

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE WICKED PRECENTOR.

"PROVIDENCE" has made many mistakes in this world, and one of the greatest was letting John Calvin be anything but a Scotchman. North of the Tweed was his proper home. He and John Knox were two fine companions. Colonel Ingersoll says that they fitted each other like the upper and lower jaws of a wild beast. Both were men of great ability, both were sure they were right, and both were ready to make other people admit it. John Knox was perhaps the less objectionable of the two. He had some amiable weaknesses. He was fond of a glass of wine, and had a partiality for the ladies. John Calvin was more entitled to the epithet of "sour," which Browning bestows upon the northern Protestant. Look at his portrait. What a nose he had! Long and pointed—just the size and shape for poking into other people's business. Servetus should never have trusted a man with a nose like that. John Calvin carried his certificate of character in front of his face. It was always there. Servetus, however, did not notice it, or he misread it, and the result was that he was burnt to death with *green wood*, and died in an awful slow agony.

John Calvin had a strong but not a decisive influence in England. He offered to draw up a creed, a ritual, and a discipline for the English Church, but our "Reformers" put him off with compliments. He was more successful in Scotland. The "Reformers" of that country adopted his damnable theology and his damnable discipline. They set up what is called Presbyterianism, and had the humor to call it Christian liberty. Every minister of "The Kirk" was a little God Almighty. A tyrant was placed in every parish. His business was to preach a hell hereafter and realise it here. And the people were so overawed that they said they liked it. They drank and fornicated on the sly, and the minister sometimes joined in the sport—also on the sly. But in public they declared that they would live and die for the Kirk. And when the trouble occurred in England in the seventeenth century, and Charles the First's head was cut off, and monarchy was abolished, and the House of Lords shut up, and the Bishops were kicked out of their dioceses, the Scotch were foolish enough to believe that England, after breaking the rods of Episcopacy, would welcome the scorpions of Presbyterianism. But they were rudely undeceived. Milton's sonnet and Cromwell's sword showed the English temper; and Preston, Dunbar, and Worcester sent Presbyterianism north again, bleeding, groaning, and dejected.

From that time Presbyterianism had to confine itself to the torture of Scotchmen, and how it succeeded is vividly told in Mr. Henley's monograph on Robert Burns. It is pretty strong yet, but not as strong as it was. In the cities and large towns men laugh at and defy it; in the smaller towns and rural districts it is still a rampant tyranny.

No. 885.

Carnoustie is one of these little places, and a curious rumpus has recently occurred there—a report of it appearing in the *People's Journal*. Mr. A. Simpson was the precentor of Panbride Free Church, where he played the harmonium, which is as much church music as the ordinary House of God will stand in "Caledonia stern and wild." Mr. Simpson was also a newsagent, and, like a good business man, he supplied what his customers wanted. It did not occur to him that keeping a shop entitled him to set up a press censorship. He sold every paper that was reputable, whatever opinions it advocated, and nobody seems to have complained. But the minister of Panbride Free Church, the Rev. A. Macpherson, had to be reckoned with. This gentleman paid a visit to Mr. Simpson's shop to see whether he was dealing only in "proper" literature. Imagine his indignation at finding that his precentor, the player of his harmonium, the leader of praise in his church, was actually selling a certain theatrical publication, which is not named, and (worse still) that abominable journal called the *Freethinker*. The man of God sternly ordered him—in the name of the Almighty, and for the salvation of his own immortal soul—to discontinue the sale of these papers. Mr. Simpson, however, felt capable of thinking for himself; anyhow, he felt capable of conducting his own business, and plainly said so. Thereupon the Rev. A. Macpherson called a meeting of the Session to deal with this obstinate sheep, who was too much like a goat. It was unanimously agreed "that Mr. Simpson be considered an unfit person to fill the post of organist of the church, but can still retain his membership." This decision was communicated to the culprit, who was informed that he might still finger the ivories if he would only give "an assurance that he would discontinue the sale of the above-mentioned or any similar papers." But there was to be no trifling, and three days were given for a definite answer. Mr. Simpson replied that he did not want "any amateur assistance from irresponsible people." "Supposing the papers referred to," he said, "were below what you consider your moral standard, would it not have been far more sensible on your part to have called the attention of the authorities to them, and have them suppressed and the publishers prosecuted?" Mr. Simpson also declared: "Racing papers, that is, gambling papers, you admitted I could continue to sell." Finally, he told the reverend gentleman: "I do not admit your authority to interfere in the conducting of my business." That settled it. If a man of God is not to interfere with other people's business, why the deuce does he exist at all on this planet? Mr. Simpson was therefore discharged forthwith from "the office of organist and leader of praise in Panbride Free Church," and requested to send in immediately the key of the sacred harmonium.

Mr. Macpherson expresses "regret at this unfortunate termination of the matter." It is probable, however, that Mr. Simpson will not take it quite so much to heart. He has honorably maintained his independence, and he may be glad to have done with such a ministerial busybody. You may keep company with the devil till you see his cloven hoof. Then you look out for other society. Mr. Macpherson has betrayed himself. Mr. Simpson understands him now, and is probably no longer anxious to receive his spiritual ministrations. If there is a heaven hereafter, this sensible newsagent will perhaps get there without leave of the Rev. A. Macpherson.

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIAN DISHONESTY.

THE vindication of freedom is one perpetual conflict, and, when the struggle is of a religious nature, it is generally very keen. Experience has proved that, if we approach any question from a religious point of view, we are apt to stand upon narrow, unsafe, and dangerous ground. It is a matter of history that the most wicked follies and the most shocking crimes have been committed in the name of religion. Supposing it were true, as it is alleged, that Christianity is productive of peace, it is a strange fact that its adherents should always be in conflict with each other, and that in their quarrels the most severe language is indulged in on both sides. That this is so was forcibly illustrated in the late Parliamentary debate upon the Anglican Church. No charge appeared too severe, and no invective too keen, for the Protestant defenders to hurl at their Roman Catholic brethren. It afforded a striking proof that the religion of Jesus is utterly impotent to inspire love and good feeling amongst his professed followers. We know of no anti-religious community wherein is to be found so much open discord and bitterness of feeling as we witness in the Christian fold. It is quite time that these devotees of theology directed their attention to the better regulation of the lowest passions of their nature.

When we speak of Christian dishonesty we simply mean want of probity or integrity in principle, lack of sincerity in profession, and faithlessness in carrying out the obligations of the faith. If one-half of the charges were true which were made in the House of Commons by the vehement defenders of the Anglican Church during the debate referred to, then our so-called National Church is the hotbed of the most unprincipled tactics and the grossest forms of hypocrisy. It was there alleged that clergymen are guilty, not only of "misconduct in doctrine and practice," but of systematised treachery and perjury. Sir W. Harcourt said: "I have been overwhelmed with correspondence on this matter from persons of all political parties and all sections of the Church of England, and I believe I speak for a great many persons in the country when I say that there is at present at work an organisation attempting to identify the doctrines and practices of the Church of England with the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome." As Secularists, we favor neither of the contending parties, but we recognise that this religious controversy may confer advantages upon the struggle for legitimate mental freedom. It demonstrates the justice of our demand for Secular liberty; and, moreover, the conflict will tend to keep both Churches—Catholic and Protestant—in check. Thus their weakness will add to our strength, and show to the world that the orthodox religion does not promote harmony and brotherly love. The Secular plea is free speech, and individual liberty for every one, controlled only by a proper consideration for the rights of others.

Hitherto public attention has been drawn chiefly to the conflict between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism; but now the secret practices of the Jesuits have come to light. This Christian trinity presents a curious aspect of religious dissension, folly, and vice. American card-players have a game they term "Cut-throat-euchre." Three persons are necessary to play the game, and two of the players are always against the leader of trumps. So has it been with this three-handed theological game. The Jesuits have shown their readiness, if they can win their own game, to apparently ally themselves with either party. We have given our opinion in previous articles upon Catholicism and Protestantism; we now propose to record our estimate of Jesuitism, which we regard as the very incarnation of deceit, aggression, and moral corruption. Of course we admit that there are Jesuits who are sincere and earnest workers, but, as Macaulay observes: "Great vices are mingled with the disinterestedness and self-devotion of the society. The same devotion that gives them such fearless courage makes them also have little regard to truth and mercy; and a Jesuit, by the interest of his religion, too often meant the interest of his Society." We have just been reading again *The Order of Jesuits*, reprinted from the *English Review* for March, 1846; also Paul Bert's Preface to *La Morale des Jesuites*, translated from the fifteenth Paris edition, and, as the result, we pronounce that the teachings of the Jesuits are utterly

subversive of the legitimate exercise of all national and civil authority. They are destructive of personal freedom, and are an impediment to the cultivation of the moral sense. The Jesuit order is a deadly conspiracy against truth, honor, domestic fidelity, and the highest safeguards to the well-being of society. As an organisation it is a standing menace to all free and constitutional government, and is thoroughly incompatible with the more prolific elements of modern civilization. Its policy is based upon avowed falsehood, hypocrisy, and the maxim that it is "a virtue to lie and deceive for the glory of the Church." Its motto is "The end justifies the means." If the machinations of the Jesuits are allowed to triumph, there will be an end to freedom of thought, private judgment, and national progress. The fact should not be ignored that Jesuitism is the worst form of Roman Catholicism, and that when it flourished, comparatively unrestrained, immorality and intellectual darkness reigned supreme.

The Jesuits profess to be genuine Christians, and their organisation is known as the "Society of Jesus," which is strictly a secret order. It originated thus:—Luther was excommunicated in 1520, which date Mosheim fixes as the beginning of the Reformation. The Church had become so corrupt and despotic that revolution within it seemed certain to crumble the rotten superstructure to the ground. To oppose it the "Society of Jesus" was organised, under the leadership of Ignatius Loyola, in 1534. Loyola was a military man of no mean parts, so he conceived an order, planned after military discipline, with himself as General, possessing the powers of an autocrat. He brought to his assistance in shaping his plans a man of remarkable ingenuity for framing a constitution that would subvert the manhood to absolute obedience to a superior in power, in the person of Lainez, who may be credited with maturing the constitution of the Jesuits. Four degrees are provided as follows:—Novice, or novitiate, scholastic, second novitiate, and that of a professed member. The Society was founded by Loyola, and was established by Pope Paul III. Sept. 27, 1540. It appears that a boy of fifteen years, or upwards, is eligible as a member if sound physically, and passes an otherwise satisfactory examination. F. Genelli, in his biography of Loyola, says: "In those who offered themselves he looked less to purely natural goodness than to firmness of character and ability to business, for he was of opinion that those who were not fit for public business were not adapted for filling office in the Society."

According to the authorities alluded to above, the Jesuits teach that, under certain circumstances, robbery is justifiable. "Trifling thefts committed on different days, and at different opportunities, against one man, or against many, however great may be the amount which has been stolen, will never become mortal sins.....A son who robs his father is not accounted to sin mortally." It is alleged that in taking the oath direct equivocation is permissible. "It is not in itself a sin to use equivocation in swearing.....When, for instance, the swearer begins by 'I swear that,' let him in a low voice insert the reservation 'to-day,' and then continue aloud. In this manner the entire speech is true." It is taught that difference of opinion is not to be allowed. "Let no difference of doctrine be permitted, neither by words of mouth nor in letters or books." They also teach as a religious duty death to heretics, the destruction of reason, and the abnegation of all family ties. At the admission of the novice into the Association he is made to "swear to combat, even unto death, the enemies of humanity (heretics). He has sworn eternal hatred to the genius of evil, and he has promised absolute and unreserved submission to our Holy Father the Pope, and to the orders of their hierarchical superiors of the Association. The Director, in admitting him, exclaims: 'We have one soldier more!'" (*Les Jesuites et l'Univers*, par F. Génin, pp. 266-7). The novice is also made to contemplate for hours, in the darkness and solitude of midnight, such imaginary scenes as the depth of hell, the doings of the Devil, and the tortures and sufferings of the damned. Thus, at the very initiation, fear is made to crush the reason of the poor victim to prepare him for still further degraded submission to the Church. He is not, under any circumstances, to entertain opinions opposed to those of the Pope or General; he is to give up all family associations and all personal property; and he is never to disobey his superiors, command him to do what they may. In fact, his body and mind are riveted

to this debasing humiliation by vows and dread of the infliction of fearful penalties here and hereafter. (For proof of this see "Spiritual Exercises," by Ignatius Loyola.)

This Christian Society further maintains that upon all questions of morals the judgment of the Church is final, even if it contends that what appears to some to be white is black. "That we may be altogether accordant with and conformable to the Catholic Church, we are bound, if the faith defined anything to be black which to our eyes appears white, in like manner to pronounce that it is black." That, according to its doctrine of "probable opinions," the same act may be lawful and unlawful just to suit the desire of the individual. "Is it lawful to follow one probable opinion at one time, and a different probable opinion at another time, upon the same subject? It is probable, for instance, that a tax has been unjustly imposed; it is also possible that it has been justly imposed. May I then to-day, in my capacity as the King's tax-gatherer, exact the said tax, and to-morrow, or even on the same day, in my capacity as a merchant, secretly defraud it? I affirm that it is lawful to do at pleasure sometimes the one, and sometimes the other." The late Mr. Gladstone, in his work *The Vatican Decrees*, states that the Jesuits teach the authorised condemnation of those who favor the fostering of "the liberty of the press, the liberty of conscience, and the liberty of speech." Those are also condemned by these teachings who allege "that the Church should not employ force, that in the conflict of laws, civil and ecclesiastical, the civil law should prevail, that marriage not sacramentally contracted has a binding force, and that in countries called Catholic the free exercise of other religions may be laudably allowed."

These are but a few specimens of the demoralising teachings of the members of "Christ's Church." The truth is, the noblest traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race are being assailed by these Jesuits, who are attacking the very bulwarks of that freedom which has been secured at too great a cost to be yielded up without a struggle, "even unto death," in its defence. The triumphs of human thought and the potency of unfettered intellectuality must be protected. Jesuits may plot, priests may connive, the Pope may exult, and party politicians may rejoice; but be it our duty to resist to the very last the intrigues of a Church whose very teachings are the embodiment of all that destroys human happiness, poisons the atmosphere of domestic life, and impedes the advancement and elevation of the national character.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE SECULAR CHARTER.

PUBLIC AND PERSONAL NOTES.

A FORTNIGHT ago I printed in the *Freethinker* the whole Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Secular Society, Limited. In the same number of this journal I gave a long explanation of the new Society, pointing out its advantages, and showing that gifts and legacies might be given or bequeathed to it with perfect security. This is a matter which I shall have to return to shortly. For the present I am, as I said, anxious to enrol as many members as possible. The entrance fee is ten shillings, which covers the first year; afterwards the subscription is five shillings per annum.

Several friends in various parts of the country have applied for membership, but I should like to see a much larger number of applicants during the next few weeks. The first General Meeting of members must be held within four months of registration; that is to say, before the end of September. By that time there ought to be at least a hundred on the Society's books.

One Freethinker, who is a member of the N. S. S. Executive, tells me that he and some of his friends have talked the matter over, and they prefer to wait to see what will happen. He and his friends do not altogether approve the present constitution of the Board of Directors. I presume they mean that there are too many lecturers upon it, and too few "laymen." But this is a point easily explained, and easily set right.

An interesting and instructive history might be written

of my efforts to incorporate this new Society. When the project was ripe I sought the co-operation of substantial "laymen." But I found that scarcely one was prepared to take any responsibility. That, as usual, was left to me. Several said they would help when the Society was once established, but they did not care to sign the Memorandum and Articles, and thus become Directors immediately. What was I to do then? Let the project drop after so much thought and trouble? No, no; I am not built that way. What I did was this. I asked my friends and colleagues, mostly poor men, to give me their signatures. They did so, and I thank them—and the party may by-and-bye thank them too. By a law, which we cannot help, Messrs. Hartmann, Watts, Forder, Cohen, Moss, Heaford, and myself are the first Directors; and we are at least a good guarantee that only *bonâ fide* Secularists will be admitted.

Well, we only sit as Directors until the first General Members' Meeting, which, as I said, must be held before the end of September. Then the members can place whom they please upon the Board. They have the matter in their own hands, if they will only join. What more do they want? Is it manly and dignified to hold aloof, and then complain that things are not to your liking? Why not join and try to make them so?

All along I have said that I wish the "laymen" of our party would take this matter up with spirit and energy. That would be far better than criticising the poor lecturers who have sufficient faith in their President to stand by him when he calls upon them. Let the "laymen" begin business and keep at it. Nobody will be more pleased than I shall be to witness the spectacle. I am really not anxious to do everything myself. Those who fancy so don't know how much I have to do already. Besides, I am no more fond of unnecessary work than the next.

Long ago I stated in the *Freethinker* that I did not want to be the Chairman of this new Incorporation. My presence on the Board may be advisable I think it is. But I should like the Chairman to be a man "substance," as they say, and a man of tried business capacity. The Board may consist of as many as twelve members, and if the lecturers and journalists of the movement were represented by (say) four Directors, and the "laymen" by eight, I think that would be a fair, wise, and serviceable arrangement. Of course I only give this as my personal opinion. The decision rests with the general body of members.

I call upon the "laymen" of our party to come to the front in this matter of business, as laymen of position and capacity come to the front in Christian bodies. Carping at this juncture is too much like a cloak for laziness or cowardice. I place at their disposition a scheme which has cost me long and careful thought, much trouble, and (for a poor man) a good deal of money, which I think I am entitled to have repaid me. Well, the "laymen" can take this gift or leave it. I cannot do more than offer it. And if they desert their duty, and leave it all to me, I shall go on with it as I can, but I shall smile rather scornfully at any irresponsible criticism they like to indulge in. There are no rights without duties, and those who do nothing have not even a claim to be listened to when they choose to speak.

I repeat that the present Board is only preliminary. Nothing of any importance will be done until after the first General Meeting. What we have to do in the meantime is to enrol members. Applications should, for the present, be sent direct to me. Whatever arrangement on this point the Board may make at its first meeting will be duly announced in next week's *Freethinker*.

And now a word in conclusion. Some apprehensive persons want to know what is to become of the N. S. S. if the incorporated Society succeeds. I reply that I don't know and don't care. If it succeeds, the Secular Society, Limited, will be really and practically the old N. S. S. with a legal status, a business organisation, security for its funds, and a right to receive, hold, and use donations and bequests without let or hindrance. These invaluable additions can be hardly a detriment. For the rest, we may leave the result to natural selection. If the new organisation helps

the old one, and both can live together in peace and co-operation—well and good. If the new organisation absorbs the old one by achieving its objects more efficiently—that is also well and good. And if the supporters of the new one are just the same persons as the supporters of the old one, what on earth is there to grieve about? Let us have a little common-sense—and let us have a lot of members.

G. W. FOOTE.

BUDDHA AND HIS TEACHINGS.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

(Concluded from page 420.)

GAUTAMA, now the Buddha, travelled from place to place, appealing alike to Brahman and outcast. He compared his law to the sky; all could participate in its beneficent influence. "Not by birth does one become an outcast; not by birth does one become a Brâhmana; by deeds one becomes an outcast, by deeds one becomes a Brâhmana."* The common people heard him gladly. He is said to have personally converted 1,250 persons. One of his chief disciples was a barber. Even wretched outcast girls, whose only couch was a dung heap, would seek him to gain relief from their burdens. He taught them the Five commandments, or rather prohibitions, against destroying life, stealing, impurity, lying, and drinking intoxicants; and the six positive injunctions to loving-kindness, purity, forbearance, fortitude, contemplation, and knowledge. Those who entered into the Samgha, or assembly of mendicant monks dedicated to deliverance, had more minute directions. After entering on the path they were to divest themselves of the ten Samyojanas, or fetters, which are: 1, Delusion of Self; 2, Doubt; 3, Reliance upon the efficacy of rites and ceremonies; 4, Bodily passions; 5, Hatred, ill-feeling; 6, Desire for future life on the earth (or in the worlds of form); 7, Desire for future life in heaven (or in formless worlds); 8, Pride; 9, Self-righteousness; 10, Ignorance. Good must be pursued without any ulterior motive whatever, and that man is not spiritually free who requires any reward in a future life beyond the grave. Buddha, in short, taught the Gospel of Renunciation; of gaining all by desiring nothing. An illustration may be drawn from a dialogue which occurs near the beginning of Sutta Nipâta:—

"I have boiled (my rice), I have milked my cows"—so said the herdsman Dhaniya—"I am living together with my fellows near the banks of the Mahî (river); (my) house is covered, the fire is kindled; therefore, if thou like, rain, O sky."

"I am free from anger, free from stubbornness," so said Bhagvat. [The blessed Lord, Buddha] "I am abiding for one night near the banks of the Mahî (river); my house is uncovered, the fire (of passions) is extinguished; therefore, if thou like, rain, O sky!"†

The herdsman continues through several verses, enumerating his material advantages which Buddha parallels with his own absence of desire.

Buddha paid no heed to the teaching of the sacred Veda, and absolutely forbade sanguinary sacrifices. To this day the doctrine of atonement by blood remains an almost insurmountable obstacle to the acceptance of Christianity by any Buddhist. Buddha taught reverence to man instead of sacrifice to gods. He said:—

"If a man for a hundred years worship Agni [the Hindu god of fire] in the forest, and if he but for one moment pay homage to a man whose soul is grounded (in true knowledge), better is that homage than sacrifice for a hundred years.‡

"To feed one good man is infinitely greater in point of merit than attending to questions about heaven and earth, spirits and demons. These matters are not to be compared to the religious duty we owe to our parents; our parents are very Divine.§

"To a young man about to worship the six quarters he said: 'Know, young man, that these are the six quarters. Parents are the east quarter, teachers are the south quarter, wife and children are the west quarter, friends and companions are the north quarter, spiritual pastors are the zenith, and servants and dependents are the nadir.¶

* Sutta Nipâta, 141.

† *Ibid.*, 18 and 19.

‡ Dhammapada, 107.

§ Sutra of 42 sections, sect. 10, *Beal's Catena*, p. 194.

¶ *Sigala Vada Sutta*; R. C. Childers; *Contemporary Review*, p. 422; Feb., 1876; and *Sept Suttas Pâlis*; Paris, 1876; p. 316.

The supreme power, with Buddha, was kamma (in Sanscrit karma). Kamma, in its primary signification, is work. It means an action, either good or bad. Secondly, it means the consequences of action, the merit or demerit which lives on after it is produced. Finally, as an abstraction it is the energy or cause whereby things are brought into existence, the bad producing bad, and the good good. Everything is in ceaseless evolution; whatever begins must end. All that remains of the individual at his death is his kamma. We inherit the kamma of all the countless multitudes in the past. They toiled and suffered for us, though they knew it not; and we in turn shall pass our kamma on to our successors. Buddhism is thus at one with the dictum of Comte, that we live *by*, and should therefore live *for*, others. Kamma supplies both the absence of an immortal soul and of a personal ruler of events.

Buddha, however, did not directly deny the existence of the Brahmanic gods. But he made them subject to kamma. In the Brahmajala-sutta Buddha declares this of Brahma, the supposed creator. He is in the whirl of transmigrating births which are the result of kamma. He is simply one of innumerable sentient beings, from an insect to a god, who are in a state of constant change, dying perhaps in this world and reproduced in another, according to the merit or demerit of the kamma. And so with the Brahmanic view of other worlds. He did not deny their heavens and hells, but made them subject to his fundamental tenet, *sabbam aniccam*, all is impermanent. In the words of Dr. Oldenburg, p. 130, "God and the universe trouble not the Buddhist; he knows only one question, How shall I in this world of suffering be delivered from suffering?"

Much dispute has arisen among scholars as to the meaning of Nirvana, the goal of Buddhism; but in the light of further acquaintance with Pâli texts the question is approaching settlement. Dr. Oldenburg says (p. 269): "Nirvana must have been understood in the ancient Order to be either the Nothing or a supreme felicity; there was finally neither on the one side nor on the other perfect accuracy." Nirvana means the extinction of Tanhâ—a moral condition of holy calm possible to be attained in this life. Nirvana attained, the chain of kamma is broken, and no new being is produced. "As a flame blown about by the violence of the wind, goes out, cannot be reckoned (as existing), even so a Muni [monk or ascetic] delivered from name and body, disappears, and cannot be reckoned (as existing).* Exert thyself, then, says Buddha; being wise and thoughtful in this world, let one, having listened to my utterance, learn his own extinction."†

For forty-five years Buddha continued his public preaching, when, finding his powers failing, he called his followers round and asked them to speak out if they had any doubt or misgiving in regard to his teaching. "Inquire, brethren, freely. Do not have to reproach yourself afterwards with the thought, 'Our teacher was face to face with us, and we could not bring ourselves to inquire of the Blessed One when we were face to face with him?'"‡ All kept silent. He finally said: "Behold now, brethren, I exhort you, saying, 'Decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence!'" These were his last words.

Buddha had not written anything, and after the death of their master it is said three of his disciples were selected to record his teachings. It is not easy to credit that his immediate followers would have spoken of him in the exaggerated terms in which he is here described. Probably we have similar phenomena to that found in the Christian gospels. Remembering, however, how Omar (afterwards Caliph), when near the tent where Mahomet lay dead, drew his scimitar, and swore he would slay any who dared say that the Messenger of Allah could die before all the hypocrites were exterminated and all the heathen converted, we may leave this question to be settled by subsequent criticism. Mr. Rhys David says, in the "General Introduction to his Translation" (p. 10): "The age of these writings can be fixed without much uncertainty at about the latter end of the fourth or beginning of the third century, before the commencement of the Christian era."

In the reign of King Asoka (B.C. 242), who adopted Buddhism, while extending the utmost toleration to all

* Sutta Nipâta, 1,073.

† *Ibid.*, v. 1,061.

‡ Book of the Great Decease, chap. vi., sect. 5; page 113, vol. xi.

other beliefs,* missionaries were despatched not only throughout India and to Ceylon, but also to Thibet, Mongolia, Kashmir, and Siam. "Nor is it impossible," says Colonel Meadows Taylor, "that Buddhism may have been preached in Britain, as it was in Greece."†

The Canon of Buddhist Scriptures was then determined. They are called "Tripitaka," "the three Baskets," or "Caskets," and are divided into Sutra, Vinaya, and Abhidharma, Doctrine, Discipline, and Metaphysics. The Sutra consists of discourses delivered by Gautama, and in some instances by his disciples, and also contains birth-stories and illustrative narratives in connection with the sermons. The Vinaya gives the laws of the priesthood, forming a code of monastic discipline, together with legends and details of the life and ministry of Gautama. The Abhidharma discusses the various philosophical speculations in terms of great wealth and precision. These constitute their sacred scriptures, and are the ultimate appeal on all points connected with the religion. Only a portion, chiefly from the two first divisions, has as yet been translated. The Pali Text Society is deserving of the utmost commendation for its efforts to publish the whole of the texts in Roman character, and if the Society receives the encouragement it deserves, we may reasonably hope that English translations of the whole of the Buddhist Sacred Literature will shortly appear. The influence which a knowledge of Sanscrit literature and of Buddhism has already had upon European thought is known to all acquainted with German philosophy. The publication of Pali literature will have a considerable value for the student of early manners and folk lore, as well as for students of the history of the development of religion. The work of the scholars who are making us acquainted with this faith deserves much commendation, even if, while viewing the extensive influence which it has had upon the world, we are unwilling to endorse the final words of the Book of the Great Decease: "Hard—hard is a Buddha to meet with through hundreds of ages!"

GAMBETTA.

(Continued from page 421.)

We may here dispose of a question which once caused much dispute and gave rise to a legend. How did Gambetta lose one of his eyes? According to the legend, he destroyed it himself. Not liking the clerical seminary at Montauban, he wrote home to this effect: "Dear father, if you don't come and take me away from this place I shall poke out one of my eyes." M. Gambetta, senior, took no notice of this strange epistle, and in a few days he received another: "Dear father, I have poked out one of my eyes, and if you don't come and take me away I shall poke out the other." This is a capital story, and shows the idea people had of his determination of character. But it is utterly untrue. Gambetta lost the sight of his right eye at the age of eight. He was one day in a cutler's shop near his father's house, watching a workman drill a hole in the handle of a knife. The instrument suddenly broke, and a sharp fragment wounded the eye, puncturing the cornea. There ensued a watery discharge and protusion of the ball. It was for years a source of annoyance and pain, and in 1867 he had it removed to save the other eye.

Gambetta came to Paris at the age of eighteen to study law. He was renowned among the students who lodged with him at the Hotel de Var, not only for his vigorous ideas and vehement speech, but also for his liberal allowance of three hundred francs a month. In 1859 he was enrolled at the Paris bar, and as to be *dans ses meubles* was the rule, he furnished modest apartments of his own. His father was against his practising in Paris, where the market was so overstocked, and wanted him to settle down at Cahors. But *Tatan* came to the rescue. She had an annuity of about £100, and she said to the father: "You do not see how you can keep your son in Paris, it may be for long years, but next week I will go with him, and we

shall stay together"; then, turning to Léon, she added, "And now, my boy, I will give you food and shelter, and you will do the rest by your work."

Gambetta returned to Paris with her and did work. During his student days he had led a noisy life, and he was a thorn in the side of the Imperial gendarmes, before whom he would spout sedition in the streets. But he studied hard all the same, and now he studied harder than ever. Bismarck called the September government "men of the pavement." He was just as accurate as the *Spectator* which, after Gambetta's death, described him as "imperfectly educated." The truth is, he had a splendid education. He was a good connoisseur in art; he was well versed in more than one branch of science, and could, in after years, chat on ornithology with Paul Bert; his knowledge of Greek and Latin was extensive and profound; he was well acquainted with Italian; he could read English easily, although he never trusted himself to speak it; he was deeply read in the best literature of France; his stock of law was enough for his induction to the bar; and he was proficient in military science, a subject in which he always took a deep interest. Gambetta's preferences in French literature were characteristic. He knew yards of Victor Hugo's verse, but he delighted chiefly in the old authors—Molière, La Fontaine, Diderot, Voltaire, and, above all, in Montaigne and Rabelais. He usually carried about a copy of the latter, and it is reported that he has left some racy notes on the great humorist.

At the Café Procope, an old establishment that had been patronised by the great wits and wits of the eighteenth century, including Diderot and Voltaire, there was a large upstairs room in which a debating society held its meetings. Gambetta attended them, and soon became their most noticeable figure. Most of the attendants were impecunious young men who have since become eminent in science, art, literature, and politics. They felt his ascendancy, and predicted that he would "make the world dance." But their plaudits did not entice him astray. After leaving them he went home, and from midnight till three in the morning he gave himself up to extra study. At the age of thirty he was equipped with the best culture, his rare faculties were well trained and alert, and that eloquent tongue was ready to use all his great resources for some noble purpose. And what could be nobler than to impeach tyranny in the name of freedom? The man was ready, and the hour was at hand.

As Crémieux's secretary, Gambetta had picked up a good knowledge of legal practice. As early as 1862 he was engaged, on the recommendation of Jules Favre, to defend Buette, a foreman mechanic, who was charged with treason. Only a year before he tried his first speech at the bar in defence of a prosecuted newspaper, *Le Hannelet*, stuttered, broke down, and was mercilessly snubbed by the judge. But now he spoke freely, and charged the jury not to listen to the suggestion, *Tu non es amicus Cæsaris*. From that moment the workmen of Paris fixed their attention on the "one-eyed advocate." At last Gambetta's opportunity came. He seized it, leapt into notoriety, and suddenly became a power in France. He did not, as Byron said, "wake up one morning and find himself famous"; he gave eloquent speech one day to the suppressed passion of millions, and made himself famous.

The Empire was beginning to be found out. Eugène Tenet's book baffled the press laws, and told the French people how Louis Napoleon had established his throne. It showed how the Coup d'Etat had been resisted, gave a long list of martyrs, and narrated the death of Alphonse Baudin, a deputy who was shot on a barricade in the Rue Sainte-Marguerite. Paris was moved, and on the next *Jour des Morts* hundreds of old exiles and young students visited Baudin's tomb at Montmartre. The police made several arrests, and journals that condemned them were prosecuted. On the *Reveil* starting a subscription for a monument to Baudin's memory, a prosecution was commenced against its editor, Charles Louis Delescluze, who entrusted his defence to Gambetta.

The notorious judge Delesvaux presided at the trial. He was a fierce legal hawk, often styled the Jeffreys of the Second Empire. The case of Delescluze came on late in the day, after several other editors had been defended by Crémieux, Jules Favre, and Emmanuel Arago. It was getting dusk, and just before Gambetta rose Delesvaux observed: "I suppose you have not much to say, so it will hardly be worth while to have the gas lighted."

* Mr. Davids, in his *Hibbert Lecture*, pp. 229-231, gives extracts from the noble inscriptions of this truly great king, and affirms, moreover: "There is no record known to me in the long history of Buddhism, throughout the many centuries where its followers have been for such lengthened periods supreme, of any persecution by the Buddhists of the followers of any other faith."

† *A Student's Manual of the History of India*, p. 51; 1871.

"Never mind the gas, sir; I will throw light enough on this affair," answered Gambetta; and amid the laughter produced by this retort he began that splendid speech which lifted him above the great orators who had preceded, and won him a national fame. He attacked the Empire with astonishing vigor. The judge rose to stop him, but a growl from the crowd in court forced him back into his seat. Gambetta's hearers were startled by his courage and fascinated by his eloquence, and when he finished his magnificent peroration their admiration knew no bounds.

"Listen; for seventeen years you have been the masters of France, absolute and arbitrary, as yourselves have said. We will not inquire what use you have made of her treasures, her blood, her honor, and her glory. No one is ignorant of the financial catastrophes which, at this very moment, spring like mines under our feet; but what condemns you the most is that you have never dared to say—We will celebrate, we will put among the solemnisations of France, the second of December as a national anniversary. And yet every successive *regime* in the country has honored the day of its birth. There are only two anniversaries, the 18th Brumaire and the second of December, which have never been raised to the rank of a public celebration, because you know that, if you attempted to do so, the general conscience would revolt against them. Well, that anniversary you have neglected we will vindicate and take for ourselves; we will celebrate it every year without fail; it shall be the anniversary of our dead, until the day when the nation, again become master, shall require of you the great national expiation, in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity."

Gambetta's speech made an immense stir in France, and when he went south to defend other journalists at Lille and Toulouse he was greeted with acclamation. The Republicans saw in him their destined leader. He soon entered the Corps Legislatif as a sworn enemy of the Empire, having been returned by two constituencies, Belleville and Marseilles.

Gambetta's future career belongs to history. Soon after taking his seat he became the leader of the Irreconcilables, a party which, in his own words, had "recourse neither to violence, nor to insurrection or conspiracy," but were implacably opposed to any form of government that took the nation's destinies out of its own hands. Even then he was a man of order as well as progress. He detested "demagogues of every kind, whether Cæsars or Marats," and he plainly told the Republicans that before they could hope to govern France they would have to prove that they could govern themselves. When Napoleon tried to galvanise the Empire by a plebiscite, Gambetta denounced it in one of his finest speeches. The polling showed 7,500,000 votes for the Empire, and 1,500,000 against it. The formidable minority included no less than 56,000 soldiers, and this fact so alarmed the Emperor that he lent a willing ear to those who counselled a war with Germany. That frightful contest destroyed his throne in a few weeks, and prepared the way for the Republic.

In the stormy days that followed Sedan one grand figure towered over all. Gambetta's voice declared in the Chamber that "Louis Napoleon and his family had for ever ceased to rule over France," and it was he who proclaimed the Republic from the Hotel de Ville. An eyewitness of that memorable scene states that he was perfectly cool and collected when thousands of older men lost their heads. After doing all he could in Paris, Gambetta left it to organise the national defence in the provinces. As the city was then invested, he had to leave by balloon. It was a dangerous enterprise. The companion balloon was lost in the German ocean, and Gambetta's came so close to the Prussians that their shots whizzed past the car—one going through his hair. We have not space to tell how he raised the provinces against the enemy. In four months he levied 600,000 troops, equipped and provisioned them, found them generals, directed their campaigns, and inspired them with enthusiasm. Von Moltke himself has borne testimony to the wonderful labors of the young Dictator. Success was impossible, but Gambetta worked like a Titan for France. He could not save her provinces, but he saved her honor; and Frenchmen loved the hero who, in the darkest hours of defeat and shame, kept a brave heart and "never despaired." Yet, if Gambetta toiled for France, he played deep in the game of life and death for the Republic, and in that he succeeded. Let us thank him for that.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

THE FREE PRESS DEFENCE COMMITTEE.

THIS Committee has been formed to watch the Bedborough case in the general interest of free publication, and to raise a fund for an adequate defence when the case comes on for trial. Subscriptions are urgently required. They should be sent to the honorary treasurer, Mrs. Gladys Dawson, Bedford Hotel, Covent Garden, London, W.C., or to the honorary secretary, Mr. Henry Seymour, 51 Arundel-square, London, N.

The Committee has issued a careful manifesto, which is being widely circulated. "Its members," this document says, "belong to many different schools of opinion. They are not in any way concerned with the particular views entertained by Mr. Bedborough, or set forth in the writings which form the ground of the prosecution. The present is neither the time nor the occasion to express either agreement or dissent. The one thing to be done is to defend the liberty of all opinions. It is always the bigots who choose the point of attack, and it is there that the friends of freedom must rally."

A large number of representative persons have joined the Committee, and fresh adhesions are received daily. We have only room for a selection of names: G. J. Holyoake, G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, C. Cohen, Robert Buchanan, J. M. Robertson, Edward Carpenter, Herbert Burrows, Walter Crane, Mona Caird, Grant Allen, A. E. Fletcher, H. M. Hyndman, George Moore (the novelist), George Bernard Shaw, W. M. Thompson (editor of *Reynolds's*), Frank Harris (editor of *Saturday Review*), E. Belfort Bax, H. Quelch, H. S. Salt, Edward Truelove, and William Platt.

A public meeting to protest against the prosecution, and to affirm the principle of free discussion, has been arranged for Tuesday evening next (July 12) at South-place Institute. This is centrally situated, being close to Moorgate-street Station, and to car and 'bus service to nearly all London. A strong list of speakers is being prepared. Mr. Foote will be amongst them, and no doubt the Secular party will be largely represented in the audience. The bigger the gathering the more influential it will be, and the more notice will be taken of it by the ordinary press.

ACID DROPS.

SENOR SAGASTA stays in Madrid, which is a long way off the fighting. Perhaps it is for this reason that he says the war will go on. "There are in Cuba," he declares, "a hundred thousand men, including volunteer troops, ready to die in its defence, but they will not yield." What these poor devils are really asked to die for is the pig-headed stupidity and asinine pride of the Spanish government. Apparently the only way to bring the war to a close is to send an American fleet over to Spain, and the sooner that is done the better in all probability it will be for everybody concerned.

The clerical journals at Madrid publish violent articles against the peace party. They preach war to the bitter end, and rely upon "one above" for victory. Well, we guess the end will be quite bitter enough to satisfy them; and it looks as though their God had given them away already.

The *Chicago Chronicle* suggests that those clergymen who are preaching and praying so earnestly for the success of the American armies should form themselves into a regiment and go to the front. We wish they would take this advice. And if a regiment of Catholic priests were organised to meet them, and the two regiments annihilated each other—well, we shouldn't grieve too profoundly.

Chaplain Milburn, of the United States Senate, has been praying for Queen Victoria, and asking God Almighty to "maintain the eminence of her sovereignty." The *New York Truthseeker* wants to know if there are not chaplains enough in England to do all the necessary praying for the Queen. "Our official prayers," it says, "come high—about five dollars each—and we cannot afford to produce them for the export trade."

Dean Lefroy, of Norwich, wanted to raise £2,000 for a new organ in the Cathedral, so he started a Self-denial Week in the diocese, during which faithful Churchmen were to swear off drink, tobacco, theatres, music-halls, and all other luxuries and amusements, and send him at the finish

the amount they had saved. Well, the Self-denial Week is over, and has realised £36 1s. The Dean regards this as "inadequate and unsatisfactory."

The present Lord Chancellor of England, Lord Halsbury, late Sir Hardinge Giffard, did all the dirty legal work for the Tories when they were baiting Bradlaugh. He also conducted the famous "blasphemy" prosecutions in 1882-3. He never did anything else worth mentioning. However, he has a splendid reward for that. Mr. H. C. Richards is another lucky opponent of the great Iconoclast. He contested Northampton three times, always unsuccessfully. Finally he captured "Jemmy" Rowlands' seat in East Finsbury. He is now made a Q C., and this probably means a good income at the bar.

Bill stickers, the Birmingham *Daily Mail* says, are responsible for some peculiar mistakes. On a window in a leading thoroughfare of that city there was a placard announcing, "Shop to let, good basement." Underneath a bill poster had stuck the announcement, "Christ is coming."

Monsignor Bonomelli, Bishop of Crémone, has written a book entitled *Let us Follow Reason*. Of course he means a certain distance. He tries to harmonise Church dogmas with the Darwinian theory: new wine in old bottles. The Vatican is said to be scandalised, but is afraid to condemn the author.

According to a correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette*, a Turkish band was heard at Jerusalem, on Sunday, June 12, practising Handel's "Rejoice, O Daughter of Sion." The explanation is as follows. The band had been ordered to practise several German marches, to be played when Emperor William enters the Holy City, and the bandmaster took counsel with a German musical friend, who mischievously recommended this piece of Handel's among other compositions. Of course the Turkish soldiers had not the slightest notion of the meaning of the words.

Sam Jones, the Yankee revivalist, has been "answering" Colonel Ingersoll in Atlanta city. Sam is a poor sort of "funny" creature, but he goes down with a certain section of the Christians. One of his definitions was this: "An Agnostic is one who will not listen to reason, and is talking all the time." A sentence like this passes as witty and logical amongst Sam Jones's audience.

"Bob Ingersoll," said holy Sam, "is an Agnostic for revenue only." This is a display of Christian charity. As a matter of fact, Ingersoll preached Freethought when it didn't pay. It pays now because he has made his name a household word in the United States. Sam Jones is like a good many other Christians; he mistakes the effect for the cause.

But the funniest thing is yet to come. Sam Jones described Ingersoll as "a little bald-headed man." Certainly he is bald-headed, and doesn't fly into a passion (like Elisha) when he is reminded of the fact. But little! Why the Colonel is about six feet high, and broad in proportion. Somebody must have played a huge joke on Sam Jones—unless Sam Jones is playing a very small joke on his own public.

At the New Jersey State Prison, on May 29, Bishop McFaul, of Trenton, administered the sacrament of confirmation to fifty-nine convicts. In the audience there were 420 convicts, all Catholics. For of such is the kingdom of heaven.

The *Catholic Universe* makes the following admission:—"The vice and immorality among the Catholic body in Liverpool are fearful. The sooner we admit that fact the better, and deny it we cannot in the face of statistics compiled by the Rev. Father Nugent. This plain statement of figures, set down in black and white, reveals a horrible, hideous blot on the Catholic character in the great northern seaport. Their substance is this—that in Liverpool the strongest phalanx in the devil's army is recruited from the ranks of Catholicism. Of the three great divisions in that gloomy host—thieving, harlotry, and intemperance—the majority are members of our community."

Some weeks ago that pious novelist, Marie Corelli, indignantly denied (through her solicitors) that her next novel was to be entitled "The Sorrows of Christ." Someone had evidently played a joke upon her, and she did not see its humor. Since then the joke seems to have developed, for the *Strand Magazine* for July gravely contradicts the suggestion that "the title of her next book will bear the blasphemous and revolting title of 'The Sins of Christ.'"

Marie Corelli is afraid that her next novel will "excite the clergy of all denominations a good deal." She will find

that they take a lot of exciting. Nothing she can say will raise their hair.

There have been many Papal tiaras. Pope Julius paid £400,000 for his. It was a grand affair, and when he was hard-up he pawned it. It was broken up at the Revolution. The tiara of Paul II. cost £300,000. He was so fond of wearing it that he brought on heat apoplexy, which killed him. In 1854 the Queen of Spain sent a beautiful tiara to Pope Pius IX. There were 18,000 diamonds in it, and it was valued at £21,000. Everybody knows that the Popes are poor fishermen, servants of the servants of God; but they have generally had a childish love of glittering baubles.

The Bishop of Worcester does not see that a university is wanted at Birmingham. What is wanted, in his opinion, is "a vigorous effort to meet the spiritual necessities of the city." He begs Churchmen not to "allow any other object to turn them aside" from this "awful responsibility." This is the episcopal way of saying, "Education be damned, sir; let us have more parsons."

The Bishop of Stepney, according to the *Westminster Gazette*, has been preaching some "eloquent" sermons at St. Paul's Cathedral. "In the last," we are told, "he said that there was in the Cathedral a tall and clever artisan, who was a living example of the value of intercessory prayer. Some years ago, in an East-end workshop, he challenged a fellow-workman, a little man of small brain power, to a discussion in any hall on the truth of Christianity. The little man said: 'I can only pray for you.' Years rolled on, and the big man became an earnest Christian, and now scours the streets of London in the hopes of finding his little colleague and thanking him."

This is one of those delightfully silly yarns that are so eagerly swallowed and highly relished in religious circles. Note the simplicity with which the infidel is allowed to be "clever," while the Christian is a man of "small brain power." Note also the final simplicity of the big, clever man "scouring the streets of London" to find the little, stupid man. What a remarkably clever way of trying to find one person amidst the six million inhabitants of our great metropolis. One hardly knows which to admire most, the exquisite beauty of the story or the sublime wisdom of its application.

This same Bishop of Stepney has an article in the July number of the *Dawn of Day* on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The argumentative part is simply beneath contempt. We should waste our time, and that of our readers, by dealing with it. The evidential part, however, is really original. The Bishop states that Jesus Christ, after his resurrection, was "seen by five hundred people in broad daylight on a mountain." Now we know all about the five hundred people. Paul invented them. But the "broad daylight" and the "mountain" are pretty bits of latter-day fiction. There is nothing about them in the New Testament.

"A Pauper" writes to the *Islington Gazette* from Wallis-road Workhouse drawing attention to the scanty and poor food dealt out to the inmates. "Three times a day," he adds, "we are called upon to return thanks to Providence for what we have received." This is the most unkindest cut of all.

Canon Eyton affords another fine illustration of Christian charity. "We must not act," he says in the *Church Gazette*, "in the spirit of that poisonous little rat, the *Church Times*." How the Christians would chortle if Freethinkers wrote in this way of a Free-thought journal. Still, we are bound to say that Canon Eyton only follows the precedent set by Jesus Christ, who called his religious opponents "vipers," not to mention "whited sepulchres" and "children of hell."

The Archbishop of Manila has decamped in order "to avoid irritating the insurgents by his presence and provoking them to acts of violence." What a sweetly happy excuse for levanting!

Recent medical science and the hospital system together have done much to demoralise the people of this country. They have filled ordinary men and women with a most disgraceful fear of disease and death. The tendency all round is to treat a sick human being something like a kennel of dogs treat an ailing canine. Such a person is to be "isolated," thrust away amongst strangers, and allowed to live or die according to the strength of his constitution. The poor wretch himself loses all the helps of natural sympathy and affection, which are often more curative than medical skill; while those from whom he is severed are degraded in proportion as they lose the courage and humanity to nurse their own sick ones back to health or onward to a peaceful death.

An illustration of this lamentable state of things has just

occurred near Holsworthy, in Devonshire. A farm laborer, aged seventeen, was taken ill of typhoid fever, and when it was known that he was suffering from the farm folk would not go near him or render him any assistance. Dr. Kingdom, the medical officer of health for the district, had to remove the lad to the Devon and Exeter hospital, where he died the morning after his arrival.

One fact in connection with this case we have much pleasure in noticing. Ordinarily we are not fond of parsons, but this is solely on account of their profession. We were never so bigoted as to suppose that there were no "good fellows" amongst the thousands of ministers in England. Certainly one of them is the Rev. G. D. Melhuish, the rector of Holsworthy, who stayed with the poor typhoid-fever-stricken lad for three days and nights, when the members of his own class deserted him. We take off our hat to that parson. He is a man.

Christ said "Woe unto ye rich," and "Blessed be ye poor." Nearly two thousand years afterwards John Morley writes of England as "a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able, and a hell for the poor." And is he not right? The sleepers on the Embankment seats might have a word or two to say about the "blessings of poverty." The police have been very strict lately. Their orders are that no one must be allowed to sit on the seats after midnight. So it's "Now then, up you get!" and "Move on there, move on," to the sleepers huddled in a shapeless mass on the hard iron and wood or the cold stone steps. It is a pitiable sight to see the poor wretches creep back like whipped dogs as soon as the representative of law and order has passed, to snatch a few minutes' rest until the petty tyrant returns.

Apropos of the High Church Billingsgate against Sir William Harcourt, the *Daily News* calls attention to the fact that Matthew Arnold used to call the religious papers "the infidel Press."

On the fall of Lord Beaconsfield in 1880, when Gladstone was busy in forming a new ministry, a friend asked what he could do to help; he was willing to write notes or send messages. Gladstone's answer was "Pray," and Lord Stanmore calls it "a most characteristic reply." It is just possible, however, that Gladstone didn't want the proffered help, and that the pawky old parliamentary hand "spoke pious" in order to veil his refusal.

"Providence," general or particular, according to taste, has permitted another disastrous earthquake in Italy. At Rieti not one house escaped without serious damage, and hundreds of persons were injured. Much destruction occurred at other places.

The Jew-hunt has been going on merrily in Western Galicia. Christians have attacked the Jews, burnt down their houses, and pillaged their property. An excellent combination of religious fervor and good business.

Professor Evans, the distinguished antiquary, is preparing a book on the criminal prosecution and capital punishment of animals in Europe. These ridiculous proceedings occurred under Christianity. An old Pagan would never have thought of prosecuting and hanging a pig, for instance; that splendid intellectual and moral achievement was reserved for the devotees of "the only true religion."

George Watt, while lying in Norwich Prison under sentence of death for murdering his wife, expressed a hope that he might "meet her in heaven." Perhaps she is less anxious for the encounter. One experience of the kind is quite enough for any sensible woman. A man who could kill his wife here might knock her on the head with his hallelujah harp hereafter.

Walter Horsford, who was recently hanged at Cambridge Prison for poisoning his cousin, Annie Holmes, paid great attention to the chaplain's ministrations, and read his Bible regularly every day. He did not express penitence for his crime; nevertheless religion, or something, supported him beautifully. He walked to the scaffold without the least trepidation.

Rev. Arthur Mordaunt Hale, a Guernsey curate, has been sentenced at Gloucester to five years' penal servitude for bigamy. Mr. Justice Matthew said that the prisoner's offence was aggravated by the position he held as a minister of the Gospel.

Ten thousand troops are camping on Salisbury Plain. Their spirituous necessities are looked after by the canteen, their spiritual necessities by the Bishop of Salisbury, who has erected Church of England tents. This has inspired the Wesleyans with a generous rivalry, and Methodist tents are being provided. The black-coats will tell the red-coats the

way to heaven; and probably some of the red-coats will wish the black-coats in the opposite establishment.

"When I was ordained," says a correspondent of the *Daily News*, "the Bishop placed his hands on my head, using these words: 'Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.' Every clergyman of the Church of England is therefore what the Yankee called a "little tin Jesus."

There was a fire at Gardiner (Me.), and a woman who was burnt out was hunting up her effects which had been removed. Not finding an article she was very anxious about, she shouted: "Where in h—l is my Bible?" So says the *Reporter-Journal* of that city.

Charles Rumpf, a minister of the Gospel at Elizabeth, New Jersey, has been arrested and put on trial for beating his wife. The neighbors interfered when he took to pounding her on the head with a big Bible. Perhaps he thought the better the book the better the deed.

Moses Ricks, a negro preacher, was arrested in Monroe County, Arkansas, for an outrageous assault on a farmer's wife. Three hundred citizens took him out of gaol and lynched him. No more preachee, no more rape. Sad are the tribulations of the godly.

"The Bible courted investigation. It was not to be judged by human reason." We take this delicious morsel from a report in the *Watford Observer* of a sermon by the Rev. G. Boggis. Comment upon it would be like refining pure gold, painting the lily, or throwing a perfume on the violet. Boggis is unique. Nought but himself could be his parallel.

At the recent Oxford Diocesan Conference the Rev. N. C. Poyntz, of Dorchester, created quite a diversion. He contended that while it was right to bring the Church into harmony with the Prayer Book, it was also right to bring it into harmony with the Bible. This was enough to raise the Bishop's suspicions, and his lordship kept a sharp eye on that Dorchester parson. He was allowed to go on, however, and he pointed out that it was distinctly ordered in the fifth chapter of James that elders, or priests, should pray over the sick and anoint them with oil. This "distinct command" ought, in his opinion, to be obeyed, and "those Bible practices" should be restored. But this was too much for the Bishop, who didn't relish the prospect of having his hands perpetually greasy; so his lordship cut the speaker short and put the resolution, and poor parson Poyntz lost his chance of reintroducing clerical oil-cans.

The Queen loves her soldiers and sailors. She also loves her parsons. Her Majesty has just given 1,000 guineas to the Queen Victoria Clergy Fund. She gave a twentieth part of that sum for the Improvement of the Condition of the Working Classes.

Mr. Reader Harris, a legal gentleman, edits a paper called *Tongues of Fire*. Turning over its pages, we note an editorial complaint that the people of this country pay £5,000,000 as gate-money at football matches, and only £1,250,000 for the conversion of the heathen. We object to this too. It would be better to spend the whole £6,250,000 on football.

In another part of the same paper we read of an ardent missionary who came to an untimely end. "Within three weeks of his reception of the Spirit," we are told, "he started for India, and died within ten days of landing in that country." This is not an economical way of carrying on business. Evidently the Lord holds missionaries very cheap.

Where the devil is the devil? Lots of people want to know. He has been missing for a long time. Mr. Reader Harris, however, seems to have discovered his whereabouts. Amongst the "Prayers Asked" in *Tongues of Fire* is this: "For the inmates of Hanwell Asylum, that the devil may be cast out." Well, well; who would have thought it? Poor old Nick! The cleverest fellow in the universe at last amongst the lunatics!

A youngster of this town, not long since, while the family were enjoying a visit from the minister, stood behind the door, and as the preacher entered the room the lad jumped towards him with a loud "whoop." Upon being questioned by his parents as to why he acted so rudely, he answered: "I wanted to see if 'perfect love casteth out all fear.'"—*Wilson Kansas Echo*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 10, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London, W. : 7.30, "Purgatory ; or the Half-Way House."

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. LEWIS.—We do not share your views, but we have no quarrel with them. On the ground of a good life in this world we can all join heartily.

EDWARD LAWSON will become a member of the Secular Society, Limited. "I am glad," he says, "that you have got the scheme so far advanced, and hope you will soon be able to get it established on a solid foundation."

E. J. WARREN.—Your lecture notice for last week arrived on Wednesday, too late for insertion.

R. J. TURNER.—You should apply to the magistrate for a summons. Salvation Army people have no more right than others to become a nuisance.

STUDENT.—The words you refer to are technically correct. We left the phraseology to our solicitor.

HENRY SWIFT (Kimberley).—Thanks for your subscription to the Wheeler Fund, in memory of "that good soldier of the cause."

DR. W. H. STEVENS writes: "I wish to become a member of the Secular Society, Limited, and enclose 10s. as my entrance fee. I think it is a move in the right direction, and most heartily congratulate you on having so well thought it out. I wish it every success, which I shall do all I can to promote."

ALICE MARY BAKER, daughter of the late Daniel Baker, applies for membership in the Secular Society, Limited, and writes: "I wish it every success. If carried out, it should solve a difficulty, and place your party in a better monetary position."

E. GUILLAUME.—Thanks for letter and enclosure. Your certificate of membership in the new Society will be forwarded in due course.

W. H. DEAKIN.—See our notes on the Secular Charter. Thanks for the cutting.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges: J. Oram, 2s. 6d.

W. ELCOAT, applying for membership in the Secular Society, Limited, says: "Whenever the Secular party make up their minds to go in for a suitable hall I will give £2 towards it."

R. CHAPMAN.—See paragraph. Mr. Foote intends to visit your district in September or October. What halls are available at South Shields now?

JAMES NEATE.—Thanks. See paragraph.

C. H. CATTELL (Birmingham) writes: "In my humble opinion you have earned the gratitude of all Freethinkers for your bold attempt to deal with the bequest business. The scheme places matters on such a sound financial basis that, if it is only taken up with spirit by the party, it should silence all grumblers and lead up to a grand organisation worthy of your leadership." This correspondent is thanked for cuttings.

G. W. B.—We purposely refrained from discussing whether parents should or should not, on secular grounds, be obliged to call in medical aid for their sick children. Indeed, we stated so plainly in our article. Our sole object was to expose and denounce the hypocrisy of professed Christians who prosecute real Christians.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your weekly batch of cuttings.

LOUIS LEVINE.—The London correspondent of the *Irish Independent* is a liar or the companion of liars. Mr. John Morley has not been received into the Catholic Church. Thanks for copies of your leaflets. They are excellent, and their circulation should be of much service to the good old cause.

NEWSAGENT.—The best cheap edition of Shelley, we believe, is the one edited by William Rossetti, price 3s. 6d. Shelley only repudiated *Queen Mab* on the ground of its immaturity—he wrote it at eighteen. He did not recede from its philosophy.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Copy of the Memorandum and Articles of Association forwarded.

LOUIS ORGAN.—Thanks for the paper.

TOM TAYLOR.—Pleased to hear from you again. Our regards to your wife.

E. PINDER.—Thanks for the Leicester list of subscriptions to the Wheeler Fund. We can quite understand that your members are being pushed just now for your forward movement, which we hope will be a great success.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad the Birmingham friends had such a pleasant excursion.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Record—Islington Gazette—Crescent—Torch of Reason—Freidenker—Secular Thought—Public Opinion—Lucifer—English Mechanic—Humanity—Freethought Magazine—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Watford Observer—Progressive Thinker—Lincoln Leader—Weekly Citizen—Consett Chronicle—Tongues of Fire—People's Journal—Dawn o Day—Oxford Times.

It being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 23 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (July 10), taking for his subject, "Purgatory ; or the Half-Way House." Mr. Foote has never lectured on this topic before, and it will have at least the charm of novelty.

A North of England Freethinker, who is a man of position and an M.B. and B.S., but cannot court martyrdom by having his name published, applies for membership in the Secular Society, Limited, and writes as follows to Mr. Foote: "It seems to me a splendid idea, conceived in a statesmanlike manner. It must be a great source of content to you personally to see a way at last whereby you may escape not only monetary loss, but also a great deal of gratuitous insult and insinuation. I should support the new Society if only to give you a fair chance."

Mr. Cohen lectures for the Bethnal Green Branch in Victoria Park to-day (July 10) at 3.15 and 6.30. The collection in the afternoon will be given to the Wheeler Fund. Freethinkers in the neighborhood, who have not yet contributed, should go to this lecture and drop something into the box.

Mr. Cohen's recent lectures at Stanley are noticed in the *Consett Chronicle*, which says he can always draw a large audience here, and adds "there is something in that." "How many of our local ministers," it asks, "could 'draw' as Mr. Cohen has done? If the most eloquent among them called a meeting against Secularism, the probability is that not above a score of the faithful would have turned up."

Mr. Joseph McCabe, formerly the Very Rev. Father Antony, who is now acting as organiser and lecturer to the Leicester Secular Society, is evidently getting well to work. On Sunday last he lectured in the Secular Hall on "The Revival of Ritualism." He is down for two more Sunday lectures during July. The hall will be closed during August, but in September a course of lectures will be delivered by Mr. McCabe on "The Nature and Purpose of Secularism."

Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, the president of the Leicester Secularists, and a very devoted friend of the movement there and elsewhere, does not often take the platform, we believe, but he takes it to-day (July 10) at the Secular Hall, his subject being "The Future of Secularism," with special reference to the Secular Society.

"The Real Robert Burns," by G. W. Foote, in his paper, the *Freethinker*, ought to be put in a pamphlet. It is a faithful, natural picture of the poet and the man. Burns was anything but a Calvinist, and, not being a hypocrite, he expressed his doubts of orthodoxy in phrases not calculated to flatter the Church. Freethinkers the world over owe Mr. Foote a debt of gratitude for his splendid defence of the great Scotch bard.—*Boston Investigator*.

The same number of the *Boston Investigator*—the oldest Freethought journal in America, and still one of the best—prints a long extract from Mr. Foote's address at the grave of the late J. M. Wheeler. Our esteemed contemporary announces the approaching publication in its columns of a symposium on the question: What would you substitute for the Bible as a moral guide? Colonel Ingersoll is amongst those who will supply answers. Mr. Foote has been invited to furnish a contribution, but is unable to do so in consequence of the load of work thrown upon him by the loss of his sub-editor.

This is how the N. S. S. Annual Conference strikes the New York *Truthseeker*: "The National Secular Society of England has just held a successful Annual Conference at Manchester (May 29). The attendance was good, interest

deep, and enthusiasm lively. Without the slightest hesitation the delegates re-elected G. W. Foote for president. A motion was carried, authorising the Executive, meaning President Foote, to arrange for a national demonstration on the occasion of Colonel Ingersoll's visit to England in 1899."

The *Record* (Watford) publishes an excellent letter by "Celsus" in reply to Canon Reith's nonsense about the antiquity and independence of the Anglican Church, which only dates from the reign of Henry VIII., and is in every respect a creature of the State.

"Iconoclast" has started a useful correspondence on "The Finality of the Bible" in the *Lincoln Leader*. Correspondence of this kind in the local press is of great service to Freethought.

Wilson Macdonald, the sculptor, has gratuitously designed a bronze bust of Thomas Paine, to be placed on the monument at New Rochelle. The expense of casting and placing is being defrayed by a public subscription, Dr. E. B. Foote being the treasurer.

The Liverpool Branch holds its annual picnic to-day (July 10). Brakes leave Woodside Ferry at 2 o'clock for Burton Woods, Cheshire. The tickets (3s. 6d.) include the drive and a knife-and-fork tea, and can be obtained from Mr. Cox, 28 St. George's-hill, Everton, or from Mr. Hammond, 26 Sandheys-street, Kirkdale.

The South Shields Branch holds its annual picnic to-day (July 10), travelling in brakes from North Shields to Holywell Dene. During the customary meeting held under the trees the presentation of a silver watch will be made to Mr. John Sanderson, who is leaving the district for the south of England. We have known Mr. Sanderson for any number of years, and a better man never walked in two shoes—or out of them.

The Birmingham Branch N. S. S. had its annual picnic on Sunday last. By Midland Railway to Worcester the members and friends, to the number of eighty-six, started at 7.30, and arrived there at 8.30, where a special steamer was waiting to take them to Tewkesbury, a two-hours-and-half trip on the Severn. Favored with beautiful weather, kindred spirits, and some excellent music, the journey each way was of the most pleasant description. The return at 8.30 brought to a close one of the brightest outings the Branch has had. Great praise is due to Mr. R. Taylor, the president, and Mr. W. T. Pitt, treasurer, for the splendid boat arrangements.

One thing is much to Gladstone's credit. He had a sincere regard and admiration for John Stuart Mill, whom he called "the Saint of Rationalism."

WHEELER MEMORIAL FUND.

W. Heaford, 10s.; Gateshead Friend (per C. Cohen) 10s.; J. Helm, 10s.; W. Armstead, 2s. 6d.; J. R., 1s.; W. P., 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, 2s. 6d.; J. Dennis, 10s.; J. Hocken, 1s.; Henry Swift, £1.

Per Miss Vance:—Manchester Branch, £2; Mr. Charles Payne, 5s.; A Friend, 5s.; Sale of *Truthseekers* sent per J. W. Gott, 10s. 2d. Ipswich Branch: Mr. and Mrs. Pickett, 5s.; T. L., 2s. 6d.; W. K., 2s. 6d.; T. Haste, 1s.; J. Calver, 1s.; Messrs. Abbott, Baker, and Bishop, 1s. 6d. W. Hardiman, 2s.; R. Dowding, 2s. 6d.; J. Orain, 2s. 6d.

Per E. Pinder:—Rank and File, 1s.; S. Leeson, 2s.; A Friend, 1s.; Another Friend, 1s.; J. H., 1s.; W. Wilber, 2s.; J. Potter, 1s.; J. Sharman, 1s.; H. Sursham, 1s.; Tom Richards, 1s.; J. Essex, 1s.; W. Payne, 1s.; Muston, 6d.; H. Allen, 1s.; Mrs. Hill, 6d.; Mrs. Lowe, 1s.; Miss Manning, 6d.; Mrs. Slater, 2s. 6d.; W. Marston, 1s.; A. Letts, 2s.

A Child's Laugh.

Strike with hand of fire, O weird musician, thy harp strung with Apollo's golden hair; fill the vast cathedral aisles with symphonies sweet and dim, deft touches of the organ-keys; blow, bugler, blow, until thy silver notes do touch and kiss the moonlit waves, and charm the lovers wandering amid the vineclad hills. But know, your sweetest strains are discords all, compared with childhood's happy laugh—the laugh that fills the eyes with light, and every heart with joy. O rippling river of laughter, thou art the blessed boundary-line between the beasts and men; and every wayward wave of thine doth drown some fretful fiend of care. O Laughter! rose-lipped daughter of joy, there are dimples enough in thy cheeks to catch and hold and glorify all the tears of grief.—*Ingersoll*.

THE WRITINGS ON THE TOMBSTONES.

I WANDERED through a churchyard on the Devil-dodgers' day, The day that's bossed by "beetles" on the Bible-banging "lay";

For Monday I was waiting, so I whiled the time away
By reading all the writings on the tombstones.

How saintly were the people in that churchyard now at rest,
Like Adam was before he fell—that is, before he dressed;
Not like the people living now, but better than the best—
According to the writings on the tombstones.

The grave I first inspected was a new one, spick and span;
'Twas that of William Smith, deceased, a wealthy slaughterman;

He fell asleep in Jesus on the twenty-first of Jan.—
According to the writing on the tombstone.

Now, William Smith, deceased, no doubt placed fat beneath
the scale,
And did some other sinful deeds while in this sinful vale;
But William went to glory when he kicked the mortal pail—
According to the writing on the tombstone.

The souls of all the other folks, whose graves I gazed upon,
Have gone to be with Jesus, like the soul of number one;
They've joined the blessed angels, every blessed mother's
son—

According to the writings on the tombstones.

How very sad Old Nick must be; how very, very glum;
His "roomy" lodgings are "to let," no lodgers ever come;
The damned infernal regions are as empty as a drum—
According to the writings on the tombstones.

I murmured, as I came away that Sabbath afternoon,
"Oh, why do Christians fear to die, if death is such a boon?
They've no more faith in Christ than in the man that's in
the moon,

In spite of all their writings on the tombstones!"

ESS JAY BEE.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held on Thursday, June 28 (the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair). Present: Messrs. E. Bates, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, S. Hartmann, Victor Roger, F. Schaller, C. Watts, W. Heaford, E. W. Quay, C. Quinton, J. Neate, M. Loafer, P. Sabine, W. Leat, and the secretary (Miss Vance).

The cash statement was received and adopted.

It was resolved that a new prospectus be issued in accordance with the alterations and additions to the rules made at the Society's Conference.

The sub-committee's minutes, which contained a suggestion that a special balance-sheet dealing with the receipts and expenditure in connection with the Treasurer's scheme should be issued when the first twelve months of working had expired, were read and confirmed.

The President then reported upon the Secular Society, Limited. The Society had a legal basis for the first time in history, and under this incorporation the banking account would be the only treasurer, all monies being paid into the bank and all payments being made by cheques signed by members of the board elected for that purpose. Several questions having been asked and explanations given, the President then reported that he had been acting in the Bedfordshire prosecution as a private individual, and had drawn up a resolution which had been unanimously carried by the Defence Committee.

Those present expressed their satisfaction at Mr. Foote's attitude, and Mr. Heaford moved, and Mr. Neate seconded: "That this Executive regards the prosecution of Mr. Bedfordshire as an attack upon the right of free publication, and hereby subscribes the sum of one guinea as a subscription towards the cost of his defence."

The election of sub-committees was then proceeded with.

Benevolent Fund Committee.—Messrs. R. Fordor, S. Hartmann, G. J. Warren, Victor Roger, E. Bator, and Miss Annie Brown were re-elected, with the addition of Mr. E. W. Quay.

Finance and Propaganda Committee (Treasurer's Scheme).—Messrs. E. Bator, T. Gorniot, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, and Victor Roger.

Some discussion then arose as to the advisability of running an Annual Excursion, and a small committee, consisting of Messrs. Loafer, Sabine, and Bator, was elected to consider and report at next meeting. EDITH M. VANCE.

N.B.—Secretaries of Branches are requested to forward immediately the official forms upon which they have appointed delegates to represent their Branches upon the Executive. Only a very small number have been received to date.

THE YARN OF THE CROSS.

Not many months ago "Chips" gave the readers of the *Liberator* some capital articles (founded on Mr. Parsons' book) respecting the meaning of the Cross. Once or twice I have told in this journal the Legend or Yarn of the Cross, and it may not be amiss to relate it *de novo*. The Protestants still keep the barbarous notions of the Cross before the crowd, and thus perpetuate the savage and ferocious sentiments of the race—corrupting one portion of mankind into ferocious and cruel tyrants, and the masses into timid and non-resisting sufferers. The cruel tyrant is worse than the worst wild beast; the patient sufferer of what he ought to resent and resist is worse than the most contemptible cur. And these two classes of beings the Cross story, in the hands of the priests, has created in a perpetual stream for many hundreds of years. The amount of human suffering that has arisen from the Cross can never be estimated, nor even remotely guessed at. It is our duty to neutralise and destroy the power of the Cross as much as possible.

All through the Christian ages the Cross, or the sign and symbol that goes under that name, has been a magical instrument or sign, and the most astounding miracles have been ascribed to it. For at least a thousand years it was looked upon in the most materialistic light, and credited with power enough to change and reverse the course of nature in every respect, and to the fullest extent. What the older and later Pagans have ascribed to their incantations and charms, that the Christians have ascribed to their Cross. True, in modern times the Protestants have somewhat idealised it, and stripped off some of its purely physical elements; but they have not diminished its all-mightiness. If ever the Christians, Papal or Protestant, really had an Almighty God, it is the Cross. This Cross can conquer nature, or reverse its courses; can conquer men, and even wild animals; can conquer devils, high and low; and it is not less true that it can, and does, conquer God Almighty—that is, it is God Almighty, and the other Almighty has to yield to it.

The real history of the Cross I have given in my *Phallic Worship* pamphlet; but the Legend or Yarn of the Cross, invented and circulated by the Christians, is very different from that, and is a sheer romance from end to end. I may also mention that the Christ and his Cross are by no means historical; they, too, are pious yarns told by priests and monks to stir the devotion and confuse the brains of their dupes. The priestly fables called Gospels have had a long run and a widely-extended influence for evil; but their nature is now understood by intelligent people, and Christ and Cross must go the way of all gods and superstitions. There is no future for them, for the Age of Man has commenced; and Man and God can never occupy the same planet—the supernatural must all disappear in the Day of Science.

There can be no doubt that the Yarn of the Cross was as devoutly and universally believed in the Dark Ages as any item of the Christian faith. It was immensely popular; it was painted up in the churches, and shone in stained windows. There seems to be no room for doubt that the Cross Yarn is the Christian form of similar stories told in connection with Tree-worship, which in ancient times was universal. The Spirit of Vegetation was everywhere regarded with religious awe, and worshipped as the all-bountiful giver of good. And the Cross-worship is but one branch of Tree-worship—Christ, like John Barleycorn, being the spirit or soul or life of vegetation, which is constantly sacrificed for human life. The principal products of the vegetable kingdom are man's food, of which bread and wine were, and still are, the staple, however much they may have been superseded by other products of the animal and vegetable world.

With the hint given that the Cross Yarn is a survival of Tree-worship (mixed, of course, with Sun-worship), we may proceed to relate the story in its substance, though the details are too numerous for repetition here.

According to various monkish writers, the Cross of Christ was made of four kinds of wood; of three kinds only; of only one kind. Bede says the inscription was box, the upright beam cypress, the transverse cedar, the lower part pine. Another says the upright was cedar, the transverse pine, the head cypress. A third party contends that the upright was cypress, the transverse palm, the head

olive. One legend says the whole Cross was made of the aspen tree, whose leaves have never ceased to tremble at the use its wood was put to. Lipsius said the wood was oak, and a later writer says it was pine. At any rate, the microscope shows that the wood preserved at Rome, Pisa, Florence, and Paris, all vouched by those who could not know to be parts of the Cross, is pine.

Of course, the old Tree-worship was hardly likely to permit one tree alone to have all the credit, and so the saints who took over the old Pagan superstition, and called it Christian, manufactured their imaginary Cross of various woods, as if they had been making some choice and showy piece of furniture.

Everyone knows the Bible yarn of Adam and Eve, their creation and fall, their expulsion from the Garden, and the death of Adam (Eve does not seem to have died at all) at the early age of nine hundred and thirty years. The two trees, be it observed, of knowledge and of life grew in the Garden, and from these Adam, and all his posterity, were excluded, until the Christ should come to restore all things.

Well, Adam one morning felt that his end was rapidly drawing nigh, and, like all pious people, he felt much inclined to stay a little longer in this "vale of tears." He sent for his son Seth (who at this time was eight hundred years old!), and begged him to go to the Garden of Eden and ask the angel there to give him a little of the oil of mercy which exuded from the tree of life. Adam expected that this would restore him to health and vigor. But Michael, the angel, refused it, saying it could not be had until 5,500 years had passed. Michael, however, gave Seth either a branch of the tree of knowledge or three seeds of it—though some say it was three seeds of the tree of life. Let us take the latter view.

When Seth went to Paradise he found his way, as Adam had told him, by the footsteps of his father and mother as they fled therefrom over nine hundred years before. Their feet were then so hot that they scorched all the grass they trod upon; and nothing grew again where they trod. Thus was Seth conducted to the gate of Eden.

When he returned Adam was dead, and Seth buried him, and either planted the twig he had brought on his grave, or else put the three seeds into his mouth. The tree that resulted was threefold, and it flourished till the time of Solomon.

You will not be surprised to learn that it was a branch of this tree that Moses had for his wonderful rod, with which he desolated Egypt, divided the sea, brought water from the rock, and sweetened the poisoned pool at Marah. In fact, you could not be surprised at anything this tree or its branches and leaves might do.

Another gospel declareth that Moses got possession of all three rods into which the seeds in Adam's mouth grew, and always took them about with him. By-and-bye he planted them in the land of Moab, where they flourished till David's time. An opportune angel bade David remove those rods to Jerusalem, where they healed the sick, cured a leper, and turned three negroes into white men. This holy king left the rods one night, and the next morning found that they had taken root and grown into one tree! He built a wall round it—for miraculous things always require protection, you know—and under its shadow he composed his psalms.

As it was a goodly tree, that wise but wicked King, Solomon, piously resolved to use it in the building of the temple, and ordered it to be cut down and shaped to fill a certain place in the building.

But the tree, evidently knowing that it was destined to other ends, declined to be fitted in anywhere. Do as they would, the beam was ever too short or too long for the purpose. It was of no use to employ saw or plane upon it, it was altogether incorrigible; and at length, Solomon's patience being exhausted, he ordered his men to fling the beam aside.

Maximilla, a prophetess, sat upon this wood, and it set her clothes on fire. She began to prophesy, and the Jews scourged her to death for doing so. Why they treated the girl so cruelly is not at all clear. Perhaps the Christians, who concocted the story, wished to show the Jews in the worst possible light.

After this the blessed wood was either flung into the creek called Kidron, near Jerusalem, or it became a bridge over it. Here it remained trodden under foot for some time, until the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon. She at once perceived the wondrous properties of the

wood, and refused to tread on it she even preferred to wade through the water. She revealed to Solomon the nature of the wood, and he ordered it to be removed to the temple, where it was furnished with a precious case.

The Jews, for some reason, removed it; and as they were then constructing the Pool of Bethesda, they buried the beam in the bottom of it. The wood imparted to the water such miraculous properties that the sick in crowds went there to be cured. Still, for unexplained reasons, the Jews required a tremendous amount of miraculous healing in the time of Jesus, when, the gospel says, the healing virtues of the Bethesda water were due to the periodical descent of an angel, who should, according to the story, have come down much oftener, or stayed there altogether.

When Jesus and the two thieves were condemned, wood in Jerusalem was exceedingly scarce, it seems, and the high priest sent out men to find enough for the Cross of Christ. They went, and, as they passed the Pool of Bethesda, that ancient and sagacious beam buried in its bottom must have seen them and understood their errand. Knowing that its time was come, it broke loose from its grave and floated into view. The men saw it, took it, and turned it into the Cross on which Christ was crucified.

But the history of that timber is not yet finished. The disciples soon began to worship the Cross, and to heal the sick and cast out devils by its means. This did not suit the Jews, as you may suppose, and they took all three crosses and buried them—the true Cross making no objection. You would have thought it had lost its energy for ever.

The grave of the crosses was unknown, except to one Jewish family, and there they lay hid just about three hundred years, when Helena, mother of Constantine, went to Jerusalem for the good of her soul. She resolved to find the true Cross, and threatened the Jews with death if they did not produce it. Of course it was forthcoming, though not without some delay.

A wicked Jew named Judas was the only one who knew the grave of the Cross, and even he was not sure. The Queen ordered him to be put into a dry well, and there starved into submission. He came out almost a convert; he prayed for divine direction, and was conducted to the very spot where the crosses were buried. They were all found and taken up, but nobody could tell which was which. It would have been such a terrible thing, you know, to worship the cross of the impenitent thief, and Helena felt that she must find some means of distinguishing them. A girl was brought who was alleged to be sick. She was placed on cross number one, with no results; on number two with no results; but she no sooner touched the third than she jumped up as well as ever! The wood that could not reveal its hiding-place, that could not speak and reveal its own identity, could yet cure the girl!

In later times the Cross merges into the general history of the Christian superstition, and becomes as potent in the Church as it had been in ancient Paganism.

I may mention that one yarn tells how Lazarus and Mary Magdalen discovered the cross of the penitent thief in the island of Cyprus.

All early Christian yarns are equally yarns, and the one I have just related is as true as anything you find in the Gospels.

The use of the Cross in the Romish sect, sensuous though it is in so full a degree, is not more untrue than the more "spiritual" use to which it is applied in Protestantism. As an instrument in the hands of tyrants and swindlers, nothing can ever beat it; as a means of fostering cruelty and ignorance, the Cross of Christ never met its match.

—*Liberator*.

JOS. SYMES.

Dear God,—The baby you brought us
Is awful nice and sweet;
But 'cause you forgot his toofies,
The poor little thing can't eat.
That's why I'm writing this letter,
A purpose to let you know.
Please come and finish the baby.
That's all. From Little Flo.

"Why did you strike little Elsie, you naughty boy?"
"Well, what did she want to cheat for?" "How did she cheat?" "Why, we were playing at Adam and Eve, and she had the apple to tempt me with, and she never tempted me, but went and ate it all up herself!"

BOOK CHAT.

THE *University Magazine* for July opens with the first instalment of an essay by Dr. Robert Park on "The Science of Emotions," which should be interesting to educationalists and social reformers. This is followed by a freshly-written article on "Paganism and Christianity" by C. Barclay Bennett, in which modern missionary enterprise to the heathen gets rather roughly handled. Among the other articles may be noticed Mr. Howard Williams's continuation of an able paper on "The English Criminal Code," and Mr. H. S. Salt's "Canonisation of an Ogre," a reply to Sir Henry Thompson's objections to vegetarianism. The number concludes with a not too accurate article on the Bedborough case. It is not true that Mr. Bedborough's bail is £2,000; the sureties are two of £500 each. Nor is it true that he is prosecuted for selling the six books enumerated, all published by the University Press. Only one of them is included in the indictment. Considering the careful way in which the prosecution is conducted, it is a great pity that the friends of the defence cannot avoid such inaccuracies.

* * *

The *Adult* appears this month under a new editorship. Mr. Henry Seymour, 51 Arundel-square, London, N., has bravely stepped into the breach caused by the prosecution of Mr. Bedborough. Mr. Seymour explains that he is opposed to the current "Free Love" theories, but he believes in freedom of thought and discussion. Perhaps the best thing in the new number is the editor's contribution to the symposium on "The Question of Children." It is a welcome relief after the intellectual frivolity which has characterised too many recent articles on the marriage question.

* * *

Humanity (organ of the Humanitarian League) for July contains the first instalment of a strong article by Joseph Collinson on "The Slaughter of the Fur Seal." Mrs. Louisa T. Mallett writes on "Poisoned for Profit," dealing with the miseries of the lead and match factories. Another article unsigned is on "The Butchery of Big Game." The number also contains some interesting editorial notes and news paragraphs, from one of which we learn that the Wood Green Cycling Track is not to be used again for anything like the butchering contest which recently took place there in the presence of three thousand English "heathen."

CORRESPONDENCE.

"PROVIDENCE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—After carefully perusing Mr. Edgley's letter in your issue of the 3rd inst., I am forced to the belief that, in endeavoring to extricate himself from what I deem an unwarrantable and totally untenable position, he sinks deeper in the mire of illogicality; the more am I now convinced that his assumed Jehovah is but a "belief" conjured up in his own imagination, but of whom he possesses no "knowledge" whatever based upon the "known." I fail to recognise one scrap of evidence to warrant his assertions, and, in my opinion, in his eagerness to defend his position he has brought himself down to the very level of my contention, failing to establish anything beyond nature. He assures us Jehovah is like magnetism; but magnetism is only known as a phenomenon of or property of matter; therefore, to be like magnetism, Jehovah has "matter" as his very base. "Jehovah thinks"; but thinking is confined to "matter" in a certain state of organization, and Mr. Edgley has no knowledge of the "thinking" powers from any other source. Does magnetism think? If not, Jehovah cannot be like magnetism. Again, man has no knowledge of thought or intelligence apart from a brain. Has Jehovah a brain? Further, he has no knowledge of such brain being maintained without a continual supply of food in the shape of matter to replace disintegrated tissue. Does his God need food? If so, it destroys the very idea of a God, as such would not need external assistance. I am assured "Jehovah" has no sex, but Mr. Edgley has no knowledge of any of the higher organism "without" the opposite sex. He assures us "matter has always existed, that Jehovah did not create, and that he alone is immortal." But where is the evidence for such monstrous statements? How can God alone remain immortal in a universe of matter Mr. Edgley believes has always existed? If God did not create, how can he destroy the universe? My friend must endeavor to realize that "life" is but a phase of phenomena—an inherent property of a combination of matter. The rotting leaf by the wayside, or the rippling brook, is not dead; they are infinitely active—in other words, "alive." The universe and matter are the same.

What a dreary picture Mr. Edgley paints for the future—

a magnetic immortal God reigning over a lifeless mass, or nothing. What will become of the universe of matter when Jehovah reigns supreme, or how can God alone remain immortal while matter exists? Where is Mr. Edgley's authority for portraying a lifeless, inert universe? He can have no conception of such a condition drawn from the province of the known, and nature. Matter is indestructible. We are assured "storms, etc., are necessary"; but if Jehovah has the power awarded, he could so arrange the universe that no need of such existed. But even granted there is, surely it would be an improvement if such events did not destroy myriads of helpless creatures, and cause widespread misery and destruction. First, Mr. Edgley claims an all-controlling power; he next proceeds to limit such power. He excuses his God by suggesting that "what weather might suit Farmer Jones's crops would not suit Farmer Brown's." Where is the sense in believing that it is necessary to send weather which will destroy one crop in order that another may benefit? If Mr. Edgley's God exists, he could arrange weather which suited all crops and avoid the destruction of any, or he might arrange the crops to suit the weather. No farmer ever complains of a good crop, but it will take a deal of time to educate him to believe in a bad one.

We are told "diseases and failures of nature" must occur, that the aged "are neither ornamental nor comfortable in their existence, and sensible people do not desire to live to become very old." But is it consistent that a parrot, wild hog, elephant, tortoise, or mere toad should have a longer life, and be freer from disease and suffering, than the highest intelligence? And why should man's latter years be embittered by a gradual torturing decrepitude, by the agonies of disease and decay (frequently congenital), by a return to very childhood or imbecility? Such a termination of a good career is cruel, and might be considerably improved upon. If man must die, why should he not retain his faculties, remain free from torture, close his eyes as if in sleep, and gently pass away? However, anatomy and physiology entirely fail to prove that the human body is necessarily incapable of unending existence; it contains within itself no marks by which we can possibly predict its decay. I am certainly of opinion that man does not die of so-called "old-age," or because of the number of years he has lived, but from ossification and starvation. (An explanation here would occupy too much space, but, with your permission, Mr. Editor, I shall be happy to write an article for insertion and criticism on this topic some day when I have more leisure.)

Why so many do desire a termination of their existence at the approach of old age is simply because life becomes a burden; the pleasures of existence are no longer realised. A fond parent in such condition not only has his own life embittered, but intense grief is caused to those by whom he is beloved. We are told "diseases are necessary as a check to increase, and that many are brought about by the sufferer." But is it the best possible arrangement for Jehovah to bring into the world more beings than Nature can accommodate, simply to be ruthlessly slaughtered, in many instances by a cruel and lingering process? If Nature were less prodigal, there would be no need for all this tearing with claw and fang, this torture, this waste of so much time and material. Surely it is admitted that myriads do suffer from hereditary diseases over which they have no control; even one such instance shows the grossest injustice. I totally deny that man is a free agent.

Mr. Edgley says "Jehovah 'permits' those crimes" I enumerated in my last. Well, if he permits, with full power to prevent, he is an accessory to the actual crimes, and equally as guilty as the criminal. Supposing I stood calmly by, witnessed a foul, cowardly murder, with power to prevent same, and did not take steps to do so, I should consider myself an inhuman monster, and should be treated as such by man. Mr. Edgley has placed his God in this position, and by doing so has degraded him to the level of an assassin; and even humanity rises superior to the Jehovah he adores.

My friend tells us he has suffered from catarrh for eighteen years, and has lost the sense of smell. Nothing enlists my sympathy more than human suffering; but honestly now, does Mr. Edgley really think it is better to lose the sense of smell than to retain it? Has he ever tried to cure his complaint? If yes, he acts antagonistic to his own beliefs; if no, how can he tell it is incurable? To be consistent with his belief that things could not be better arranged, if in addition he lost the use of his eyes and ears to-morrow, and soon afterwards was paralysed in legs and arms, he would have to consider things could not be better controlled. As an individual, I imagine that the retention of all his faculties would be a far better arrangement; but Mr. Edgley has in no way established his Jehovah. Matter and the properties of matter are all with which "he" is acquainted, and suffice to account for every phenomenon witnessed; all postulated gods or attempted additions are superfluous; the word "necessity" seems to me to be an ample substitute for "God," and I deem it most unphilosophical to desire or suppose more causes than are adequate to explain the phenomena of things. Mr. Edgley does not believe in man's

future improvement; surely he believes that man has risen from a condition of cannibalism, barbarism, and ignorance; surely he believes there is more intelligence in the world to-day than ever, and does he not believe that if man had first entered upon the stage of life as a civilised, intelligent being it would be an improvement upon his past history, or tardy development? I believe man *will* continue to improve intellectually, leaving his bestial propensities and powers to the brutes beneath him. I do not think any improvement will be made by contentment with even his present achievements by believing that things cannot be better controlled, but by doing his best to bend those forces in nature which are antagonistic to his welfare to do his bidding, by thwarting many of the ends nature aims at. It is quite certain that a belief in gods is no moral incentive, it does not tend to civilisation; the greatest cut-throats and swindlers of past and modern times have been God-believers; our prisons are filled with God-believers; the most prolonged, savage, and sanguinary wars the world has ever seen have been instigated by God-believers; and even England's great majority of God-believers are the most immoral and drunken under the sun. Gods have been a curse to man, a stumbling block to progress, causing more cruelty, more tears, more bloodshed, than any other infatuation. Instead of believing things could not be better arranged, and that all is ordered with a special view to his well-being, man must stand erect and face the problems of existence as they arise, grapple with the forces of nature, and bend them to his will. It is only by such means that the progress and civilisation of the past have been attained, and whereby we can ever hope to continue such progress. When man was a cringing coward, the slave of priestcraft, carpeting the very earth with his knees, when prayer to gods was most relied on, then did civilisation sink to its lowest ebb, culminating in the dark ages of faith, stagnation, bondage, ignorance, and immorality.

Let the gods fade from man's imagination, man remains needing all our assistance; let us cultivate the germs of a far more noble worship than grovelling at the feet of unknown Jehovahs; let humanity's flag of truth and progress float where once sailed proudly the bloodstained banner of the gods, where once grovelled the savage on his knees in recognition of impossible monsters of his own construction, cringing in awe to phantoms of his untutored brain.

OCTAVIUS DREWELL.

THAT FORGED PASSAGE IN JOSEPHUS.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE windbags are continually asserting the celebrated forgery in Josephus to be genuine. As a matter of fact, it has been abandoned by all the men of any note on the orthodox side. Dean Milman says: "It is interpolated with many additional clauses" (Milman's *Gibbon*, vol. ii., p. 285). Bishop Warburton calls the passage "a rank forgery" (*Divine Legation of Moses*, book ii., sec. 6). Rev. Dr. Giles also condemns it as a forgery (*Hebrew and Christian Records*, vol. ii., p. 62). Dr. Lardner gives up its authenticity (*Works*, vol. vi., pp. 492-505). Dean Farrar says: "The single passage in which he (Josephus) alludes to him [Christ] is interpolated, if not wholly spurious" (*Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 46). Dr. Edersheim says: "The expressions attributed to Josephus must have been altered, and in some parts interpolated, by later writers" (*Dictionary of Ecclesiastical History and Biography*, article "Josephus"). Gibbon says that this passage "was inserted into the text of Josephus between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius," and "may furnish an example of no vulgar forgery" (ch. xvi., footnote). And De Quincey, in his essay on the Essenes, emphatically says that "this passage has long been given up as a forgery by all men not lunatic" (*Works*, vol. ix.). This passage was first quoted by Eusebius, who is by no means a scrupulous authority (see Lardner's *Credibility*). The passage is foreign to the context. As a zealous and orthodox Jew, Josephus could not speak of Jesus as the Christ, nor doubt whether it was lawful to call him a man, for the Jews did not believe the Messiah to be God; and the statement that Jesus drew after him many Jews and Gentiles is inconsistent with the gospels. If Josephus were the author, it would be reasonable to expect in him frequent mention of Christ's miracles, whereas he is everywhere silent about them.

She Would Not Insist.

The *Troy Times* tells of a little girl who had been naughty. When bedtime came her mother said to her: "Now, Mabel, when you say your prayers, be sure to ask God to help you not to be a naughty little girl."

Mabel promised that she would add this petition to her prayers; so, when she had finished her usual form she spoke as follows: "And now, O God, please keep Mabel from being a naughty little girl." There was a pause, then she concluded: "Nevertheless, thy will, not mine, be done."

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, "Purgatory; or the Half-Way House."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (86 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): July 14, at 8.30, Members' general meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 8.15 and 6.30, C. Cohen.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Pack.
FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, E. White, "Miracles, with Special Reference to those Performed by Jesus Christ."

FINSBURY PARK (near bandstand): 11.15, Debate between Mr. Tarry (Christian Evidence lecturer) and E. Pack (Secularist), subject: "Christianity v. Secularism."

HAMMERSMITH (The Grove, near S. W. Railway-station): 7, B. P. Edwards.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture; 3.30, Stanley Jones.

KILBURN (High-road, corner Victoria-road): 7, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (Midley-road): 11.30, Stanley Jones.

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What Christians Believe."

COUNTRY.

DERBY (Central Hall, Market place): 7.30, Mr. Tunneley, "Thoughts we may Draw from the Character of George Eliot."

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Sydney A. Gimson, "The Future of Secularism," with special reference to the Leicester Society.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' quarterly meeting; 7, Vocal and instrumental music, recitations, etc. Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): Picnic at Holy Well Dene, 12.45 ferry; braks leave North Shields at 1 o'clock.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—July 10, m., Mile End; a. and e., Victoria Park; 12, Limehouse; 13, Mile End; 17, m., Camberwell; a. and e., Peckham Rye; 19, Limchouse; 20, Mile End; 24, m., Wood Green; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 26, Limehouse; 27, Mile End; 31, m., Kingsland; a., Finsbury Park; e., Victoria Park. August 7, m., Camberwell; a. and e., Peckham Rye.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—July 10, m., Mile End; 17, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn; 31, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye; e., Camberwell.

T. J. THURLOW, 350 Old Ford-road, London, E.—July 24, e., Mile End Waste.

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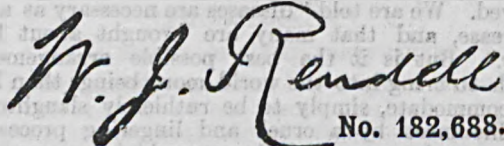
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