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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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MR. STEAD'S "JULIA."

(Concluded from page 162.)

MR. STEAD himself supplies us with a very good reason for rejecting the extra-Stead authorship of his particular batch of messages from "over there." According to Julia's communications, the spirits of the dead have a wonderful control over matter. They wield a power which we only possess in dreams. Their thoughts and wishes are creative. They will things into existence without the aid of any other agency. Naturally they are naked, just as we are; but they share our taste for clothes, though they are not obliged to purchase them with hard-earned cash. A gentleman spirit thinks of a frock coat and a top hat, and lo they are on him! A lady spirit thinks of a fine sealskin cloak and a ravishing bonnet, and both are "on" without even the trouble of adjustment—which some ladies, unless they alter very much in the spirit-world, will find rather disappointing. Both sexes wear wings, but not habitually, as they do not fly with them, their movement through space being effected by a mysterious process of "thought transference." When they fancy wings they grow them instantaneously. This is extremely romantic, yet we do not presume to deny it. For all we know, it may be true. We have absolutely no information on the subject. But if it is true, the question spontaneously arises, Why should Julia worry about Mr. Stead's hand, and have recourse to the roundabout expedient of automatic writing, when she could more easily produce her letters by the simple exercise of her volition? If she could will clothes and will wings, she could also will letters. This was recognised by Madame Blavatsky, who was far cleverer than Mr. Stead. She abolished all intermediate machinery, and exhibited the Mahatma letters direct from the hands (or wills) of those supernatural personages.

It seems to us that Mr. Stead would be the better occultist for some of the Blavatsky's audacity. He has what she had not—his misgivings and his little apologies. Every now and then Julia falls into very obvious Steadese. Mr. Stead has been to America, and Julia talks of New York and Chicago. She shares Mr. Stead's views of the importance of the Queen's Jubilee. She talks of Dime Museums and penny-in-the-slot machines. Mr. Stead was unable to conceal himself, and he feels it. Julia therefore expresses a preference for words and illustrations with which he is familiar. "What I want you to say," she writes, "I make you feel in the readiest way possible, always using your own language and your own ideas, as I use your own pen and your own handwriting." This is a clever explanation in its way, only it is not clever enough. Mr. Stead forgot that his writing was "automatic," that his "feeling" had no share in the transaction, and that he "watched" Julia's use of his hand "with keen and sceptical interest." According to the theory, his personality was in complete detachment from the writing; according to the apology, the writing was tampered, if not governed, by his own idiosyncrasies.

This apologetic vein in Julia's letters is calculated to beget suspicions of Mr. Stead's sincerity. A person bursting with news does not pause in his narrative to explain why he keeps something back, or to give reasons why you should believe what he discloses. Julia, however, after seventy-six pages of tidings from the spirit world, appears

to realize the paucity of her revelations. She has communicated nothing with which the world was not already familiar. Her messages from the "borderland" are extremely like foreign correspondence written in Fleet-street. She therefore thinks it necessary to utter a warning against scepticism on the one side, and rash expectations on the other. "Our chief difficulty," she says, "in framing our message is the fact that we have nothing to say that has not been anticipated, more or less, by one or other of those messengers who have taught men the way to God." But is it not strange that Julia should have nothing new to tell, seeing that she was not speaking in the bodily life through "inspiration," but in the spirit life from personal knowledge? This is quite intelligible, however, if the voice is really Mr. Stead's. He is unable to impart any definite information about the next life; but, of course, he can tell us why he has nothing to tell us, and give us every reason but the right one.

Summing up these considerations, we have to say that Julia's ideas, sentiments, turns of thought, tricks of expression, and range of knowledge, are all Mr. Stead's. The logical inference, then, is that he is the real author of these letters. If he does not know it, his ignorance is a curious phenomenon in psychology. Still, it is not unique, but merely the latest instance in a long list of self-deceptions.

We will now pause to say a little about Julia personally. In the flesh she was a devout Christian. She had a dear friend called Ellen, and a covenant was made between them that the first who died should, if possible, appear to the other, and banish all doubt as to the life beyond the grave. Julia was the first to shuffle off her mortal coil, and in due course she appeared to Ellen at the witching time of night, which is generally affected by ghostly visitants. Soon afterwards Julia used Mr. Stead's hand to write letters to Ellen, who is apparently still living. Subsequently the lady spirit's letters were written for Mr. Stead himself, and some of them expressly for publication. It seems, however, that the spiritual telephone is now out of order, and that the messages have ceased. Whether they are ever resumed will probably depend on the exigencies of Mr. Stead's traffic in the supernatural.

Strange as it may seem, the automatic writer has never caught sight of the ghostly author. Others have seen her, but he has not been thus privileged. Yet the correspondence extended over several years, and Julia plainly promised him that he should "see and hear and touch" her if he only obeyed her instructions, which were to sit alone in a darkened room and think of her intently. Perhaps the lady was afraid of his "touch," after all, and silently backed out of this little engagement. Or perhaps he did not think hard enough. "Oh, my dearest friend," she said to him in one letter, "if you only knew the power of thought, and if you would but think, think, think!" Which is quite a remarkable bit of unconscious self-portraiture.

And now for more details of Julia's "tips" from the spirit world. When she condescends to be precise she is very amusing—though not intentionally. Being first freed from her body, she found it "such a strange new feeling." She saw her body lying on the bed, and friends crying over it; and the scene was so absurd that she could not help laughing. Then an angel came to her with wings, which are not used for flight, but apparently for ornament. They went "through the air" together, and she was left alone "in a great expanse of landscape," where she was joined by Jesus, who had a friendly chat with her. It is interesting to know that the "sweet mildness" of his

face is hit off well in the pictures of Fra Angelico. Julia also saw her Guardian Angel—which is not exactly a novelty. There is something decidedly novel, however, in the explanation that “the Guardian Angel is a kind of other self, a higher, purer, and more developed section of your own personality.” Julia allows that “this is perhaps a little difficult to understand.” Still, it is true, and that is the great thing; and Mr. Stead will understand it in time, if he will only think, think, think!

Our lady spirit found herself naked at death, but she was soon dressed in the fashion already described. “I do not remember putting on any garments,” she says; “we think, and the thing is.” It also appears that sex is carried over into the spirit world—which, by the way, Mr. Stead-Julia or Miss Julia-Stead might have learned from Swedenborg. “I was a woman,” she says, “in my bodily life, and I am a woman still. There is no change there.” An elegant expression! which is followed by the illuminating sentence, “But you are in a manner different.” Darwin himself might have envied the lucid precision of this statement.

Julia’s powers of description fail her in narrating her arrival in heaven, after sliding through space with her Guardian Angel. “The place,” she says, “was very pleasant to behold. The air was sweet, and there was a delicious fragrance as of flowers in June.” Any young lady could write thus who had seen and smelt a bunch of roses. It is the baldest description of heaven on record. The Julia-Stead poetical faculty is obviously very limited. No wonder, then, that the narrator, after a few general words about peace and love, cuts the matter short by saying, “The details I will not enter upon.” It is the details that are trying, and show whether you know what you are talking about. Simply to wave a bouquet, and ejaculate “peace!” and “love!” and say “That’s heaven!” is a confession of uninventive ignorance.

Julia, indeed, is never great at details; which proves Mr. Stead’s discretion. “I find it so difficult,” she says, “to explain how we live, and how we spend our time.” Of course she does! She indulges in a long rhapsody about heaven, “without entering now into the question of body and matter.” Her amanuensis asks, “What about space?” and she replies, “It is impossible for me to answer all your questions.” In answer to another important question she says: “No, I will not enter upon that subject.” After a long talk about her Lord, she is asked about his Divinity, and she airily replies: “Why do you trouble yourselves about these scholasticisms?” In this way she gets out of every difficulty. But in regard to vague generalities she gushes with the freedom and force of a pump. She never wearies of “Love, love, love!” Whenever she is gravelled for matter she recurs to this easy refrain. Dribble, dribble, dribble! Some would say, Drivel, drivel, drivel! The same weak, washy, everlasting flood! A mere dilution to the point of tastelessness of the great sentence of old George Fox, who had more in him than a hundred Steads: “I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of Light and Love flowed over the ocean of Darkness: and in that I saw the infinite love of God.” Ah, if these ghosts would only write like that old Quaker!

We have plenty of cheap sermonizing in these letters, but not a single flash of spiritual insight. What we are treated to is a Steady selection of the commonplaces of orthodox religion, with a dash of the fashionable Theosophy. We are told, for instance, that at death “there is no breach or break in the continuity of individual existence.” One has heard all that before. But dear Julia must add her little explanations. “There is, no doubt, a change,” she says, with her usual perspicuity. “The memory,” she adds, “appears to be quickened rather than dulled.” That one word “appears” throws a flood of light upon the writing. We see it is not Julia stating positive facts of her personal experience, but Mr. Stead advancing his own conjectures.

Julia tells us that we may all do wonders if we only cultivate our souls. “What you call miracles,” she says, “are the natural capacities of the soul.” We may see and hear spirits habitually if we please. “There is no more reason,” she says, “why you should not have apparitions as regularly and as certainly as you have light when you strike a match.” This sublime simile ought to convince everyone that the writer is not a member of our feeble humanity. It is followed by a scientific illustration

of amazing truth and beauty. Spirits, we are informed, are all about us, though we do not see them, because we have not got the right “focus of the eye.”

“When you have a focus adjusted only to see material things, you can only see material things. But when you are able to adjust your focus at will, you will be able to see what there is to be seen; and that with as much certainty as the astronomer sees through his telescope stars invisible to the naked eye.”

According to natural science, this is a monstrous absurdity; but Mr. Stead and his dear Julia are adepts in something higher than natural science, and we must believe they are wise even when we see they are nonsensical.

Presently, however, this wonderful illustration of “the focus” is dropped, and we are informed that the denizens of the spirit world are to be seen and heard by means of “the sixth sense,” which will some day be developed in the whole human race. At present it seems to be almost confined to the lower animals. “Many” of them “have the open eye” and “see when their owners are blind.” Well, we have read that pigs can see the wind, and now we have the explanation. It is all owing to that “open eye,” though a pig doesn’t look like possessing one. And when men have the “open eye” they will not only be able to see the sightless couriers of the air, but also the cherubim that ride them. Meanwhile we wait with all the patience we can command, and study the means whereby we may become thus gifted. The “higher life,” we learn, must be pursued in this way. You must wash and take exercise. But that is not all. Sandow does this daily, but is not yet as opened-eyed as the proverbial pig. You must cultivate reflection on the soul, sitting “alone and still,” and if possible in “a shaded room.” Don’t kneel, because the discomfort might spoil your serenity; and don’t lie down, because you might fall asleep. For the rest, you need not be too particular, like Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant. “No,” says Julia, “I make no restrictions upon diet.” You need not be a vegetarian and a teetotaler, nor practise sexual abstinence. This is hard upon the poor Theosophists, but Julia throws them a sop by admitting the pre-existence of the soul, though she hastens to add that this “is not reincarnation.” Yet, says the accommodating Julia, the soul “may have been incarnate before.” So the Theosophists may look up again.

There was a method in Hamlet’s madness, and there was a purpose in Julia’s letters. It was reserved for Mr. Stead to save the public from “perishing in the arid wilderness of unbelief,” and for Julia to help him on her side of the “borderland.” The spirits longed to communicate with their friends on earth, who longed to communicate with the spirits. “What is wanted,” said Julia, “is a bureau of communication between the two sides.” Mr. Stead took the hint and started *Borderland*, which was to be the centre of a world-wide business, and to lead to “a great spiritual awakening among the nations.” Everything was ripe and ready on Julia’s side. “There is something to me almost inconceivably pathetic,” she said, “in the yearning that all of us here have to be able to communicate with you on your side.” Mr. Stead was to make the Bridge between the Two Worlds. “You are very eager,” said Julia, “and we are more so.” She told him that when the Bureau of Communication was established he would be “overwhelmed with applications from both sides.” But alas and alack, he wasn’t. *Borderland* is dead, and the Bureau was a fizzle, and poor Mr. Stead complains of the public apathy. People don’t want to communicate with the dead; he thought they did, but he finds he was mistaken. What doesn’t occur to him is, that they may have no faith in his Bureau.

The upshot of the whole affair seems to be this. Mr. Stead’s “sub-conscious mind” put his “conscious mind” up to a promising bit of business, and he proceeded to work it with all that energy which serves him as a substitute for intellect. But unfortunately it turned out a bad speculation. The Bureau of Communication is closed for want of customers. The Bridge between the Two Worlds failed for want of passengers. Julia is a convicted false prophet, who does not understand the world she is in or the world she has left; and Mr. Stead hawks about the sad remains of a very bad egg. Strange to say, there are plenty of people who rather like the flavor, and while it has any “money in it” he will not let it be forgotten.

Luckily for a certain class of *entrepreneurs*, superstition is not killed by exposure. Prophets who foretell the end of the world, and outlive the predicted day of doom, put forward a fresh date with sublime serenity, and still find a generous reception. Mr. Stead, therefore, need not despair; for if the Julia kite is blown to bits, he can fly another, and he seems to be doing fairly well already with one labelled "Ghosts."

G. W. FOOTE.

WHAT HEAVEN IS LIKE.

SELDEN, in his *Table Talk*, shrewdly remarks: "The Turks tell their people of a heaven where there is sensible pleasure, but of a hell where they shall suffer they don't know what. The Christians quite invert this order; they tell us of a hell where we shall feel sensible pain, but of a heaven where we shall enjoy we can't tell what." A Miss Craddock, of Philadelphia, in a little book published by Lippincott & Co., entitled *The Heaven of the Bible*, has sought to supply some details. She contends that we shall live after we are dead, in just as substantial a world as this one. There, as here, water quenches thirst and luscious fruits refresh, life alternates between the city and the garden, and industries are carried on. Wedlock and the capacity for parenthood exist; and this she argues from the good old fetish books that can be cited in proof of anything you please.

She notes that Paradise means a garden, and the New Jerusalem a city, and says after cranky John of Patmos: "The streets of the city are of pure gold, which seems to have been so manipulated in the manufacture as to be transparent like glass." As to buildings, Jesus informed his disciples that there were many mansions in his father's house. Our authoress observes:—

"To suppose that these mansions have all been disposed of in the nineteen centuries which have elapsed since the days of Jesus of Nazareth suggests a faulty management in the municipality of Heaven that would put an earthly municipality to the blush."

Then she notes the vegetation of the garden:—

"At the Last Supper Jesus remarked to his disciples as he handed them the cup of wine: 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' This shows that grape-vines and grapes will be found in that world beyond the grave to which he was so soon to depart.

"The white-robed throng of worshippers about the throne have 'palms' in their hands. Palms presuppose palm-trees, and a rather large grove, too, if the leaves used in the service around the throne are to be green and fresh, and not retained until they wither to the yellow of our palm-leaf fans."

The worshippers who carry palms also wear white robes:—

"The angel who appears to Daniel is clothed in white linen, and nothing is said about his garments being illusory, and not actual. Now, linen is made from flax; and so there must have been in heaven at least one field of flax from which that linen robe was made."

With vines and palms and flax and water we are getting on; for not only is water required to grow the flax, but in the process of separating its fibres preparatory to spinning the linen; which, too, we may suppose occasionally requires the washtub to preserve its whiteness. Miss Craddock makes a list of the industries she presumes are carried on in heaven, from "stone-cutters and polishers to shape and polish the stone which form the city walls," to gardeners to attend to the plants in Paradise. The list of things required extends from needles and threads for the garments, to leather for binding the records of our deeds. Among personal accessories she enumerates:—

"Towels for the hands and feet; since hands may become wet when dipping a drink out of the river of the water of life, whether by hand or cup, and also soiled from plucking fruit from the tree of life; and feet may become soiled from walking in the garden, so that mud may be tramped over the clean, golden streets, up to the foot of the throne.

"Also, towels for the body generally.
 "Also, towels for drying the drinking-cups.
 "Tooth-brushes to be used after each luncheon from the tree of life.

"Special implements for cleaning the wings of the seraphim and cherubim, and also for smoothing the feathers, etc., etc."

We are tempted to think she is laughing at believers, but she gravely assures us that she is looking forward to living and working in this heaven herself. Miss Craddock's gross materialism is amusing, but it is consistent, and apparently sincere. She wants to be an angel, but a fleshy one, with a good, substantial male companion whom she can instruct, as in her classes at Philadelphia. She tells us little concerning the angelic poultry themselves, and leaves us to guess who serves out the angels' food when the saints sit down in the kingdom of God; who provides the new wine of the kingdom, etc. We hear of the voices of angels, and that "cherubim and seraphim continually do cry," perhaps because they cannot sit down in the kingdom of heaven. But in what tongues do they converse? Will those have an advantage who already know Hebrew? Miss Craddock makes Jesus endorse the idea that there is no marriage, but, nonetheless, sexual intercourse in heaven, because there they are as the angels. She says:—

"If angels were sexless, this statement would of course do away with the possibility of husbands, wives, and the begetting of children in Heaven. But the reverse is the case, as we learn from scripture. In Genesis vi. we find the statement: 'The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose.' The Septuagint, however, originally rendered the words 'sons of God' by 'angels of God'; and this rendering is found in Philo, Eusebius, Augustine, and Ambrose. This view of the above text was held by most of the early Church Fathers. 'Angels of God' seems to be the original rendering.

"From this it is evident that angels, according to scripture, are by no means sexless, but are as desirous as are earthly men to enter into lawful marital relations with the women of their choice. And another verse in the same chapter states that children were born from these unions of the angels of God with the daughters of men—and exceptionally fine children they were, too; for we read that 'the same were the mighty men which were of old, the men of renown.'

"When we remember that Jesus spoke of conjugal union in Heaven as existing without the earthly custom of giving in marriage, we begin to realize why such stress is laid upon prohibiting the entrance of the impure into the Heavenly City in Revelation xxi. 8 and xxii. 15."

This idea is by no means original. Over fifty years ago the Rev. G. D. Haughton wrote a work *On Sex in the World to Come*, in which he contended that this belief was conformable to reason and confirmed by revelation.

Swedenborg, who has described both heaven and hell, in his *Conjugal Love* lays it down that in after-life the male continues male and the female female, and that the love of the sex especially remains. I transcribe his own words from the translation published by the Swedenborg Society (p. 54):—

"Married partners enjoy similar intercourse with each other as in the world, but more delightful and blessed; yet without procreation, for which, or in place of which, they have spiritual procreation, which is that of love and wisdom. The reason why married partners enjoy similar intercourse as in the world is, that after death the male is a male, and the female a female, and there has been implanted in both from creation an inclination to conjunction; and this inclination with man belongs to his spirit, and thence to his body; wherefore after death, when man becomes a spirit, the same mutual inclination remains, and this cannot exist without similar intercourse. For, after death, man is a man as before; neither is there anything wanting either in the male or in the female: as to the form they are like themselves, and also as to the affections and thoughts; what else, then, follows thence, but that they must enjoy similar intercourse?"

The question of age in heaven has also exercised much speculation. If the principle of growth prevails, at what age does it stop? If babes who died at birth meet their mothers on "the other shore" as full-grown men, with mustachios to match, why should not the aged grow younger, all angels being in the prime of life? The showman's exhibition of Washington's skulls, when a boy and when a man, should find its parallel above. The mother who died in giving birth to a child should find that babe in heaven, the wife of that grown-up child rejoin him as a grown-up man, and his grandchildren see him as a patriarch.

Believers never care to face the possibilities of a future life. It is believed in purely in the abstract. They never venture a concrete imagination or realization of them. Orthodox beliefs exist on the sufferance of being totally undefined.

A material heaven is, after all, the only rational one. Human happiness and human virtue alike depend on the surrounding conditions. An immaterial heaven, full of perfect spiritual beings, could afford no scope for fortitude, temperance, justice, prudence, or benevolence. The orthodox heaven would be more miserable and as contemptible as the orthodox hell. Miss Craddock sees that to make heaven real it must be material; but it must be confessed that her glimpse of heaven is far less vivid than Father Furniss's Sight of Hell.* J. M. WHEELER.

NEGLECT OF SECULAR TEACHING.

THE recently-published Blue-book on the health of Great Britain for the last ten years reveals some astounding facts as to the lamentable results of the neglect of secular teaching. According to this authority, two million ten thousand children, under five years of age, have died within the last decade. Although, as an evening newspaper observes, "young children naturally hold their lives upon a precarious tenure," yet this enormous infant death-rate is, according to our contemporary, "far too large to result from ordinary causes, and we must look to our industrial system, especially as practised in the mills of North-west England, to account for this great waste of young life. Out of every hundred thousand children born in Manchester about forty thousand die before the age of five. As the Blue-book shows, the infant mortality in certain Lancastrian towns exceeds that of three whole counties. And the highest mortality is among the children of factory workers. The reason is plain. Factory or mill hands are very often unfitted for maternity by their laborious work and the conditions under which they live. They produce stunted, weakly offspring, who, if they happen to exist till the age of half-timers, are sent to work for their parents in the mills. Children of this sort are looked on in Lancashire merely as money-making machines. On the whole, perhaps, it is just as well for them that so many escape by death. That work in the textile trades conduces to early death among young men is apparent from the fact that the mortality between the ages of fifteen and twenty is 33½ per cent. above the ordinary standard. Among the cotton operatives of Lancashire it is 46 per cent. above the average. We may be a great mercantile nation, but we pay for our supremacy in flesh and blood."

Such is the deplorable state of things in a country which is called Christian and civilized. It is, indeed, a strong indictment against the Church, for it is under its influence that this disgraceful order (or disorder) of things has been allowed to develop. Had Secular teachings been obeyed, a very different aspect of human conditions would have been presented. Secularists have always maintained that the quality and extent of organic life is determined by the environment of existence, and that it is only by the application of material means that the conditions of life can be altered. When we speak of circumstances being the great factor in deciding the nature or character of man's life and destiny, we include in that term the whole of his organism, also his surroundings, including the influences to which he is subjected. Nothing can more clearly demonstrate the necessity of observing the Secular view of life than the reckless, and in some cases the criminal, manner in which children have been brought into the world and afterwards trained, more particularly in their infancy. Too little attention has been given by professed Christians to the method of carrying out their God's command to "multiply and replenish the earth." Not only has woman been made an indiscriminate "breeder of sinners," but the large families which have resulted have frequently increased the physical debility, the moral depravity, and the social misery of the human race. Secularism teaches that the duty of parents towards their children commences long before the period of birth. Not only should prudence dictate the limitation of families to the parent's ability to properly

train and educate their children, but special care should be taken that all births should occur when both the mother and father are physically healthy, and when their systems are free from all those diseases that too often contaminate the bodies and minds of their offspring. Secularism furthermore enjoins the necessity of providing for the rising generation sufficient proper food, clothing, house-room, pure air and water; also good sanitary arrangements; for these secular agencies are necessary to bodily health, which is an essential to the health of the mind. Moreover, judicious instruction and education should be afforded to every child, in order that the intellect may be nourished and developed to the full extent of its capabilities. Had these rules been properly followed in the past, the saddening records of the Blue-book, as mentioned above, would not have appeared.

The utter failure of Christianity to meet the emergencies of commercial enterprise, and to supply the necessary requirements of active life, has long been apparent to the impartial observer. Those who are familiar with the North-west country know that in all its districts bishops, clergy, and their followers abound, and that there is no lack of prayer, praise, and professed trust in God. But the lesson has yet to be learnt that the secret of right-doing in secular affairs lies deeper than belief in the alleged influence of the spirit of God, and in his much-talked-of overflowing kindness. This belief has entirely failed to produce the required results, more especially in the treatment and training of the young. The "one thing needful" is a knowledge of, and obedience to, the natural laws by which the health and welfare of the rising generation are secured and regulated. "Mother's meetings," and the setting apart of days and weeks to pray for the "illuminating influence of the Almighty," have proved to be destitute of any beneficial results, either to children or adults. How much misery and injustice might be averted if the Secular view of regulating life were adopted we shall not learn so long as theological teachings prevail. We know of no orthodox Christian sect that directs the attention of parents and children to the study and observance of natural law as the basis of duty and conduct, instead of advising them to rely upon "God's mercy and consideration." There is no doubt, in our mind, that one of the principal causes of so many premature deaths among the laboring classes is neglecting to study the true methods of nature, and persistently depending upon "divine aid" to make things right. Secularism recognises this drawback, hence its adherents counsel reliance upon science and human precaution rather than upon God and theological injunctions.

It is unreasonable to suppose that any good God would act so partially as to give the poor a lease of life many years less than he gives the rich. Yet if our "lives are in his hands," this is what he has done according to the figures furnished in the Blue-book. Secularism aims to destroy this delusion of ascribing to any god the evils which are the result of man's own neglect. While such a delusion exists, proper means will not be taken to get rid of the causes of the evil in question. But once convince mankind generally that the remedy is in their own hands, and thereby an incentive will be supplied to discover what is wrong, and then, as far as possible, to remove it. This we regard as the practical view to take, and if each member of the human family will perform his and her duty, no god will be found necessary to do for them what they can do for themselves. If, on the other hand, they neglect their duty, there is no adequate reason for supposing that any deity can save them from the results of their negligence.

By way of a beginning, let the words of the late Professor Huxley be remembered: "That the foundations of all natural knowledge were laid when the reason of man first came face to face with the facts of nature." It is here the true remedy is to be found, and the true science of life discovered. Let every school be compelled to afford instruction in the elements of physical science, and every employer compelled to provide such healthy conditions of labor as are essential to a reasonable tenure of life. This will be found more efficacious for the public good than "religious instruction" and "spiritual dependence." It has recently been the subject of comment in the press that the boys in our large cities do not furnish the required material for good soldiers. Reference has been made to the great superiority of young men who were born in villages of

* See *Freethinker*, pp. 146 and 162.

parents who have breathed purer air and lived in more sunshine than it is possible to have in large cities. This suggests a clue as to the way to secure long and healthy lives. If the masses will but learn what nature teaches them, and obey the lessons thereby acquired, the conditions of existence will be the better for each and for all.

CHARLES WATTS.

WAS THE UNIVERSE CREATED?

WE remark, in the first place, that the hypothesis of creation necessarily implies a creator, who existed anterior thereto, and was himself never created, but was self-existent and eternal. If this be true, it necessarily follows that this creator must have been composed of some form of matter, as it is impossible for the human mind to conceive of a being, or of an entity, which is not so constituted. To say that God is immaterial is equivalent to saying that he is nothing, which means that he does not exist. If, therefore, we concede his existence, we are driven to the conclusion that *some* matter has always existed; and if this be so, why may not *all* matter have thus existed? If it be admitted that matter has been and is eternal, it could not have been created; and, therefore, a creator must have been wholly unnecessary. Were it otherwise than this, we would be compelled to believe that the immaterial can produce the material, or that nothing can be the cause of something—an hypothesis which is wholly inconceivable and untenable. If it be difficult to conceive of a universe without a creator, how much more difficult it must be to conceive of a Supreme Being without a previous creator; for, as the creator must be greater and more wonderful than the thing created, all the reasons for thinking that the universe was created apply with still greater force when we consider the Creator himself. These self-evident truths are fatal to the hypothesis of the creation of matter from nothing by a personal god.

But it may be suggested by our Christian friends that it is impossible to ascertain the truth on this subject without recourse to what they are pleased to call "the light of revelation." While we do not consider the Bible to be an authority on questions of this nature, as it is neither more nor less than a collection of the writings of men who were entirely destitute of a knowledge of science, and who merely presented to their fellow-men the best explanation of the origin of the cosmos which was possible at the time when they wrote, we are pleased to consider its statements for what they are worth, if, indeed, they can have any value whatever in the solution of the problem before us. From certain expressions therein, God appears to have been, and to be, a male person, as the word "he" is used whenever that being is alluded to, besides which his eyes, his hands, his mouth, and his other bodily organs are mentioned; and he is also represented as seeing, speaking, walking, etc., all of which imply that he is a being similar to man. Now, if God is such a being as this, he must possess a physical organism, and a form which occupies a certain definite portion of space, however great or however small that may be. If this be true, several interesting questions are presented for our consideration, among which are these:—

If God created the universe from nothing, there must have been a particular instant when he began that work; for in whatever has been produced the process of production must have occupied some period of time, however long or short that period may have been; and, previous to the first creative act, there must have been absolutely nothing in existence except the Creator himself, who, during a beginningless past, must have been suspended in perfectly void or vacant space, in complete darkness and consequent idleness, when, according to the Bible, he suddenly began the work of creation by saying, "Let there be light" (Genesis i. 3). What caused him to do so has never been explained. As he was alone before and at this time, and therefore could have had no use for a language, these must have been the first words which he ever uttered; and the question at once arises, Who heard them? Are we to understand that he spoke to inanimate matter, and that it hearkened to and obeyed him? But if it did not then exist, how was that possible?

Again, in the next verse we are informed that "God

saw the light," which must have been the first vision which he ever experienced; for, even had there been external objects in existence previous to that time, he could not have seen them when this dense darkness must have been universal.

In the next verse it is stated that "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night"; and this completed the first day's work. If the word "day" signifies a period of twenty-four hours, as many Bible commentators contend that it does, then we are obliged to think either that it must have taken the whole of that period for God to speak these six words, or that the process of making light was an exceedingly slow one, and that he could not have produced it more speedily; and either conclusion is utterly absurd and wholly inconsistent with the doctrine of his omnipotence.

If God is a person having a physical organism similar to that possessed by man, in order to live he must have food to eat, water or some other beverage to drink, and air to breathe; and as these are simply different forms of matter which could not have existed before God had created them—if he did so—how could he have utilized them previous to that time? And if they were also absolutely essential to his subsistence, how did he subsist anterior to their production?

These are only a few of the many interrogatories which might be propounded on this subject did our space permit us to do so; but these are sufficient for our present purpose. Of course they are exceedingly absurd and ludicrous; but the responsibility for that fact rests upon those people who accept the Theistic hypothesis of creation, and not upon those who reject it.

—Boston Investigator.

SCARECROWS.

IN Victor Hugo's *La Légende des Siècles* is a story of a strolling confab between Philip Augustus and Archbishop Bertrand. The priest urges the king to suppress new ideas and heresies, as a danger alike to throne and altar. The king asks the best means of ruling, and the priest points to a cornfield wherein straw scarecrows, in apparent human shape, serve to frighten away the birds. This is the secret of the priest. He rules by fear. The dread of something after death not only makes us bear the ills we have, but makes us hand our purse, and reason, and children to the custody of priests, and let them live in luxury for the task of moulding them.

The scarecrow Satan is pretty well played out. But, when religion reigned, how the birds all fled when priests began to pull its puppet's strings. In every field where food, and life, and joy might perchance be found, there was a devil-scarecrow with pitchfork, ready to carry the intruder off to hell. How they worked the racket of a day of judgment, and the end of all. Periodic scares, which made the wealthy hand over their goods to the Church and the poor ready to be its slaves, still find some faint reflections, as in Prophet Baxter and his dupes. This man, regularly ordained a Church of England minister, some twenty years ago wrote *Louis Napoleon, the Destined Monarch of the World*; proved it, too, by Scripture. When Napoleon the Little died he found other substitutes. Year by year he has predicted the near approach of Christ's second advent to judge the world, ever shifting the date a little forward. He has made the game pay, and now has taken a lease of valuable premises for thirty-one years, though he issues at the present time a prediction that this year begins the last ten years of earth. He travels the country with horrid pictures of the beast with seven heads, and the other monstrosities of the Apocalyptic menagerie; and many a devout old lady of both sexes supplies cash to keep the scare going. Religion would be a poor game without its scarecrows. JACINTH.

Who can compute what the world loses in the multitude of promising intellects combined with timid characters who dare not follow out any bold, vigorous, independent train of thought, lest it should land them in something which would admit of being considered irreligious or immoral?—John Stuart Mill.

ACID DROPS.

POLITICIANS are always too ready, at least in England, to take God's name in vain. After the Stepney election Mr. Steadman thanked God for his success, and promised, with God's help, to do his duty. Of course Mr. Steadman doesn't really believe that God was one of his canvassing agents, or that God will take any special interest in his doings at Westminster. He was simply using the cant language of an emotional but unimaginative public. Let it not be supposed, however, that we have any special quarrel with Mr. Steadman. He is only one sinner among many. Mr. Goschen, for instance, in winding up his speech on the Navy Estimates, used the name of God twice in one sentence. Perhaps he was thinking, like a good Jew, of the old Lord of Hosts, strong and mighty in battle, especially when his side has the most ships and the biggest battalions.

"Providence" seems to have been in an ironical mood last Sunday evening, when a terrible fire broke out in the Bowery Mission, New York City. All the fifteen-cent beds were occupied on five floors. Heartrending scenes were witnessed, and more than thirty poor wretches perished. Many others were shockingly burnt and taken to the hospital.

In spite of the plague, the Mecca pilgrimage is not to be prohibited this year. It is thought to be too dangerous to arouse the religious fanaticism of the Mohammedan world. Besides, the Mohammedan has usually little fear of death. He believes in Paradise and wants to go there, unlike the average Christian who wants to keep out of heaven as long as possible.

Dr. Creighton, in a letter to the *Daily News*, points out that the action of the authorities in Bombay irritates the natives without in any way reducing the plague. He says that the real cause of the mischief is the greed of the ground landlords. Huge blocks of dwellings for mill-hands have been erected without due regard to the sanitary precautions that are necessary in such a water-logged district. The soil is plague-tainted, and is the first thing to be dealt with.

It appears from the *Glasgow Weekly Citizen* that Dr. Kennedy Moore is again urging a charge of heresy against Dr. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren"). We confess our sympathies are rather with the heresy hunter, who is presumably inspired by a desire for intellectual honesty and conformity with the accepted creed. Dr. Watson has sworn his belief in the Westminster Confession of Faith. He holds his position as a minister, and receives a stipend on that condition. Yet he teaches something in direct contradiction to the evident meaning of salient points of that Confession.

The *Weekly Citizen* says: "At one time the Atonement meant one thing to all men—the washing away of human sins by the blood of the Son of God, who died on the cross. Now it has all shades of meaning, from the crudest Salvation Army notions to the refined, almost metaphysical, conceptions of a theologian like Dr. Lyman Abbott. To demonstrate heresy on such a doctrine as this would plainly be a very difficult matter, necessitating the careful definition of every expression used. The same holds true with regard to the other fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such as the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and Scriptural Revelation." The demonstration that the new views are heretical is not so difficult if the Westminster Confession is interpreted in the light of the other writings of the divines who drew it up.

The *Church Evangelist* states that a house-to-house visitation at Bolton shows that the religious accommodation of the town is 22,000 sittings less than the need. At least, 6,500 families admitted they seldom or never went to a place of worship. Only fifty-four avowed themselves as opposed to Christianity. Some 2,500 persons were engaged in Sunday work, and 480 small shops, chiefly confectioners and tobacconists, were open for purposes of trade.

According to the *Annuary of Catholic Missions*, the Romanists have increased their numbers in the United Kingdom during the past two years to the extent of 37,203, bringing the total number of Roman Catholics in Great Britain and Ireland to 5,283,059. But in 1841 they are said to have numbered 7,000,000, or 26 per cent. of the entire population. Emigration from Ireland has been the chief cause of the decline, but there has also been a serious leakage among the poor in England and Scotland recouped by conversions from among the rich.

The *Church Review* announces that about four hundred associates of the English Church Union have seceded from that body at Brighton alone. This is said to be the result

of "intense dissatisfaction" with the policy of the Union in connection with St. Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate. They wished the Ritualists to fight, and, eager for the fray, desired to precipitate a battle with the hated Protestants.

George Müller, the praying philanthropist, is dead. For many years he had been expecting the second coming of Jesus. Of course he was mistaken in this calculation. We think he was equally mistaken in the belief that his Orphanage was supported by prayer. He claimed that he never advertised, and this is technically true; but he issued reports and addressed public meetings—which are very effective methods of publicity. "Such was his faith in Providence," we are told, "that he never insured any of his buildings." But is it not true that fever got into the Orphanage many years ago, that prayer could not extinguish it, and that science had to be called in to supply the deficiencies of faith? Belief in the efficacy of prayer is always grounded on well-selected illustrations.

Two items in a recent *Daily Mail* were in amusing juxtaposition. One was headed "Prayer and Faith," giving an account of the late Mr. George Müller, of Bristol, who got plenty of money for his Orphanage by telling everybody that he never asked anyone but the Lord for anything. The other was an account of the special appeal issued by the London Missionary Society, which is from eight to ten thousand pounds out on last year's business. No explanation is given of the failure of prayer in the second case. The *Daily Mail* should appoint a special reporter to deal with the question.

The National Sunday League, which was started by Free-thinkers, is now a very prosperous organization. Six hundred people sat down to its recent Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant. One of the speakers was the Rev. H. Russell Wakefield, who, according to the *Daily News* report, said that "one best supported the cause of religion by supporting such movements as the League." If the reverend gentleman said this as a minister of religion, he was talking traitorous nonsense; if he said it as a friend of the League, he was simply impertinent. The Sunday League was not formed, and has never existed, for the purpose of supporting religion.

The Bishop of London, presiding at the annual meeting of the Associated Societies for the Protection of Women and Children, said that he was afraid such societies would always be needed as long as human nature was human nature. We believe his lordship's fears are ill-founded. Human nature does improve, in spite of the doctrine of original sin and natural depravity. Some day or other, we venture to think, there will be no further need for Protection Societies. Sporadic cases of cruelty may occur, like cases of insanity; but brutality will have ceased to be so common as to need an organization to keep it in check.

"People often held up their hands," said Bishop Creighton, "and wondered how such dark deeds as we heard of from time to time could be perpetrated in Christian England, and regarded them as being a disgrace to civilization. With such people he entirely disagreed. There was no Christian country in the world. Because a certain number of people were Christians it did not follow that the country deserved that title."

According to the Bishop of London, then, England is not a Christian country. Well, if this be true, it only proves the futility of Christianity. We have a State Church, with thirty thousand parsons, and an income of something between six and ten millions a year. We have the Christian religion taught in nearly all the public schools. It is a crime at law to bring the Christian religion into disbelief and contempt. Yet a man who is paid £10,000 a year out of national money to preach Christianity has the hardihood to stand up and declare that this is not a Christian country! What is this but announcing the failure of Christianity?

In Leeds there is a Salvation Army Hall which bears the sign: "Souls renovated while you wait." Salvationists have probably found the idea "to be born again" unprofitable, foreknowing that an enigma would arise between the masculine and feminine genders consequent upon the person to be born again. Hence the innovation. Hallelujah! Renovation of the old souls first, and then substitution of new ones. Let Islamism be interested in the latter.—*Crescent*.

A barber at Preston was prosecuted under the old statute of pious King Charles II. for following his calling on the day of our Lord the Sun. The magistrates, however, considered the charge a trivial one, and dismissed the summons.

In Alabama the bequest of a sum of money for masses for the dead has been held to be void, on the ground that the testator's own soul was the sole beneficiary, and that no

living person could call the priestly trustees to account. In New York and Wisconsin it has been held that such trusts are void for want of a definite beneficiary to enforce its execution. But bequests left to a particular priest for masses are held to be valid.

The Virgin Mary has appeared to a child of nine years of age in a part of rural Spain, and it has caused great excitement. Another occasion of excitement in this most Christian country is an elephant and bull fight. The elephant cost about £250, and was known to be a tame and good-natured animal, so every torture known to the Spanish Inquisition was used to make an animal savage which longed to rest at peace. And the people who patronized these sports boast of their religion. We are glad to know that the Freethinkers of Spain oppose such brutalities.

The Princess of Wales has written a letter "To the Children of the United Kingdom," begging them to collect all they can for the Prince's Hospital Fund, the success of which is "very near my heart." Many of us think, however, that the success of this Fund is more important to the Prince and the Hospitals than to the public. It may be true, as the Princess declares, that "the blessing of God" will rest upon the child collectors. No doubt she knows more about God than we do. Still, we venture to think that the expression is an evidence that the Prince's project has not "caught on." No doubt he meant well, but he was ill-advised. The Hospital authorities made use of him to get money that would enable them to laugh at all threats of public control, and it will take something more than "the blessing of God" to rouse the public enthusiasm in their favor.

Radical newspapers praised the Bishop of Manchester for his liberality. He had actually condescended to preach in Dissenting chapels! But it appears that they were mistaken. All his lordship really did was to pay a visit of inspection to some chapels in his diocese. He was "not preaching or taking part in any service," says his lordship's chaplain.

We don't observe any great rush to heaven. Most believers, in fact, keep out of it as long as they can. But there promises to be an awful rush to Klondyke this summer. About 3,000 miners are expected from South Africa, and as many from Australia, while 50,000 will probably go from the United Kingdom. Gold is evidently the greatest god on this planet, and a good claim at Klondyke is preferred to any quantity of golden flooring in the New Jerusalem.

Some of the Dundee folk have not only made their religion a cloak, but a profitable source of revenue, and parishioners have been discovered selling their rights for sums varying from £9 to £200. Cases are not even unknown in which men have taken pews for a twelvemonth, and then sold them, like seats for a show, at a substantial advance. They descant on the situation of the Church, the eloquence of the preacher, etc., with the thinly-veiled hypocrisy of a Talmage. Sometimes, I am told, the seller is a heritor, and sometimes a person to whom a pew has been assigned by one of the trade corporations who shared in the original allocation of seats.—*Critic*.

The Rev. John Burry Thomas, Baptist minister of Togarh, Breconshire, has to pay Miss Susan Williams, the organist of his church, £40 as *solutium* for breach of promise. The engagement began in June, 1896, and was broken off in July, 1897. The defendant had obtained the consent of the lady and her father to the marriage; a house had been taken, the furniture purchased, the bride's trousseau bought, and the bridesmaids chosen; but the man of God funk'd at the eleventh hour.

Charles Sabine, one of the local preachers at a chapel in Gloucester, seduced Elizabeth Salome Haynes, and then offered up prayer. He declined to support her child, but the magistrates made an order for 2s. 6d. per week.

The Rev. James Utter Todd was summoned at Dunster Petty Sessions for assaulting a boy of ten, one of a class to whom he gave religious instruction. There were marks on both the boy's thighs, and on his arm above the elbow. There was also a scar on the back of the right wrist. The summons was, however, dismissed.

The *Lagos Weekly Record* states that recently a minister warned the members of his church that "if they did not pay up their class fees, when death occurred among them, and the minister was called to officiate, he would promise to attend, but when the time appointed came he would make it his duty to be absent."

In the *Nineteenth Century* Dr. Jessopp describes the circumstances of the Reformation as "The Great Pillage."

He attributes it to the lust of the wealthy for gain, rather than to "what we call the Reformation."

China's trouble with Christian nations began with the entrance of the first Christian missionary. Knowing this, it is small wonder that the celestials look askance at the followers of sweet Jesus.

An American paper gives the following illustration of Christian behavior:—"Stranger (in Brooklyn)—'Where are all those gentlemen going?' Resident—'They are going to bid farewell to a popular missionary to China, who has been very successful in teaching the heathen the gospel of love and peace.' Stranger—'I see; and where is the gang of boys going?' Resident—'They are going to stone a Chinese funeral.'"

The number of even nominal Christians in the world make a poor share after 1,800 years of a divine religion, and the missionaries themselves say that the heathen are increasing faster than they are being converted. But when we come to a scrutiny as to who are really Christians, the most imposing show diminishes to a very small minority.

"Mohammedanism," says the *New Age*, a Christian paper, "is spreading rapidly, in Central Africa, and by its religious and educational ties has cemented the interest of many large and powerful tribes. On the other hand, the work of Christian missions is almost stationary," though Bishop Tugwell has collected £2,000 in England as the first instalment of an Advance Fund. The Mohammedan missionary doesn't wait for money. He sets forth as a preacher of Islam, and trusts to Allah for protection and support.

Mohammedanism is spreading far more rapidly than Christianity in Africa. Sixty millions of Africans have been converted to the faith in Islam. What is more, every follower of the Prophet of Arabia is treated as a brother by every Moslem.

According to Mr. Dimpleby, of the British Chronological Association, we are rapidly approaching the end of all things. In his book on *The Appointed Time* he fixes Easter, 1898, as the date of the advent of J. C., and in one place mentions the date as about March 21, 1898. The more wary Baxter has again shifted the end of all things a little bit on—just to 1903. Meanwhile he has taken a new lease for thirty-one years.

On March 21 the Order of the Cistercians keeps its eight-hundredth anniversary. They claim that on March 21, 1098, twenty-one monks, under the leadership of Saint Robert, retired to a wild solitude in France, where they set up the first monastery. Their history is, however, like that of the other monastic orders—very legendary.

Christian parochial life is not without its enjoyment to the man with a sense of humor. A London curate, paying a pastoral visit the other day, complimented a householder of mature years on the age of his aged mother. "Yes, sir," said the pleased son, "there don't seem any reason why our mother shouldn't live to be a centurion." A neighbor received an equally astonishing answer to an inquiry after a parishioner's health. "Well, sir," said the parishioner, "sometimes I feels anyhow; sometimes I feels nohow; and there be times when I feels as stiff as a himmidge."

The Harny announces a great spiritual corroboree, to take place during the present year. The Australian provinces will be represented on the occasion by girls, dressed in white, who will kiss each other effusively, as a sign of good feeling. But what have Hallelujah Bill and Brother Bang-the-Drum done that they should not be allowed to share in this pious osculation? Girl kissing girl is at any time a most insipid and unconvincing spectacle.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

The *Flaming Sword* of Messiah Koresh Teed, who holds that the earth is concave—sun, moon, and stars being on the inside, instead of the outside, of the earth—offers a thousand dollars to anyone who will disprove this theory to the satisfaction of the editor.

A coroner's inquest was held at Newington (London) on the dead body of Annie Florence Little, aged five months. The jury were of opinion that her death was caused by vaccination, but the coroner came to the aid of the medical tyranny, and a verdict was returned of death from exhaustion. This reminds us of the Wild West verdict on a victim of lynching. He was hung up on a tree one cold night and cut down in the morning, and the jury brought in a verdict of "death from exposure."

"Mr. Smith, of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, offered prayers at the opening of the House of Representatives to-day." This important piece of news was telegraphed from Washington

to the British press. It would be still more important to know whether the Lord heard Mr. Smith. Reuter should make a searching inquiry and let us know the result.

Dr. Marsden, who was the initial missionary to New Zealand, either had a pleasing fancy or exceptional lack of humor. He preached his opening discourse to Maori cannibals on Christmas Eve, taking as his text, "Behold I bring you glad tidings." Strange to say, the niggers did not freely translate "glad tidings" as a Yuletide dinner.—*Critic*.

A correspondent of the *Sydney Bulletin* writes: "Way back in the '70's I was tramping with a mate from Hill End to Sofala. Entering the latter town after a long day's march through snow and sleet, we made for the first pub., and, being wet and cold, we called for brandy—dark brandy. 'Roman Catholic or Protestant?' asked the man from Erin; and, quick as thought, my mate replied 'Roman Catholic.' A bottle of Hennessy's *** was thereupon uncorked, and, after having smacked our lips over the excellence of the 'craythur,' I made bold to ask our host what was the difference between 'Roman Catholic' and 'Protestant' brandy? 'One carries the beads, me bhoy,' he replied, with a wink; 'the other doesn't.' Thenceforward we were devout Catholics."

"The Healing and Holiness party," like other bodies, needs cash, and it appeared, from a recent action, that Mrs. Winter gave one of the leaders £200 as a free gift, to live the higher life, and afterwards wanted her money back. Mr. Justice Darling, however, decided against her claim.

The vicar of Paddock Wood, who is also Chairman of the School Board there, recently required the headmaster of the Board school, Mr. W. Turner, who has been twenty-three years in his office, to resign. In the letter asking him to resign the vicar merely refers to the fact that Mr. Turner had "had a good long innings," and that "a change is in every way desirable." A public meeting was held to protest against this shabby treatment of an old servant of the public.

The *Christian World* states that a Norfolk vicar, preaching in a neighbor's pulpit, became quite confidential, and said he would tell the congregation what day stood out in his life as the very happiest day he had ever known. He did not doubt they all thought he was about to mention his marriage-day. No. Happy as that was, it was not the happiest in his life. The very happiest day he had ever known was the day when he made a full confession of sin to a godly priest, and received his absolution. Oh! it was a very blessed experience to be assured by a divinely-ordained priest that all one's sins were forgiven.

The London Wesleyan Mission held its annual meeting at Exeter Hall on Monday evening. "Financially," we read, "the year had not been so encouraging, and £1,500 was needed to complete the grants to the various branches, while they had a debt of £5,000." Still, they want to build a new hall off Tooley-street at a cost of £25,000. One of the speakers declared that "London could only be saved by regeneration through Jesus Christ." Then where is the necessity for all that cash?

The Church Army is an orthodox rival of the Salvation Army. According to Dean Hole, the latter body has strange doctrines, and it ignores the sacraments. What the Church of Rome says of the Church of England the Church of England says of the Salvation Army. It is a pretty quarrel all round.

At a Church Defence meeting on Monday evening Lord Cross said he believed that, although there was a lull at present, the attack upon the Establishment "would be renewed at perhaps no distant date." We hope his lordship is a true prophet.

A French priest at Escarmaur, in the diocese of Cambrai, has written a very angry letter to a Catholic lady whose daughter is going to marry a Protestant. He says that such a marriage is simply concubinage, and will incur the curse of God. This strong language simply means, at bottom, that somebody is poaching on the priests' preserves. Trade jealousies are generally very bitter.

The "Ian Maclaren" heresy case in England is matched by one which is going on in America. Professor McGiffert, in his *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, has given offence to his Presbyterian brethren by an "unsound" reference to the Lord's Supper. The "trial" will come on shortly, and we shall look out for the result. Perhaps one of our American readers will send us a paper containing a good report.

Rev. C. F. Aked, of Liverpool, is a very sanguine man

with lofty ideas of the value of his own Church to the world. The other day at Bristol he spoke of himself (with others) as representing "a divinely-created, divinely-guided, divinely-inspired movement to save Nonconformity that Nonconformity might save the land." This is a remarkably large order, which Mr. Aked will never live to see executed. Christianity of all kinds, and all inspired, has been "saving" the land for ever so many centuries. There must be something wrong with the recipe when it produces no effect upon the disease.

At Hanada, in Persia, a serious riot occurred in consequence of a quarrel between the partisans of two rival priests. Twenty-seven persons were reported as killed. Blessed religion!

Some preachers have asked the question, "Can Agnostics be saved?" and have answered it in the affirmative. Thus are many sincere Agnostics robbed of their fondest hope, which is that the orthodox heaven may elude their grasp. What must we do to be damned?—*G. E. M.*

The great Protestant champion, Mr. John Kensit, kicked up a rumpus at Brighton last week. Several opponents were ejected, and among them was one well-known curate of Ritualistic proclivities.

The Rev. Sam Jones, a famous American revivalist of even coarser stamp than Moody, is running for the Governorship of Georgia, and, being very popular in that State, it is said that his election is far from improbable.

G. E. Macdonald observes in the *Truthseeker* as under:—"The eloquence of our Ballington Booth, commander of God's American Volunteers, crosses the Atlantic and echoes through the London *Freethinker* as follows: 'I was born in England, 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.' The editor of the *Freethinker* rightly surmises that lofty sentiments of this sort will deeply thrill the American heart. They do, indeed, and much more; they relax the sphincters of the American pocket. Mr. Booth invariably suffers an access of patriotism immediately before the collection is taken. His words are accompanied by the waving of the star-spangled banner, which, of course, does not show in print, and are followed by girls with tambourines, who, to reverse a biblical figure, catch the rocks where the prophet has struck water."

Our New York Freethought contemporary remarks:—"Aside from the sensational newspapers which cry war in order to sell a few more copies of their ochre issues, the loudest shriekers for a quick resort to arms against Spain are the chaplains of the two Houses of Congress, who work a belligerent speech to the country into their prayers to the alleged Almighty, whom they address each morning at \$5 per minute. It seems queer that the ministers of the 'prince of peace' are always the readiest to fight—by proxy—and do the most to stir up strife, which only death can settle. The Christian religion is far from being the humanitarian creed best fitted for these times, or else its devotees are far from worthy exponents of it. But one is at liberty to doubt whether, if there were no reporters in Congress, these men of God would be so bloodthirsty. We have a well-defined suspicion that they are talking to the galleries, wherein the unintelligent and savage are seated for applause. They are beating the tom-tom loud now, but if the war does eventuate they will go into the tents with the women and children and send their wives' relatives to the front."

The Rev. H. C. Wagell, of Blackpool, is one of the men of God who see in the theatre a rival to their own show. The production of a piece entitled *No Cross No Crown* gave the gentlemen an opportunity of working off his gall as "the desecration and degradation of such terms." For the theatre to pretend to teach and improve people is bad enough, but to use phrases founded on the Bible is downright blasphemy.

The Rev. J. S. Balmer, of the Methodist Free Church, Blackpool, says that the text about the prayer of faith saving the sick is like Paul's saying that women should be silent in the church—not of universal application. When modern sentiment comes to oppose old Biblical tradition it is always found to be not of universal application. What a pity so much of God's divine word is for a limited application only.

You can rarely reason a man out of an opinion which he has never been reasoned into.—*Swift*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 20, Athenæum Hall, London: 7.30, "Julius Cæsar: Statesman and Atheist; with Remarks on Shakespeare's Play and Mr. Tree's Production."
April 17, Huddersfield.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—March 27, Bolton; 30 and 31, Debate at Portsmouth. April 26, 27, 28, 29, and May 1, Glasgow and Districts. May 8, Manchester; 15, Birmingham. —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.

BOOKSELLER.—Jokes are welcome, and will appear in due course.

W. R.—The Anti-Vaccination Society's address is 50 Parliament-street, Westminster. For the rest, see our reply to T. Saunders.

G. F. DUPLAY.—On the general question we can only repeat that discussion is a waste of time. If reason and effort cannot improve the world, that is a very good reason for thoughtless inaction, but not for controversy. With regard to universal suffrage, we agree with a good deal that you say. Some democrats make quite a fetish of it, as though counting heads were of much use without weighing them. Voting, after all, is not a solution of any problem; it only decides what shall be done at the moment. It may be right or wrong—which depends on quite different considerations.

D. B.—Thanks. See paragraph.

G. W. BLYTHE.—You are too hard on the youngsters. Boys will be boys, and their elders must learn to put up with the fact.

A. B. COLLINS.—The best is Lea's *History of the Inquisition*, but it is expensive.

EDWARD TRUELOVE.—Thanks for the copy of the funeral address delivered by Mr. Joseph Kaines at Mrs. Truelove's grave. We shall preserve it as a memento of your noble wife. It gives us pleasure to be able to tell our readers that you are recovering from your indisposition. You are the oldest N. S. S. Vice-President, and you have the best wishes of every member.

T. SAUNDERS.—(1) We do not quite understand this question. If you want to hold your own in discussions with Christians, you should at least read the principal writings of Colonel Ingersoll and Messrs. Holyoake, Foote, Watts, and Wheeler. (2) There is no Freethought Club in Manchester, but there is a Branch of the National Secular Society at the Secular Hall in Rusholme-road, All Saints, holding meetings every Sunday night. (3) The only way to escape having your children vaccinated is to disregard the law and chance the consequences. Sometimes a change of address throws the authorities off the scent.

ANNUAL CHILDREN'S PARTY.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Mrs. Horne, 5s.; J. T. Embleton, 2s. and parcel of toys.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—F. Thornett, 5s. Left-off clothing, especially for women and children, would be very welcome. Send to Miss Vance, N. S. S. office, 376-7 Strand, London, W.C.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—F. Thornett, 5s. Per O. Ford (Derby): H. Whitney, 5s.; T. Nowton, 2s. 6d.; R. Willings, 2s. 6d.; G. Harper, 2s. 6d.; J. F. Brooks, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. McGuinness, 2s.; G. Laudor, 2s.; T. Barnes, 1s.; G. Heritage, 1s. 6d.

W. KAY (Bradford).—Inserted. What are the "saints" doing in your locality? There ought to be some propagandist effort in such a populous district.

T. S.—Shall appear.

J. R. WHITTLE.—It must have miscarried.

COSMOPOLITAN.—Certainly the general outlook of the world is not very bright at present, and almost everywhere the Christian nations are the aggressors, with the quiet connivance of pretty well all their Churches.

S. L. WEBLEY.—The delay arose through your sending to Mr. Foote instead of to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., to whom all orders for books, pamphlets, and papers should be sent direct. We have not reprinted Colonel Ingersoll's "Thanksgiving Sermon" yet, though we should be happy to produce it as a pamphlet if there is a general demand for it.

W. TAYLOR.—Order handed to Mr. Forder. Please send to him direct in future.

CAPTAIN OTTO THOMPSON (Stockholm).—Always glad to hear from you. The lady you refer to was quite unknown in England, and we don't see what good we could do by taking up the matter here.

DISGUSTED EX-BELIEVER.—It is a difficult thing to write about when one didn't see and hear the details of the performance. There is generally a happy-family scene when Ritualists and true-blue Protestants got together. We are glad to hear that the bigots who drove you from your situation have had to taste a little of their own medicine.

LEO.—It all depends on what is meant by "the desire to worship." Generally speaking, worship is the adoration of power, whether good or evil. This is the usual attitude of men towards their gods. Even among Christians you find it in their answers to sceptical objections that the moral government of the world is unreasonable and unjust. "Cannot God do as he likes?" they say, just as Paul said, "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" If by worship is merely meant submission to a great ideal, independent of one's personality, surely the Humanitarian has all that is requisite.

W. SIMON.—Paragraph as requested. Lecture notices must always be written on separate slips of paper for the compositors in our printing office.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Blackpool Gazette—Birmingham Post—New York Public Opinion—The Ethical World—Free Society—Two Worlds—Truthseeker—Liberator—Independent Pulpit—Blue Grass Blade—Lexington Argonaut—Cincinnati Free Opinion—Fria Tankar—Crescent—Progressive Thinker—Echo—People's Newspaper—Banner of Light—New York Times—Torch of Reason.

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

THE National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

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.

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was a crowded audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Heaven and Hell," the chair being occupied by Mr. Thomas, of the West London Branch. A good sprinkling of ladies, who were not the least interested and alert auditors, gave a pleasant tone to the meeting. Mr. Foote lectures from the same platform again this evening. His subject will be "Julius Cæsar: Statesman and Atheist; with Remarks on Shakespeare's Play and Mr. Tree's Production." A lecture on "the foremost man of all this world" should be interesting and instructive, especially in view of the latest Shakespeare revival. Mr. Charles Watts, who happens to be disengaged for once in a way, will take the chair on this occasion.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured to a good audience in the Secular Hall, Camberwell. He was in good form, and the audience was exceedingly enthusiastic. The chairman drew special attention to Mr. Watts's article on "Secularism and Marriage," which appeared in last week's *Freethinker*; the result was that every copy of the paper in hand was sold, and many more were required.

Mr. Roberts, secretary of the Liverpool Branch, sends us an account of Mr. Cohen's recent lectures in the district. For three consecutive Sundays he addressed good audiences at Liverpool. Some week-night meetings were held under the Treasurer's Scheme, the Branch undertaking the expense of halls and advertising. There was only a moderate attendance at Prescott, but the local *Weekly News* gave a two-column report, which conveyed the lecture to a wider public. Two excellent meetings were held in Liverpool and one at Birkenhead, the last being largely attended. Two reporters were present, so the lecture has probably gained further publicity. A dozen persons gave in their names and decided to meet a few days later, with a view to forming a Birkenhead Branch.

Mr. Roberts speaks in high praise of the Lecture Scheme, which was inaugurated by Mr. Foote and carried on personally by him for two years, and that without a break, whether funds were in or not. "It is a splendid agency," Mr. Roberts says, "for reaching the masses of the people, and to let it fall through for want of adequate support would be a disgrace to the whole party." We quite agree with Mr. Roberts. All who have any cash to spare for this good work should forward it at once to Miss Vance (secretary), 376-7 Strand, London, W.C.; to Mr. Hartmann (treasurer), at the same address; or to the editor of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Cohen delivers three lectures to-day (March 20) in the Lecture Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow. We hope they will be well attended, as they should be.

The Committee of the Camberwell Secular Hall asks us to mention Mr. Hyatt's evening there this Sunday. He gives a dramatic study from *Othello*, and an oration on the Heavenly Bodies, interspersed with humorous narratives and musical accompaniments.

Our readers will remember that Colonel Ingersoll, in a letter to Mr. Watts, early in January, said that he could not visit England in 1898, but he would do so in 1899. It is possible, however, that the Colonel will come over this year after all. Mr. Foote has just received a letter from

Mr. Farrell, who is a near relative of Ingersoll's as well as his publisher, and lives with the Ingersoll family at 220 Madison-avenue, New York. Mr. Farrell says: "We are thinking strongly of coming to England in October or November, if the Colonel can arrange his affairs so as to get away." All the "saints" over here will be delighted to hear this good news. Some of them, of course, are growing old, and may not live till 1899, and these would die all the happier, or at least more contentedly, if they had only seen Ingersoll in the flesh. Besides, the world is full of accidents, and if one is promised a good thing the sooner one gets it the better. The cup may break, or the lip may fail: who knows? So if the Colonel wants to do us a kindness over here—and of course he does—he will try to arrange those affairs of his as soon as possible. What a pleasure it will be to know that he has actually booked his passage! The ship he sails in will be watched in imagination all the way across the Atlantic.

Sir Robert Stout has definitely retired from public life in Australia. He has earned a rest, and we hope it will be a long and happy one. He was at one time Prime Minister of the Colony, and it was he who carried the Woman Suffrage movement to its triumphant conclusion. Sir Robert Stout is a Secularist.

On Thursday, March 24, at 8 p.m., Mr. G. Bernard Shaw will lecture under the auspices of the Criminal Law and Prisons Department of the Humanitarian League, at Essex Hall, Essex-street, Strand, on "Flagellomania," dealing with the recrudescence of the flogging craze.

There is a fine field for Freethought in India, that land of many religions, and we are pleased to receive from Madras *The Awakener of India; A Freethought Monthly, devoted to Science, Philosophy, Religion, and Sociology.* *The Awakener of India* opposes "Blavatskosophy," but selects good from all sources. It should have a great mission before it.

"It is quite a pleasure," the *Methodist Times* remarks, "to agree with anything that Mr. G. W. Foote says—it is so seldom that we find it possible—but his powerful essay on *The Shadow of the Sword* is a striking and just indictment of war, of the wickedness of war. He shows how black the shadows are."

The Rev. Dr. Clifford, speaking at the recent Free Church gathering in Bristol, said that "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" was "the most glorious motto ever uttered on earth." Good! But where does Jesus Christ come in?

Mr. Malcolm Quin, 30 Alexandra-place, Newcastle-on-Tyne, is endeavoring to form a Patriotic Union in opposition to the growing spirit of militarism. "True patriotism," he says in his preliminary prospectus, "consists in maintaining the liberty and promoting the progress of our own country, in subordination to the general welfare of mankind, and in developing its friendly and harmonious relationship with all the other people of the world." Mr. Quin holds that missionaries and others who go to foreign countries should be considered for the time being as subjects of those countries, and as "not entitled to the military support of their own Government."

The *Labor Echo* (Bradford) refers to Mr. Charles Watts's pamphlet, *Why do Right?* as "a very able exposition of the Secularist's position."

A meeting of all interested in the matter will be held today (March 20) at the Bradlaugh Club, 36 Newington-green-road, to receive a report and make further arrangements for the open-air lecture-station at Ridley-road, Kingsland, during the coming season.

MORALS AND CONSCIENCE.

FOR my part, I can imagine no higher morality or virtue, no nobler development of the social man, than is expressed in that feeling: "I am a man; I will do nothing a man should feel ashamed of; I will take no mean advantage of another, nor will I permit others to encroach upon my rights while I am able to defend them."

I am sure the Bible and Christianity do not contain or teach anything so noble or so moral as that. The highest morality or virtue they know is absolute self-abnegation, combined with fulsome flattery of their owner. The veriest cur that can be found is the most perfect type of a thorough Christian.

But let us proceed to discuss the question of Conscience. Most people, especially those who blindly follow the teach-

ings of the pulpit, the confessional, and Sunday-school, regard Conscience as a guide, a sort of divine policeman placed on duty inside of each particular man, with a perfect moral code to impart, and in every emergency of life prompt to order the individual to abstain from wrong and to do the right. That, I think, is a fair representation of popular notions respecting conscience.

I heartily wish each man were furnished with such a useful and perfect guide in life! How different my own experience of life would then have been! I should not have found such swarms of utterly conscienceless characters around my path. But the popular superstition of conscience is as unlike the reality as could be imagined.

Whatever conscience may be held to be, the very highest conscience found in the Bible permits, even if it does not prompt, the frightful punishment of all mankind and all else for the alleged fault of a few non-human beings, the visiting of the sins of the fathers upon the children so late as the fourth generation. These are specimens of Bible conscience in its most perfect form, as found in the Bible God himself. The same God quite conscientiously ordered people to be murdered for Sabbath-breaking, for infringing his patent rights in oil and perfume (Exodus xxx. 22-38); also to order the wholesale destruction of Amalekites, Hittites, Canaanites, etc. His conscience did not forbid this God to murder his own son as a sacrifice to himself; and Christians have boasted more of that senseless, savage sacrifice than of anything else—except of their ill-gotten wealth and power.

These facts show how very misleading the highest Christian conscience is, and must ever be, until enlightened—when it must cease to be Christian.

The true Philosophy of Conscience will show its character and limitations.

Man is capable of thought and feeling. These are fundamental facts in our nature. Of course, there is the greatest possible difference between the measure of thought or feeling of men at the opposite extremes of society, but we are not just now concerned with the exact measure; our business relates only to the acknowledged fact that men may think (have thoughts) and feel (have emotions).

Most men can reflect more or less, a few are so stupid as not to know whether they are in harmony with their fellow-men or not; and few are so devoid of feeling as not to care for that harmony. The greatest number of mankind have always cared for the goodwill of their fellows. The exceptions to this rule are so few that we need not take them into account. Omitting them, we may lay it down as an undeniable proposition that all men are anxious to stand well with their fellow-men, and to do and think the same as the vast majority of those they know best and among whom their lot is cast. So extremely strong is this desire in most men that they will endure almost anything, and play the hypocrite wholesale, rather than be reckoned odd, or lay themselves open to sneers, or reproach, or laughter for being unlike "everybody else," etc.

The Reformer knows how much it costs and what it means to live a life even partially out of harmony with that of his neighbors. There are no things mankind has ever punished so severely as the crime of the Reformer, the man who does his best to teach his fellows "a more excellent way."

And here we learn, or may learn, instructive moral lessons. We find conscience and conscience. The general conscience of the people tells them that what is must be right, that the morals and ways of those who reared them must be correct, and that only rebellion, heresy, or other wickedness could attempt, even in the slightest particular, to change the beliefs, ways, customs, etc., of the community. Here we find the root of all honest persecutions. Persecutions committed by hypocrites and tricksters is a very different thing.

Supposing the Gospel story were true, we should there find conscience against conscience. The Jews conscientiously regarded Jesus as a vulgar blasphemer; and their conscience and their Bible bade them kill him for that crime. The conscience of Jesus incited him to reproach and denounce the Jews as a set of wicked people who deserved everlasting damnation for rejecting his foolish and fanatical claims. Here conscience on both sides might be perfectly honest and pure, but extremely dark and unenlightened. Had the Jews and Jesus been properly educated, they would have readily seen that the most extreme difference of opinion on religious matters was

really the last thing in the world to justify a quarrel between them.

Of course, we must not forget that a man's conscience, as well as his face or any other part of him, is not made by him, but for him. It depends entirely upon his constitution, his ancestry, his circumstances; and is not to any extent under his own control.

When people speak of Conscience as a judge, a monitor, a guide, a "still small voice" condemning our actions, etc., they forget that conscience must always approve of just what it has been reared to, and disapprove what is contrary thereto—that, in sober truth, conscience as often approves of what is wrong as of what is right. And if men all followed their conscience just as it really is, they would differ as much in their beliefs and practices as they do now.

The most enlightened and best-intentioned man is often in the gravest doubt as to how he ought to behave in given circumstances—that is, he knows not which to approve or to condemn, this or that. But if conscience were the infallible judge or guide ignorant people pretend, it could never approve the wrong or condemn the right; and, besides, all consciences would teach or approve the same thing, etc., and conscientious quarrels and crimes would be unknown.

The word "conscience" fully bears out what we say. It is compounded of *con* and *science*. *Con* means *with*, and implies here mutuality; *science* is *knowledge*, and also feeling. The word "conscience," then, both in etymology and in its present sense, means "mutual knowledge and mutual sentiment combined." It never means anything less or more than that; and it beautifully expresses what we are contending for.

In society, savage or civilized, people have common knowledge, common feelings or sentiments, most especially as regards behavior, or conduct and character. On these subjects they know alike, think alike, and feel alike. And that mutual knowledge and sentiment is the regulating principle of the community, the standard of right to which each and all spontaneously look to direct their course.

The man who regulates his conduct and life by such a standard is a conscientious man, no matter how low or how high that moral standard may be. If he should remove to a more perfect environment, his conscience would require to change accordingly, and right and wrong would vary in detail, though in nothing else.

—*Liberator*.

JOS. SYMES.

At Heaven's Gate.

'Twas the pressman at the wicket—
He who ne'er requires a ticket
When on earth, but always gets there just the same
upon the nod—
That St. Peter intercepted,
Saying, "Nods are not accepted;
We have absolutely no free list up here, so help me—!"
Then the pressman, sighing sadly,
Said: "You wrong me, Peter, badly
I'm no common deadhead bummer, for I represent the
Press;
And you, knowing this, refuse me....."
Said St. Peter: "Please excuse me;
Press alone, of course, accepted—here's your hale;
kindly dress."

—*Sydney Bulletin*.

EIFFA.

When Religion Ruled.

Going back only a very few years in time, we see the pillory, the rack, the gallows, the stake, and the pruning-knife in full swing over that portion of the world which Christianity boasted, but too truly, it had transformed—into a shambles. All over America ill-fated couples, traduced by unsuccessful spoilers of their domestic peace, were swinging particularly for the crime of kissing one another on a Sunday; all over Europe and England wretched old women were screaming at the stake for the sole crime of being prematurely withered and ugly, thanks to the wretched sanitary arrangements religion, in its ignorant war against science and common sense, was determined to maintain, or because, for similar reasons, a blight had taken Farmer Tithepigs' cattle. Everywhere the rack was creaking, wrenched-off ears and rotten eggs were flying about the pillories, and Atheists (or supposed Atheists) were expiating the crime of possessing a brain by being disembowelled alive by the common hangman.—*W. W. Strickland, "Epicurean Essays," p. 152.*

A NEW FREETHOUGHT WORK.

Ourselves in Relation to a Deity and a Church is an anonymous work of 239 pages, published by George Redway. The author is a Freethinker entirely outside the trammels of the Church, and without belief in the orthodox deity. He goes over most of the ground in dispute between Christian and Freethinker. In particular he shows how the pretensions of the Church to be a divine guide have been, and are, falsified. His book is put forward, he tells us, to induce Freethinkers whose station and culture confer on them an advantage over their fellows, to set an example to the rest. It strikes us he should himself, if he could afford it, set an example by putting his name on the work.

The author says:—

"For the superstitious, illusive, empirical, and hybrid theological system, under which so many of us live and die, I thirst to see substituted one more in a line with recognisable facts, or even with reasonable probabilities—one more contemporary, less idolatrous, less pagan, less conventional. In our civil institutions we have reached the close of the nineteenth century; in our ecclesiastical, which touch at least equally the heart of our life, we are not far from the Middle Ages. We acknowledge a modified polytheism, a mixed ritual, and a theological costume based on that of a nationality with which we have no kindred."

He takes a survey of the position of the Church, examines its rites, discipline, and doctrines. Practically, he says, "The Church is a Vocation and a subsistence, just as the Army, Navy, Civil Service, and Counting House are." Christianity, he points out, is only a large sect, one of the many faiths of the world, of which Buddhism boasts even larger numbers. Its sacred books, he contends, have reached our hands in very doubtful state. The lapse of time between the events related and the most ancient manuscripts known to survive, and the facilities which have existed for modifying the text, might be well considered. He shows what those books actually were, and how they have been mistaken and misinterpreted by those who worship the Bible as a fetish. He says:—

"The difference between the book as it was written, and as it is set before us, even in the latest recension, is almost equivalent to that between Sir Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights* and Mr. Lane's. The pages of the Hebrew work, like those of the Arabic, are replete with Orientalisms, in comparison with which the coarsest jocular miscellany in European literature is milk for babes. But we lie in the bed which we have made for ourselves. We have chosen to accept as Holy Writ a Collection of Relics belonging to an alien race, as they have been adapted from time to time by excision, paraphrase, and literal changes to answer the postulates of faith and decency."

The leading Bible stories are examined, and their absurdity and lack of evidence exposed. The New Testament, he says, is, like all Oriental literature, "a web of fact and myth." He shows the lack of evidence for a resurrection, and observes:—

"The gradual relinquishment of our faith in a Resurrection, so far from impoverishing the life in our hands and curtailing its blessings and opportunities ought, among well-balanced minds, to widen and intensify our appreciation of it, our interest in those duties which it falls to us to perform, and our affection for all with whom we are brought into closer relationship; so that, assuming that we have no substantive being hereafter, we may emulate each other in the healthiest and most elevating of all forms of rivalry—that which aims at creating in our name and work a property inheritable by our family, if not by our country and by all countries."

The work is a shrewd and able one, to which we may return. Meantime we commend it to the notice of our readers.

Obituary.

DIED, on March 9, aged sixty-four, Mr. James Edgecombe, of West Bowling, Bradford, after two days' illness. From early life he was a sincere and intelligent Secularist, and was a member of the Bradford Branch of the National Secular Society. He had the deepest regard for Mr. Charles Bradlaugh during the lifetime of that great and noble man. He was interred at the local cemetery, when Mr. A. B. Wakefield, of Hipperholme, read effectively the Secular Burial Service.—*W. KAY.*

BOOK CHAT.

GERMANY used to be thought the land of thinkers and poets. But the military régime has changed all that, and better works are now produced in the German language, in Zurich or in Cincinnati, than in Berlin. The Emperor's orthodoxy has had the effect of lowering the status of German literature.

The late Dr. Brewer's *Dictionary of Miracles* records two thousand instances of the miraculous, both of the Catholic and Protestant faith. Yet it is surprising how they run in a few well-worn grooves, such as casting out devils, walking on water, giving sight to the blind, etc. Baron Munchausen was a commonplace liar compared to some of the chroniclers of the saints. There's no choice in rotten apples, so we give as specimen the first we come to: "When St. Blaise fled from Sebaste, in Syria, through fear of Agricolaus, he lay concealed in a cave in a craggy mountain called Argeus. Here savage beasts visited him daily: and if, by chance, they happened to drop in while he was in prayer, they would reverently wait till he rose from his knees. Sometimes the wolf and the sheep would meet in the cave, the lion and the lamb, tigers, bears, leopards, and kids, yet none would hurt another; but they would abide in friendly intercourse, till the holy man would give them his blessing, and bade them go in peace. Some of them he quite transformed, so that those beasts which before preyed on each other ate grass like oxen; and whenever he saw any defiled with blood, he never failed to chide them for their cruelty, and told them to abandon their evil ways" (*Life of St. Blaise*).

An account is given where "a saint wards off the sun from a public assembly." Another stops a river; another is converted into a wolf, and from the wolf into a lamb, such stories of transmigration suggesting a Buddhist source; another was fed for sixty years by a crow; the dead bodies of three saints refuse to be moved; a team of horses kneel when St. Francis holds a crucifix before them; St. Vincent Ferrier had wings occasionally, when he waited on the Lord; the holy wafer bleeds profusely from the knife of a Jew; the only wafer, impatient to enter the mouth of St. Catherine, leaps from the plate to the lips of the saint, etc.

We receive from "M.," Clevedon, a pamphlet entitled *Jesus is God*. "M." says: "The Lord has graciously deigned to bless this Book to souls, and the author has thus been encouraged to scatter many and many tens of thousands of copies gratis throughout the world." We are blessed if we can see anything in it but a jumble of texts, without rhyme, reason, context, or commentary, all designed to show that Jesus is God. But the Unitarians have their texts, and explain every one of those given by "M." in accordance with their doctrine. We leave them to fight the matter out.

Vol. iii. of *The Hat Crusade* details the doings of the young Quakers—Fox, Pickard, and Tregelles—and narrates the last illness and death of the first-named. There is appended a dissertation on hat-wearing, the military salute, shoe-doffing, kneeling, bowing, and other gestures of salutation of considerable interest to students of custom.

A very thorough exposition of *The Jewish Law of Divorce*, according to the Bible and Talmud, is that given by David Werner Amram, MA., LL.B., of the Philadelphia Law (D. Nutt, 270 Strand). It appears from the preface that in 1888 a clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal Church was tried in the Ecclesiastical Court of the diocese of Pennsylvania, upon charges of immorality and breach of his ordination vow. His chief offence was his second marriage after he had been divorced from his first wife because of her desertion—a ground of divorce not recognised by the Church. This case led Mr. Amram to look up the entire law, and the result is given in the volume before us. He argues that to study the laws of the Bible, without the use of the Talmud, is the study of the law without the commentary; "it is an attempt to understand the character of a nation by reading its statute-book, and disregarding the judicial interpretation and application of its laws to the daily life of the people."

The patriarchs had absolute power over their wives. Hagar was sent out into the wilderness by Father Abram with no other formality than giving her bread and water, and the Old Testament accepts divorce as an immemorial right of the husband. The first restriction upon divorce at will are found in the Deuteronomic Code. The restrictions are that he must not calumniate his wife as a non-virgin, nor put her away if he has ravished her as a virgin. The customary right of the husband was maintained till after New Testament times; the famous Rabbi Aqiba, whose opinion was of commanding authority, holding, with the school of Hillel, that a man need assign no reason for

divorcing his wife, and may, for example, divorce her if he find another woman more beautiful than she; for it is written, "if she find no favor in his eyes." Philo and Josephus also agree with the mere giving a bill of divorce. Jesus, in taking a more strict view, was only following the rival school of Shammai.

Mr. Amram goes fully into the laws of the Mishnah restricting the husband's right to divorce, and the causes entitling the wife to divorce under Talmudic law. According to Numbers v., by direct order of the Lord a wife who was suspected was compelled to drink the waters of jealousy, which, if guilty, would cause her to swell. This barbaric Bible law, however, fell into disuse. The Rabbis said: "Only when the man is himself free from guilt will the waters be an effective test of the wife's guilt or innocence; and if he has been guilty of illicit intercourse the waters will be of none effect." This was a prelude to the final abolition of the divinely-ordained ordeal which was done by Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai.

Mr. Amram gives full particulars of the Bill of Divorce, or *Get*, which has long been the principal item in proceedings of divorce. A copy of one in Hebrew is given as a frontispiece. There is a good index, as well as a list of the principal works consulted in the preparation of the volume.

Mr. F. F. Arbuthnot, of the Oriental Translation Fund, 22 Albemarle-street, announces as now ready, and issued under the patronage of the Royal Asiatic Society, *The Makâmât; or, Assemblies of Hariri*, in two volumes, translated from the Arabic by the late Mr. Thomas Chenery and Dr. F. Steingass, with notes historical and grammatical, and full descriptive index.

The *Athenæum*, reviewing Vuilier's *History of Dancing*, says: "The early Christians had their ritual dances, just as the Hebrews and all other religious sects had. Where formerly stood a temple a Christian sanctuary rose up, and the worshippers held their services in it, and accompanied them by rhythmic movements, just as the Pagans danced around their altars. In Mr. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past* he has a chapter on "Religious Dances," in which many curious particulars may be found.

Mr. Stanley Lane Poole has completed *The Life of Saladin*, which one can safely predict will give a faithful and enduring view of the famous and chivalric "infidel-soldan." Messrs. Putnam will publish the work.

CORRESPONDENCE.

PHRENOLOGY AND THEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is not here intended to discuss the truth of Phrenology (that is open to the judgment of those persons who care to study it carefully), but only to deal with its religious aspects. So far as the writer is aware of the many elaborate expositions on the subject of phrenology, most, or all, tend to lend their support to the Theistic position. Not one has had the courage or honesty enough to stand alone before the public and give a philosophic examination of those organs suggested to be of a religious character—viz., Spirituality and Veneration. These organs have, according to the exponents of the science, various degrees of activity, varying from degree *one* to *seven*; persons having the lower degree are commended to cultivate, and those possessing the higher degree to restrain, the action of these organs (see any phrenological chart). Now, after a course of several years' careful study of the science, I deny that any man possessing these organs in degree *one* can cultivate the organs to any higher degree, any more than a man born with one arm can grow one more—his usual amount. It therefore follows that Theistic freewillism can not logically ask a man to do a thing he has no power to do. The writer also denies that primarily these faculties in healthy condition are of a religious nature at all, or in any way relative to the so-called higher aspects of Theism. When they become diseased through too great an activity, it produces what the Rev. Brewin Grant called the *mud* Christian. The influence of these organs, in character, is a matter of topography, heredity, and education. The savage pictures his god with the same faculties as the Theist does his, the exception being that the above-named influences have moulded their different conceptions.

The faculties are defined by the leading American writers, Professors Sizer and Drayton, thus: "*Spirituality*: Belief in a spirit, or Psyche.....for the most part religious..... and is the basis of our longing after novelty." The latter sentence is precise. The writers also show that this organ has been large in cranks, warriors, and philosophers.

Socrates had his Dæmon, Napoleon had his star of destiny. Ann Lee, Loyola, Whitfield, and Swedenborg had it very large. Thus it will be seen that its action is not confined to Theism. *Veneration*: "The sentiment of reverence in general; a disposition to worship a Supreme Being." The writers under this heading also show how large it has been found in criminals and in persons with the "vindictive spirit in the asseveration of their religious opinions" (*Heads and Faces*, pp. 84-87). It will be seen that morality does not necessarily go with religious beliefs.

Phrenology, properly examined, is a useless prop to the Theist. It favors the sceptical and Atheistic position by showing that man is a being of circumstances, past and present. If a man is born with either of these faculties inactive, it is certain he will never be a victim of credulity and adoration of the Unknown. The organs have their legitimate use of *Wonder* and *Respect*, and when in subjection, and acting in combination with the reasoning powers, produce good results. It is when they are diseased from inheritance and over-action that they produce, or continue, senseless dogmas and superstitions.

Another point of phrenology is, it teaches that thought or personality is the result of (and the amount of can be judged by the quantity of) that grey matter called brain. Precisely. What does that prove? Simply that personality, or thought, perishes with that which produces it. As Mr. Foote pointed out, belief in a future life is only the psychological side of self-preservation.

Perhaps some of your readers, sir, will oblige with their views on the subject—especially the Theists.

A. E. DAVIS.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VACCINATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Having regard to the interesting and appreciative notice of "Vaccination a Delusion: its Penal Enforcement a Crime," by Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, LL.D., F.R.S., etc., (just published by Swan Sonnenschein), in a recent issue of the *Freethinker*, it may interest your numerous readers to learn the views of one of the most distinguished scientific observers of our time on this important subject. In a communication addressed some time ago to the past President of the National Anti-vaccination League, Dr. Wallace wrote: "Like many other people, till a few years back, I had not a doubt as to the efficacy of vaccination. I accepted it blindly as one of the established facts of science. Having been led to look into the evidence on the subject, I was first startled by the discrepancy of the statistics of small-pox mortality with the vaccination theory, and on further inquiry I was amazed to find that the evidence in favor of vaccination was of the most shadowy kind, while there was good reason to believe that it was itself a cause of disease of the most serious nature. I have also been struck by the (apparent) want of honesty in the defenders of vaccination in repeating over and over again statements which are not true, and in actually falsifying the records of small-pox mortality by entering all doubtful cases as 'unvaccinated.' I have no doubt whatever that any unprejudiced person, who will investigate the evidence on both sides for himself, will arrive at the same conclusion as I have done—that to enforce on unwilling parents a surgical operation which they honestly believe to be injurious, and as to the efficacy of which there is so great a diversity of opinion, even among medical men, is a gross infraction of personal liberty, entirely unjustified by any proved beneficial results.—Believe me, yours very faithfully, Alfred R. Wallace." It will be remembered that Dr. Wallace gave important evidence before the Royal Commission on Vaccination; but, like the evidence of other anti-vaccinators, little consideration appears to have been given to it by this pro-vaccinist-packed Commission.

JAS. R. WILLIAMSON.

THE YOUNGSTERS.

The teacher in a Sunday-school once asked a little girl what would happen if she broke one of the Ten Commandments. "There would then be but nine," was the prompt reply.

Bright boy (to visiting pastor)—"Now try it on me. Ma says you can put anyone to sleep in five minutes."

The Sunday-school lesson was about Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness, and the teacher was asking questions of her scholars. "What did Moses strike the rock for?" she inquired. "For water," answered the class, promptly. "Was Moses blessed for what he had done?" "No, ma'am." "Why not?" This was a poser for some time, but finally a tough-looking small boy held up his hand. "Well, Tommy, why not?" asked the teacher, encouragingly. "Because, mum, he didn't strike it for beer."

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

THUS Colonel Ingersoll: "The religion of the future is humanity. The religion of the future will say to every man, You have the right to think and investigate for yourself. Liberty is my religion. Everything that is true, every good thought, every beautiful thing, every self-denying action—all these make my Bible. Every bubble, every star, are passages in my Bible. A constellation is a chapter. Every shining world is a part of it. You cannot interpolate it; you cannot change it. It is the same forever. My Bible is all that speaks to man. Every violet, every blade of grass, every tree, every mountain crowned with snow, every star that shines, every throb of love, every honest act, all that is good and true combined, make my Bible, and upon that book I stand."

'Tis guaranteed by Truth divine
That devils enter man and swine;
And you or I can cast them out
By fasting and by conquering doubt.
And those who say this is absurd
Mock and despise God's holy word.
Devils can be expelled, I know,
Because the Bible tells me so.

—W. P. Ball.

A religion that keeps the people in poverty and the priest in plenty is an imposition.—*Boston Investigator*.

Do not believe in what ye have heard; do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations; do not believe in anything because it is rumored and spoken of by many; do not believe merely because the written statement of some old sage is produced; do not believe in conjectures; do not believe in that as truth to which you have become attached by habit; do not believe merely on the authority of your teachers and elders; after observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.—*Gautama Buddha*.

There are popular lies and political lies,
And "lies that stick fast between buying and selling,"
And lies of politeness—conventional lies
(Which scarcely are reckoned as such in the telling).
There are lies of sheer malice, and slanderous lies,
From those who delight to peck filth like a pigeon;
But the oldest and far most respectable lies
Are those that are told in the name of religion.

—L. Doten.

PROFANE JOKES.

YOUNG sky-pilot (with exalted opinion of his own power)—"I don't think I need put on the gown, John. It's only an encumbrance, though some folks seem to think it makes the preacher more impressive." Beadle (with less exalted opinion of the preacher's power)—"Ay, sir, that's just it, sir. It mak's ye mair impresive—an' ye need it a', sir, ye need it a'."

A parson once visited a lady of his parish, who had just lost her husband, in order to offer consolation; and, upon her earnest inquiries as to the reunion of families in heaven, the sky-pilot strongly asserted his belief in that fact; and when she asked with anxiety whether any time must elapse before friends would be able to find each other in the next world, he emphatically said: "No, they will be united at once." He was thinking of the happiness of being able to offer the relief of such a faith, when she broke in upon his meditations by exclaiming sadly: "Well, his first wife has got him, then, by this time!"

Parson Saintly (excitedly)—"Ha! the great philanthropist Givaway is dead, and has left his entire fortune to local charities and foreign missions." Stranger—"Ah! God bless him! God bless him! I like to see money left like that." Parson Saintly—"Pardon me, sir; but are you one of the cloth?" Stranger—"Oh, no! I'm a lawyer."

Rector's wife—"You ought to avoid even the appearance of evil. Do you yourself think the girls who dance are right?" Belle of the parish—"They must be. I know the girls who don't dance are always left."

Teacher (of Infant School)—"Well, children, I know you are all looking forward to the Christmas holidays. Now I wonder if any of you can tell me what Christmas day is?" Six-year-old Girl—"Jesus Christ's birthday." Teacher—"Quite right, dear. You have all answered my questions very well to-day, so I will let you ask me a few." Six-year-old Girl—"Please, ma'am, when is Satan's birthday?"

Diocesan Inspector—"Now, my dear children, tell me how Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed?" Sharp Boy—"By brimstone and treacle from heaven, sir."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Julius Cæsar: Statesman and Atheist."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.30, Open discussion on "Vaccination," O. W. Flint opener.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, A lecture; 7.30, An evening with B. Hyatt.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 11.15, Discussion, "George Meredith's Works," opened by J. Barratt; 7, Stanton Coit, "Erasmus and His Praise of Folly."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Stanton Coit, "Erasmus and His Praise of Folly."

WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): 7.30, Adam Taylor, "Thomas Cooper (Self-taught), Shoemaker, Chartist, and Poet."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 7, S. Armfield, "Some Peculiarities of Jesus."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, Stanley Jones, "God and Man."

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, Brunswick-street): C. Cohen—11.30, "Evolution and its Gospel"; 2.30, "Rome, Dissent, or Freethought?"; 6.30, "What is the Use of Religion?"

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Felix Volkovskiy, "Russia."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Hammond, "Christian Origins."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, E. Evans, "Nansen's Dash for the Pole," illustrated by lantern slides.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Byker Social Club, corner of Raby and Parker-streets): 7, R. Mitchell, A lecture.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. P. Ward—11, "The New Woman and the Old Man"; 3, "Jesus the Infidel"; 7, "Why I Dare not be a Christian." Tea at 5. March 21, Assembly Room, Woodhouse, 7, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secular Platform."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "A Lesson in Music," with illustrations.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—March 20, Glasgow; 21 to 26, Greenock, Paisley, Dunoon, and Motherwell; 27, Edinburgh. April 2, 3, and 4, Stanley; 10, Gateshead; 17, Manchester; 24 and 25, Birmingham. May 1, Sheffield; 8, Liverpool; 15, Blackburn.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—April 10, Mile End; 17, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith; 24, a., Victoria Park. May 1, m., Finsbury; 8, m., Mile End; 15, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn; 22, m., Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 6 Wawne Grove, Alexandra-road, Hull.—March 20 and 21, Sheffield; 27, Manchester. April 3, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 10, Stockton-on-Tees; 17, Glasgow.

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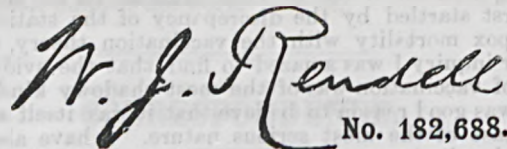
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