

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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THE REAL ROBERT BURNS.

CARLYLE'S essay on Burns was written in 1828. It contains some good writing, and one passage which has become famous—perhaps we should say classical; namely, that on the important though oft forgotten fact that the aberrations of a great character must be judged in relation to its orbit. On the whole, however, Carlyle's essay is no longer satisfactory. For one thing, it is too preachy. Burns would have been a different man in many respects in a different environment; he might not have consummated the folk-song of Scotland if he had enjoyed (or suffered) a university training; and he might not have been burnt out at thirty-seven if he had possessed as much prudence as genius. All this may be said briefly, as it should be said, if said at all; but time is wasted in saying it with didactic elaboration. What might have been is a most unprofitable theme for speculation. What was is the only thing that really concerns us. We have to take Burns, as we have to take every man who figures in history, and estimate him by what he was and what he did in the actual circumstances. It must also be noted that Carlyle's judgment of poetry was very defective. He appreciated power, which is an element of sublimity, but he had little appreciation of beauty. In that very essay on Burns he sees absolutely nothing in Keats but "weak-eyed maudlin sensibility." And the man who wrote that of such a sheer poet as Keats simply proclaims his own fatal incapacity.

Curiously enough, the more sedate Wordsworth struck a truer note of Burns criticism than Carlyle. Many poems have been written on the great Scots lyricist, but none is comparable with Wordsworth's "I shiver, Spirit fierce and bold." This first line is singularly felicitous. Wordsworth at the grave of Burns touched, as it were, the very heart of the dead singer.

Many years afterwards, in 1859, James Thomson (B.V.)—this time another Scotsman—wrote a splendid characterization of Burns:—

"The heavens for the heavens, and the earth
for the earth!
I am a Man—I'll be true to my birth—
Man in my joys, in my pains."
So fearless, stalwart, erect, and free,
He gave to his fellows right royally
His strength, his heart, his brains;
For proud and fiery and swift and bold—
Wine of life from heart of gold,
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled
Full-billowed through his veins.

"Heathen manhood" is admirable. It describes Burns to a nicety. He had the aboriginal blood, which Christianity could only condemn, but which the saner old Philosophy might have disciplined.

Matthew Arnold has some discriminating criticism on Burns in the essay on "The Study of Poetry" in the second volume of *Essays in Criticism*. Arnold naturally could not stand the "Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners," with which so much of Burns's poetry is concerned. Chaucer's world was far richer and more significant than that of Burns, who had the greater force, though perhaps less charm; but when "the largeness and freedom of Burns get full sweep," as in *Tam o' Shanter*, or still more in "that puissant and splendid production" *The Jolly Beggars*, his poetic genius achieves a signal triumph. Arnold says that the famous Auerbach's Cellar scene in *Faust* seems "artificial and tame" beside the "breadth,

truth, and power" of Burns's chief masterpiece, and that on this ground he is only matched by Shakespeare and Aristophanes. But his "lighter and archer masterpieces" were what Arnold thought "poetically most wholesome for us." And surely no one could praise too highly "those four immortal lines" which so stirred the soul of Byron:—

Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

By the way, though Burns triumphed in the Vernacular, and generally moved with awkwardness in English, these four lovely lines contain but one Scotticism, the more abrupt "so" lengthened into the softer "sae."

Now comes another Englishman with a brilliant and well-nigh final essay on Burns. Mr. W. E. Henley completes the Centenary Edition of Burns—which he has produced in collaboration with Mr. T. F. Henderson—by a critical biography and appraisal, which leaves Carlyle far behind. It is as full of matter as an egg is full of meat. No important aspect of the poet's life or work is neglected. The essay will be a delight to every lover of Burns, and its republication in a separate form at the moderate price of one shilling renders it accessible to the poorest book-buyers.

Mr. Henley is himself a poet of no mean distinction. He has an eye and an ear, and a mind behind them. His style is singularly vivid and forceful. It bears traces of his studies in the older literature of England, produced when writers were not overwhelmed by unmanageable accumulations of printed matter, nor overawed by a multitude of professional critics; when they were able to give free play to their spontaneity, and indulge in happy audacities of expression. Mr. Henley disdains the monotonous structure and tame proprieties of journalese English. Not for him the lazy lappings of a canal stirred by a slow-drawn barge. For him the rush of the river, alive and surging, and in spite of all curves and dallings ever sweeping onwards to its goal.

Neither is there any cant about Mr. Henley; in other words, he is no sentimentalist. He is content with nature. He takes the facts as they are. He is free from what George Eliot called the fool's hectic of wishing about the unalterable. He is also free from the common foolish proneness to the canonization of a fictitious personage, instead of the frank admiration of a true man of flesh and blood, gifted with genius, but touched with the frailties of humanity. Mr. Henley knows that men of genius are not turned out from arbitrary moulds. They are lefty varieties of our common stock. And they have always what the French call the defects of their qualities. For here, as elsewhere, Nature asserts her great law of compensation, lest differentiation should destroy the embracing unity.

Mr. Henley gives us the substantial truth about Burns in his "Life, Genius, and Achievement." He has steeped himself in Burns's poetry, yet his wide and varied culture saves him from the provincialism of so many of the poet's countrymen, who are apt to look upon Scottish nature as something unique, and Scottish poetry as something specially sacred, and Burns as the one miraculous nightingale of Mount Zion. Mr. Henley is also free—perhaps this is because he is an Englishman—from the romantic folly of those who raise statues to Highland Mary, and the cowardly folly of those who seek to disguise the real Robert Burns into a quite respectable person who

had the occasional misfortune of mixing with questionable company. On the other hand, he is not so presumptuous as to apologise for Burns. He avoids flattery, and he avoids patronage. What he tries to see, and to present, is the truth, and if not the whole truth yet nothing but the truth. And, after all, what does Robert Burns want with idolatrous lies or polite misrepresentations? Don't try to make him an impeccable lay-figure. Let him stand as he was, a Scots peasant, with a sturdy figure and strong passions and a fierce delight in life, but also with a sensitive heart and a fine brain, and eyes that glowed with love and poetry, and lips that trembled with deathless song.

Burns was first of all a Scots peasant. Mr. Henley takes that as the keynote of all he has to say on Burns the man. What he depicts is "the lewd, amazing peasant of genius," or, as he more happily expresses it, "the inspired faun." When Burns was born, in 1759, the Kirk of Scotland was still an oppressive tyranny. It was largely occupied with "narrowing the minds" and "perverting the instincts" of the people. It and the "wild Whigs" had "crushed the taste for everything but fornication and theology." Into this world Burns came, and as he was the most popular poet of Scotland, so Mr. Henley justly asserts that he was "the most anti-clerical." He gave "proper" people much cause to blaspheme, but he brought back the Vernacular poetry in the Kirk's despite; he did a service for the people such as was done in other spheres by Hutcheson, Hume, and Adam Smith; and he "showed that laughter and the joy of life need be no crimes, and that freedom of thought and sentiment and action is within the reach of him that will stretch forth his hand to take it." And if he "pushed his demonstration to extremes," as Mr. Henley admits, it must be remembered, as he wisely points out, that "most men do as they must—not as they will." With all his "faults and failings" he was "ever a leader among men." In the long run he led for the truth that maketh free, and his service to Scotland is simply immeasurable. "She could scarce have been the Scotland she is," says Mr. Henley, "had he not been." G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION.

LAST week I attended a meeting at St. Martin's Town Hall, called by the Humanitarian League, to hear a lecture on "The Rights and Wrongs of Native Races," by H. R. Fox Bourne, formerly editor of the *Weekly Dispatch*, and author of *The Story of Our Colonies*. The lecture, which I trust will be published and have a large circulation, largely confirmed the statements made by myself in the article on "Christians and Heathens," which appeared in the *Free-thinker* of November 14, 1897. Mr. Fox Bourne took us over the whole ground of the treatment of native races, and showed a long course of plunder carried on by force and fraud, under the pretence of Christianity and civilization, from the days of the Spanish conquest of America to our latest doings in Rhodesia and Bechuanaland. It is not my purpose to follow Mr. Fox Bourne, and, in giving some further illustrations of Christian civilization culled from various sources, I should be sorry to have it supposed that that gentleman is in any way responsible for my opinions.

A. Featherman, the author of *The Social History of Mankind*, in his third division, p. viii, remarks: "When, at the close of the fifteenth century, a New World had been added to the then known continents and islands, the Chiopo and Guarano-Maranoneans of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, Mexico, and Peru were a mild, gentle, unsuspecting, and confiding race, far superior in morals to the heartless, soulless ruffian Spaniards who subdued them, enslaved them, and partly exterminated them." When Cortes set out for his piratical expedition to Mexico, his fleet was placed under the patronage of St. Peter, and his flag was embroidered with these words: "Friends, let us follow the Cross; if we have faith we will conquer with this sign."

Missionary religion strongly resembles that of the Italian brigand, who confesses to a priest and obtains absolution, then starts on an excursion of robbery and assassination. At the conquest of Peru, Father de Valverde was sent forward with the crucifix and breviary to exhort the

Inca Atahualpa to embrace the Catholic faith; but, as the Inca refused, Pizarro advanced with his army, and, it is said, killed two thousand of the natives without losing a single man. Yet Christians say that Islam was propagated by the sword. The Moslem might retort that Christianity was spread by the swords of Clovis, Charlemagne, and the Teutonic Knights who gave the European heathen but the option of baptism or death. They might cite, too, the statement of the Rev. Robert Cust, that "the sufferings of Armenia under the Turk are as nothing in comparison with the sufferings of Africans" under the discreditable game of grab carried on by France, Germany, and England, and that "Attila and Geughis Khan could not have done worse than these nominal Christian States."

When asked, at Darjeeling, to give a reason for the attitude of rigorous exclusiveness adopted by the Grand Lama of Lassa towards foreigners, the reply of a red-capped Lama, who had just returned from Thibet, was prompt and explicit: "Because first would come missionaries, then would come whisky, and lastly would come soldiers." This personage knew, if he had not read, what has been the course of Christian civilization.

The famous Rev. John Williams, in his well-known and still interesting *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, chap. xii., remarks: "It is a very remarkable fact that in no island of importance has Christianity been introduced without a war." Von Kotzebue, in his *New Voyage Round the World*, says: "The new religion was forcibly established, and whoever would not adopt it put to death. With the zeal for making proselytes, the rage of tigers took possession of a people once so gentle" (vol. i., p. 159). Ten pages further on he adds: "The bloody persecution instigated by the missionaries performed the office of a desolating infection."

Since the advent of Christianity in the Sandwich Islands they have witnessed a depopulation almost without a parallel. Herman Melville, the great American traveller and writer, in his book on *The Marquesas Islands* (chap. xxvi.), says: "To read pathetic accounts of missionary hardships, and glowing descriptions of conversions and baptisms taking place between palm-trees, is one thing; and to go to the Sandwich Islands and see the missionaries dwelling in picturesque and prettily-furnished coral-rock villas, while the miserable natives are committing all sorts of immoralities around them, is quite another." Further, he says: "Not until I visited Honolulu was I aware of the fact that the small remnant of the natives had been civilized into draught-horses, and evangelized into beasts of burden. But so it is." And he goes on to describe "a missionary spouse, who day after day, for months together, took her regular airings in a little go-cart drawn by two of the islanders." "How little," Melville exclaims, "do some of these poor islanders comprehend, when they look around them, that no inconsiderable part of their disasters originate in certain tea-party excitements, the object of which is to ameliorate the spiritual condition of the Polynesian, but whose end has almost invariably been to accomplish their temporary destruction." This is the testimony of a competent traveller, a man of insight and genius, who spoke out vigorously that which he knew.

In New Zealand, within the reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Maoris have been jockeyed out of the whole of their lands. In 1839 there were but two thousand whites on the island. Now there are about a million. "The Maori warrior," says Froude, "before the English landed, was brave, honorable, and chivalrous; fire-water had not taught him the delights of getting drunk." What a change! T. W. M. Marshall, in his work on *Christian Missions*, gives many damning facts as to how the missionaries got hold of lands in New Zealand. On one occasion thirteen thousand acres were bought for forty-eight axes. Between 1830 and 1835 "twenty-seven square miles were purchased by missionaries." The Rev. R. Taylor, who wrote a book about New Zealand, full of unction and texts of Scripture, put in a claim before the Land Commissioners for fifty thousand acres. The Rev. W. Yate, another church missionary, who wrote a godly book on the country, used to prohibit the natives from selling their pork to the whalers, not from any unkind feeling to those mariners, but because he preferred to buy it himself at a penny a pound, and to sell it at five. The descendants of the Rev. H. Williams now have about eighty thousand acres at Hawkes Bay.

About no place have the Wesleyans made more fuss than

Fiji, where they pretend to have rescued the natives from cannibalism to the light of the Gospel. As a matter of fact, they have almost exterminated them by the introduction of new habits, drink, and disease. Estimated at 200,000 in 1859, they have dwindled to less than half that number. When it was made an English colony in 1876, a chief said: "If we do not cede Fiji the white stalkers on the beach, the cormorants will open their maws and swallow us." The fact is the Wesleyan Missionary Society derived a large item of its income from the sale of cocoa-nut oil procured through the labor of the converts. According to the *Sydney Bulletin*, a recent Commission of Inquiry into the condition of the islanders has had the courage candidly to saddle Christian civilization with the moral and physical ruin of the race. "Paganism prevented sexual immorality," and as Christianity only forbids it the result is that "the chastity which was formerly almost invariable in a bride is now the exception." In heathen days the men slept in a separate house. Christian civilization abolished that custom, and many witnesses declare that the moral results are most disastrous. Christianity prides itself on the abolition of polygamy, but the story of "Arahuta's Baptism," given in our last number, shows this is not unattended with misery. In Fiji the labors of the wife have to support the husband. When spread over several the burden was slight, but Christian civilization has kept woman the mere beast of burden, while putting on the shoulders of one tasks that were formerly distributed over several.

In our own time whole nations, with elaborate social polity and institutions, have been almost entirely wiped out; and quite recently the inspired organ of an Emperor who prides himself on the Christianity of his soldiers coolly proposed to cut up the most venerable institution on earth, the Chinese empire, with its 400 millions of human beings, for the advantage of Russia, Germany, and France. We could say little morally. We have grabbed all we could in Africa; and Russia, at any rate, is doing the like in Asia. On the north-west frontier of India our soldiers' lives are being wasted in making us hated by tribes whose independence might be a barrier against Russia. Christian civilization, the pride of Exeter Hall, fairly stinks in the nostrils of all the heathen of the earth.

One word I would like with the Rev. John Page Hopps, who spoke at Mr. Fox Bourne's meeting. Mr. Hopps's sympathies are ever with the oppressed; but he must needs bring in his theology. He said it was God's will that we should deal with less civilized races as an elder brother with a younger one. I freely grant that this is a better view of God's will than that found in the Old Testament, where we read God's exhortations to ruthlessly destroy idolaters; or even than the New Testament declaration, that there is no salvation in any name under heaven save that of Christ Jesus, and "He that believeth not shall be damned." To me it seems that such texts, together with the Bible curse on Ham and its approbation of slavery, have tended to make Christian treatment of the heathen what it has been. But, I would like to ask Mr. Hopps, if it is the Almighty's will that the less civilized should be treated as younger brothers, how is it that that will has not been carried out? Nay, I would ask, how can the wholesale spoliation, degradation, and extermination of races "made in the image of God" be reconciled with the existence of such an Almighty Father at all?

J. M. WHEELER.

SECULAR REGENERATION.

THAT the world requires regeneration is a fact which should be patent to all who contemplate the present condition of society. It is also obvious, as was shown in our article in last week's *Freethinker* upon "Christ and Redemption," that the method hitherto adopted by professed Christians to regenerate society has proved a palpable failure. The reason of this is not difficult to discover. The supposed remedy was not suited to the disease. The evils to be removed are natural, and no supposed supernatural panacea has been found capable of securing this result. Regeneration will be achieved only through a knowledge of, and obedience to, natural laws, physical, intellectual, and moral. More attention than has hitherto been given must be shown to the rising generation, in

order that children may be able to successfully play their part in the reformation of society. Recently the Bishop of Hereford, in speaking at a conference of teachers convened by the Birmingham Band of Hope Union, dwelt upon the importance of combating hereditary tendencies by early training and habit. He said "that it was humiliating to find in the most Christian country in the world, and after so many centuries of Christian teaching, so little done to preserve children from those evil influences against which even the heathen philosophers, long before the Christian era, had warned them" (*Birmingham Post*, October 11, 1897).

Secular regeneration is based upon knowledge of cause and effect. The more we know the better shall we be enabled to properly contribute to the necessary improvement. During the ages when the Christian faith was paramount hardly anything was done towards human redemption; but with the advancement of knowledge and the spread of scepticism the regeneration of society commenced. As Lecky remarks in his *History of European Morals*: "Nearly all the greatest intellectual achievements of the last three centuries have been preceded and prepared by the growth of scepticism.....The splendid discoveries of physical science would have been impossible but for the scientific scepticisms of the school of Bacon.....Not till the education of Europe passed from the monasteries to the universities—not till Mohammedan science and classical Freethought and industrial independence broke the sceptre of the Church, did the intellectual revival of Europe begin" (vol. ii., pp. 205 and 219). It was then that men began to study the nature and influence of conduct, and thereby they learnt the effects of certain actions upon individual character, and also upon the well-being of the community. It was also soon discovered that obedience to natural law was an absolute necessity. Such obedience involves temperance in all our daily conduct, not merely in eating and drinking, but in the gratification of every passion of our nature. It further involves physical discipline and mental culture. These are essentials to secular regeneration, which consists in possessing a mind free from ignorance, which is the mother of devotion; from the power of priestcraft, which is the nightmare of the intellect; from the influence of theology, which is the prelude to mental bondage; and from the domination of the Church, which for ages rendered intellectual freedom an impossibility. Such human advancement is not to be won through prayer, belief in Christ, or faith in God; but rather by secular effort, self-reliance, fidelity to conviction, allegiance to truth, and, above all, by manifesting justice to, and love for, general humanity regardless of creed or country.

Christians are constantly boasting that their faith has produced what they term "a change of heart," which they allege has had a more beneficial effect upon the general condition of society than any secular agencies could possibly have brought about. Such, however, according to our view, is not the case. Western civilization is the result of the cultivation of the intellect far more than it is of the fostering of the emotions. In transforming society from what it was to what it is, the teachings of science have proved more efficacious than the preaching of sermons, and the brain power of such master-minds as Galileo, Newton, Watt, Stephenson, and other scientists, has been a greater civilizing factor than all the emotional force manifested by the host of divines who have contributed to the history of the Christian faith. And in the moral and intellectual regeneration of our race the services of such men as Darwin, Tyndall, Spencer, Bentham, Mill, Huxley, and Clifford have been more efficacious than the exposition of theologians, or the injunctions of their Master, Jesus of Nazareth. If by the phrase "change of heart" is meant that men should cease to do evil and learn to do good, then we do not deny the advantages of such a change, but we contend that intelligence and secular agencies are necessary to render such a change a lasting good. We further assert that, before a person's character is changed for the better, the conditions which surround him must be improved; for, as Spencer has shown, a moral character cannot emanate from immoral surroundings. Thus the very "change of heart" spoken of depends upon the superior environment caused by external influences. Moreover, we find that this "change of heart" has not induced Christians to seek to remove slavery, religious inequalities, political wrongs, and social injustice; neither has it inspired

them with a desire to encourage education, or to favor the discovery and the application of the sciences.

Next to the acquirement of general knowledge and judicious personal effort, the application of science is an important factor in the well-being of society. We think it was George Combe who wrote as follows: "It is sometimes objected by the ignorant that science is uncertain and changeable, and they point with a malicious kind of pleasure to the many exploded theories which have been superseded by others as a proof that the present knowledge may be also unsound, and, after all, not worth having. But they are not aware that, while they think to cast blame upon science, they bestow, in fact, the highest praise upon her. For that is precisely the difference between science and prejudice: that the latter keeps stubbornly to its position, whether disproved or not, while the former is an unarrestable movement towards the fountain of truth, caring little for cherished authorities or sentiments, but continually progressing, feeling no false shame at her shortcomings." Professor D. C. Gilman, in a recent article in the *Cosmopolitan*, observes: "Religious men are afraid of science very often; and in the pulpit they sometimes condemn it, as if it were the foe of all that is good. First they personify it, then they clothe it, then they attack it. Yet they, nevertheless, in many cases (happily not as frequently as in the last generation) forget that the domain of science is wholly different from that of religion; the realm of knowledge is not the realm of faith. In the natural, if not in the moral, sciences, if we know, we know; we can prove, we can verify, we can test; if we do not know, we can search, we can investigate, we can hope, we can believe." It is too true that theologians, both Roman Catholics and Protestants, have depreciated science. But Professor Draper, in his *Conflict between Religion and Science*, justly rebukes such as worse than religious folly. He writes: "As to science, she has never sought to ally herself to civil power. She has never attempted to throw odium or inflict social ruin on any human being. She has never subjected anyone to mental torment, physical torture, least of all to death, for the purpose of upholding or promoting her ideas. She presents herself unstained by cruelties and crimes. But in the Vatican—we have only to recall the Inquisition—the hands that are now raised in appeals to the Most Merciful are crimsoned. They have been steeped in blood" (Preface, p. xi.).

Science is the secular providence; upon it rests our hope for the race. Christians allege that they have science, and something more. What, however, is this "something more"? Simply a *belief* in a God of whom they *know* nothing. Judging from the history of this belief, it has never proved itself an actual factor in human regeneration. Let those who sneer at our faith in science remember this fact:—Secularists can do without the Christians' "something more," but Christians cannot do without our science. For, in the sublime words of Colonel Ingersoll, we say of science: "Thou art the perpetual providence of man—preserver of light and love! Thou art the teacher of every virtue, the enemy of every vice. Thou hast discovered the true basis of morals—the origin and office of conscience—and hast revealed the nature and measure of obligation. Thou hast taught that love is justice in its highest form, and that even self-love, guided by wisdom, embraces with loving arms the human race. Thou hast slain the monsters of the past. Thou hast discovered the one inspired book. Thou hast read the records of the rocks, written by wind and wave, by frost and flame—records that even priestcraft cannot change—and in thy wondrous scales thou hast weighed the atoms and the stars. Thou art the founder of the only true religion. Thou art the very Christ, the only savior of mankind. Theology has always been in the way of the advance of the human race. There is this difference between science and theology—science is modest and merciful, while theology is arrogant and cruel. The hope of science is the perfection of the human race. The hope of theology is the salvation of a few and the damnation of almost everybody."

CHARLES WATTS.

SUCH A SILLY CREED!

(Concluded from page 85.)

THE whole story of the Fall of Man is ineffably silly, but its silliness is capped by that of the plan of salvation. Mankind having become hell-deserving sinners through an act of which they were perfectly innocent, the position of affairs was to be transposed, and the suffering of one *innocent* man, who was also the God who inflicted the suffering, was to be taken as washing away the alleged guilt of the whole human race! Could silliness further go? But do not suppose that you are going to get off so lightly as the first sight of the terms of the plan might lead you to suppose. You will have to go through the process of *saying you believe* in this plan of redemption before you can really reap the fruits of it. If you happen not to be able to read, and have never come into contact with anybody familiar with the verbal terms of the scheme, damnation in hell will be your portion. This transcendently silly doctrine actually makes man's eternal happiness or misery dependent upon the mere accident of an ability to read and write! For that is what it resolves itself into. And, in the meantime, both literate and illiterate are our human fellows, among whom are performed many "little unremembered acts of kindness and of love"; or, indeed, glowing heroism, remembered in a more or less substantial way. Such a hopelessly silly entanglement is this scheme of redemption that theologians have never yet been able to agree as to whether it included the whole human race in its scope, or only a select portion of them.

Listen to these sweet and wholesome words from a Calvinistic minister. They were delivered on the occasion of a Protestant lecture (January 10) in the minister's capacity as chairman of the meeting: "We Calvinists believe that salvation is of grace, all of grace, from the beginning to the end of it. That is to say, we believe in the absolute unconditional predestination of God's elect to be conformed to the image of Christ. We believe in particular redemption. That is to say, we believe that Jesus Christ, by his one offering, perfectly redeemed all who were predestined to be conformed to his image, and *no more*..... *We do not believe that human duty forms any part of the sinner's salvation.*" There, that is what these lovely people believe. Isn't that a pretty dish to set before Mr. Mulrooney's widow, who, with seven or more squalling brats and herself to keep, has to work the skin off her poor bones at the washtub to do it? If God Almighty did not predestinate Mrs. Mulrooney to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ before the world was made, then down she goes to hell; and serve her right, says the Calvinist. She may do her duty to her children, but laugh! do you think that the Lord of Hosts is to be propitiated by doing what is right and proper and dutiful? You do not know him if you do. But just look at the logic of the words I have quoted. By Adam's sin *all* participated in the condemnation thereof, and all would have inevitably been damned had not God sent his own son to shed a few drops of his blood on the Cross. Nevertheless, out of the "all" who were inevitably booked for damnation there were a select few who were never in the slightest possible danger, and who, just as otherwise they would inevitably have been damned, were as inevitably sure of salvation; for were they not predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ before there was either an apple to eat or a woman's mouth to water at the sight of it? Fancy one poor little bit of human flesh and blood telling another that Christ did not die to save them both, and that he (the aforesaid bit of flesh and blood) was perfectly cocksure that *he* was of the saved.

We Freethinkers attack Christianity as a false and fatally injurious system of *thought*. It presents to the world certain propositions as to man's nature, origin, and destiny which, on examination, are found to be inharmious with the facts of life as they are known, and the acceptance of which propositions as a basis of conduct hinders a man from realizing the excellence that is in him, and of exhibiting those warm, sympathetic feelings of comradeship which must be the condition of any real success in combatting the evils of life, and of achieving any substantial results in the direction of human progress. Inaccurate thought leads to erroneous conduct, and if a man's conduct as the result of his being a Christian takes the form of maintaining a cold, harsh, unsympathetic attitude

Whatever mitigates the woes or increases the happiness of others is a just criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it, is a criterion of iniquity. One should not quarrel with a dog without a reason sufficient to vindicate one through all the courts of morality.—*Goldsmith*.

towards the majority of his struggling, suffering fellows, while he hugs to his poor withered soul the idea that the "dear Lord" has specially singled him out to be taken into his immediate favor after death, how is it possible to do otherwise than conclude that the thought that inspires this snuffling priggery is *wrong*—fatally wrong? To point to certain excellent precepts alleged to have been uttered by Jesus is quite beside the point, for they belong to the common ethical pabulum of the race. Of what avail can it be to tell a man to love his neighbor as himself if, at the same time, you tell him that he is "totally depraved," and cannot possibly do anything good of himself? And supposing you further tell him that, even if he does love his neighbor as himself, he is, nevertheless, deserving of eternal damnation, and will certainly be damned if he happen not to be one of the elect? And supposing he manages to convince himself that he is one of the elect, he will have to conclude that the mass of those with whom he rubs shoulders are predestined to be damned; and how can that result in anything but a feeling of contemptuous indifference towards them? If they are not good enough for God to notice them, except to ensure that they shall be damned, why should he go out of his way to concern himself with their earthly welfare? In the meantime the work of the world has to be done, the secular exigencies of life have to be met and conquered, and this will be done all the more easily if men will cultivate the sentiment of humanism and work together as loyal comrades. But, in order that this spirit of comradeship should become the actuating principle of the race, Freethought must accomplish its great work, the destruction of the monstrous lie, Christianity, which has substituted the qualities of the bloodhound for the instincts of human affection, and quite consistently with this has converted men, who should have shown the virility of manhood, into examples of priggish effeminacy, absolutely useless for the purposes of human progress. If Christianity is silly, it is also atrocious—in fact, atrociously silly.

B. STEVENS.

ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD.

If the Bible is the word of God, it is all his word. If a part of the Bible only is God's word, how are we to distinguish this portion? Are we to believe what the Bible says on every subject, or not? Is one verse to be held in equal reverence with another? Whatever God has done must be deserving the homage of man. The serious question to answer is: Is any part of the Bible God's word?

We open the Bible, and at the top of the first page of the volume we find these words: "The first book of Moses, called Genesis." What is the meaning of this? If the Christian Church is right in its estimate of the Bible, we should read instead: The first book of God, called Genesis. Or is the word of "Moses" simply the divine pseudonym? We see no necessity for the Christian Church to dodge the dogma of the Bible's divinity, no necessity for avoiding the issues of its teachings. If Genesis was written by Moses, and not by God, is not this portion of the "holy volume" the word of man?

But who was Moses? And how did he know what God said or did before there was any earth, any moon, any sun, any living thing on the earth? Genesis gives an account of the creation, tells about the beginning of things, how the heavens and the earth originated, and how man was "made." Wonderful man, this Moses! He informs us that creation came from the mouth of God. God had only to speak, and the wonders of the universe unfolded. The stars and the suns came into being at the divine command. Darkness rolled away and light spread its blessing over all things, because God so ordered. The method of creation, according to the author of Genesis, was this: "And God said, Let it be so, and it was so."

Moses certainly was not present when God commenced to create—that is, "in the beginning." He was not an eye-witness of the work of creation. He did not hear God speak. He did not see God turn the button which let on the light throughout the vast halls of infinite space. He did not behold the glorious coming of the sun, the bright blossoming of the stars, the sweet coming of leaf, grass, and flower; nor did he see the plastic earth turn in the hands of its God into man's majestic form, into woman's infinite loveliness.

How did Moses know of what he was writing? As he could not have been a witness of what he describes, how did he get his knowledge of these things? Did God tell him? The person who wrote Genesis either knew what he was writing, or else he guessed at it.

Greater events never enriched the pen of man. To turn darkness into light, an infinite void into an infinite universe, a black firmament into stellar radiance, a vast nothingness into countless worlds, barren earth into teeming life, and the insensate dust into marvellous man, was indeed a work to fill the mind with wonder, and the lips with praise.

Let it be set down for a fact, however, that the worker of these wonders was the only person who saw the exhibition. God had no audience when he performed the miracles of Genesis. The account of this divine work of creation must have come from God, or from imagination's brain.

Who this God was, who had only to speak to have creation follow his word, we are not able to find out. Where he was when he commenced to create things we are not told. What he had been doing before he started the creation-ball rolling, no one seems to know. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Geh. i. 1). In the beginning of what? Did God have a beginning? If the heaven and the earth were called into being by the will of God, where were they called from? What existed before the work of creation was begun? "Create" is a big word. When we talk about creating anything, do we realize that to create is to bring into being, to form out of nothing, to cause to exist? What is nothing? Can you find it? Can you see it? Can you think it? Nothing is a word in which every other word is lost, even the word "God." Whether the universe had a beginning, whether something can come out of nothing, is beyond human understanding.

The account of the origin of the world, as related in Genesis, is a poem. To make it creation's confession, the report of the voice on high, is to count on a credulity which is fast passing away. We do not regard Genesis as nature's secret laid bare, as the translation of the silence of God, as the writing of heaven upon the earth, as human language pregnant with divine revelation. It is not history, not science, not fact. It is an epic of divinity. It is beautiful as poetry, but it is trash when put forth as a true account of the origin of things.

—Boston Investigator.

ACID DROPS.

MR. CLEMENT SCOTT'S outburst against the morality of the profession—namely, the theatrical—is quite a godsend to the clericals, who are working it for all it is worth. Dr. Horton declares that Mr. Scott "says with a full and impartial knowledge precisely what I should have said myself." Dr. Clifford says that Mr. Scott's outburst "rings with considerable conviction," and will be of great service in "bringing men and women face to face with reality." Mr. Hugh Price Hughes affirms boldly that what Mr. Scott says is "a decisive justification of the antipathy with which the most truly religious classes of the English people" regard the stage. Similar utterances come from the Rev. F. B. Meyer and Prebendary Webb Peploe. But all these gentlemen are biassed. It may be said of their criticism that the wish was father to the thought. The primary reason of their hatred of the theatre is that it is a rival show, and, what is more, a successful one.

Dr. Clifford ventures to hope that "the day may come when all the advantages of the drama may be offered to men without any peril to the highest ideals of life." But is not this very absurd? The highest ideals of life are always in peril, otherwise they would not be the highest ideals. And does Dr. Clifford seriously imagine that any place of public resort can ever be entirely free from what he would call "temptation"? Is it possible to exact a certificate of character from every man and woman who goes to see a play? Could the plan be worked even at a church door?

On the whole, it would be better if the clergy of all denominations would look after the morals of their own order. Judging from the newspaper reports, they have a very fair percentage of black sheep among them, and far more cases are hushed up than ever find their way into the public press. They will not improve the morals of the

theatrical world by talking nonsense. Nor is their assistance at all wanted in arranging the stage for the spectators. The sort of drama they would give us may be seen by anyone who will take the trouble to sit out Mr. Wilson Barrett's *Sign of the Cross*. We don't suppose they would tolerate a play on Joseph and Mrs. Potiphar, although they put this terribly crude case of attempted seduction into the hands of boys and girls.

The Rev. Stewart Headlam, as everyone knows who is acquainted with him, is a thorough "good fellow." But, unfortunately for his Church prospects, he is very fond of the theatre, and has quite a passionate affection for the ballet. This taste of his—which, with all respect, we can hardly imagine Jesus Christ or the Twelve Apostles sharing—got Mr. Headlam into trouble with the Bishop of London, who eleven years ago revoked his preaching license. Bishop Jackson died, but Bishop Temple continued the ostracism. Bishop Creighton, however, has now given Mr. Headlam a general license to preach in the diocese. So all's well that end's well. Anyhow, we congratulate Mr. Headlam on sticking to his guns.

The Sunday Closing party have issued a long appeal for funds. The English public is asked to supply the cloth for its own strait waistcoat, leaving the Sunday Closing party to do the stitching.

This appeal is signed by "F. Cantaur"—the trade name of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mr. A. F. Hills. No concealment is made as to the "religious" character of the movement, and "Christian people" are pointedly called upon to shell out handsomely, in order to secure "the purification of the Lord's Day from the dominion of strong drink." All this bears out the contention of our article on the subject in last week's *Freethinker*. The Sunday Closing party consists of professional Christians and their pious supporters, who want to dragoon the English people into a slavish Sabbatarianism.

An extraordinary argument for the Sunday opening of saloons was quoted by one of the speakers at a recent temperance meeting. He said that at a public meeting in Coventry an orator urged that public-houses should be opened at noon on Sundays in order that working men should have an opportunity of discussing together the sermons they had heard in the morning. The ingenuity of thirsty souls knows no bounds, says an exchange; but we commend the suggestion to the parsons, as a good means of putting some spirit into dull sermons.

The *Daily News* is getting too facetious. On Monday it had a heading, "Sunday Service at Olympia." But the said Sunday Service only consisted of some "curious experiments" that were witnessed by a select party of ladies and gentlemen, who were invited by Mr. Bailey. Horses and elephants were tested as to their comparative strength. There were other items on the program, and it was doubtless an interesting way of spending a Sunday afternoon. But fancy calling it a Sunday Service! Our contemporary will have to be careful, or it will provoke the thunders of the Nonconformist Conscience.

Sabbath desecration is spreading even in godly Scotland, the infection having reached as far north as Aberdeen, where the Free Presbytery is making dolorous complaints. Some time ago the fishermen would as soon have thought of a trip to the moon as of trawling on Sunday; but of the eighty fishing-boats in Aberdeen only one remains at home on the Lord's Day. That one is called *Faith*. Cycling, of course, is as bad, or worse. One minister counted 378 cyclists in one hour on the road to Ballater one Sunday last summer. Sunday football, too, is becoming affected on the blessed Sabbath, especially by boys. The evil, in short, is growing so alarmingly that the ministers are talking of simultaneous sermons against it from every pulpit in the district. But, alas, the wretches who profane the Sabbath will probably not hear the sermons; and what on earth is to be done?

Some of the ministers' speeches were highly amusing. Rev. Mr. Stewart said the feeling of the Presbytery would no doubt be similar to that of the committee—one of surprise and profound pain. No one of the committee thought, when they took the matter in hand, that Sabbath desecration was carried on to such an extent. He also deplored the extent of Sunday cycling. The Rev. G. W. Thomson moved the adoption of the report, and, in seconding, the Rev. Mr. Brown, Torry, stated that at the Bay of Nigg, between three and five o'clock on Sunday afternoon, sometimes 400 young men were engaged at football. The Rev. Andrew M'Queen looked upon the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Services as one of the greatest blunders that Christian men could have committed. (Hear, hear.) The word "pleasant" was to him abhorrent. Probably Mr. M'Queen is a very unpleasant gentleman.

The Rev. G. Stone, a member of the Norwich Board of Guardians, strongly objects to the workhouse children going to an afternoon performance of the pantomime. He thinks their morals are easily contaminated. He even objects to entertainments at the workhouse, saying: "They should do nothing that tended to encourage the spirit of pleasure." Pleasure, according to this worthy, is a snare of the devil. We trust he finds no pleasure in *preaching*.

Professor Marucchi still potters about that graffito which he has discovered on an old Roman wall in the city of the Popes. He says it is a picture of the Crucifixion, and he is persuaded it was drawn by one of the soldiers who "assisted," as the French say, on that occasion. No doubt he is persuaded himself, but we guess it will be a deuce of a time before he persuades other people, especially those who are troubled with what Jeremy Taylor calls a "pertinacious understanding," and want evidence before they believe. So many lying wonders have emanated from Rome that everything discovered there is under suspicion. When the boss-liar of the parish opens his mouth nobody expects to hear the unadulterated truth.

Professor Marucchi's "find" appears to be laughed at even by a Catholic archæologist. Signor Gatti thinks the graffito represents a rope-dancing scene; while other archæologists, like Signor Lanciani, regard it as a simple joke. Such is the latest bit of Christian Evidence! It may be Jesus Christ, or it may be a rope-dancer. You pay your money and take your choice.

This is about as rich as the famous graffito, called attention to by Father Martigny, scratched on the wall of the Palace of the Cæsars, representing an ass-headed figure on a cross, or holding a T, while underneath is rude lettering, "*Alexamenos Sebeta Theou*"—Alexamenos worships God. This, he argued, represents a caricatured copy of some undiscovered crucifix used for Christian worship. The ass's head connects it rather with the Jews, whom the Gnostics accused of worshipping an ass; and the charge is made by Tacitus that, when the temple was opened, an ass's head was found in the holy of holies.

In Rome, the other day, it was reported that the Pope, taking pity on the poor, had commanded the fountains of the Piazza of St. Peter to throw out macaroni instead of water. A vast crowd assembled, some with dishes; and there was much grumbling when it was discovered that the foundation for the report was that the fountain had not been playing well, and the men sent to clean them had found a quantity of growing grain in the pipes, which had obstructed the flow of the water.

The paper on "The Literary Life of Edinburgh," in the *New Century Review*, has an amusing story of one of the old dames of the Canongate, and a dream she had of heaven. One morning she said to a friend: "Eh, what a dismal dream I had last night; it was maist gruesome. I dreamt I was in heaven—o' a' places on eurth—and the whole place was crowded wi' stark-naked weans. An' ye ken I never could abide bairns. Eh, but it was a dismal dream!"

In the name of religion, the poor little fragments of carbon, oxygen, etc., which compose a child's body are to be exhumed, in order that they may be reburied with Roman Catholic rites. It seems that there was a mix-up at a northern hospital, through which the child of Roman Catholic parents was buried by a Protestant family, who believed him to be their son. Hence this barbaric proceeding. We do not know if God is a Protestant or a Roman Catholic; in either case, the boy is sure of heaven, having credentials from both sides.

The Methodist women in the United States have been asked to boycott the Church until such time as it admits women to a vote in its management. The Methodist papers say the appeal comes from those already outside the Church. But the movement is a cheering one, for, however started, it is apt to spread.

The Hon. David W. Carnegie, who has returned to England after a thirteen months' journey across the Great Victoria and Great Sandy Deserts of Western Australia, gives a very unfavorable account of the natives he met with. There are not many of them, and the planet is to be congratulated on their paucity. "The people are very dark," Mr. Carnegie says, "and add to their blackness by smearing themselves with grease and ashes—a fact which makes their presence known at a considerable distance. They are very ugly—more like monkeys than anything else, with their flat foreheads and protruding lips. As a rule, they are very thin, and of small stature. Men, women, and children are all stark naked. They make no houses. They simply scoop out a hole in the sand and squat in it." This is fresh and striking confirmation of the Darwinian theory.

Two copies of Darwin's *Descent of Man* have been issued two hundred times from the Clerkenwell Free Library—nearly as often, in fact, as any of the most fashionable novels. To an ordinary mind it is pleasant to find so much interest in a great book on the most important of questions. But that dear old Evangelical paper, the *Rock*, shakes its head gravely, and suspects that the Clerkenwell readers of Darwin are not animated by a mere love of science, but by "a desire to find arguments in favor of rejecting the Scripture account of the origin of man." Poor Christians! They occupy a most uncomfortable position. Every breath of science makes them tremble.

Apropos of a projected new translation of the Granth, the sacred Bible of the Sikhs, Mr. Andrew Lang gave us one of his delightful *Daily News* leaders. He brings in a capital story of how, when the Kurnai, an Australian tribe, are about to initiate lads who have lived among Christians, they put them through a process of massage to work the selfishness out of them.

Mr. W. Perks, M.P., proposes that the Methodists shall commemorate the commencement of the twentieth century by raising a fund of £1,000,000, for Methodist Church purposes, from one million Methodists in the United Kingdom. This sum, he says, would represent only a trifling percentage on the accumulated prosperity of the Methodist people. When will Freethinkers raise enough to endow a Freethought college?

At the Conference of the Foreign Missions Board of the United States and Canada it was stated that from thirty to forty per cent. of the receipts for foreign missions comes from legacies. All the religious bodies live largely on dead men's money, and until we repeal or circumvent the Blasphemy Laws, so as to obtain practical liberty of bequest, we shall ever stand at a great disadvantage.

Bishop Moorhouse tells his clergy they should all be united for the *cause* of the Church. We have always found that their energies are united for the *effects*.

Trinity Church, Broadway, New York, has possessions valued at nearly two millions sterling. It is thus the trustees obey the injunction to lay not up treasures on earth.

Between war and plague poor India has a bad time of it, and now the cry is rising for compulsory prophylactic inoculation. Since the Brahman's creed is based on purity of blood, there is no doubt that our doctorcraft will be, and is, largely considered as a religious offence. Those who know India well say what is most required is purity of water.

The *British Medical Journal* argues in favor of another prohibition of a religious practice, this time interfering with the Moslems. Russia is prohibiting Mohammedan pilgrimages to Mecca from Russian territory, on account of the plague being brought back; the same was done in Bombay, but this was with a view to the safety of the Moslems themselves, who would have been imperilled by association with pilgrims from a plague-stricken district. The Bombay Presidency is treated as an infected country, isolating it from other parts of India. The ports open to pilgrims are limited to Karachi in Scinde, and Chittagong in the lower provinces of Bengal.

God's divinely-ordained rite of circumcision was the cause of the death of Walter Berman, a Jewish child, living in St. George's-in-the-East. After the barbaric rite, the child bled to death. One juror thought it ought not to be allowed, but, as directed by the coroner, the verdict was, "Death by misadventure."

Mr. Oswald Simon, in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, says that an octogenarian, a man of great distinction in the scientific world, said to him: "When the Queen came to the throne I was twenty. In those days the Bible was taken literally and swallowed whole. Nobody ventured to question anything which it contained." Now nobody ventures to uphold everything it contains. As the Rev. Jasper said, "The world do move," and its progress has been powerfully advanced by brave and determined Freethinkers.

In the *New World* Frederic Palmer, writing from Christchurch, Andover, on "The Paganism of the Young," observes that "the young have ceased to take much interest in matters directly religious." The Sunday newspaper, the bicycle, athletic games, Sunday concerts, and entertaining are put down among the causes.

The annual compilation of Church statistics made by the *New York Independent* shows that about one-third of the 25,919,027 communicants in the United States are Roman

Catholics. The most numerous Protestant denomination is the Methodist, with 5,735,898, while the Baptists are second (including their multifarious sub-divisions) with 4,175,300. The next in order are the Lutherans, with 1,507,466, and then follow the Presbyterians, who number 1,490,162; the Disciples of Christ, with a total of 1,051,079; the Episcopalians, with 658,640; and the Congregationalists, with 620,000. The Unitarians number 70,000, and the Universalists over 50,000. The twenty-five millions claimed by the Churches are supposed to include some dead ones; but, all told, they represent only a third of the population of the country. The other fifty millions are out of any chance of heaven.

The *Jewish Messenger* says it is of interest to learn from the figures of a noted statistician what Solomon's temple really cost. The "talents" of gold, silver, and brass were equal to the sum of £6,879,822,000. The worth of the jewels is placed at a figure equally high. The vessels of gold, according to Josephus, were valued at 140,000 talents, which, reduced to English money, was equal to £575,296,203. The vessels of silver, according to the same authority, were still more valuable, being set down as worth £646,344,000; priests' vestments and the robes of singers, £2,010,000; and the trumpets, £200,000. To this add the expense of the building material, labor, etc., and some wonderful figures result. The materials in the rough are estimated as having been worth £2,545,337,000. The total, which by no means expresses the whole cost, is £10,719,760,261. Now, who can credit that Solomon had this immense wealth when, in the days of Saul, there was not even a smith in the land?

A paper read by Mr. J. Offord before the Society of Biblical Archeology, on "New Material of the History of Hadrian's Jewish War," tended to show what pains the Romans took to suppress the fanatical Jewish rising under Bar-Cochba. One victory by that adventurer would have resulted in his being proclaimed the Messiah. As it was, the bulk of the Jewish nation seem to have thrown in their lot with "the son of Star," and they have never had any but twopenny-halfpenny Messiahs since.

Another literary find—which, although not of the importance of the discovery of the Gospel of Peter in 1822, is yet of considerable interest—is a large fragment (perhaps a fourth) of the alleged Acts of St. Paul, mentioned by Eusebius, the father of Church history. It narrates Paul's missionary activity in Antioch, Corinth, Philippi, and Rome, and tells how his leading convert, Thecla, travelled with him in single blessedness. This lady is said to have written the Alexandrine version of the Gospels with her own hand. But, as that is certainly not older, if as old, as the fifth century, Thecla must have been a prodigy of longevity. The Acts of Paul and Thecla has long been known as a spurious early Christian document.

This discovery rather upsets the claim that has been made for the tact and judgment of the early Church in selecting its canonical literature. The work now discovered is evidently nothing better than pure romance and invention, irreconcilable either with the epistles attributed to Paul or with the Acts of the Apostles. Yet we know from Eusebius that the book was generally accepted, even in Rome itself, by the chief dignitaries and scholars of the Church. The Roman bishop, Hippolytus, treated it as genuine; and even Origen quoted it with respect. That a book certainly not written in the alleged time of Paul could be so received should be remembered when one considers the question of the authenticity of the epistles attributed to the other apostles—as, for instance, that barefaced forgery, 2 Peter.

Pathetic hunk from recent discourse of Bishop Stone-Wigg, just down from New Guinea: "We lately sent two Kanaka teachers to serve four villages. On the day of their arrival great festivities were proceeding, in which they joined heartily. They discovered next day they had unwittingly participated in a cannibal feast. There had been a battle with a mountain tribe, and one of the enemy had been taken captive and used as material for a banquet." By the way, oughtn't a teacher or missionary who unwittingly participates in such a spread to be suspended awhile from his ghostly functions—long enough, at least, to let him get the taste of the lamented fried brother out of his mouth? —*Sydney Bulletin*.

"Commander" Ballington Booth, as our readers will probably recollect, broke away from his father's "Army" in the United States and set up a rival show of his own. By way of ingratiating himself with the people over there, he appears to have naturalized himself as an American citizen. Of course this is a terrible blow to England, but we dare say the old country will survive it. From what Ballington now says we judge that he was born over here by some mistake. Perhaps it was an oversight on the part of Providence. "I was born in England," Ballington said the other night at Philadelphia, "but I can't help that. I

am an American. I love America as I love my God. Her flag, those dear old Stars and Stripes, yes, the only flag in the whole world, shall be carried before my Christians all the time." This magnificent eloquence will doubtless thrill the heart of every patriotic American. For our part, we quite believe that the noble Ballington loves America as he loves his God; but we fancy there is a third party that he loves still better.

A curious instance of answer to prayer was related the other evening in the *Westminster Gazette*. In the early days of the Tractarian movement a prayer-meeting was held at the house of Captain Maude, and the Lord was implored to overrule the Romanizing tendencies of the Oxford party. The result was that Captain Maude's son was converted to Roman Catholicism, and became one of the best-known Fathers of the Oratory. Providence must have heard that prayer upside-down.

Last April—on the first of the month, for all we know—the Church Association presented a Memorial to the Queen, signed by 36,876 women, against the Romish practices of the High Church party. Having waited six months and got no answer, the Church Association, in the name of all those anxious ladies, once more approaches her Majesty on the subject. We do not suppose they will obtain a satisfactory reply. That, however, is no affair of ours. What we are concerned with is the happy-family condition of the Church of England. High Church and Low Church love each other as the Devil loves holy water; and the more they quarrel the better it will be for Freethought.

Mr. Foote's *Comic Sermons and Other Fantasias* contains "A Mad Sermon," purporting to be given by a man of God whose insanity declared itself outrageously while he was in the pulpit, and who had to be dislodged by main force, after a prolonged battle in which he inflicted great losses on the enemy. No doubt those who have read that "Mad Sermon" will have thought it altogether improbable, however amusing; but, as a matter of fact, the variety of nature far exceeds the fertility of human invention, and there is nothing conceivable that does not happen in the course of human affairs. Only last Sunday, for instance, what is called "a painful scene" occurred in the Parish Church of Harborne, Birmingham. The Rev. Mackenzie Jones, the curate, had read a portion of the service, when he suddenly commenced to shout and gesticulate, and continued until he was forcibly removed from the reading-desk. As he continued shouting in the chancel, the service had to be brought to a sudden close by the vicar pronouncing the benediction. The demented curate is now under medical care.

William Smith, who is awaiting trial for the murder of his wife, is likely to join the saints in glory. In a letter wherein he confesses his crime he says: "I conclude with my weak endeavors to repent, and try to get peace with my God—

When my final doom is near,
Jesus, Son of God, hear
That my spirit will be (with) those
I did truly love."

In another letter the saintly William Smith laments: "The awful wrong to his Creator, who saith with wisdom [this testimony to his Creator is very good of William] that 'Vengeance is mine, I will recompense' (xxxiii. Deuteronomy, verse 35; also x. Hebrews, 30 and 31 verses). But by the help and light of the Gospel of Jesus, with deep contrition and true repentance which I by grace may have faith to hope through Jesus Our Blessed Savior, who alone after ourselves canst plead the sinner's redemption to Almighty God, who I must prepare to meet after this life, for his all-wise and just judgment." William is a full believer in the efficacy of the blood, and is prepared to take his seat with the ransomed, and his halo with the elect.

The prosecution of a Benedictine Brother at Brighton has called attention to the fact that there are a large number of Anglican monks under the "Rule of Our Most Holy Father, Saint Benedict." There is a Benedictine Priory on the Isle of Dogs, another at the Chase, Clapham Common, and another near Cheltenham. They are supposed to be Roman decoy ducks to familiarize the Anglican mind with the idea of clerical celibacy.

An enterprising manufacturer of mineral waters has offered £500 a year for the lease of St. Winifred's Well. But it is probably more profitable to the Rev. Father Beauclerc, who pays £400 a year for the privilege of healing pilgrims.

St. Winifred, according to the legend, was a noble British maiden, whose head the Prince Carodog cut off because she repelled his unholy proposals. The head rolled down a hill, and where it stopped the spring gushed forth. The legend

adds that St. Benno replaced the saint's head, and that she survived the miracle fifteen years. And there is the well this day to show the story is true.

Klecksography is the newest French art of trading on foolish credulity. You upset a bottle of ink on a clean sheet of paper, which you then fold and open again. You next send the inky paper to a professor of Klecksography, who will read in it your past and future—in short, tell you all you are dying to know. Of course you must not forget to send "the usual consideration" with the inky paper. Klecksographologists are like other mysterious practitioners: no money, no straight tips.

Mrs. Besant made a pathetic appeal to the Spiritualists on Monday evening at St. James's Hall. She implored them to sink minor differences and join with the Theosophists in opposing their common enemy, Materialism. She seems to have been listened to with respectful attention for the most part, but there were distinct sniggers when she referred to the vestal virgins of old Rome, who lived in an atmosphere of such purity (she said) that no one who ate meat, or drank strong drink, or smoked, was permitted to approach them. As a matter of fact, of course, the vestal virgins had no opportunity of objecting to the smell of tobacco, as smoking was not known to the Romans. It was not known at all in Europe till after the discovery of America.

California has 35,000 Jews. The "chosen people of Jehovah" seem to have found a better land than their God gave them. If Judea was ever flowing with milk and honey, it must have been a long while ago. Stones and fleas are more abundant in the Holy Land now-a-days.

The tender mercies of the Lord have been recently attested by severe earthquakes in Asia Minor, and a blizzard in New England, which has taken many lives as well as causing great damage to property.

The Rev. G. Blenkhorn, vicar of Ulceby, near Barton, has been fined £5 for an assault on Alice Lill, eighteen, a domestic in service at the vicarage. The man of God, in addition to striking her, called her a damned woman and a devil, and his wife used similar language. It was said that he had had a hundred servants within the past seven years.

Dr. Creighton, the Bishop of London, says that the clergy are "the most self-centred, undisciplined, and difficult people I ever came across." What is this but saying that their training unfits them to be worthy citizens?

Henry Greay, an insurance-agent at Portsmouth, ended his life by immersing his head in a bucket of water. His landlady said the deceased worried himself a great deal about religion, of which he seemed to have taken an overdose. The verdict was, Suicide while of unsound mind.

The only trouble about old-age pensions is raising the money—say some twenty millions to meet them. This, it has been computed, could be easily done from the tithes devoted to the Church, and the charities and doles now for the most part maladministered by the clergy. The ancient division of tithes having included a third part for provision for the poor, it would be peculiarly appropriate to see that they were restored to their original purpose.

Actual Fact. Poor Man (at door on wet Sunday morning)—"Please buy a Scripture-text; only a penny." Free-thinking Householder (giving penny)—"I don't believe in Scripture texts." Poor Man—"More don't I; but you have to do something to live on Sunday."

Once upon a time, not long ago, there lived at Acton a certain mercer. He was a stern man, and at eight every morning compelled his poor employees to assemble in the show-room for prayers. This was allowed to go on for some time; but at last one morning an explosion of gas took place, and seven of those who prayed were severely burnt. Can one, after this, doubt the working of an all-wise Providence?

Governments are always invading the people's liberties. Every one of them needs to be watched. Even under the French Republic it appears that letters are systematically opened by the Post Office, which plays the spy for the "authorities." The *Daily Chronicle* says that a certain deputy, who had borrowed a hundred francs from a colleague, returned it in a letter of thanks. Somehow he omitted to enclose the bank-note, and on discovering his error he hastened to his friend and tendered his apologies. His friend said that the bank-note was in the letter all right. Both of them demanded an explanation from the Post Office, and it turned out that the official who opened and read the letter, finding no enclosure, supposed he had lost it, and the "authorities" substituted another.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 13, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.; 7.30, "A Freethinker's View of the Zola Trial."

February 20, Glasgow.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—February 13, Camberwell; 20 and 27, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, W. 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.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Mr. Foote will be happy to pay Newcastle another visit on the old conditions, and as soon as possible he will offer you a date. He cannot do so just at the moment, as certain arrangements are pending. You shall hear from him as soon as they are settled.

INQUIRER (Leeds).—We know nothing of a beginning of the universe, neither does anyone else. The problem of the origin of life is not yet solved. Science has solved many other problems on which the clergy dogmatized, and we are content to wait for its determination of this one. With regard to the Christ of the four Gospels, he is certainly not a perfect character in our judgment. Read Mr. Foote's pamphlets, entitled *What was Christ?* and *Was Jesus Insane?*

WALTER MELTON.—Buckle's *History of Civilization* is still published by Longmans in three vols. at 24s. There is no cheaper edition. You would get a discount of 6s. off the published price.

YOUNG FREETHINKER.—Read the *Crimes of Christianity*, by Messrs. Foote and Wheeler, and as many as you can of the works referred to in their footnotes. Some of them, at any rate, should be found in the nearest Free Library.

R. LARGE.—Clodd's *Story of Evolution, Childhood of the World*, and the other volume on *Religion* could be read with profit by children. Glad to hear you were so pleased with our articles on Tolstoi. Present our compliments to your boy. The sketch bears out all you say.

LUCIANUS wishes it to be known that he is in no way to be identified with "Lucian" writing in another publication.

E. H. DALY.—Jokes are always welcome.

W. SMAILEY.—You would do well to read Mr. Foote's *Philosophy of Secularism* and Mr. Watts's *Secularist Catechism*. Atheism is the deliberate rejection of Theism. Secularism is the practical philosophy of this life, without reference to the unknown future, which we must die to become acquainted with.

MR. HOLYOAKE says of the late T. Curtis: "He was a brave, unchanging advocate of Freethought. I sent him several letters of late which might give him pleasure."

J. A. IFAAC.—Your order and remittance are handed to Mr. Forder, our publisher, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., to whom please send direct in future.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—W. Hardaker, 4s. (p); Ips, 5s. (p).

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—George Anderson, £5 5s.; Huddersfield Collection, 15s.

RAMEGATE.—Will try to find room in our next. Too late for this week.

SCPTIC.—The issues involved in the Dreyfus case are more than personal. Perhaps you would do well to hear Mr. Foote's lecture at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Questions or opposition will be allowed as usual.

J. PULFORD.—Mill's *Dissertations* has long been out of print. A volume of his *Early Essays* has recently been included in Bohn's Library (Bell and Sons), price 3s. 6d.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Portsmouth Evening News—Dawn of Day—L'Étoile Socialiste—De Dageraad—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Progressive Thinker—Sydney Bulletin—Boston Investigator—Cincinnati Free Opinion—Torch of Reason—Herts Leader—Lincoln News—Secular Thought—Tiverton Gazette—Mind—Manchester Evening Chronicle—Weekly Scotsman—Newcastle Daily Leader—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—Vegetarian Messenger—Huddersfield Examiner.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

ANOTHER fine audience assembled at the Athenæum Hall last Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Mr. Stead, his Ghosts, and his 'Julia.'" It was a pity that Mr. Stead was not present to witness the merriment caused at his expense. No doubt he would have found the position trying, but it might have done him good (in the long run) to know how his ghostology strikes people with a fair sense of humor. Very shortly we shall bring Mr. Stead's nonsense—which is important only because it is typical—to the notice of the wider circle of readers of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Foote occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (February 13th). His subject will be "A Freethinker's View of the Zola Trial." This is a topic of immediate interest, and Freethinkers would do well to bring as many as possible of their orthodox friends to the lecture.

This evening, Sunday, February 13, Mr. Charles Watts will deliver his new lecture, "The Decline of Paganism and the Dawn of Christianity," in the Secular Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell. Christians should be present to hear their faith compared with that of Paganism.

Mr. J. G. Bartram, 117 Morley-street, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, desires us to notify that efforts are being made to revive the North-Eastern Secular Federation, which did excellent work some years ago. A second meeting of delegates from N. S. S. local Branches has been held, the old rules have been revised, and another meeting is fixed for Saturday, February 29, at 6.30, at Mr. Foreman's, 1 Grainger-street, Newcastle. Mr. Bartram is acting as secretary *pro tem.*, and will be pleased to hear from anyone desiring to assist financially, or from Branches willing to affiliate.

The *Blyth Scribe* has long, but rather slap-dash, reports of Mr. Ward's recent lectures in the Blyth Assembly Rooms.

Mr. Ward is lecturing this Sunday at Hull, which, if not his native place, is near his and was the scene of his labors when a Wesleyan.

Another ex-Methodist preacher is lecturing this week before the Newcastle Society on "The Christian God an Impossibility."

A tea and social evening, in celebration of Darwin's birthday, is held this Sunday at the Bradlaugh Club. Tea at six o'clock. There will be some speeches, and the Dramatic Class will perform *Delicate Ground* during the evening.

The N. S. S. East London Branch sends us its annual balance-sheet, which is, on the whole, a healthy document. We are glad to see that 140 lectures have been delivered under the auspices of this Branch during the year; and as all this work has been done in a poor neighborhood, and on slender resources, we think it is highly creditable to all concerned. Mr. G. J. Warren is re-elected as secretary and treasurer, being an indispensable man, and Mr. Loافر as delegate to the Executive.

An article in the current *Westminster Review* on "Science as a Moral Guide," by Miss H. E. Harvey, contends that science affords more satisfactory rules for conduct than Christianity.

According to a character sketch of Dr. Leyds in the *Hollandsche Revue*, of Haarlem, this somewhat famous gentleman had a confession to make when he was appointed State Attorney of the South African Republic. "President," he said to old Kruger, "I have something else to tell you. I am afraid it may grieve you, and I do not know if it is not an obstacle to one's filling the position—I believe in no God." Old Kruger was silent for a considerable time, blowing clouds of smoke from his mouth; but at last, looking at Dr. Leyds, he said: "Young man, what I have heard grieves me. It hurts me, and I blame you most. But if you do your duty faithfully and trustworthily as an honorable man, that need be no objection." Shrewd old Kruger! God or no God, he wasn't going to lose the best man for the post.

The Glasgow *Saturday Weekly Citizen*, in a paper on "Fin de Siècle Fanaticism," says: "One of the most vivid recollections of the President of the National Secular Society is a year's imprisonment for the crime of blasphemy. The stormy career of Charles Bradlaugh is still fresh in the memories of many people, and the conditions which made his life one long fight for a fair hearing still exist in almost undiminished perfection."

LECTURING NOTES.

WE frequently hear from professed Christians that Secularism is declining. I have seen nothing to justify such an allegation during my fortnight's tour, which has just concluded, in the Midland districts. On the contrary, I have not known in the nearly forty years of my public life more Secular activity manifested than is being shown at the present time. It should not be overlooked that, although the National Secular Society is still carrying on a vigorous and an increased propaganda, its members do not confine their efforts to that organization. In the Sunday Society, and in the Ethical and Socialistic movements, are to be found numerous avowed Secularists and Freethinkers. True, the method of advocacy adopted may not be the same in each case, but all are opposed to the orthodox Christianity of the day, and each seeks to elevate the community and to improve society by purely secular agencies. Theology, with its spurious remedies, has no place in the organized work of either of the associations mentioned. They all ignore the creeds and worn-out doctrines of the Churches. The mundane reformers of the present time have discovered that Dr. Charles A. Briggs was right when he stated, in a recent issue of the *Forum*: "The Church has lost the confidence of the people in its ability to teach them the truth.....Theology no longer reigns; she has not kept pace with the progress of knowledge. She has pursued her own independent way. She has waged war with science and philosophy, and has been defeated in so many battles that science and philosophy have gone on before her and left her in the rear."

Secularism appears to me to have permeated all the advanced movements of our time, so that its triumphs are by no means limited to the N. S. S.; and herein lies the potency of our principles. They are so catholic in their nature, and so useful in their influence, that they are welcomed by all whose object is to improve the material condition of mankind. Even the Christian societies have discovered that to be successful they must not depend alone upon what are termed "spiritual agencies." They have been driven by the secular spirit of the age to alter the nature and style of their preaching, and to rely more upon the attractions of singing, music, and the cultivation of the social element, rather than upon an exposition of the "pure and simple gospel" and the efficacy of the "blood of the Lamb." The endeavor to improve the body, instead of considering the welfare of the soul, seems to me to be the action of the majority of the Christian community. Outside of the Church we hear less than ever of the Christ of the New Testament, and see but little of any attempts to regulate daily conduct by his impracticable teachings. It is the lessons of science, the force of education, and the power of philosophy that now dominate human action. And these are all secular factors, and the persistent manner in which they are recognised and acted upon is a striking indication of the marked advancement of Freethought principles.

I write thus because, in my recent lecturing and debating, the changed mode of defending the Christian faith was so palpable. Not at one of my eight lectures in Birmingham and Derby did I have any opposition from orthodox Christians. Many professed believers were present, but they all maintained silence. Even in my two nights' debate with the Rev. A. J. Waldron no defence was attempted of the distinctive features of Christ's teachings. The heaven, hell, devil, and future punishment, as taught in the New Testament, were all given up by my opponent, while he candidly admitted that the book did not teach science, nor did it contain any system of education. Further, he granted that Christ was imperfect, limited in knowledge, and subject to human weaknesses; also that the Bible is not infallible. Now, in the face of these admissions, what becomes of the boast that Christ was divine and the "Light of the world"? The fact is, the advocacy of Christianity is one of the intellectual frauds of the age, and the more its pretensions are exposed, the greater service will thereby be rendered to the cause of truth. Orthodox citadels, once regarded as being invulnerable, are now found unable to withstand the attacks of Freethought exponents.

I was exceedingly pleased at the success of my four lectures in Birmingham. The audiences were by far the largest I have had in that town for years. It was gratify-

ing to see so many ladies present. The local Branch deserves great credit for the energy its members show in the interest of the good old cause. The sale of literature there has been of late unusually large, with the result that strangers are to be seen at the meetings every week. This is encouraging, inasmuch as it denotes that the Secular platform has a powerful ally in the Freethought press.

The gatherings were not so large at Derby, where I lectured under the N. S. S. Treasurer's Scheme. The Branch in Derby is composed of men and women who are really hard workers. Unfortunately, however, they have to cope with so many difficulties. The local press entirely ignores them, and one paper will not even receive a paid advertisement of their lectures. Every hall in the town is denied them for Sunday meetings, and efforts are being made by the Christians to prevent the Branch having in future the Co-operative Hall (where I lectured) on week-nights. Such are Christian bigotry and injustice. Still, our friends are not going to submit quietly. Much progress has been made in Derby since the time when the late Mrs. Harriet Law was the victim of an infuriated Christian mob, and if the Secularists there continue their present earnest work, further advancement will be won ere long. At my four lectures last week not the slightest disorder took place. Much interest was shown in the treatment of my subjects, and the hearty and repeated applause which was given afforded a proof of appreciation.

Last Sunday I lectured three times in Sheffield. The weather was terrible; wind, snow, sleet, and rain prevailed the whole of the day. This, of course, interfered with my audiences. Still, we had a good meeting at night, and all who attended throughout the day gave demonstrative evidence of their approval of the lectures. Our Sheffield friends will pardon me for suggesting that they should secure the co-operation, in managing their propaganda, of the younger members of their Society. The principal work now appears to devolve upon one man, Mr. W. Nelson, who has given more than fifty years' hard work to our cause. The experience of the elder members of the Society, allied with the activity of the younger, would be productive of great advantage, and doubtless add to the progress of the movement in Sheffield.

CHARLES WATTS.

"RELIGION," "SIN," "SOUL"—THEOLOGICAL TERMS.

THERE are some words which have crept into our language in connection with ecclesiasticism which, in these days of scientific knowledge, ought to be banished from the vocabulary of all lovers of liberty and freedom of thought. "Religion" is one of these. It is a word coined by ecclesiasticism, suggesting, as it was no doubt originally intended to suggest—for it was in accordance with the knowledge and teaching of the day—*binding, fettering, and blind obedience*. As lovers of freedom we know nothing of fetters or obedience in sociological ethics, and as lovers of science we know nothing of the *unknowable*, which "religion" deals with so extensively. "Religion" and "sociology" are distinct from each other. The moral duty owed to sociology is, therefore, distinct from the moral duty owed to religion; the one is a duty to our fellow men, the other is a duty to an imaginary supernatural (extra-cosmic), not *being*, but *person*, possessing all the malevolent attributes of man.

In carrying out our duty in social life, then, we are not religious, for we are bound down, as free agents, to no despotic commands from an invisible world. Nor are we religious when we offer the only worship we are capable of offering—*i.e.*, devotion to science. Then when are we religious? Never. Therefore religion is nothing to us. It is the child of clericalism and spurious respectability, and bears the mark of theology and coercion upon it. It is descriptive of a mode of conduct strictly and solely "*divine, supernatural, and superhuman*."

Then, again, we commonly see in songs for the children of Freethinkers such words as *sin* and *soul*; they may be useful for purposes of rhyming, but these relics of theological thought and conception are liable, when perpetuated, to produce wrong impressions in the minds of the young. Can we disconnect the word *sin* from theology, duty to "divine" law, and ecclesiastical ordinances? Can we

separate the word *soul* from ideas of "future life," "eternal life," "heaven," and "hell"?

Sin is a breach of *divine* as distinguished from any other law. *Guilt* and *fault* are breaches of the moral (private) law. *Crime* and *misdeemeanor* are breaches of the common (public) law. The first is based on supposed commands emanating directly from a supernatural person, divinity, or deity, through the channel of ecclesiasticism; and whatever assistance to morality any portion of this code may offer may be considered secondary and accidental. Its primary object is to please and give "glory" and adulation to the deity. The second or social law has morals for its primary object, and has, as its basis, the welfare of our fellow-men. To commit a breach of this law is to be guilty of a fault. Sin does not enter the question anywhere outside theology. *Guilt* and *fault*, then, are words that we may use, instead of *sin*.

Soul is an imaginary spirit or second-self, the product of a conception concerning shadows, dreams, echoes, swoons, etc., in connection with the breath of life. It may be usefully replaced by the words—*mind*, *breath*, *life*, and *being*; also plural—*ones*.

In the following verses and parts of songs (from *Songs of Love and Duty*, by G. Spiller) substituted words are suggested for the originals:—

So our little errors
Lead the *soul* (*us each*) away
From the paths of virtue
Into *sin* (*guilt*) to stray.

Falsehood all the *soul* (*our being*) degrades,
'Tis a *sin* (*fault*) from which proceeds
Greater *sin* (*guilt*) and darker deeds,
Always speak the truth.

Then let our winged ideal
In us become the real.
Uplift the *soul* (*mind*)—
Endow the heart with vigor,
The conscience lax with rigor,
Till, grown to nobler figure,
We reach (*love*) our goal (*kind*).

Our hearts we must surrender
To feelings deep and tender,
To scorn of *sin* (*crime*);
And leaving hate behind us,
And selfless love to find us,
And nothing false to blind us,
Our cause shall win.
(*We live our time.*)

Ring in the valiant man, and free
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the *Christ* (*good*) that is to be.

May duty be my guide to-day,
May love and truth illumine the way;
May nothing warp or stain the *soul*,
(*May nothing stain the word or act*)
May noble aims the will control (*subject*).

Our homely wants—our food, our dress—
With ease are satisfied;
'Tis ours the cup of happiness
To eager *souls* (*ones*) denied.

W. W. HARDWICKE M.D.

Genesis.

In the beginning man created the devils and the gods.
And his imaginations were without form and void, and darkness was on the face of his thoughts, and the spirit of fanaticism moved on the face of society.

And the priest said, Let there be delusion; and there was delusion.

And the priest called the darkness day, while light he called night.

And the priest said, Let there be strife in the midst of the people, and let it divide them sect from sect. And it was so.

And the priest said, Let superstition and slavery bring forth vices after their kind, yielding seed after its kind.

And the priest saw that it was good for him.

And the priest set two great darks—the priestcraft dark to rule the mind, and the kingcraft dark to rule the body. He made their flunkies and parasites also.

And the priest made the persecutor after his kind, and the hypocrite after his kind, and all the creeping things that crawl upon the earth after their kind.

CHRISTIAN INTOLERANCE.

THE great crime of Christianity which cannot be pardoned has been its savage intolerance. The yoke of blood which the religion of Jesus has pressed on the *elite* of humanity, without being directly prescribed in the Gospels, exists there in germ in those verses where the Christian Messiah proclaims that he has come to make division, to separate the child from his father, the daughter from her mother, and that he brings not peace, but a sword. Such precepts once put forward, fanatics drew from them practical consequences. From the time when it ceased to be persecuted, Christianity became a violent persecutor. Theodosius prohibited all other worships. The spirit of St. Cyril, hounding down Hypatia with the populace of Alexandria, has been, since the beginning, the spirit of the Church. For a thousand years, to think was a crime, and the Inquisition but marked the last term of the clerical fury. In the name of a religion of peace and love they imprisoned, tortured, and burnt. Under the single reign of Charles V., according to Grotius, five thousand heretics were exterminated in the Netherlands by the hands of the executioner. Llorento, on a moderate calculation, put at the figure of 341,021 the number of wretches rigorously punished or burnt, either really or in effigy, by the most Holy Inquisition in Spain. The same writer estimates that five hundred thousand families were thus destroyed.

—C. Letourneau, "L'Evolution Religieuse," p. 556.

Two Souls.

Two souls before the Great Tribunal stood,
And both, in different ways, were passing good.

One Soul had in a parson's body dwelt,
The other in a form that ne'er had knelt.

The Parson's Soul began aloud to cry:
"On prayer, not works, O Lord, I did rely!"

For well I knew that works, however good,
Were snares to lure from Thy Beatitude.

This other, here—whereof I make complaint—
Put faith in works, and is a self-made saint."

Then said the Lord: "O, vapor of a clod!—
I, thy Creator, am a self-made God!"

"Ho, Satan!" Satan came—his smile was grim—
"Canst thou find any use, or place, for him?"

The Fiend replied reproachfully: "Alas!
Lord, dost thou think I can run Hell on gas?"

—*Sydney Bulletin*.

Obituary.

THE saddest duty that has ever fallen to my lot is that which I now carry out in recording the death of my brother, Leonard Norman Clifton, for several years the secretary of the Wolverhampton Branch. Born July 10, 1864, his little course was run, and his life's record closed, on Wednesday week, the 2nd instant. Although so young, he had seen much of the world, having emigrated to Toronto, Canada, when he was eighteen years old. His hopes were shattered by disease, and he returned a mere shadow of his former self. Nothing daunted, he struck out again on life's highway, and, starting in a lowly position, by his earnestness and thoroughness he won for himself a position of great trust, and everything again looked bright, when disease once more stepped in, and he was struck down with that dreaded fever, typhoid, lying 'twixt life and death for thirteen weeks. This was in last summer. It left his constitution a wreck. As the November fogs came they brought for him his death-shroud—consumption set in and did its awful work. He took to his bed a few weeks before Christmas, and never rose again. While he lay ill his only anxiety was for the dear ones he was to leave behind, for he felt that his recovery was hopeless. Notwithstanding this reflection, he was as cheerful as though he were soon to be up again and taking his part in the battle of life. He spoke of his death and of his wishes for a Secular funeral; and so calm and pleasant was his manner that it inspired everyone who came into his presence with courage to bear up bravely, as he did, and prepare to meet the inevitable, which he felt was so soon to take place. The funeral took place at the Wolverhampton Cemetery on Sunday last. There was a large gathering of friends. Mr. Forder delivered an address at the graveside, which was listened to with rapt attention, and created a very solemn impression. Farewell, dear brother; and may I, when my turn comes to deliver up my little house of clay to Mother Nature, of which it is a part and whence it came, pass through Death's gateway as bravely as thou.—HENRY R. CLIFTON.

BOOK CHAT.

MR. ABEL ANDREW, who writes *The Bible of the Future, or Evolution*, appears to be a person who has travelled over the world considerably, and who has returned essentially a Buddhist. He is a strong vegetarian, and believes that man, having evolved from the stone into the plant, and thence into the animal, is on the fair road to be a son of God and co-heir of Christ. God, he says, is the sum of creation. "To speak without intentional irreverence, there is a bit of him in every stone we tread upon." Mr. Andrew says "He that believeth not shall be damned" is the interpolation of hate, and the same is said of "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins." "Salvation by blood is redolent of magic. It is part of the stale leaving of the magicians." The coming man will sweep his brain clear of fear, and his heart of cant.

* * *

Here is an extract on "The Evolution of Hell": "When we were children hell was hell. The sermon in those days was of the good old brimstone type. When we became men hell had considerably cooled down. The real fire now became mental fire. Now we are growing old hell is called 'sheol.' It sounds better. If we go on like this, the Torrid Zone will soon become the Temperate Zone. Hell is not changed; it is we that are changed. The inhuman are becoming human. When the fire of Love in the human heart burns hot and high, then will the fires of hell die out."

* * *

A *Course of Sermons on the Important Query, Should England be Roman Catholic?* preached by the Rev. Dr. Gastaldi (G. H. Green, 3 Accacia-grove, West Kirby), shows considerable controversial skill, but is altogether overstrained in its partisanship. To make out that the Protestants put to death under Mary were "traitors," while those put to death under Henry VIII. and Elizabeth were martyrs, will never commend itself to fair-minded Englishmen. The truth is that politics, religion, and plunder were all mixed in the events of the Reformation. Dr. Gastaldi concludes his sermons with the well-known rhetorical quotation from Macaulay's essay on Ranke's *Lives of the Popes*, on the permanence of Catholicism. It is strange that the name of Macaulay should be misspelt (p. 29); but we suppose this is a misprint.

* * *

The article on Shelley, in the fifty-second volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, is written by Dr. Garnett, and, of course, contains the most complete and accurate information that could be condensed within the compass of sixteen columns. Dr. Garnett says: "After many vicissitudes, opinion seems to be agreeing to recognise Shelley as the supreme lyrical, all of whose poems, whatever their outward form, should be viewed from the lyrical standpoint." Of his prose he says: "His essays and correspondence are not more distinguished by fine insight into high matters than by sound common sense in ordinary things." We are pleased to notice that Mr. F. G. Ellis's gigantic *Lexical Concordance* to the poet's works is mentioned as "the most practical homage to his genius."

* * *

Mr. Sidney Lee, in the *Fortnightly Review*, gives the quietus to the view of Mr. Tyler, too hastily adopted by Mr. W. Archer, that the Sonnets of Shakespeare were addressed to Pembroke. Mr. Lee concludes: "It is, I believe, to Southampton that Shakespeare addressed such of the sonnets as can be positively credited with a genuinely autobiographic significance." Mr. Gerald Massey, Mr. J. G. Fleay, and others, support this view.

* * *

The Rev. Frederick George Lec, D.D., who has the distinction of being a Roman Catholic bishop while in receipt of £300 a year as vicar of All Saints', Lambeth, wrote in 1869 *The Validity of the Holy Orders of the Church of England Maintained and Vindicated*. Since then he has changed his views, while keeping in the Church, and is said to have ordained eight hundred Anglican clergymen under Roman Orders. He has written many Romanizing works, such as *The Sinless Conception of the Mother of God*, and *The Church under Queen Elizabeth*.

* * *

The *New Century Review* opens with a proposal to call the Queen "Victoria the Great." There is a good account of "The Literary Life in Edinburgh"; a powerful story, "His Cipher-Note"; a monograph on Ibsen, an historical sketch of "The Hungry Hohenzollerns," and an appreciative account of "The Poetry of William James Linton." "The Trail of the Bookworm" is well done.

* * *

Those who know and admire Mr. Eugene Lee-Hamilton's poetic works will be interested to know that Mr. Grant Richards is about to publish a verse translation of Dante's *Inferno* by this gifted but unfortunate poet. It is stated

that Mr. Lee-Hamilton's object has been to secure a comparatively satisfactory line-for-line translation.

* * *

The joint translation, by Mr. William Archer and Miss Diana White, of Dr. Brandes' Shakespearean studies is to be published in two volumes during the coming season.

* * *

Parson (entering library)—"Have you *Moths*—by Ouida, I think it is? My daughters are earnest students of entomology, and would dearly prize such a work."

* * *

W. W. Strickland, B.A., the author of *Epicurean Essays in Prose and Criticism* (R. Forder; 3s. 6d.), is a writer whose originality is not cramped by any fear of criticism. He lives abroad, and can afford to laugh at what the orthodox and conventional may say of him. He has considerable power of satire, original thought, and musical expression. The folklorist should be thankful for an admirable *précis* of the Finnish epic, the Kalevala. He has himself a Freethinking story of the king who was condemned to see flat, and there is an amusing skit on "How the Man-Ape Lost his Great Coat." "Cannibal Island" is also a satire in the form of a fairy story. "A Strike in the Top Storey" is an account of the angels going on strike. "Three Fallacies" deals with "the rhetorical fallacy that the religion of Christ has transformed the world," the metaphorical uses of the words "high" and "low," and "some reasons for doubting the supposed evidence of men of genius in favor of religion." Among his conclusions are that Christians greatly overrate the importance of their religion in the history of the human race; that their notions of heaven and hell are founded on an illusion and ignorance of the true constitution of the universe; and that the supposed evidence of eminent Christians is invalidated by the fact that the cruelty and bigotry of the Christian societies, into which they were born, compelled the acceptance of Christ as the condition of their being allowed to live and work. An essay on "The Possible Application of Modern Mechanical Discovery to the Propagation and Maintenance of Religion" is a satirical proposal to utilize the phonograph, photography, etc., in the service of religion.

* * *

More suitable for general perusal is *Christendom: Two Essays*, by W. W. Strickland, B.A. (R. Forder; 2d.). The first essay is on Protestant Blasphemy, in which he urges that Protestants who pretend to build on reason must know that their creeds and dogmas are a colossal lie. The second essay is on Popery and the Stock Exchange. Mr. Strickland notices that the mean interest paid by Popish countries is £6 1s. 6d., while the mean interest paid by Protestant countries is £3 3s. 7d.—that is, the security, credit, and honesty of Popish countries are so inferior to Protestant ones that Popedom is compelled to pay nearly twice as much interest for money lent as Protestantism does. Moreover, the mean value of Popish Government stock is some seventeen points below par, that of Protestantism nearly seven points above; and, while the mean fluctuation of Catholic funds is 6.6, that of Protestantism is only 2.7. In other words, the stability of Protestant national organization is between two and three times as great as that of Popery. Further, Mr. Strickland gives figures to show that in England Popery yields about 750 criminals per 100,000 Papists, 500 to the same number of Anglicans, 270 to Non-conformists, and 30 or 40 to Atheists. The pamphlet has many other good points, and deserves to be widely circulated.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. BANNIN AND SECULARISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is gratifying to find that the warmth of priestly replies to Freethinkers is now-a-days confined to language, and has nothing to do with faggots. Mental freedom is being gradually wrested from the modern representatives of the sacerdotal maimers and murderers of the Dark Ages.

I am pleased to learn that it is the duty of the Catholic priest to be "fair" to Freethinkers. I was under the impression that his duty is (if not restrained by the secular arm) to extirpate heretics at any cost, "not sparing the knife."

I agree with your correspondent that it is a pity Mr. Wheeler cannot implant the doctrines of Secularism "in the minds of the hundreds of suicides in this country." Let me tell him why. A successful propaganda needs plenty of funds. Our funds are impudently stolen by our Christian oppressors. I will forgive Mr. Bannin the taunt, however, if he will promise to endeavor to obtain for us down-trodden Secularists the right to possess our own property, left to us by our deceased friends for propagandist purposes. Suicides, by the way, almost without exception, "following the freedom of their own [Christian] thoughts, and hoping

or a better home," seek "a higher and spiritual home which they call heaven."

The "Father's" charitable efforts are highly creditable to him as an individual (*i.e.*, as a Secularist); but, as a Christian, he deserves no credit whatever. He is simply investing in the heavenly funds, expecting, by and by, to draw a handsome annuity.

Almsgiving is a temporary expedient. As things are, we must often relieve in this way. Secularism and common sense would have struck at the root of the evil, and extinguished poverty long ago. The Church would prefer to go on plastering the sore for ever. By not proceeding in a rational way, she "does keep the people in rags," and "is the cause of their poverty."

The "history of the matrimonial contract" is purity itself compared with "the history of sacerdotal celibacy," the accuracy of which Mr. Bannin does not dispute. He rails against the "matrimonial contract." Does this mean he would like to see it abolished?

I cannot understand a person having a special "vocation" for celibacy. Most people who fancy they have, when suddenly confronted with temptation find they are only human after all ("accidental defects"—"natural effects").

Most sermons on "the body" do "stigmatize its most sacred function." The text, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," definitely excludes worldly pleasures of all kinds. Catholic priests, it is true, exhort their flocks to increase and multiply; but simply to augment their power by numerical preponderance.

I fancy no confessor would care to see printed for public perusal the questions he asks penitents. Any of the latter experiencing difficulty in unbosoming themselves must appeal for help to their "spiritual superior." Can this person elicit particulars without "inquiry into detail or circumstance"?

If your correspondent gibes at God for making man prolific, and shakes his head at the divinely-instituted estate of matrimony; if he alludes to Satan as "the old gentleman," and retorts when smitten instead of turning the other cheek, I am afraid he will dwell below under any circumstances.

EX-RITUALIST.

FREEWILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It would, I think, be very discourteous to Mr. Watts, whose great ability and experience of Freethought are thoroughly recognised by myself and my friends, if, after declining to discuss freewill farther with him, I were to write at all fully in reply to Mr. Octavius Drewell's letter in the *Freethinker* of January 30.

I must, therefore, beg that gentleman to pardon me for an extremely brief rejoinder to his criticisms on my two letters, and Mr. Watts to pardon me for even doing that. (1) I do not in the least allow that the Bible teaches predestination in the sense in which Mr. Drewell interprets its teaching. The Bible throughout declares God's sovereignty and foreknowledge, and, within limits, man's responsibility. These may appear antinomies, but, as Professor Huxley said so clearly, *science* teaches antinomies also. (2) If, as I hold, God honors man with the gift of freewill, God cannot, without denying Himself, override it. (3) I do not hold that unbelief, which is not due to special sin in the unbelieving individual, will ruin *him*; but I think all unbelief in what is true and good is a great misfortune. (4) Whenever, by "special creation," evolution, or any other way, man became responsible, then for the first time was it possible for there to be a moral fall in the race, and very natural would it be for such a fall to take place very early in the beginning of responsibility; and very natural, also, that God should provide an atonement for *such* a fall. (5) I think heredity and environment influence us all very greatly. (6) Cannot God be as considerate for congenital drunkards as Mr. Drewell? If they really cannot in any way fight against their inherited proclivities, I hold, as the very basis of my Christian belief, that "the judge of all the earth" will "do right," and that they can be left quite safely to His justice and mercy.

C. LLOYD ENGSTRÖM.

THE NEW TESTAMENT PROBLEM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The articles of "Abracadabra" have, I expect, convinced your readers that the Gospels are not merely unhistorical and legendary, but deliberate concoctions and fabrications. I, at any rate, am of that opinion. It remains to decide when and where they were originated, and these are questions to which I would like "Abracadabra" to address himself. The errors as to Jewish geography and customs may convince us that Palestine was not the place of their birth. Was it, then, in Egypt or Italy? For the former there is this to be said—that the Greek of the Gospels is very similar to that found in the recent MSS. recovered from Egypt. I am, however, desirous that the claims of Italy, whether Rome or Monte Cassino, should not be overlooked.

It is singular that such important names as Petrus, Paulus, Marcus, and Lucius should be Latin. I confess, too, I have speculated as to whether the Petrus of the Catacombs was originally the same as the Simon Kephias of Judea. Then we must not forget the occurrence of such words as "legion," "centurion," "speculator," "fragello," and the many other indications of Latin, originally called attention to by the Rev. J. Black in his *Palæo-Romaica*. "Abracadabra" may claim to have smashed the orthodox theory to smithereens. But if he proposes to build up another one of his own, there is a wide field before him. I should be glad to have his views on these points.

ABRAXAS.

THE CULT OF BRUTALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—"We have let brutality die out too much" is the despairing cry of *Blackwood's Magazine* (January number) in an anonymous tirade against "The New Humanitarianism." All who want a hearty laugh should read this comical attempt to rehabilitate the rank old savagery of our forefathers, who "burned and marooned and beheaded and shot and fought cocks," as *Blackwood* admirably expresses it. Indeed, it would be well if the article could be studied by all thinking people, that they might see how thoroughly brainless is this modern cult of Brutality.

The first thing that strikes one is the absurdity of the "conviction" which *Blackwood* is good enough to foist on the New Humanitarianism—that "death and pain are the worst of evils, their elimination the most desirable of goods." Humanitarians do not say that death and pain are the *worst* of evils. They do not absolutely condemn the infliction of death or pain; what they denounce is the infliction of death or pain *unnecessarily*. Yet this vital distinction between necessary and unnecessary suffering is entirely ignored by *Blackwood*, except in one sentence, where the necessity of the pain caused by an imperialist policy is incidentally asserted.

Secondly, there is the assertion that Humanitarianism is a mere *negative* creed, "all *antis* and no *pros*, all for *forbidding* and no *permitting*, for *undoing* and no *doing*." No conception of our principles could be more absurdly false. "Humanitarianism is not the cult of pleasure," says *Blackwood*; "that its votaries would be the first to disclaim." On the contrary, I claim emphatically that it *is* the cult of pleasure, but the pleasure of a civilized and humanized being, not of a tiger or a swine. It is precisely because we find the world so beautiful, and life so rich, that we oppose to the uttermost the vandals who would turn a fair garden into a slaughter-house and a hell. "We must not hurt stags," says the advocate of the Old Brutality; "we must not whip criminals; but what may we do?" Life is a blank to this aspiring gentleman if he is not permitted to torture and to slay. But, after all, it is not in the present age only that restrictions have been imposed on cruelty. Even our less humane ancestors brought some of their pastimes to an end. Does the writer regret that he cannot still burn heretics, duck witches, bait bears, and kidnap negroes for slaves?

As the editor of *Blackwood* declines to insert a reply to this article, which so grotesquely misrepresents the principles of Humanitarianism, I ask your courtesy for the insertion of this letter.

H. S. SALT,

Hon. Sec., Humanitarian League.

PROFANE JOKES.

A LONG-SUFFERING listener, after hearing from a youth his account of how he and two companions kept five hundred Indians at bay for twenty-four hours, asked: "Do you know why the Lord said to Ananias, 'Stand forth'?" Upon receiving a negative reply, he continued: "Well, I don't either, unless it was so that you and your two companions could stand first, second, and third."

An old Yorkshire woman being much distressed at the sudden loss of her only son, the Dissenting minister assured her consolingly, "He is now with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." "That's the worst of it," she sobbed. "And he always was so shy among strangers."

Curate (new to the district)—"My poor child, is it possible that your parents can be so depraved as to send a little boy like you for beer?" The Poor Child—"Parients? This ain't for no parients. It's for meself!"

It used to be the duty of the parson to keep a bull for the use of the parish. A recent legal decision has been given that this duty cannot now be enforced. There is, however, a London parson who can supply any amount of bulls. He recently preached against the enormity of sleeping in church, which he said was one of those sins people commit with their eyes open.

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 (78 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "A Freethinker's View of the Zola Trial."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): Charles Darwin's Birthday. Tea at 6; 7.30, Speeches; 8.30, Dramatic performance.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, A. lecture; 7.30, C. Watts, "The Decline of Paganism and the Dawn of Christianity."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road, E.): 8, J. F. Haines, "In whose Interests are the Asylums Board Hospitals Maintained?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 11.15, Discussion, "The Action of Environment," opened by J. G. Dobson; 7, Stanton Coit, "Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar.'"

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Stanton Coit, "Shakespeare."

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

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): C. Cohen—11, "The Meaning of Atheism"; 3, "The Origin of Man"; 7, "What is the Use of Religion?" Feb. 14, 8, C. Cohen, "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?"

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, A. Guest, "Faith made Easy."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class, Mr. Milne—Essay, "In Defence of Christianity"; 6.30, P. McGivern, "The Rise of Christianity."

HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): H. P. Ward—2.30, "The 'New' Woman and the 'Old' Man"; 7, "What will you Give us in Place of Christianity? A Secularist Answer."

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Concert, vocal and instrumental, by Mr. Lowe and party. Collection in aid of the Infirmary.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A. Jennings, "Socialism."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, E. Evans, "Science and Modern Civilization."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Byker Social Club, corner of Raby-street and Parker-street): 7, An ex-Methodist Preacher, "The Christian God an Impossibility."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Lantern exhibition of Circular Tour in Ireland, including a number of typical Photos of Irish Peasantry.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, R. Chapman, "An Introduction to Christianity."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—February 13 and 14, Birmingham; 20 and 27, Liverpool. March 6, Liverpool.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Orelon-road, London, S.E.—February 20, King's Hall, Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 6 Wawne Grove, Alexandra-road, Hull.—February 13, Hull; 20, Manchester; 21 and 23, Blackburn; 27, Manchester. March 1, Huddersfield; 6 to 11, Mission at Derby; 13, Birmingham; 20 and 21, 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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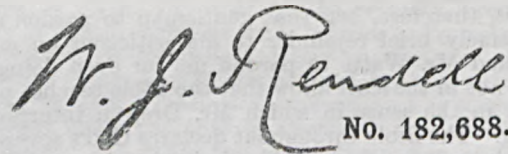
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