

194

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

VOL. XVIII.—No. 13.

SUNDAY, MARCH 27, 1898.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

NONCONFORMISTS AND HUMANITARIANISM.

THE Humanitarian League is one of the most extraordinary of present-day organizations. It was founded by a few enthusiasts like Mr. H. S. Salt. They were men (and women) of very little influence in the world, yet by steady persistence they have made the League astonishingly influential. Their success shows what may be done by wise and patient effort. To look at Mr. Salt and Mr. Bell, for instance, you would not imagine them to be enthusiasts at all, still less ardent soldiers in one of the "forlorn hopes" of progress. There is no shrieking about them, no attitudinizing, no calling on heaven and earth to witness their sublime endeavors. They never prophesy that if they have their way the millennium will arrive in a few weeks. But they have got hold of a great principle, and they spend their time, strength, and ability in making it prevail. Though they would like to see it win faster, they are in no hurry. They are satisfied to see it gain a little every day. Already they have enlisted the sympathy, and more or less the support, of a considerable number of well-known "progressives"; they have succeeded in catching the ear of the press, and they have issued quite a little library of publications. And what, it may be asked, is the great principle they are thus promoting? A very simple one in essence, though not so simple in its implications—the principle of humaneness—the principle, to use the language of the League's prospectus, that "it is iniquitous to inflict suffering, directly or indirectly, on any sentient being, except when self-defence or absolute necessity can be justly pleaded." "Oh," the man in the street will say, "everybody agrees with that." Perhaps so, in the most abstract theory. But saying "Amen" is one thing, and meaning to have any share in bringing it to pass is quite another. Few men are desperately wicked, and the number is not really great of those who are deliberately cruel. Most men have sympathies that may be touched. But evil (as the poet says) is wrought by want of thought as well as by want of heart; and sympathy can only be appealed to with any durable profit through the avenues of intelligence. For this reason, doubtless, the Humanitarian League deals in the concrete with what it calls "the cruelties of civilization." Its pamphlets expose the barbarities of "sport," the needless and often thoughtless ill-treatment of the lower animals as man's servants or food-providers, the ferocity of sentences passed upon so many criminals and the cold callousness of their treatment in prison, the evils of the State-enforced medical dogma of vaccination, the horrors of the sweating system, especially in relation to women and children, and the folly and wickedness of war. These are some of the many evils attacked by the League; and we repeat that the war, if prompted by the heart, is carried on with the head—as every social war must be if it is to result in anything more than a few scornful or impatient concessions.

Let it here be said, in passing, that the League has just published its Sixth Annual Report, which can be obtained gratis on application at its office, 53 Chancery-lane, London, W.C. We hope a good many readers of this journal will obtain a copy, and some of them will probably be moved to send the League a subscription.

Anyone who looks through that Report will find, I think, that most of the work of the League has been done by persons outside all the Churches. A few Church of England men have helped, but Nonconformists have done

No. 870.

practically nothing. This fact gave a fine suggestive flavor to the announcement that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes was to deliver an address at St. Martin's Town Hall on "The Attitude of Nonconformists to Humanitarianism." The meeting was advertised by the League in the usual way, it was also announced in press paragraphs, and as Mr. Passmore Edwards was to take the chair one expected a large attendance. When I entered the hall, a few minutes before eight, on Tuesday, March 15, I was surprised to see the merest handful of people. At no time did the meeting reach a hundred. From sixty to seventy was perhaps the actual number. Yet the admission was free, a famous philanthropist was in the chair, and the speaker was one of the leading lights of the Wesleyan Church. What was the explanation? Was it that the friends of Humanitarianism could not get up any enthusiasm over the attitude of Nonconformists? Or was it that even Mr. Hughes's leadership failed to produce any Nonconformist interest in Humanitarianism? Certain it is that the crowds who applaud Mr. Hughes on Sunday afternoon at St. James's Hall were represented that evening by one "Sister" and two or three other ladies, and a dozen or so of male devotees.

Mr. Passmore Edwards, in his very brief speech as chairman, seemed rather depressed by the sight of so many empty benches. However, he paid Mr. Hughes a remarkably strong (some would say a violent) compliment, somewhat at the expense of Mr. Frederic Harrison. Mr. Hughes himself, like an old practitioner, set off and continued at a rattling pace, by way of defying the spirit of depression which had made a victim of the chairman. The first thing he did was to pay Mr. Passmore Edwards a strong (or violent) compliment in turn, somewhat at the expense of Jesus Christ. All through the evening, indeed, the chairman was sturdily courted by the speaker. Everybody, of course, knew that Mr. Passmore Edwards was a rich man, who has given away large sums of money; and nine out of every ten, I fancy, would have thought the courtship all the better for a little lace of delicacy over its boisterous nakedness.

Being a public speaker myself, I refrain from criticism of Mr. Hughes's oratory, and confine myself to the substance of that evening's address. He confessed that he was not exactly familiar with the Humanitarian League and its work; still, he had read its objects carefully, and looked into several of its publications; and he was there to state what, in the light of history, had been the attitude of Nonconformists to the principles which the League included under the head of Humanitarianism. His method of doing this was, to say the least of it, peculiar. He took certain great causes—such as anti-slavery, prison reform, peace, the emancipation of woman, the protection of children, temperance, and popular education—and cited the names of certain Nonconformists who had befriended them. As though a host of Nonconformists had not opposed them, either by active hostility or by the dead-weight of indifference! And the greatest peculiarity of this peculiar method was this, that the chief part of Mr. Hughes's list of Nonconformist Humanitarians belonged to the Society of Friends, vulgarly known as Quakers. Now the Quakers are one of the smallest of Christian sects, and they were just as infamously treated by the general body of Nonconformists as ever they were by the Established Church.

It would be easy enough to show, if Mr. Hughes were ready for a real discussion of the subject, that Noncon-

formists, as such, had no special share in the abolition of slavery. They owned slaves in the Southern States, for instance; they clung to their flesh-and-blood property with as much tenacity as Episcopalians; and they justified it by the same appeal to the Bible. Then in regard to war, it is perfectly true that John Bright (a Quaker again!) opposed our war with Russia; but it is also true that the overwhelming mass of Nonconformists looked upon that war as "righteous." Even now we do not see much Nonconformist opposition to fighting when England stands a chance of appropriating large territories of the heathen. War is very wicked when it means a big thing and plenty of danger, but a mere peccadillo, not worth talking about, when it means a sure stroke of cheap and easy thieving, and all the loss on the other side. Of course we do not forget, and we frankly admit it, that Nonconformists are more or less ready to fight for the Lord. They talked the other day about England's guns thundering against the bloody Mohammedans. But perhaps they knew it was an inexpensive form of braggadocio, a thrifty flourish of religious fanaticism; for every sane person knew that the firing of an English gun, except within the Concert of Europe, meant a general war, in which England would in all probability have had to face a coalition of bitter enemies.

Mr. Hughes's remarks on the woman question were positively facetious in the light of the fact that his own Wesleyan Church will not admit a lady delegate at its Annual Conference. It is all very well in its way to oppose the Contagious Diseases Acts as applied to women in India. We are as hostile as Mr. Hughes can be to the forcible cleaning of females as instruments of male lust. But behind this question there lies another. Thousands of young Englishmen are sent out to India as soldiers; they are of the common ethical mould, with little culture and rank passions; and you offer them a tract or a sermon as a check to their most imperious appetites. If you will have an empire in India you must keep an army there, and if you keep an army there you must have prostitution. Everything in this world has its price, and Nonconformists have to pay like other people. They may whine, wail, groan, shriek, or rave, but Nature will have her bill.

Mr. Hughes went on to speak of the protection of children. Naturally he did not explain how it is that helpless little children require so much protection from brutal adults in a Christian country. He referred to Mr. Waugh, the secretary of the Children's Protection Society, as a Nonconformist. This is true enough, but does one swallow make a summer? Müller's Orphanage was also referred to, and certainly we do not wish to disparage that old gentleman's benevolence. But on such an occasion Mr. Hughes need not have sung the triumphs of prayer. It is not by such agency that the Humanitarian League proposes to achieve its contemplated reforms. Besides, everybody knows that Müller's charities did *not* rely upon prayer, but were extremely well advertised, although not in the business columns of the newspapers.

Popular education is no part of the Humanitarian League's program, so I will not trouble my readers with Mr. Hughes's observations on this head. I will only say myself, in passing, that, as a matter of fact, the Church of England finds immensely more money for elementary schools than is found by all the Nonconformist Churches together. With regard to Temperance, Mr. Hughes confessed that "the Anglican Church is running us very close." After all, however, it is historically true that the Churches only began to patronize the Temperance movement when they found it powerful. The Temperance movement was started by men not in connection with any churches, and they were reviled by all churches with edifying impartiality. Wesleyans, as well as other sectarians, tried to frown the movement out of existence. In 1841 the Wesleyan Conference resolved that Wesleyan chapels should not be used for Temperance meetings, and that no Wesleyan preacher should publicly advocate teetotalism in another circuit without the consent of its superintendent minister. Of course the scene is changed now, and for very obvious reasons. Always and everywhere the Churches "noble" successful movements which they did not originate, and which, indeed, they often opposed or derided in the beginning.

Mr. Hughes referred to the Nonconformist town of Leicester as the chief centre of practical anti-vaccination. Probably he does not know that the handful of men who

started the movement there, and fought its battles in the days of its obloquy, were mostly Freethinkers. The late Mr. P. A. Taylor, who was the Parliamentary champion of anti-vaccination, was also a Freethinker. With regard to vivisection, too, it cannot be denied that Freethinkers have spoken out more clearly and decisively than Nonconformists. Has any Wesleyan minister come within measurable distance of the glowing denunciations of vivisection from the lips of Ingersoll? Only one great Nonconformist name occurs to my recollection here. It is that of Dr. Garth Wilkinson, the Swedenborgian, who has stigmatised vaccination and vivisection alike with all the resources of his opulent genius.

General Booth brought up the rear of Mr. Hughes's procession of Humanitarian Nonconformists. The head of the Salvation Army was highly eulogised, although his work is really without significance to those who do not regard charity as a solution of social problems. Finally, we were given an account of the work of the West London Mission, and I confess that Mr. Hughes seemed to be genuinely interested in it. He spoke like a man whose heart was in the business. What he did not see was that many of his facts showed the hopelessness of his methods. Take, for instance, the horrible crowding of the dwellers in Soho. I should be sorry to perpetrate a suspicion of a sneer at the "Sisters" who toil in that human quagmire, but I do say that they might just as well stay at home for any solid good they do. Dealing with the effects of causes tends to blind us to the causes themselves. Giving away a little food and a little clothes has no practical relationship to the general question of hunger and destitution. It might well be done out of sheer compassion, as an act of pressing necessity; but it should not be trumpeted as a great and glorious remedy. That crowding in Soho is due to economical causes, for a dozen people do not huddle in one room for the mere love of gregariousness. Deal with the causes if you can. It is mighty slow work, but nothing else avails. While the causes operate the effects will continue. Charity at best is but a feeble mitigation. It abounds, as Zola admits, in Paris; there is a benevolent institution in that city for almost every misfortune; but it is all based upon a fundamental error, and it makes no real difference to the mass of poverty and misery.

The Humanitarian League is not likely to follow Nonconformists in these charitable adventures. Its objects are wise, definite, and practical. They can be promoted by men of all shades of opinion on other matters. Would it not be well, then, if Mr. Hughes could persuade those millions of Wesleyans—say through their Annual Conference—to do something, if only in the way of a strong resolution, on behalf of the "humaneness" of the League's program? What the League wants is the force of public opinion and the weight of votes. Will the Nonconformists help it to obtain this? It would be pleasant, in the midst of our differences, if we could stretch out all our hands together as one to protect the victims of inhumanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

LIFE, NOT DEATH.

ONE of the principal differences between Secularism and Christianity consists in their respective teachings as to the relative considerations which should be given to life and death. The former holds that the study of the requirements of our present existence is of more importance than forming conjectures as to the supposed condition we may occupy in some future state. In other words, the chief aim of Christianity is to teach persons how to die; while the object of Secularism is to endeavor to discover efficient means of making life worth living, believing that those who know how best to live will also know the best way to face the ordeal of death, let it come when it may. To the Secularist it appears a waste of time and a misuse of energy to speculate as to another life, inasmuch that if there be one we can know nothing of it while we are upon this side of the grave, and, therefore, to make any special preparation for it seems to us to be absurd. It occurs to Secularists that the most rational thing to do is to strive to develop—physically, morally, and intellectually—the potencies of the life we now have, for by so

doing we shall secure the advantages of any future that may await us "when we have shuffled off this mortal coil."

The tomb should be the abode of peace, the anodyne of repose; but Christianity frequently makes it the entrance to a chamber of torments. If Christian teachings as to eternity be true, the thought of an alleged future life is sufficient to fill us with anxiety and dread. Well may its devotees exclaim: "Shall I be with the damned cast out, or numbered with the blest?" Considering that, according to the orthodox theory, the great majority of the human family are to be "damned," the odds against any one person being "numbered with the blest" are very great. How foolish and ill-advised it is, then, to mar and perplex life with such gloomy forebodings of death. To do so is no more sensible than was the conduct of the Irishman who was seen standing in front of a mirror with both his eyes tightly shut. On being asked what he was doing, he replied: "I'm trying to find out how I'll look when I'm dead." In like manner, too, many professed Christians have, with their intellectual eyes tightly closed, imagined a future, and guessed how they will feel when their sense of feeling will have ceased. The contemplation of death has, from the Secular point of view, but one advantage, and that is, it reminds us of the brevity of life, and, therefore, it should stimulate us to "work while it is called day," and not to indulge in idle dreams which, so far as we know, have no relation to realities. We should remember that in the presence of death the passions, the jealousies, and the misunderstandings of life are exceedingly insignificant, and should as much as possible be avoided. As Mr. Foote once so admirably expressed it: "In the tomb neither riches nor titles can avail us aught. There the great and the lowly, the rich and the poor, sleep together, and are as one. Monuments and epitaphs may record who rests there, but our only real and worthy memorial will be in the hearts of those who knew us, and that memorial we must erect for ourselves by the constant practice of justice and loving-kindness."

To the Secularist death has no terror. He neither fears the anger of a god, nor the infliction of tortures by a devil. He may regret having to part with those he dearly loves, but still he knows that death is as natural as life. If his career has been a bright and happy one, and he has made the most of it in its purest and noblest sense, he should be content to slumber after his well-earned rest. If, on the other hand, his life has been stern, and he has done his best in fighting its battle to the bitter end, then, wounded and broken down, he must, in that case, also rejoice to sink into perfect repose. The Christian need not foster the delusion that he has an advantage over the Secularist in believing that he will reunite his beloved ones. If, after death, a reunion takes place, Secularists will participate in it; while, if it does not take place, no belief will alter our future state. At any rate, the Secularists die without fear, as they have lived without hypocrisy. We believe with Shakespeare that—

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear!
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

Turning our thoughts from the question of death, we come to the far more important one—consideration of life. Secularism enjoins the duty of studying, as far as possible, everything which is a factor in human existence. With us the question is, What will ennoble and beautify life? And, further, how are we to act so that the blemishes which now mar our career, producing suffering and injustice, can be removed? We have been told that—

'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus;
and that—
There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Herein lies the true philosophy of life—that of self-reflection and of self-reliance. While it is a fact that our conduct is largely influenced by surrounding conditions, it must not be overlooked that our actions form factors which, to a certain extent, mould those conditions; and our business is to learn what power of action our environment affords us. Unfortunately, some persons never avail

themselves, as much as they might, of the force they possess. Hence the advantage of acquiring a knowledge of natural potentialities. "Every man," says Professor Swing, "makes the book of his life day by day as he lives, and at his death the pages are turned over by his friends, and by his record each one is judged." This is the keynote to a useful life, and a death that leaves behind lessons of profitable instruction.

Life, to be fully realized in its loftiest aspects, should be adorned with love, real friendship, and self-sacrifice. These impart a charm and a service to existence known only to those who share in their manifold blessings. Even morality is vivified by love, for without it our conduct is frequently selfish, and destitute of that force which imparts good results and evokes emulation. We once read the following definition of love: "The person who stands ready always to give of his utmost, ever on the alert to see when his little endeavor may be of service, and who never for one second stops to see whether he receives praise or blame, is living the life of love." The joy in the heart of such an one is like a bubbling spring. Friendship is akin to love, inspiring, as it does, mutual consideration for the comfort and well-being of the individual; and the two—love and friendship—have often called forth that self-sacrifice which has ever been of the greatest benefit to the human race. As society is at present constituted, a large section of its members must necessarily be deprived of a fair proportion of those comforts which are indispensable to the proper enjoyment of life. Not that we think the true value of existence consists solely in the pursuit and acquirement of wealth, although, no doubt, many of us would be able to command more of life's sunshine if we were not so limited in that commodity, the love of which, we are told, "is the root of all evil." The honest worker probably experiences the additional pleasure which Sydney Smith says he felt when he earned a fresh guinea.

The real advantage of money, however, consists in the use that is made of it. All the gold which is said to be at Klondyke would be comparatively useless unless it was put to a proper purpose. To hoard up money for which the owner has no need is not doing the best with it for the good of the general community. Better far that it should be used by its possessor to assist those in want, and to advance those movements which he may deem beneficial to the world. It is sad to know that lives are embittered, and many a just cause impeded, through the blighting influence of poverty, while ample wealth abounds to prevent the consequences of both these evils. Fortunately, we have in the Secular ranks many good men and women who are ever ready to lend a helping hand to their less fortunate brothers and sisters. Such benefactors are the real friends of humanity. They contribute to the happiness and utility of life, and do more to secure for themselves serenity of mind on entering the portals of death than can possibly be derived from any, or all, of the theologies of the world.

CHARLES WATTS.

SATAN'S ANCESTRY.

As No. 1 of a series of "Studies on Biblical Subjects," David Nutt, of 270 Strand, has published an important monograph, by Dr. A. Smythe Palmer, entitled *Babylonian Influence on the Bible and Popular Beliefs, Têhôm and Tiâmat, Hades and Satan: A Comparative Study of Genesis i. 2.* Although Dr. Palmer writes in a somewhat orthodox strain, his facts and conclusions are altogether opposed to orthodoxy. He allows at the outset that the Jews, like every other people, had an historic evolution. They had their own limitations and superstitions, the inherited traditions and folk tales of a misty past, and the origin of not a few of them may be traced to Babylonia. Harran and Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abraham is said to have come, were strongholds of the Babylonian faith. Dr. Palmer might have added that the compilation of the Book of Genesis probably did not take place until after the exile in Babylon. Be this as it may, our author allows that "Moses, or the compiler of the Book of Genesis, whoever he may have been, manifests a familiar acquaintance with the religious epics of Babylonia, which go back to the twenty-third century B.C.—to a date, i.e., about 800 years earlier than

the reputed time of Moses." Evidence of this may be found in the entire stories of the Creation and the Deluge; but Dr. Palmer restricts himself here to the second verse of the Pentateuch: "The earth was waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the Deep." The last word here is one with a history, which has played an important part in the development of religious thought. The word in the original is *Téhôm*, or the roarer, and accurately corresponds to the synonymous Assyrian word *Tiāmat*, frequently met with on the cuneiform tablets and monuments. *Tiāmat* was the great watery abyss which was the ultimate source of all created things. As the fourth tablet of the Creation story expresses it:—

"The primæval Deep was their generator; Mummu *Tiāmat* (Chaos Deep) was the mother of them all."

From this primæval chaos of darkness and disorder the Creator was believed to have evolved order by subduing it. *Tiāmat* came to be regarded as the manifestation of enmity to the beneficent power, and was depicted as a dragon of darkness.

Visitors to the Assyrian Galleries at the British Museum must have noticed a large wall tablet, covered with inscriptions, representing a winged man with a sword and thunderbolt driving off a winged and clawed dragon. This represents the conflict of Merodach, the God of Light and Order, with *Tiāmat*, the demon of darkness, chaos, and the great deep, and embodies a conception widely prevalent in religious symbolism. It is found in the combat of Horus and Apep the serpent, Apollo and the Python, Perseus and the sea monster, and is preserved in the representation on our own crown pieces of the overthrow of the dragon by St. George.

In the fourth book of the Creation Epic, Bel (Merodach) challenges *Tiāmat* with the words: "Trouble on high thou hast excited." Here is sign of a heavenly revolt, and, indeed, rebel angels are spoken of in another tablet. Dr. Palmer says:—

"As the Babylonian sun-god, Merodach, the Lord of Light, was held to be the Creator of the Earth, so, on the other hand, the dark, turbid waters of the sea, out of which the sun was seen to rise as if triumphant over a power that he held undisputed sway, became a vivid image of that primæval chaos from which the world was called forth when the Omnipotent subjugated it to law and order. Accordingly, the Great Deep was constituted a symbol of anarchy and lawlessness.

"This tumultuous water, the envelope of the Earth-mass, was personified as a dragon or serpentine monster, *Tiāmat*, and from being the representative of physical evil became ultimately significant of moral evil. Among the Hebrews this serpent or dragon is the being that introduces sin among the newly-created race, and draws man into disobedience—*i.e.*, to range himself on the side of the disorder and confusion of which the dragon-serpent, in the cosmic sphere, was the animated symbol, of which 'the lawless one' (2 Thess. ii. 8), Anti-Christ, is to be the final development."

In the Revelation of St. John the Divine we have the identification of the dragon with "that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan." This, as Dr. Palmer observes, confirms "the belief that *Tiāmat* is ultimately identical with the Hebrew conception of Satan. It is quite in keeping that the Apocalyptic monster, as being originally of oceanic origin, proceeds in his rage to cast a river of water out of his mouth (verse 15)." If Dr. Palmer is right, when we say "between the devil and the deep sea" we are really saying between Satan and his progenitor.

It is not possible within the compass of a short article to bring out all the details with which Dr. Palmer elucidates his thesis. Those who are interested in the subject will do well to consult this well-got-up little volume. They will there find much additional evidence how far the Bible legends are indebted to those of the Babylonian cult, and confirmation of the view that the Bible, instead of being a divine revelation, is a record of old traditions and superstitions, having very clear traces of their barbaric origin still clinging to them.

Since we know from the book of Ezra itself that the temple at Jerusalem was built by order of Cyrus, King of Persia, after the restoration from exile in Babylon, it cannot surprise us if, in the Jewish idea of Satan, we have a Persianized modification of the old Babylonian myth.

J. M. WHEELER.

"THE ROLL CALL OF ISRAEL."

MY self-appointed quest is the discovery of the *Flying Roll*. The *Pioneer of Wisdom*, a journal the unique modesty of whose title first charmed me to a perusal of its pages, offers this advice: "If you are perplexed and troubled in mind; if you long for Virtue, Truth, and Holiness; if you wish to understand the deep mysteries of the Scriptures, etc., read the *Roll*." Furthermore: "The *Flying Roll*.....being the revelation of Shiloh.....therefore speaks with authority." And, in addition, mark this: "It is God's last message to man for the ingathering and restoration of Israel."

A most comprehensive, and, I should say, invaluable work, if it is all that is claimed for it. That, however, is the one point upon which I am open to conviction. Judged by the number of copies in circulation, it must be admitted that, financially at any rate, the *Roll* is a success. The *Pioneer* in one place states the number of copies at 170,000; in another at 190,000. The discrepancy of 20,000 is, of course, a point of no legitimate interest.

But the *Roll*! There was magic—revelation in the name. Obeying this impulse—or shall I say echo-augury?—I plunged through columns of matter, whereof I failed to gather any but the vaguest meaning, hopeful of further hints concerning the mysterious *Roll*. Its flight, and the very knowledge that it was eluding me, became an added pleasure of the chase. Incidentally, I learned that it was to be acquired in portions. A portion of the *Roll*, please! But no; that idea is too absurd. A novel by instalments, irregular bits snapped from the main thread; that is well enough. But the *Roll*—the mysterious *Flying Roll*! I cannot believe it!

Its exact nature, you see, I have been unable, so far, to discover. It is a very mysterious work, and what is to be gathered from the *Pioneer* is worth recording. The title-page of that journal is given up to its advertisement—advertisement, let it be said, of a decidedly original nature. Such questions as: "What is the new birth?" "Who created evil?" "Why was it created?" etc., occupy the larger half of the sheet, and a footnote informs us that these and many other vexed questions are fully answered in "Extracts from the *Flying Roll*, a book which should be read by every lover of the truth."

Who, then, is the author of the *Flying Roll*; or, the *Roll*, as it is familiarly termed? I seriously suspect this to be a corruption of scroll—the scroll, in fine, upon which God, abandoning tablets of stone for the nonce, has inscribed his final message to the Chosen. But whence comes it, and whither does it depart? Does it descend in mid-air, after the manner of the Holy Grail, or is it merely a volume turned out by printers and other low devils; creatures responsible for such ordinary wares as Bibles and Korans, etc.? It is published by the New and Latter House of Israel.

The *Pioneer of Wisdom* is the journal devoted to the interests of this House, which, again, devotes itself to the ingathering of the ten tribes of Israel. The Society, or Church, as it styles itself, was founded in fulfilment of the Almighty's promise ".....to assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Of the articles of the "New and Latter's" faith it is only necessary to notice one or two. *Imprimis*, it enforces belief in the Mosaic Law, saving only that portion referring to sacrifice. The second peculiarity is a belief in Jesus Christ, from which the exception to sacrifice may be traced. This avowed belief in the persecuted of the Jews would seem to render its mission to the ten tribes exceedingly invidious, if not impossible. But all that has been said is nothing compared with what follows, for here, indeed, they touch an even wider antithesis with a belief in the second coming of Christ, a person of whose acquaintance, in any divine capacity, the Jews deny the pleasure.

As with all fanatics, the "New and Latter" has its own "special brand" of literature. The *Pioneer*, which is its monthly organ; the *Flying Roll*, from which extracts are sold at the exorbitant price of twopence the set; *Sermons*, derived from the foregoing extracts, and retailed at the monstrous figure of one shilling per volume, or three volumes bound in one book for five shillings and sixpence, and various tracts and booklets priced at equally large

figures.

A significant fact in connection with the Church is that only one name—a lady's—is mentioned. The question naturally arises, Is this lady the new and latter House of Israel, or, rather, does she occupy the whole house? Are there no other inhabitants? No lodgers? If such be the case, and everything points in that direction, the lady must reap a substantial income from her housekeeping. The method adopted to force the sale of its "literature" is equally unique; and, basing calculations upon the figures given in the *Pioneer*, I have endeavored to show, in as concise a form as possible, the profits arising from sales in the provinces for the month of February of this year. The Society's canvassers, or agents, are supplied with the "literature" at 50 per cent. under the published price; but they are required to give a guarantee that it will not be retailed at less than the published price. On the face of it this rule is an unjust one, because the poor canvassers are also required to pay cash down, and whatever loss is incurred falls upon themselves. Columns of the *Pioneer* are devoted to "Notes from Canvassers," and it is easy to see that these are ladies, probably of sentimental age. The individual profits of these canvassers cannot work out at a very large sum, and consequently it is the Church (or the lonely occupant of the great house) to whom the bulk of the profit goes.

Briefly, then, the gross proceeds from sales in the ten provincial towns mentioned represent no less a sum than £84 15s. 9d. This amount is made up in the following manner:—

	£	s.	d.
To sales of <i>Pioneers</i> (6,335 @ 1d.) ...	25	2	11
" " " <i>Sermons</i> (963 @ 1s.) ...	48	3	0
" " " <i>Parts of the Roll</i> (950 @ 2d.) ...	7	18	4
" " " <i>Vols. of Sermons</i> (13 @ 5s. 6d.) ...	3	11	6
Total ...	84	15	9

When it is remembered that these publications are also issued in London, and that the sales effected here and in the Colonies must equal, if not double, the above figures, it will at once be seen what a profitable concern is the "New and Latter." At the lowest computation, after deducting printing expenses, etc., the income derived from this "literature" reaches the comfortable figure of a thousand pounds per annum!

Will it, then, be irrelevant to ask what becomes of this money? How is it devoted to the "ingathering" of the Jews? Do they financially assist the poorer of the Israelites to return to the land of their fathers? Or, on the other hand, do they rely for the promised ingathering upon the propagation of the principles set forth in the *Pioneer*, etc.? In that case, what becomes of the profits derived from its publication?

In conclusion, then, let me say that I do not consider the existence of the New and Latter House of Israel justified by the record of its works, as set forth in its official organ. With the present activity of the Zionists it seems likely that we shall be much harassed by institutions of this kind. On the other hand, however, the New and Latter House has been flying its *Roll* for five years past.

JOHN HAROLD DUOS.

THEOLOGY AND REASON.

THINKERS of all ages have been the victims of established institutions. The world tortured and pursued unto death the immortal Bruno, Galileo, and Copernicus for disproving theological geography and astronomy, by proving the rotundity of the earth, just as it frowned upon Kepler, though, until he came, there was not enough wit and wisdom in the whole human household to measure and survey the homestead, not to speak of the ether outlands stretching across the vastness of stellar space.

The world of Faith has always been at war with Reason, the most regal attribute of the human mind. It put its seal of condemnation upon a Humboldt, a Voltaire, a Paine, a Franklin, a Jefferson, a Kant, a Hume, a Gibbon, a Shakespeare, a Newton, a Buckle, a Draper, a Darwin, a Spencer, a Mill, a Huxley, a Tyndall, an Ingersoll, and all the noble army of martyr-thinkers who have contributed more light and liberty to the human race than all the theologians of all the ages.

Nothing is more evident than that humanity is made of splendid stuff to struggle through ages of mental darkness and emerge from the valley of supernaturalism filled with superstitions and myths, with the torch of reason burning in all its splendor. All that Rationalism asks of established systems is the right to think and question, and attempt to unseal the laws written in the book of Nature, that Ignorance and its offspring, Vice, may be banished; that humanity may learn how to live and die. This young philosopher questioned the efficacy of our present system, where choirs chant and prayers ascend; yet in the most favored lands under the sun crime holds high carnival, where the poet's soul agonizes and finds ready response in the strain:—

Oh! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun.

With countless cathedrals, churches, and chapels on every hand, costly as money can rear, magnificent as pride can desire, our own poor often wander houseless and homeless in the streets. And though both the Old and the New Testaments declare "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," history bears testimony to the fact that Christianity has been the ruling religion of the world in some of its forms for fifteen hundred years. Yet there never has been a time nor place when the Banner of the Cross did not float over slavery in some form, over armies and navies, prisons and dungeons, scaffolds and guillotines, strife, poverty, and human misery.

Is it a crime, dear friends, to ask: Can there be a better way, or is it claimed that we have reached the best, mentally and morally, the human race can attain? Why is it that the child is afraid in the dark? Because it has imbibed the virus of superstition in its mother's milk. Why is it that the most devout believers cower in the presence of death? Because dogma has clothed the grave with horrors, proclaiming it may lead to eternal happiness, or to endless torment in the fire that is never quenched.

The cruel doctrine of eternal punishment has paralyzed human hopes, blanched the faces, and furrowed the cheeks of millions. I, with my dead friend, utterly repudiate such a monstrous doctrine.

Both sacred and profane history attest the fact that all creeds and doctrines were established in Church councils by the votes of ecclesiastics; and, although women constitute one half of the human race, they have always been anathema in Church councils, and no woman's voice through all the ages has ever been heard in a creed or theological code.

Rationalism only asks that reason be not silenced, when it can be proven that prophets, priests, and kings can really call a halt on the laws of nature; play stop and go on with the heavenly bodies; neutralize or make ineffective the heat of red-hot furnaces; despoil hungry lions of their appetites; move asses to speak; make incendiaries of foxes; rain fire and brimstone from heaven; open dry paths through the sea; throw down food from heaven to feed wandering multitudes for forty years; tumble down solid walls of masonry by blowing of rams' horns; convert whales into reformatories for disobedient messengers; transport prophets to heaven in chariots of fire; change women into pillars of salt. When it can be proven that there can be miraculous birth and resurrection from the dead, and the countless miracles which suspend the laws of nature—when proof of these things can be given, Rationalists will at once accept the Scripture as divinely inspired.

But since all these things are at variance with the immutable laws of nature, and all standards of reason, law, or justice, we ask is it fair, is it just, to condemn those who seek a reason for the faith offered, on pain of eternal punishment if rejected, when the most orthodox would not believe these unnatural and impossible things if transpiring to-day, even on the testimony of a host of witnesses of the best repute.

JOSEPHINE K. HENRY

The more I know of the world, the more clearly I perceive that its top and bottom sin is cowardice, physically and morally alike.....We must fawn in Society.....Society is the best thing we have, but it is a crazy vessel worked by a crew that formerly practised piracy, and now in expiation professes piety, fearful of a discovered omnipotence which is in the image of themselves and captain.—George Meredith.

RETROSPECTIVE.

At times my fancy backward strays,
And dwells with ghosts of former days,
When priest exacted prayer and praise.

I kneel within the stately fane;
The sunlight slants through painted pane,
Flooding the choir with gorgeous rain.

It is the Holy Eucharist,
When God and man keep solemn tryst;
Rare music rises while I list.

The tapers twinkle on the shrine;
The priest uplifts the bread and wine;
All bow, adoring, at the sign.

By sight and sound seductive wrought
To rapt vacuity of thought,
Pronouncing phrases meaning nought.

Gone Church and pageant, priest and prayer;
No prison now; O sweet and fair
To blessed sunlight, tender air!

Say, did I dream, or was it I
Who cringed, before the altar high,
To maudlin priest, attired like guy?

Was't I who basked in taper-shine,
Deemed joss-house mummery divine,
Thought bread not-bread, and wine not-wine?

What innate blight blasts Reason's rule,
Makes thinking man a grovelling fool,
For subtle priestly hands a tool?

All good betide the little sheet—
Whatever storms may bode or beat—
Whose happy gospel, summer sweet.

From priest-cursed, god-deluded life,
Through the dark door of mental strife,
Led me where peace, not fear, is rife.

Commanding: "Love thy fellow well,
Whatever word his creed may spell;
Not seeking Heaven, or fearing Hell.

Be Earth thy Heaven; on life no blot;
Sift God's credentials—trust no jot;
Take Reason's hand, and falter not."

Who calls our gospel dark and cold?
Nay, rather worthy to be told
On precious silk, in type of Gold.

So warm, so glad; one day to be
Hailed savior of Humanity,
From sterile minds and fetters free.

Despair not, little band and true,
Clear-brained, firm-knit, though poor and few;
The world will yet be one with you.

Though keen winds blow, and tempests ring;
Though sleet and hail like arrows sting;
The air is redolent of Spring.

EX-RITUALIST.

ACID DROPS.

CONSIDERING Mr. Gladstone's great age and increasing feebleness, there is something positively indecent in the way in which papers that are not suspected of Freethought rejoice at the prospect of his lengthened detention in this miserable vale of tears. Nine out of ten of them would say that the Grand Old Man is sure of a good seat in heaven. Yet the longer he keeps out of it the better they are pleased. Does it not show that there is very little real belief in Kingdom-come, after all?

The Archbishop of Canterbury advises his clergy to burn their sermons after they have been preached three times. The *New Age* asks whether it wouldn't be better to burn many of them before they are preached once. No doubt it would—for the congregations.

"Stop, citizen, you don't know the kind of folk we are. We have such a horror of priests that it has given us also a horror of God." This exclamation came from a working man at Jolimont, in Belgium, at a meeting addressed by the Abbé Charbonnel, who has left the Catholic Church, and is preaching "on his own" as an "unattached Christian."

"Dodo" in *Reynolds's* pens some severe remarks on the refusal by the Bishops of an influential petition in favor of women being allowed to sit on Parochial Councils. "The

clergy," he says, "have all used women as tools, regarding them as a race of too inferior an intellect to meddle in Church matters. Their attendance and implicit belief are all that is expected." True enough. But what else could the Church do in front of the open Bible? Woman's place in Holy Writ is not beside man, but behind him.

America, the land of novelties, has produced a new scheme for advertising religion, which is said to be much favored already in Michigan and Illinois. Dead walls are to be covered with short sermons and Bible texts in monster type. Lithographic scenes from the Bible are to be stuck up in likely places. Street cars are also to be utilized, as well as hotels and theatres. In short, religion is to pullulate like the smallpox, so that people may be saved from hell somehow. It is a grand idea. But it doesn't meet with the approval of the *Christian World*, which opines that such advertisements would create "nausea and disgust," and make a lot of people class religion with patent medicines. But don't sensible people put it in that category already?

A *Westminster Gazette* agent has been investigating the Christian Science business in London. It seems to be prospering in the West-end. Devotees have to spend fourteen shillings on a book by way of introduction, and twenty guineas afterwards for a course of lectures. A good many fools appear to shell out at this rate. As a result, they learn how to cure their ailments by prayer and trust in God. As far as this can be done, it may be learnt in the New Testament, which can be bought for sixpence. The *Westminster* man appears to look upon these faith-healers as impostors. But except for the price of their performance they are simply treading in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Even on the financial side they plead a justification. "They plead in excuse," this writer says, "that Jesus Christ and his Apostles had their treasurer, and therefore must have received money for their work of healing and preaching."

"The final blow," the *Christian World* says, "has now been dealt to those supposed pictures of the Crucifixion which an over-zealous archaeologist recently announced that he had discovered scribbled on the walls of Tiberius's Palace at Rome. On Saturday last a paper on them was read, and photographs of them were exhibited by M. Boissier, before the French Academy of Inscriptions at Paris. He showed in detail that (as we lately stated) they have no connection whatever with Christianity, but are simply coarse military caricatures."

Such is the fate of "Christian Evidences" when they can be promptly investigated. When they are musty with age, before there is any inquiry into their genuineness, they continue to hold the field splendidly. Absurdities grow venerable with the lapse of time.

Archbishop Maclagan is said to be very wrath that the Churchmen of Sheffield would not shell out the shekels for a new bishop. He is bent on having, at any rate, a suffragan bishop for South Yorkshire. The wealthy Sheffield Churchmen are, for the most part, evangelicals, and do not see paying £3,500 a year for a bishop who would certainly reflect the high Ritualism of Dr. Maclagan, of which they disapprove; so that even the bait of being called a cathedral city did not induce them to catch on.

A Freethinker of Wenona, Illinois, left money in his will for the establishment of a Freethought library in that town. The authorities of the town, who seem to have more piety than sense, are said to be in doubt about accepting the gift.

They have had a day for public humiliation and prayer at the Christian Institute, Glasgow, under the auspices of the United Evangelistic Association. Sabbath desecration was one of the reasons for humiliation. The Rev. John Parker, of St. James's Established Church, said "he was afraid that the majority of people in Glasgow did not attend any place of worship, and they could not expect that such people would have any interest in upholding the Christian Sabbath. The press of the country had become very eagerly anti-Christian, and if the newspapers mentioned that 'day of humiliation' he was afraid it would be to scoff at it, and to regard those who were assembled there as a parcel of fanatics." For the Sabbath desecration, said the Rev. John Parker, the pulpit was largely to blame. It was often prostituted to unworthy objects. Men often played the part of buffoon there before Almighty God, or spent the precious time in discussing philosophic themes, or, worse still, in giving discourses which tended to shake the faith of the people in the very Word of God which they espoused.

The Religious Tract Society, which will be a hundred years old in May next, is raising a centenary fund for the further extension of its work. If the world could be saved by such tracts as those issued by the R. T. S., it should need no further salvation, or, rather, it would not be worth saving.

The R. C. Bishop O'Gorman, of Sioux Falls, has had to issue another episcopal decree against "dancing before the Lord" at church fairs, festivals, and bazaars. He warns the clergy that henceforth the priest who allows them for Church purposes, or accepts in the Church treasury money proceeding from them, will lay himself open to suspension.

At the discussion on the Free Churches and Literature, at the National Free Church Council at Bristol, Dr. Henry Lunn asserted that the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* was an Agnostic. Now the *Independent* says: "We understand that Mr. H. W. Massingham indignantly repudiates the suggestion, which, whether true or false, would have been better left unmade." We understand Mr. Massingham's repudiation, but scarcely his indignation.

Our readers may remember the remarkable use made by Professor Sayce of an Assyrian tablet in the British Museum, in which he discovered references to the events described in Genesis xiv. Having got hold of a reading, Eri-a-Ku, he jumped to the conclusion that it was the Bible Arioch; while Kudur-ku-Mal did for Chedorlaomer, and Tu-ud-Khula for Tidal, King of Nations. That the tablet was of a date fifteen hundred years after Abraham mattered not.

Now, Mr. Pinches, of the British Museum, the originator of the suggestion adopted by the Rev. A. H. Sayce, admits that the tablet gives no intelligent meaning, and says that he has never spoken of these names without a note of interrogation. The *Church Times* says: "After this, its advocates can do no less than give their dead tablet a decent and honorable burial."

The momentous question, Should Church collections be taken in a bag or on a plate? is pending in the columns of *Cassell's Saturday Journal*. The plate is patronized by the ostentatious, and the bag by the droppers of the widow's mite, and buttons.

"Miles" writes to the *Church Times*: "There is more trouble taken about the way in which services are rendered, and all kinds of expedients are being tried to attract people, and yet there are fewer men at the regular Sunday services than there used to be, say, twenty years ago. From country districts I hear, on the very best authority that churches are half empty." The Rev. T. W. T. Miller says "Most are true," and ascribes it to the poor quality of the sermons. "Miles" seems to think that clerical celibacy would improve matters. He says the Anglican clergyman is often forced into matrimony by the power of public opinion around him. Poor fellow!

Another writer attributes abstinence from churchgoing to "the odious system of appropriated seats, than which nothing has more fatally operated to deprive the masses of their rightful inheritance." It is assumed that the masses would rush to their rightful inheritance if only there were no reserved pews, although the churches are "half empty."

A writer in the *Birmingham Owl*, who conceals his immense learning under the disguise of "Quirk," says: "I have yet to meet an Atheist who is not comparatively ignorant." Bless his soul! for we suppose he has one. Everybody on earth is comparatively ignorant. Nobody knows everything. There is always somebody who knows what the cleverest man doesn't. We could even find an Atheist who knows something that has escaped the almost omniscient intellect of "Quirk."

"Quirk" went to hear Mr. Percy Ward deliver "a direct attack on the immortality of the soul." Sad to say, there were not only men, but women, listening with approval to his "blasphemy." The lecturer was "quite a young man," which is a fault he will grow out of; though, by the way, Jesus Christ was never particularly old, and it is recorded that he began his public disputations at the immature age of twelve. Mr. Ward, however, is described as "a powerful speaker, and apparently earnest in his manner." But why "apparently"? Does "Quirk" imagine that Atheism is incompatible with earnestness as well as information? In short, is an Atheist necessarily a rogue as well as a fool? Will the learned "Quirk" reply and explain this paradox?

In the Bishop-Burton accounts for last year there was an item of 15s. "for killing worms in the bust of John Wesley"—evidently no relations to the worms in Hades. A correspondent of the *Westminster* sends a still more curious item from the 1610 Westminster Churchwardens' accounts: "Paid to Goodwyfe Wells for salt to destroy the fleas in the Churchwardens' seat, 6d." Query: Did the salt destroy the fleas, or only drive them to other trousers? Anyhow, the prayers which cast out devils was powerless against fleas. It is just possible—especially considering the sanitary condition of those times—that one of those nimble and pertinacious parasites was extracting a meal from *Ecce Homo*

while he was transplanting devils from men to pigs. Shocking thought! but well within the range of probability.

"Ill-informed and self-satisfied Agnostics and sceptics," says the *Methodist Times*, "would do well to deal with the case of George Müller before they favor us with any more of their dogmatic utterances." No doubt Agnostics and sceptics are very ill informed. Mr. Price Hughes says so, and is he not "an eminent Christian gentleman entitled to be believed upon his word"? But when it comes to self-satisfaction it is not easy for any mortal to outdo Mr. Hughes. One look at his face is enough to convince most men that he would be always near the front in such a competition.

Mr. Hughes goes on repeating the old half-truth (which is ever the worst of lies) about George Müller. It is nonsense to say that the pious Bristol philanthropist received nearly a million pounds direct from the Lord in answer to prayer. All he did was to refrain from a certain class of advertisements, and on the strength of this he pretended that he did not advertise at all. But he issued reports, addressed public meetings, and managed to get announcements in the editorial part of many newspapers. It is said that he never asked anyone for a penny. No, but he intimated his readiness to receive it. To pray to the Lord and look hard at a probable subscriber is no great triumph of faith.

George Müller was "called home," Mr. Hughes says, in the very week in which "frantic lovers of money were offering £30,000,000 sterling for a share in the profits of Lipton's tea." Well, selling tea is an honest and useful business, anyhow. No doubt Mr. Hughes would have seen nothing "frantic" in the matter if the Lipton applicants had offered that thirty millions (but was it so much?) to the West London Mission.

Mr. Hughes gloats over the fact, if it be one, that George Müller distributed millions of Bibles. But it is much easier to circulate the Bible than to prove it to be true. *This* is the task that the Christians have got to face.

Rev. John Murray, of Calton Parish Church, Glasgow, died suddenly in the vestry last Sunday forenoon before the commencement of the service. The newspapers report the cause of death as the bursting of a blood vessel. But it is rumored that the reverend gentleman really committed suicide, and that the affair has been hushed up on the principle which led Constantine to say that if he caught a bishop in a certain act he would throw his cloak over the episcopal sinner rather than occasion scandal to the Church.

Feeling is running high between the Protestant and Ritualistic sections in the Church of England, and a meeting at the Portman Rooms of the West London Protestant Association, at which Mr. Walsh lectured on Father Ignatius, was attended with much opposition, and frequently degenerated into confusion.

A German military critic says if we could have all the armies of the Continent on a war footing and drawn up in one long procession, with their guns and ammunition and baggage waggons, the column would be rather more than 24,000 miles long, and, marching day and night, it would take nearly a year to pass a given point. What a sight for the heavenly powers after nearly 1,900 years of Christianity!

We have heard of a pious old sky pilot who was wont to say as he unfolded his newspaper: "Now let us see how our Father is governing this world of his." We should fancy that, if he ever reflected, his faith must have had some severe shocks. Just recently he might read of 216 deaths from plague in one day at Bombay, of a fever-stricken ship, of bush fires rendering many homeless in Gippsland, of a famine in Slavonia, where the peasants are pulling down their houses, and carrying the timber to the towns to exchange it for a little bread.

Then might he read of storms at sea, of suicides, train collisions, accidents, and misadventures on land. He might reflect, too, of the multitudes who are a constant prey to disease, and ever liable to burnings, crushings, and maimings by every conceivable form of accident, the greater part of the world's inhabitants being still beyond all but the crudest medical and surgical alleviation.

He might read of wars and rumors of wars, every Christian nation armed to the teeth, and indulging in more costly armaments; of crime, women killing their own children, and wife-murderers jerked to Jesus, and the long record of cruelty and oppression of those in power over the weak and defenceless.

Look outside the papers, and what is seen. In England, the richest country in the world, one-tenth of the popula-

tion are hopelessly submerged, unable to get their own living, one quarter within measurable distance of the gaol, the hospital, or the poorhouse; and then, if possible, remove in imagination all that man has done to ameliorate the lot of man, and a pretty picture is left of how "our Father is governing this world of his."

The horrible bush fires in Australia have called forth splendid exhibitions of personal heroism. Mr. E. J. Fowler, of Warragul, at the greatest possible risk to his own life, had rescued from the flames both a child and its helpless father—a deed for which he deserves the highest possible honor. The Chief Justice has written him a letter, knowing, of course, that the letter would find its way to the press, not to be published for any good quality it has, but solely because "Sir" John Madden, Chief Justice, penned it. The letter is stilted and cramped, with not a natural expression in it; and it suggests that the Chief Justice should take lessons in English composition. The longest sentence in the letter will not bear analyzing, besides containing a jumble of pious rubbish and other matters. The Chief Justice "thanks 'God'" for Mr. Fowler's conduct, and says he enabled him to perform his heroic deed!—that is, "God" was doing his best to burn farmer Loader and his child to death, and yet enabled Mr. Fowler to extricate both from the burning!

Mr. Symes says in the *Liberator*: "The second instalment of bush fires in Gippsland seems to have been worse than the first. Of course, 'God' and Co. did not help in either case. The 'God' of Nature, as some phrase their ignorance—the Christian 'God,' as others express it—is guilty, they tell us, of creating hot weather and bush fires; of destroying cattle, sheep, and horses; of destroying human beings; of destroying crops and homesteads; of sending storms and floods, fevers and epidemics, and every kind of disease and pathological horror; of sending earthquakes and volcanic eruptions; of creating numberless shipping disasters, mining disasters, railway disasters: in a word, they say this 'God' of theirs is guilty, and incessantly guilty, inexcusably guilty, most maliciously guilty, of every wrong it is possible for one sentient being to do to others. After so describing this 'God,' they feel that they would like to roast you for being unable to worship him! Can folly and malice go beyond that, think you? How is it possible? I am glad I am not a worshipper.

"When a man is satisfied that Nature is Nature, that Nature is all, that he himself is a phenomenon of nature, and that, like all other phenomena, he will have his day and disappear and be no more, he feels none of the troubles and perplexities that religion so plentifully creates. He never feels that he could curse 'God' one day and beslobber him the next; nor does he feel that he has to do with an infinite fiend whose cunning he can never escape, whose malice and power are sure to work him mischief. Whatever natural calamity comes, he feels that he has no one to blame; he has no heartbreak over the horrible deeds of an infinitely wicked demon; and when natural prosperity comes he has no one to thank for the sunshine that attends his path and enlivens his being. This is Atheism. They call it 'blank,' and so it is, for blank means white. Atheism is blank, while Christianity and Godism are black as soot, and as full of horrors and terrors as a priest is of trickery and lies. Let a man once get settled in true, blank Atheism, and one half of the troubles of life, and those the worst of all, are for ever buried, as far as he is concerned. Whereas the believer is ever troubled with the contradictions and absurdities of his belief, or is horrified at the thought that his beloved 'God' may find some paltry excuse for damning him to all eternity. Bah! 'God' is but human fear and horror worked up into a huge monster and labelled. That is all. But the clergy make a mint of money out of it, and they would like to eat the man that dares to tell the truth about their infernal trade."

A sporting paper tells a Salvation Army story, probably one of Mr. Ben Trovato's. "Now, brothers and sisters," cried the lieutenant, "who will turn to and make this money that is so badly wanted?" Up rose the converted counterfeiter and replied: "I 'ud sworn I'd never touch a mould again, sister; still, as it's for the blessed work, I'll make some if some o' the other blokes will undertake to pass it."

There is possibly some relation between alcohol and religion. Henry Hoffman, who died in Saratoga last August, drank, as a witness in his will case testified the other day, from twenty-five to thirty glasses of gin and milk per day, and occasionally took absinthe. Under the influence of the stimulant, he declared that Carnarsie, on Long Island, was a paradise, inhabited by angels, and that the New Testament was a divine play.

The Rev. A. S. Embree, Methodist, of Topeka, Kan., is charged with the ruin and complicity in the death of his

colored servant girl, who died recently from the results of a criminal operation. He denies the accusation, and pleads an *alibi*. He admits, however, that he paid the girl \$200 on the advice of his attorney. His friends say it is a case of blackmail. The Rev. Embree is a political parson, and the Parkhurst of Topeka.—*Truthseeker*.

Australia being essentially a drought-cursed land, Australian parsons are also necessarily a rain-praying lot of medicine-men. Mexico is also droughty, and much given to supplication in dry seasons. A certain Christian sect, however, in that sombre Cactus Land has carried the rain-praying business to a degree of perfection hitherto undreamed of in this country. A notice to the Lord is published to the effect that, if rain be not sent in answer to prayer and self-sacrifice by a certain date, the parties supplicating will thereafter immediately recommence their sinful courses, and be wickeder than ever.....If *this* doesn't make Heaven sit up, nothing ever will.....Ridiculous, is it? Not a whit more ridiculous than flopping on our knees and hoping thereby to effect an instantaneous deflection of natural law.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

Chris Merry, who so brutally murdered his wife, and who was such a Christian that he objected to having any man on the jury who was not a Christian, and who was convicted, has obtained a sixty-day stay of proceedings. One of the grounds upon which the stay was asked for was "That he might have time to prepare for death," and now he occupies himself in reading prayers and singing:—

"I want to be an angel,
And with the angels stand."

And some claim his wings have commenced to grow. His poor wife, whom he choked and beat to death, had no time to "get religion," and has gone to hell; but Chris proposes to have a good time in heaven, and it will add to his happiness seeing his wife enduring the tortures of the damned.—*Freethought Magazine*.

The *Detroit News* reports the grabbing at a *séance* of a ghost, who turned out to be Mrs. Richardson, wife of the proprietor and the medium, E. Medford Gilman. Both fought stoutly, and the ghost bit her captors pretty severely. A sliding door in the cabinet, a false beard, and other make-up were discovered.

The attempt made to open markets for the inland Christians in Crete had quite a different result from that expected. A number of armed Christians arrived and killed three provincial gendarmes, wounding another dangerously. It is easy to foresee that the project to re-establish communications, for which the Christians have been clamoring for the last six months, will be entirely given up.

At Bicester the Rev. William Henry Jones, Rector of Godington, Oxon, and his son have been fined £5 and £2 respectively, and £6 12s. costs, for starving six calves. The calves were found in a very emaciated condition, and two died. The hay they were fed on was only fit for litter. Insufficient skim-milk was provided, notwithstanding that the cattleman called the Rector's attention to their dying state.

Mr. H. W. Lucy, the author of "Toby's Essence of Parliament," in his "Pictures in Parliament" in the *Daily News* says: "The vanishing of a well-known hand from the pages of *Punch* brought to a close the series of pictures illustrating 'Things that might be said differently.' If Mr. Du Maurier were still alive, he would be tempted to deal with a little incident of recent occurrence. A member of the House of Commons, having written to make inquiry about the health of an acquaintance, received the following answer: 'In reply to your kind letter to hand this morning, I have to inform you of the unpleasant news that our dear brother has passed from earth to Heaven.'"

Walter Fox, the young man who committed suicide through disappointed love at Hanlan, near Bristol, left a letter in which he said: "Pray for my poor soul. God be merciful to me, a sinner." The usual verdict of "Temporary insanity" was returned.

A new League has been started on the world, entitled "The League of the Christened." It is to be a Children's Guild, and presumably will encourage spiritual pride in those who have had the extraordinary luck to be sprinkled in babyhood, especially if from a silver font.

In some parts of Scotland a new-born infant must be washed with a piece of silver in the water: the larger the sum, the better the luck. The midwife's fee of five shillings is generally put in the bath; but, to make matters safe, in poorhouses the midwife wears a silver ring. In Russia children are baptized in a silver font, and even a Presbyterian minister in Scotland will use a silver basin at a christening.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 27, Athenæum Hall, London : 7.30, "Mrs. Mona Caird's *Morality of Marriage*."
 March 28 to April 3, Chatham and New Brompton.
 April 17, Huddersfield.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—March 27, Bolton ; 30 and 31, Debate at Portsmouth. April 3 and 17, Athenæum Hall, London ; 26, 27, 28, 29, and May 1, Glasgow and Districts. May 8, Manchester ; 15 and 16, Birmingham ; 22, Sheffield.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton.

J. M. DAY.—If you are a reader of the *Freethinker*, you must have overlooked our announcement. Colonel Ingersoll has definitely promised to visit England next year at the latest, but there is a probability of his coming this year, in October or November. Mr. Foote intends to visit South Wales again, and doubtless other lecturers will give the district a turn. You will find every point of any importance dealt with in Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* pamphlet. Our recent article on Sunday Closing might also prove useful.

F. M. PARRIS.—Thanks for the cutting. It may prove useful at some time. Meanwhile, we do not refer to its contents.

G. F. DUPLAY.—Sincerely, and with good temper, we repeat that we cannot see any use in the discussion.

T. BARNETT.—It was Mr. Labouchere who offered a valuable bank-note, locked up in his safe, to any clairvoyant who could read the number of it through the iron door. "Labby" doesn't throw away his money. He knew it was a safe offer.

J. BARCLAY.—The story was told by Mr. Conway, who was a personal friend of George Eliot. The great novelist was well known as an unbeliever in Christianity. See her *Life and Letters*. See translated Strauss and Feuerbach.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges :—Blackburn Branch, 8s.

ANNUAL CHILDREN'S PARTY.—Miss Vance acknowledges :—L. Edmonds, 2s. 6d. Per Mr. Fagan, 6s.

TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges.—Bookseller, 5s.; Hugh Thomson, 5s.; F. Swain, 5s. Mr. C. Cohen acknowledges :—Dr. Jones, £2 2s.; Mr. Birch, £1 ; J. Turnbull, 5s.

N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges :—Blackburn Branch, 8s.

J. CHAPMAN.—Thanks for the cutting. Glad to hear the *Freethinker* comes as a boon and a blessing to your "benighted" town.

LEO.—Belief in ghosts is the primitive form of all the doctrines of soul and immortality. It arose among savages in the most natural way, largely through their misinterpretation of dreams. They fancied that the things and scenes they beheld in dreams were real, and that they themselves had left the body while asleep and visited the persons and places they dreamed of. You will understand it thoroughly if you read Tylor's great book on *Primitive Culture*. There is a smaller work by Clodd on *Myth and Dream*.

J. C. (Glasgow).—The rule of practice is that seven years must elapse before an N. S. S. Conference can be held in the same place again. Thanks for your letter.

D. Z. BEAUMONT.—Pleased to know that you found our article on "God Help Us" very interesting. In reply to your query, we beg to say that the doctrine of Providence has nothing to do with the so-called problem of Creation. You say "there is ample proof that this power does not care much for us here"—which is what we contended. But if it does not care for us here, why should it care for us hereafter? In those matters we can only judge by analogy. Besides, what real evidence is there of this alleged hereafter? This life is the only one we know.

C. DORNAN.—We cannot undertake to send representatives to oppose Christian Evidence lecturers, nor is the course you refer to particularly worth reporting in the *Freethinker*. We should be glad to see some Freethought lectures arranged in the Woolwich district, but we cannot undertake them just at present, and we regret to say that London Freethinkers do not support the Propagandist Scheme as they should. Most of the subscriptions come from the provinces. When we get a little time for the work we will see whether a great effort cannot be made in the metropolis—if possible next winter. Thanks meanwhile for your good wishes.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fria Tankar—Ethical World—Sheffield and Rotherham Independent—Two Worlds—Crescent—Liberator—Truthseeker—Free Thought Magazine—Echo—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—New Century—Universal Brotherhood—Sydney Bulletin—Glasgow Weekly Citizen.

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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE had another capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when he lectured on "Julius Cæsar: Statesman and Atheist." Mr. Charles Watts was in the chair, and made bright little introductory and closing speeches. Mr. Harry Snell also occupied a seat on the platform. The audience paid the lecturer the compliment of following him for nearly an hour and a-half with the closest attention. Mr. Foote lectures from the same platform again this evening (March 27), taking for his subject Mrs. Mona Caird's *Morality of Marriage*. This lady's new book contains some interesting matter, and is very outspoken; and the lecturer will criticise it as frankly and fearlessly as Mrs. Caird writes. The subject is one that Mr. Foote has not dealt with before in public, and there will probably be a crowded meeting. Of course, discussion will be allowed as usual.

Just as we are going to press we receive a copy of the advertisements of Mr. Foote's week's Freethought Mission at Chatham and New Brompton—from March 28 to April 3 inclusive. Three week-night lectures will be delivered in the Gladstone Hall, Chatham; three in the Public Hall, New Brompton; and two (on April 3) in the Secular Hall. Admission is free to all the lectures, with a few reserved seats at a small price, and discussion is cordially invited.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures three times at Bolton to-day, Sunday, March 27, where he hopes to meet a good muster of his Lancashire friends. Freethinkers in Blackburn and surrounding districts should gather in force, as it is some time since Mr. Watts was with them.

On Wednesday and Thursday, March 30 and 31, Mr. Watts debates for two nights with the Rev. A. J. Waldron at Portsmouth. Cannot some of the "saints" correspond with Mr. Watts with a view of having a meeting while he is in the town, for the purpose of forming a branch of the N. S. S.?

Captain Robert C. Adams, of Montreal, one of the leading Freethinkers in Canada, is paying England another visit. He has promised to lecture at St. James's Hall (French room) on Monday evening, April 4th, on "The Right of Private Judgment in Morals," under the auspices of the Legitimation League. Mr. Foote has accepted an invitation to take the chair.

When at New Orleans recently "Pagan Bob" visited the Press Club. The New Orleans *Picayune* thus notices the event: "At noon to-day Col. Bob Ingersoll honored the Press Club with an informal visit, and for a half hour conversed pleasantly with a number of the members who had called at the club room to welcome the greatest orator of the day in America. Personally, Colonel Ingersoll is the most charming of gentlemen, and enjoys life just as much as his many large audiences have enjoyed his lectures, and his many readers have enjoyed his books. There were probably fifty members present, among whom were a few ladies, and the genial guest graciously consented to make a few remarks befitting the occasion, and wishing the club and its members abundant success." Ingersoll spoke at Atlanta to an audience of over six hundred people. A week later, in the same hall, a Christian Judge lectured on "Ingersollism Answered" to an audience of exactly thirty-nine people.

The March number of the *Freethought Magazine*, of Chicago, gives a portrait of Parker Pillsbury, the veteran Abolitionist and Freethinker, and author of *Acts of the Anti-Slavery Apostles*. Mr. Pillsbury was one of these himself, and left the Church because he found it to be the bulwark of slavery. He is still living at Concord at the age of eighty-eight. "Jack Kazad" writes on "Fallacies and Frailties of Faith" E. Caple on "Original Sin," G. A. White on "Will the Old Book Stand?" To the editorial department G. J. Holyoake contributes a paper on "Francis Newman and his Critics," Mr. Wakeman writes on "The New Woman," and Mr. Underwood on "The Influence of the Mind and Body."

The Camberwell Branch had a large meeting on Sunday evening. Mr. Hyatt gave a selection of recitations, and Mrs. Wheeler some excellent pianoforte selections at intervals. On Sunday, April 3, this Branch holds a concert and dance. The program includes several artists from the London theatres. Tickets sixpence each.

The annual meeting of the Humanitarian League will be held at St. Martin's Town Hall, Charing Cross-road, W.C., on Tuesday afternoon, March 29, at 3 o'clock. Members are invited to bring friends who are interested in the League's work.

An inmate of one of General Booth's "palaces for the

people" informs us that he finds a good many of his fellows in misfortune not at all in love with Salvation Army doctrines. They listen readily enough to his Freethought talk. This correspondent, who is too poor to buy literature, asks us to give him a few pamphlets for use in his circle, and we have done so with pleasure.

"THE LORD'S DAY, OR MAN'S?"

THE discussion about the sacredness of Sunday will certainly do good. The readers will find that Christians have no evidence even tending to show that the first day of the week was ever sanctified by any pretended Jewish God, or by Christ or any of his apostles. They will find that the Rev. Dr. Sunderland relies on quibbles, inferences, dodges, evasions, subterfuges, and assertions; that he has been driven to the pit and pushed in, and that he lost not only his cause, but his candor. They will also find that Dr. Croftut has stated his case with clearness, and defended his statements with facts, so that it is impossible for any sensible man to read this discussion without seeing and admitting that the Rev. Dr. Sunderland was overmatched and overwhelmed.

But I must admit that the reverend gentleman was honest. Nothing but sincerity could place such implicit reliance on absurdity. How is it possible for a space of time to be holy? Can time be moral or immoral? Can it be vicious or virtuous? Can one hour or one day be better than another? Can we divide the days into sacred and profane? Christians tell us that Jehovah made the seventh day sacred, because on that day he rested from his labor. According to them, he had worked for six days, during which he created the universe. This resting of Jehovah is the first reason given in the Bible for the sacredness of the seventh day.

Is this a good reason? We now know that Jehovah did not create the world in six days. Even Christians admit this, and say that the word "days" should have been translated "periods"—unmeasured spaces of time. If Jehovah rested on the seventh "period," how did that affect the seventh day? Undoubtedly the writer of Genesis believed that Jehovah commenced work on Monday morning, did his best for six days, and then took a rest; and he thought that men ought to follow the example set by God. Christians now admit that the writer was mistaken about the six days, but still insist on the sacredness of the seventh day.

We now know that Jehovah did not create the world, that he had nothing to do with it, and that he did not rest on the seventh day or the seventh "period." We know that matter, substance, is eternal—that it never was created, and that it can never be destroyed. This being so, the first reason given for the sacredness of the Sabbath, of the seventh day, is left without any foundation. It makes no difference what men have said, what they believe, what has been written about the sacredness of the seventh day; the first reason given is absurd and idiotic.

But there is another reason given in the Bible. The Sabbath is declared to be holy because on that day Jehovah delivered the children of Israel from the Egyptians. Is this a good reason? In the first place, is it true that the Hebrews were delivered from Egyptian bondage?

According to the Bible, the Jews were in Egypt at least two hundred and fifteen years—that is to say, for about seven generations. The Jews and Egyptians lived together, slaves and masters, for all this time. It is certain that they talked to each other, and, if they did, the Jews must have learned something of the language of the Egyptians, and the Egyptians must have known something of Hebrew. In this way, new words would have been added to the language of each people. But we are now assured by the best Hebrew scholars that no Egyptian word, or word of Egyptian origin, is found in Hebrew. So it is claimed by philologists that no Hebrew words have been found in Egyptian records. This being so, it is absolutely certain that the Hebrews were never slaves in Egypt, and that the whole story of the bondage and deliverance is a pure myth.

The second reason for the sacredness of the seventh day has no foundation in fact.

The truth is, that the Jews got their idea of the Sabbath from the Babylonians, as well as the stories of Creation,

Adam and Eve, the forbidden fruit, the expulsion from Eden, and the Flood; all these things came from Babylon. In my judgment, the Pentateuch was written, or at least put into form, after the Captivity, and many superstitions that they had learned from the Babylonians were added. The Jews were, undoubtedly, impressed with the grandeur and power of their conquerors—with their education and wealth—and adopted many of their myths and legends. Unless we believe in the Babylonian gods, we have no divine sanction for the seventh day. We are compelled to rely on reason, and to decide the question without supernatural aid.

In the New Testament no great regard is expressed for the seventh day. A man asked Christ what he should do to inherit eternal life, and Christ told him to obey the Commandments. The man asked him, Which? Christ told him the ones he must obey, but said not a word about keeping the Sabbath. On several occasions Christ scandalized the pious Jews by violating the sacred day.

But if it can be established that the Old Testament is inspired, and that the seventh day was sanctified by Jehovah, how is it that Christians pay no regard to the seventh day? By what authority has the first day of the week been substituted for the seventh? God did not rest on the first day. That is the day he began to work. Neither is it pretended that God delivered the Jews from the Egyptians on the first day—that was on the seventh, according to the Bible.

When was the change made? There is no evidence, so far as I know, that Christ or his early disciples changed the day from the seventh to the first. The day seems to have been designated by Constantine. He named the first day because that day was, and had been for many ages, sacred to the sun. It was a Pagan holy-day, and for that reason was adopted by the Christians.

As a matter of fact, Christianity borrowed everything it has. It borrowed the biography of Christ, all its dogmas, and all its ceremonies and symbols. There is nothing original in "our religion."

Nothing can be more idiotic than the belief that Sunday is sacred, and that labor is profane. Nothing can be more idiotic than the belief that pleasure is sinful.

Work is worship, labor is prayer, and happiness is the answer. Looking sad, feeling mournful, folding the hands of idleness, sitting in the shadow, thinking about death, listening to orthodox sermons, to descriptions of the eternal prison, is an insane way of spending one-seventh of our lives. Every sensible man should do what he can to destroy the Sunday superstition—to take the "sacred" day from the myth called God and give it back to the people.

All Christians who are trying to get God and his eldest son into the Constitution—who are trying to keep the Sabbath sacred by law, trying to prevent the running of boats and cars on Sunday, trying to abolish bloomers and bicycles, picnics and excursions—all these Christians are the enemies of liberty. They are egotistical and ignorant, superstitious and malignant, narrow, shrivelled, tyrannical, impudent, and pious. They have no conception of human rights. They regard the universe as an absolute monarchy. God, their God, is the king. They are his agents, and the people are slaves. These agents are overbearing, meddling, meek, and malicious. They are never as happy as when writing rules and making laws for their neighbors. To see a man in jail for having worked on Sunday fills them with holy joy. They think that their God has been vindicated and the Devil rebuked. If they could close the mouths of unbelievers, burn the books of real philosophers, and stop the intellectual progress of mankind, their faces would become as much too short as they are now too long.

Death to superstition!

Down with bigotry!

R. G. INGERSOLL

Our Ladies of Death.

The weak, the weary, and the desolate,
The poor, the mean, the outcast, the opprest,
All trodden down beneath the march of Fate,
Thou gatherest, loving Sisters, to thy breast;
Soothing their pain and weariness asleep,
Then in thy hidden Dreamland, hushed and deep,
Dost lay them, shrouded in eternal rest.

B.V.

THE RELIGIOUS MICROBE.

NOW-A-DAYS every trouble is traced to its organic germ. They have discovered the bacillus of baldness, even if Tatcho does not eradicate it. Bacteria are the modern "evil spirits," swarming in every quarter. Brimstone, once held a remedy in another and a hotter world, is now used with other disinfectants against the myriads of microscopical monstrosities which science shows infest us, if they but find fitting soil.

Religion is an inherited disease. They preach that man is a religious animal. They might as well say he is a dirty, savage, and diseased animal. The dirt and savagery of our ancestors we are slowly emancipating ourselves from, and some day we shall get rid of the religion. Its most virulent forms of persecution, sacrifice, and fanaticism are already much modified by secular injections. The man who feels the Lord within him, and begins to preach, is apt to end his days in some asylum. The boy explained that pins saved our lives "by not swallowing them." So we may say that religion is our salvation by not taking any.

Dr. J. B. Wilson has well shown the effect of religious disease in brutalizing the faces of the priests, preachers, and fanatics who cultivate the microbe most.* Some scientific man will doubtless capture the *bacteria religiosa* some day, and, perhaps, observe the effect of inoculating some poor dog with the virus, which, we may suspect, is the true occasion of *rabies*.

I expect the day will come that, when a man does anything outrageous or absurd, his friends will say: "Poor fellow; you see he inherited the religious bacillus. With secular education he might have been sane, but, as it is, he needs some slight restraint"; much as one might say: "He inherits the craving, and cannot keep from drink." For, indeed, the religious microbe acts sometimes as a stimulant; sometimes as a narcotic. Those who are wise enough to moderate their religion with a strong infusion of Secularism may observe no ill effects; but the crusades and religious wars, the persecutions and antagonism to knowledge, freedom, and humanity, show what a scourge the religious microbe has been in the past.

If, as I contend, religion is a pathological phenomenon to be studied like any other morbid growth, such as a tumor or a cancer, the great question is, How can it best be minimized and eventually eliminated? Here, despite some difficulties, our general course is clear. The religious microbe thrives in an atmosphere of unhappiness, and grows upon the soil of fear. The healthy, strong, and happy throw the infection off like water from the backs of ducks. The virus is chiefly propagated on weak women and children. Let the youngsters grow up for one generation unvaccinated by this virus, and its hold would soon become infirm. Until it can be warded off the child the best plan seems to be to counteract its ravages by large doses of secular work and play, strong draughts of joy, with occasional doses of bitter ridicule.

UNCLE BEN.

WHO POCKETS THE CASH?

WHILE means of every sort and kind are being employed to raise funds for the Christian Church, it becomes pertinent to know to what purpose these funds are applied, as in the application of the money or the uses to which it is put must consist the justification, if any, of the methods employed in raising it. Now, is it not an unimpeachable fact that the bulk of this money, a large portion of which is exacted from widows and husbandless women, who have a hard struggle for existence, is devoted to the maintenance in affluence and indolence of a certain class of men, the most of whose time is occupied in the *dolce far niente*, while a number of women circumbulate around them calling them "master"? Is it not a fact, too, that the maximum of this money, a portion of which is raised by auctioning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at a shilling *per capita*, finds its way into the coffers of the minister, enabling him, while enjoying all the comforts of European life, to build houses, and, at the same time, make up a respectable banking account, while the people from whom it is collected barely eke out a hand-to-mouth existence?

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." This illustrates the depravity which this venality in the Church has engendered.

What a contrast to this sort of thing is presented in the Mohammedan system of religion! Their teachers require no outward indication of their office, the traditional black felt and round collar being with them an intolerable incongruity. Simple and frugal in their habits, they have no occasion to oppress the poor to keep up a luxurious and expensive style of living, and they inculcate the principles of their religion by both example and precept. Their men have too much self-respect to permit unwarranted interference in their domestic concerns, or allow their women to form the entourage of any man or set of men; while their social institutions do not admit of any surplusage of woman to be employed in dancing at the heels of the priest. But the so-called Christian Church in our midst stands out in bold relief with all the unhappy features we have depicted, void of spiritual life and moral power or effect, and without any hold upon the people; and thus it drifts along to the inevitable fate which awaits it.

—Lagos Weekly Record.

THE JONAH AND FISH STORY UP TO DATE.

BY OUR OWN ANANIAS.

OUR own Ananias has just returned from a long sea trip, taken for his health's (or his creditors') sake, and brings with him quite a large crop of new "evidences." Among them he brings one bearing on a paragraph lately going the rounds of the halfpenny dailies and witty papers, to the effect that some ardent cyclists have been trying the effects and sensations to be gained by cycling on board ship.

It is reported that on some of the immense ocean liners it is quite a common, before-breakfast pastime to cycle two or three times round the decks. The sensations derived from the combined motions of progressive cycle and up-and-down motion of the vessel is said, by these enthusiasts, to be something too supremely delicious—something of the nature of a toboggan slide, switchback railway, and a fall out of a balloon.

Our none too veracious reporter asserts that, recently, one of the mid-ocean cyclists caused a great sensation to a ship-load of people. Early in the morning he was taking his risky ride, and it would seem that, either by reason of his brake refusing to act or from a sudden flop downwards of the tail end of the vessel, the cyclist lost control of his machine, and, colliding with the stern bulwarks, was shot completely over into the sea, and was seen disappearing down the throat of a large fish, which had been following the ship for several days. A rather sharp squall coming on soon after prevented any measures being taken to capture the fish, which, beyond a slight quickening in pace, seemed to take very little notice of the new lodger. Later on in the day, however, a passenger noticed that from the erect fin on the top of the fish's back there was flying one of the very quiet scarlet and bright green check-pattern stockings worn by these cycling people, and soon after the lost cyclist was seen pushing his head through a sort of skylight in the fish's back. The captain ordered the ship to be slowed, and preparations were made to try and catch the fish; but to the immense surprise of the whole ship's company, now assembled at the side of the ship, the cyclist asked to have his cycle thrown over to him, because he had just found a splendid ready-made cycling track, and was going to start a cycling school of a quite novel kind, and would be glad to have recommendations to intending pupils. He would like to have a copy of B.V.'s *Satires and Profanities* which would be found in his bunk, and a box of cigarettes. There was just time to throw these things to him, when the fish took soundings, hardly giving the passenger time to close his skylight.

A very keen outlook is being kept for this strange fish; but, whether the school is a success or not, the fact that any competent cyclist should so speedily have decided on such a line of action goes to prove that there *must* have been some basis for the Jonah incident. If there be room for a cycle track, surely there must have been room for one lone man—all of which is commended to the notice of the bold bad sceptic.

TEE HESS.

[Just as we mark the above for press, and too late to deal with for this issue, we receive a special report from our reporter saying that, by means of a Rontgen rays and Cinematograph apparatus, he now has secured some very important information, which he wishes to lay before our readers. However, we defer to publish this fresh matter until we have examined it further ourselves; it suggests doubts of too many passages in Holy Writ.—Ed. *pro tem.*; the real man is away. T. S.]

* See *Freethinker*, pp. 149 and 170.

THE REDEMPTION OF DIVES.

Down in hell lay Dives burning,
 Given over to perdition ;
 Oft to heaven his sad eyes turning,
 Filled, too late, with vain contrition.

Abram on his throne was sitting,
 All around him heaven lay shining,
 Dives' hapless case unwitting ;
 Lazarus on his breast reclining.

Came a voice of sad complaining :
 "Father ! let him dip his finger,
 Lazarus—and, not disdainng,
 Slake the thirst in which I linger !"

"Son," said Abram, "thou enjoyed'st
 In thy lifetime all thy pleasure ;
 Every appetite thou cloyed'st ;
 Lazarus now shall have his measure."

"Father ! if I here must languish,"
 Came again the pleading mournful,
 "Leave me lonely in mine anguish :
 Save my brothers !" Abram scornful :—

"They have Moses !" cried the father ;
 "Let them hear the prophets' teaching ;
 Vain it were to think that rather
 They would hear a dead man's preaching !

One there was who, not unheeding,
 On the Great White Throne in glory,
 Lent an ear to Dives' pleading,
 With compassion heard his story.

"Dives damned !" He cried ; "and Dives,
 In his torment, thinks of others ;
 Hopeless, hopes where hope alive is ;
 Cries for mercy on his brothers !"

"In a soul where love is living
 I live still, and I condemn not ;
 To the heartless, unforgiving,
 Prayers like Dives' I condemn not !"

Then swift wings sped down from Heaven,
 While he lay with grief oppressed,
 And, because he loved, forgiven,
 Dives stood among the blessed.

—Bulletin.

A. NUGENT ROBERTSON.

BOOK CHAT.

Universal Brotherhood, the leading organ of the American Theosophists, in its March number has an article on Thomas Paine, by Huldah T. Gunn. She says : "Among the eminent men who labored to secure our country's freedom none stand higher than Thomas Paine. And no man in this or any other country has been more maligned, misrepresented, and calumniated than Thomas Paine. Ingratitude and ignominy have been his portion, instead of justice and honor. A name that should have been exalted has been debased, and for what reason ? Because he was a brave and truthful man, and had the moral courage to give utterance to what he believed to be the truth. That he was the great apostle of political and religious freedom none who read his works can deny, and yet bigotry and prejudice have combined to rob our school children of the right of knowing anything about this great and glorious man."

A Strange Sin, by Coulson Kernahan (Ward, Lock, & Co.; Gd.), is a short story with a good theme, that of a conscience-struck, though revered, hypocrite. But it is worked out without *vraisemblance*. Mr. Kernahan describes a court of justice as though he had never been in one, and brings about his effect by a *coup d'état céleste*, or judgment from God. Nonetheless, he writes with a fervor which may make those interested in painful problems go on from beginning to end.

It was Fontenelle who said : "If God made man in his own image, man had well returned him the compliment." Volney, in his *Ruins of Empires*, says : "It is not God who hath made man, but man who hath made God after his own image ; he hath given him his own mind, clothed him with his own propensities, ascribed to him his own judgments. And when in this medley he finds the contradiction of his own principles, affecting hypocritical humility, he imputes weakness to his reason, and names the absurdities of his own mind mysteries of God." A similar sentiment is found as far back as the old Greek sage Xenophanes, who said that if the animals depicted their deities they would be in their own image. Ingersoll puts it epigrammatically in saying : "An honest God is the noblest work of man."

Mrs. Craigie ("John Oliver Hobbes") is said to be the present proprietor of the *Academy*. Marie Corelli has only to purchase the *Athenæum*, and then our Roman Catholic literary stars may expect to be acknowledged as first in the firmament, and such minor lights as the heretics Meredith and Hardy may hide their diminished heads.

The French, who find that a touch of mysticism gives spice to sensuality, are gushing over Joris Huysmans' *La Cathédrale*, and again it is reported that the novelist will become a Trappist-Christian monk. M. Huysmans, however, has been a senior clerk for thirty years at the Ministry of the Interior, and has no disposition to resign his pension for the Carthusians' world-famed home. He sleeps more softly-delicately than on—

That wooden bed
 Which shall their coffin be when dead.

The Chartreuse which M. Huysmans prefers is green. There is no such humbug as the man who first humbugs himself, and the author of *La Bas* has succeeded in this to admiration.

From *A History of American Christianity*, by L. W. Bacon, it appears that there are 142,000 churches in the United States, valued with their property at \$670,000,000, all exempt from taxation. There are 143 independent sects of Christians, of which the Roman Catholic body is by far the largest.

Sir George Newnes is an enterprising publisher. He follows *Dan Leno's Comic Journal* with the announcement of a new religious paper, but he does not offer Joseph Parker a big figure to have his name on the title-page.

A recent theologian lamented that, since the days of *Robert Elsmere*, the leading novels have not been such as Calvin, Wesley, or Spurgeon would have approved. Not to speak of such works as *The Story of an African Farm*, *The Woman Who Did*, *The Heavenly Twins*, and *Jude the Obscure*, such works as *The King's Highway*, *Marcella*, and *The Choir Invisible* would have been deemed irreligious a generation ago. Indeed, Mr. Howard Evans said at the Free Church Congress that in his young days he was prohibited reading works by Scott and Cooper, while to-day works of Agnostic tendency were in all hands.

The Rev. Charles Kingsley's refusal to pray for rain, though authorized in the Book of Common Prayer, reminds Professor Max Müller, in his *Reminiscences*, of a story, given in *Auld Lang Syne*, told to Kingsley by an American : "In America we manage these things better. A clergyman in a village on the frontier between two of our States prayed for rain. The rain came, and it soaked the ground to such an extent that the young lambs in the neighboring State caught cold and died. An action was brought against the clergyman for the mischief he had done, and he and his parishioners were condemned to pay damages to the sheep farmers. They never prayed for rain after that."

A Vienna paper which is publishing Zola's *Paris* has been confiscated because of certain passages which were held to be offensive to religious feeling.

WISDOM, HUMOR, AND CRITICISMS OF WILLIAM RENTON.

THERE is no truce with prejudices, any more than with evil passions.

It is not the doing of a thing which alone proves character, but the manner in which it is done.

Jesus, although the most self-conscious man, with the exception of Mr. Ruskin, that more than eighteen hundred years have produced, had no such absolute self-confidence as is required for the position to which he aspired.

The last acts and utterances of Jesus were not characterized by that buoyancy and high spirit which are inseparable from real strength of mind in the hour of danger.

The most hopeless of forlorn hopes is the leading of men against themselves.

It is discomfiting to be rejected on account of one's doctrine, but it is degrading to be accepted in spite of it.

This feminine impatience, this passive heroism which insists on being defeated rather than partially victorious !

A man's death may, or may not, be the most impressive or the most important of his acts. But, unless he is a thoroughly bad man, in which case it is of more service to the world that he should die rather than live, or unless the lives or the special welfare of others depend upon the

sacrifice of his own, his death is, and ought to be, the least important of all his acts, whatever may be the degree of its impressiveness.

The real test of self-sacrificing energy is in the daily work of a lifetime.

The business of a reformer, whether in shaping his career or anything else, is not to follow precedents, but to create them.

The people who suffer most from the privileged classes are those who also fear them most.

So superstitious are men with regard to anything like success, and upon such an exceedingly fine balance does public opinion hang!

The people are only too ready to suspect a hostile purpose on those who have the power to execute it.

The man who trusts in the deeds or sufferings of another to free him from damnation is *ipso facto* damned; even if it were not also the case that the man who can accept such a salvation is not worth the saving.

Apart from its profanity, no other dogma so absurd [as the dogma of vicarious salvation] was ever formulated.

In point of fact, all theological and ecclesiastical disputes, all discussions of religious dogma or polity, are absurd. And the inter-scholastic squabbles from which the universe from time to time is promised so much by way of regeneration have no more value for it than they have more dignity or seemingly provocation than the cat-fights on the house-tops.

We are sometimes threatened with a new federation of Christians upon the basis of their points of cardinal agreement. This proposition the ultra-religionist and the man of science are agreed in contemplating with self-possession; though the former shakes his head at it as in the very worst possible taste, the latter his sides as at the very best of jokes, since to ask Christians to settle what points of their creed are essential and what are not would be to set them by the ears worse than ever.

Christianity, as a pseudo-scientific system, lives not by investigation, but by disputation; it prospers by heresy, and propagates itself by schism.

If the truth of a system could be proved by a series of cock-and-bull stories, each more absurd than the other, Christianity would take precedence of Paganism or of anything else.

The extent to which anyone is prepared to suffer for his opinions is no criterion whatever of their value. And the argument drawn from the fact that a man will die for a system which he believes to be worth everything is reduced to zero by the other fact, that many a man has killed himself for a woman, for the very reason that he believed her to be worth nothing.

The argument drawn from the success of a religious system is not only invalid as to its perfection, but is perfectly valid against it.

Casuistry is the noblest of the sciences.

In all that concerned his relations to the National Church of Judea as established by law, Jesus was not only a Free-thinker and a Radical, but a Dissenter.

It is certain that the persecuted in all ages have been more conscientious than the persecuting authorities—the early Christians than the Jews, Protestants than Romanists, Dissenters than Protestants, Secularists than Dissenters.

Accusations which prove nothing against the accused prove a great deal against the accusers.

It is only a small part of the history of religious struggle which is writ in martyrdom; the rest is mere selfishness and faction.

There is an enormous difference between a system which directs and one which merely avails itself of certain functions and results of human labor.

Not two persons in a hundred, even in Scotland, can give an intelligible reason for their belonging to one denomination rather than to another.

Not two Christians in a thousand either know or care anything about the evidences by which their creed is, or ought to be, supported; and even where these are understood they have not, except in the most exceptional cases, been the means of forming conviction, but only of defending it as a foregone conclusion.

The story of the miracles induced men to believe in the divinity of Jesus only after his assumed divinity had previously induced their informants to believe in the possibility of miracle.

The origin of Protestantism was dissent, and yet it has never acknowledged the principle of dissent, which means the right of anybody without diminution of any secular privilege to dissent from it.

The Reformation was only a bungle at best.

If religious doctrine, according to Jesus, was not even to be defended by the secular arm, still less was it to be enforced.

It is the supreme feat of Jesus's spiritual perception, for

which no admiration can be excessive, that he should have discovered and announced the principle of spirituality as essentially self-dependent and non-intrusive.

Sarcasm is powerless before a religious system, which, being expressly intended to be spiritual—neither founded on subscription nor having legal or political status—has made itself into a stale compound of the tax-gatherer, the cut-throat, the constable, and the man in possession.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. BASIL ON RELIGION AND MORALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In this month's *University Magazine* Mr. Julius Basil inferentially asks the question, "How can man be moral unless he be religious?" I do not propose to reply to this question, but to propound it, turned inside out, for Mr. Basil to answer: "How can man be religious unless he be moral?" In fact, I hold that, as morality preceded religion, so it will outlast it. Man has always had morals—*i.e.*, customs, or, as a great writer has phrased it, "local customs expanded into universal rules of conduct." A man can no more take on, or invent, a religion in the absence of morals than he can tell the color of a cloth without sight, or the scent of a flower without the olfactory nerve, or the hardness of a thing lacking the sense of touch. The first religion intended *must* have been based on morals—local customs. The Jew-God—a very late invention—had, being invented by the Jews, or adopted by them, Jewish moral characteristics. The God of Oko-Tumbo, being an invention of Oko-Tumbo's, had all Oko-Tumbo's morals; so the Christian God has Christian morals, like his composers or creators he hates, loves, shows his hinderparts to his favorites—a thing which Montaigne confesses that he himself never could do for shame—tortures, lies, cheats, loses his temper, goes on journeys, punishes the innocent, burns Jones for ever because some unknown Smith was once disobedient, commits adultery, fornication, murder, permits abominable offences, and then punishes on account of them, which is only "pretty Fanny's way" of saying that men commit these things, and then repent of having done them; goes to war, is jealous of other gods; kills his own son, who is also himself; and yet who is neither himself nor his son, but a third and distinct person; and, in point of fact, goes stark, staring mad, or drunk, and declares himself to be not one, but three; an exaggeration of the Christian drunkard's "seeing double." Now, it is clear that, just as man's gods are all creatures of man's imagination and his morals, so religions are creations of man's morals and imagination, for without morals how could any man construct a religion, or decide which one of two or more already existent religions to adopt? Really, if Mr. Basil will answer my question in your columns, "How can man become religious unless he be moral?" I shall be interested in his reply, even if I am—not like unto the Chinaman's wife when told she had a soul—"rather surprised."

D. M.

PROFANE JOKES.

A MINISTER of my acquaintance tells the following story: "It was at one time the custom in certain circles in Scotland to warm the beds of their guests by putting one of their servant lasses into it for an hour before the guest was shown to his bedroom, so that the chill might be taken off the sheets. It happened on one occasion, in a certain country manse, where this custom prevailed, that the guests had been having rather a jovial time at dinner and supper, and when the time came to separate for the night one of them was pretty far gone. He was shown to his bedroom, where the servant-lass, who acted as warming-pan, being tired, had fallen sound asleep. In his half-tipsy condition he looked at the rosy-cheeked girl in bed, and, chuckling to himself, said: 'The dinner was guid, and (hic) the whisky was guid, but losh keep me (hic) this is the height of hospitality.'"—*Scotch Bookseller.*

A gentleman, going through a churchyard, saw a tombstone on which the following lines were carved:—

Stranger, weep for aged seven;
Little Tommy's gone to heaven.

He immediately took a pencil and wrote underneath:—

Cheer up, stranger, who can tell,
Perhaps your Tommy's gone to —

A clergyman who was catechizing a Sunday-school, after informing the children that the pastor of a church is its shepherd, while the members are the sheep, asked: "What does the shepherd do for the sheep?" To the amusement of those present a small boy in the front row piped out: "Shear them!"

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, "Mrs. Mona Caird's *Morality of Marriage*."
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, Mr. Ryan, "Temperance"; 7.30, R. Forder, "Recent Egyptian Discoveries and their Relation to Christian Morals."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 11.15, Discussion, "The Relative Value of Science, Theology, and Ethics," opened by W. P. Lucas; 7, Stanton Coit, "Tennyson."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Stanton Coit, "Tennyson's Life."
WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY ("Barley Mow," Horseferry-road): 7.30, E. Calvert, "John Howard and Prison Reform."
WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): March 27 and April 3rd, 7.30, Debate between J. Boyce and Stanley Jones, "Is the Bible an Inspired Revelation from a God to Man?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 7, A. Scrimshire Recital "Hamlet," with musical interludes.
BOLTON (Spinners' Hall, St. George's-road): C. Watts—11, "Christian Tactics Exposed"; 3, "The Cradle, the Altar, and the Tomb"; 6.30, "Decline of Paganism and Dawn of Christianity."
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, A dramatic entertainment, entitled "East Lynne," will be given by the dramatic class.
DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7, J. B. Townsend, Recitations.
GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class, impromptu speeches; 6.30, A. Holm, M.A., "Tennyson as Philosopher."
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Entertainment given by the children of the Sunday-school.
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Rhodes, "Zola's *Rome*."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. P. Ward—11, "Christianity before Christ"; 3, "Some Social Evils of the Age"; 6.30, "The Church the Robber."
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street): 3, Members' monthly meeting; (Byker Social Club, corner of Raby and Parker-streets): 7, G. Selkirk, "The Bible against Itself."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rookingham-street): 7, Lecture on "The Channel Islands—Jersey, Guernsey, and Sark," with lantern illustrations.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—March 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 Oregon-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 27, Manchester. April 3, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 10, Stockton-on-Tees; 17, Glasgow.

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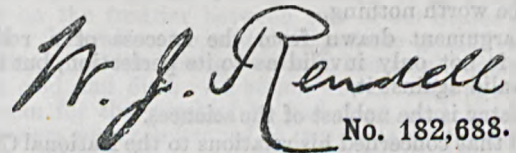
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