

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XVIII.—No. 36.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1898.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A PRIZE BIGOT.

THERE have been "scenes" of late on Peckham Rye. The space set aside by the London County Council for public speaking has been utilised by the Secularists, who have held meetings there in common with other political, social, and religious bodies. Unfortunately, as some Christians think, these Secular meetings have been highly successful. Crowds of people have listened to the Freethought lecturers, and the seeds of scepticism and free inquiry have been sown in many minds. This is naturally irritating to the orthodox, and it is not astonishing that desperate efforts have been made by the baser sort of Christians to break up the Secular meetings by disorder, and even by violence. Such tactics, however, are pretty sure to fail. In the first place, Secularists are not easily frightened; and, in the second place, there are policemen about with instructions to restrain those who commit or provoke a breach of the peace. It must be admitted that the police are acting impartially. They have repeatedly warned off rowdy Christians who molested the Secularists, and only the other day they arrested a Christian ruffian whose conduct had long been intolerable. This fellow is an ex-gaol bird, and is therefore considered by some of the orthodox as a particularly excellent soldier of Christ. He is flatteringly described in the *South London Mail* as "an active and eloquent champion of the Christian Evidence Society." We leave it to Messrs. Engström and Waterman to disown his connection with that body; but as to his eloquence, we may remark that he tried it upon a London magistrate a few years ago, yet it did not save him from imprisonment as a convicted criminal.

We do not intend to waste our time over this wretched creature. We have to fly at higher game. In our last issue we referred to the bigoted article in the *South London Mail*, calling upon the authorities to stop the Secular meetings by prosecuting the speakers for "blasphemy," and obliquely inciting the Christians to resort to physical violence against the Secularists. We have now to observe that the *Mail* returns to the charge with added fanaticism. The writer—presumably the editor—no doubt regards himself as a vigorous journalist. He is certainly vehement, his style is very turgid, and his English often ungrammatical. His adjectives and adverbs pullulate like a small-pox eruption. He is a master of the forcible-feeble kind of composition. A multiplicity of words ekes out the paucity of meaning. Apathy must be indifferent, and indifference must be apathetic; but this writer is dissatisfied with anything short of the pleonasm of "apathetic indifference." Perhaps his clients think it marvellously fine writing; it is, however, nothing but a vulgar display of pompous illiteracy.

This new article of his, like the former one, abounds in riotous abuse. "Blasphemous utterances," "traffickers in profanities and obscenities," "poison of infidelity," "pestilent Freethinkers," "obscene tirades"—these are a few haphazard specimens from his budget of vituperation. Perhaps he is a half-pay clergyman; anyhow, he seems to be a faithful student of the Bible, which is a perfect textbook of controversial Billingsgate. Nothing equals it in the vocabulary of malediction and imprecation.

The editor of the *Mail* refers to the Bible, but does not mention it. He treats it as the Jews do the ineffable name of Jehovah. He calls it "the Book," or "the Book of the Sacred Law." To him it is a sacred fetish, which

must be approached with fear and trembling, and only touched by consecrated hands. Those who presume to handle it without warrant, or in a rational spirit, deserve the fate of Uzzah, and he would delight to see them suffer it. "This is *our* book," he says in substance to all Freethinkers, "and touch it if you dare. Criticise *it* and you insult *us*. We won't have it questioned. It is not to be examined, but accepted. And if you can't do that, go and hang yourselves; or if you object to suicide, come to us for your quietus, which we shall be happy to give you with the promptest dispatch."

One aspect of the *Mail* man's solicitude is positively touching. He is quiveringly anxious about the "children." He does not mind their reading all the filth of the Bible; on the contrary, he thinks there is nothing better to train them in modesty and purity. What he contends is, that they have a right to walk on Peckham Rye without the danger of hearing the "pernicious teachings" of Secularism. A terrible risk indeed! Something ought to be done to protect these young innocents. Fancy what would happen if they learnt that the whole human race is not in peril of everlasting damnation because two persons, who never existed, ate an apple between them. Their whole moral nature would be immediately corrupted. They would lie, and swear, and steal, and go to the Devil generally, and perhaps end their days in the prison or on the gallows. Yes, the children must be safeguarded. The editor of the *Mail* says so. From experience, personal and otherwise, he knows the natural turpitude of the human heart. He is thoroughly assured that veracity is impossible unless children are trained to revere a book which approves of lying for the glory of God; that decency is impossible unless they are compelled to read laws against unnatural offences, and beautiful stories such as that of Lot and his daughters, Judah and Tamar, the Levite and his concubine, and Gabriel and Mary; that honesty is impossible without a profound study of the life of David; that humanity is impossible without a complete knowledge of the holy wars of the Jews; and that chastity is impossible without an intimate acquaintance with the continence of Solomon, and the wifely fidelity of his mother, Bathsheba. For these reasons he demands that South London children shall not be exposed to the awful danger of hearing that the Bible is not a proper handbook of ethics, that morality is based upon the welfare of human society, that it is right to promote the happiness of others and wrong to do anything that conduces to their misery.

But how are these Secular meetings to be stopped? That is the question. Violence has failed, and "the active and eloquent champion of the Christian Evidence Society" has been taught the folly (and risks) of it by the magistrate. The editor of the *Mail* evidently regrets this lame and impotent conclusion. Nevertheless he cannot alter it, and he therefore admits, however reluctantly, that there is no remedy in "physical force." Nor does he expect much from the authorities, who are so blind to their Christian duties that they rest satisfied with keeping the peace. No disposition is shown by them to prosecute the Secularists for "blasphemy," but "prosecution for blasphemy by public subscription may drive them into their holes." Never mind the law of Maintenance—"the public must take care of itself." Yes, but the public does not appear to be very enthusiastic in this matter. The editor of the *Mail* is really speaking for himself and a handful of similar-minded bigots. Still, if the public-subscription policy fails, there is no reason why the editor of the *Mail* should not take action himself. Perhaps it is hardly correct to

say "no reason," for a bigot is generally a person who likes to gratify his prejudices at other people's expense. If he assisted at the burning of a heretic, he would hand round the bag for donations towards the cost of his own bundle of faggots. But if the editor of the *Mail* is above such sordid considerations, let him start a blasphemy prosecution himself. He poses as the guardian of Christianity in South London, and, although self-elected to the office, he should try to fulfil its obligations. We do not choose to tell him how to proceed. He can find it out by paying a solicitor for the information. Instead of bleating like a frightened sheep, let him try to roar like a furious lion, even if he only succeeds in rivalling Bottom the weaver. Better still, let him try to develop claws and fangs; or, to put it on the level of his intelligence, let him bell the cat himself; so that, when half the Secular lecturers of London are in gaol, he will be able to say: "Alone I did it." Meanwhile, the Secularists will await his onset with equanimity. On the whole, they would rather see him come out in the open, instead of skulking behind the barriers of anonymous journalism. The public would then be able to gaze upon the form and features of this Bayard of the faith, and perhaps acclaim him as the very forerunner of the long-expected Messiah.

We invite this pious gentleman to begin business. He will have ample opportunity for a start this afternoon (Sunday, September 4), when a great Freethought Demonstration will be held on Peckham Rye, and addressed by the leaders of Secularism.

G. W. FOOTE.

ATHEISM AND AGNOSTICISM.

In the August number of the *Literary Guide* there appeared an article of mine under the above heading to which my friend Mr. Percy Ward takes exception. His criticisms of my statements were printed in last week's *Freethinker*. The principal object which he appears to me to have had in view when writing his letter was to show wherein he considered that I had contradicted myself, and where my position as stated in my article was an illogical one. How far he is right in his views may be presently seen. But here I desire to assure my friend that, in my opinion, it is no presumption upon his part to criticise any of my writings. I make no claim to infallibility, and therefore it is always a pleasure to me to be set right when it is shown I am wrong. In this case, however, I fail to see that I am wrong. Of course, this may be in consequence of my mental inaptitude, or it may be the result of my friend being in a state of "astonishment" and dissatisfaction, which might have interfered with his "precision, both of thought and expression." But of that the reader will be the better judge.

Before noticing the five points upon which Mr. Ward desires further information or explanation it may be an advantage to repeat that the object of my article was to state the Atheistic and the Agnostic positions, and also to indicate wherein they differ. Now, it must not be overlooked that there are two classes of Atheists, the negative and the affirmative. Upon this subject Mr. George Jacob Holyoake writes: "Affirmative Atheism of the intellect is a proud, honest, intrepid, self-respecting attitude of the mind. The negative Atheism of mere ignorance," etc., etc., is a "species of Atheism I recognise only to disown and denounce" (*Trial of Theism*, p. 244). Fortunately, negative (dogmatic) Atheism is rapidly disappearing, although, as I mentioned in my "Explanation" (see *Freethinker*, August 14), I still meet some who believe in it. It is true that all the leading Atheists of to-day agree with Mr. Bradlaugh, who said: "I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception."

In my statement of the meaning of Agnosticism my remarks were based upon Professor Huxley's definition, which amounts to this, that "nothing is known beyond phenomena," and that "a man shall not say he knows or believes that for which he has no scientific ground for professing to know or believe." Now, so far as my article is concerned (and that is the only subject under consideration here), it is not which of these theories is the true one, but rather, is my statement of them correct? In the article itself I remark: "It will be seen that in this article our

object has not been to favor either Atheism or Agnosticism, but rather to indicate what the two terms represent, and wherein they differ." I hope this is sufficiently clear for Mr. Ward, and that, so far as it goes, it will "satisfy" him. My own views will be made apparent, I hope, further on.

Mr. Ward seems to take exception to my allegation that some persons suppose there is a difference between Agnosticism and Atheism, and he asks: "Who are the 'some persons'?" Theists, Atheists, or Agnostics? Does the article represent Mr. Watts's ideas about Atheism or Agnosticism, or does it not? And, if not, I respectfully ask, What is the utility of an article which states what is 'supposed by some persons' to be the difference between Atheism and Agnosticism, if it does not represent the views of leading Atheists and Agnostics, but of 'comparatively unknown' persons?" Now I have not used the phrase "comparatively unknown" in reference to persons who recognise a difference between Atheism and Agnosticism, but to those who openly avow their denial of the existence of God. This (unintentional, of course) misrepresentation of my writing does not fill me with "astonishment," although I confess to a little "disappointment" that one who criticises another should be so careless himself. Writers who are by no means unknown have held the opinion I have here stated. Dr. Bithell writes thus: "When we hear writers of repute confounding Atheism, Positivism, and Agnosticism in one category as essentially alike, though differing in name; . . . it is certainly incumbent on those who value the truth to come forward and put these purblind babblers in the right." Samuel Laing also states: "We may frankly acknowledge that the real essence and origin of things are 'behind the veil,' and not knowable, or even conceivable, by any faculties by which the human mind is endowed in its present state of existence. This is Agnosticism. There is one other conception of which we may certainly say that it is not true—that is, Atheism" (*Modern Science and Modern Thought*, p. 71). In his pamphlet, *Is there a God?* Mr. Bradlaugh says: "If, however, God is affirmed to represent an existence which is distinct from the existence of which I am a mode, and which, it is alleged, is not the *noumenon* of which the word 'I' represents only a speciality of *phenomena*, then I deny 'God,' and affirm that it is impossible 'God' can be. That is, I affirm that there is one existence, and deny that there can be more than one" (p. 2). This is Atheism; but Professor Huxley, the Agnostic, argues that there *may* be something beyond, and Herbert Spencer observes: "At the utmost reach of discovery there arises, and must ever arise, the question, What lies beyond?" Samuel Laing, in speaking of the "wonderful universe of worlds that has been evolved by inevitable laws," says: "What are they in their essence, and what do they mean? It is 'behind the veil,' and may be anything. Spirit may be matter, matter may be spirit." Thus, while Atheism and Agnosticism may be regarded as practically the same in their rejection of Theism, they differ upon several minor points. For instance, Atheism, according to Mr. Bradlaugh, alleges there is but one existence, and denies "that there can be more than one." Agnosticism makes no such statement, but admits the possibility of other existences. Atheism assumes the eternity of matter; Agnosticism has nothing to say either *pro* or *con*. Atheism regards phenomena as a part of the one existence; Agnosticism says there *may be* some other existence behind it, but what that existence may be we cannot tell. As I stated in my article: The Atheist can see no reason for believing in any God whatever; on the contrary, to him the existence of such a being seems impossible. The Agnostic believes that "the power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable," and, consequently, he professes neither belief nor disbelief with regard to its nature or its attributes. To him it is unimportant by what name it is known; the thing itself—that is, the power in the universe—can never become an object of human thought. The difference between the Atheist and the Agnostic may be put thus: Is there a God? Theist: "Yes." Atheist and Agnostic: "We do not know." Is the universe infinite and eternal? Atheist: "That is my opinion." Agnostic: "I do not know." Is matter the cause of all phenomena? Atheist: "I think so." Agnostic: "I do not know."

I now come to my five statements, which, to Mr. Ward's mind, "are most perplexing." For the sake of brevity, the reader is asked to study them one by one, as Mr.

Ward has put them in his letter, and then note my reply thereto.

1. I am both an Agnostic and an Atheist upon the questions of the existence of God and a future life. Apart from these subjects, Atheism appears to me to be the more logical of the two.

2. The two phrases are "a distinction without a difference," and, therefore, they are not, as Mr. Ward asserts, a contradiction. The two "isms," as I have already alleged, are practically alike so far as disbelief in God is concerned.

3. It is quite true that I regard it as equally dogmatic either to affirm or to deny that of which nothing is known, and yet I may infer there is no God. Inference is not denial. This is not "a distinction without a difference."

4. Mr. Ward here asks: "If a person positively asserts the meaningless formula $2 + 2 = 5$, is the mental attitude of the individual who positively denies the assertion to be characterised as unphilosophical? Or would it be more philosophical and judicious to neither deny nor affirm anything about the matter, and say 'I do not know'?" And is the illogical position of the Theist who defines God as a personal infinite being, a term 'meaningless' and 'unthinkable,' shared by the Atheist who denies that a God so defined could exist?" The first question bears no analogy to the problems under consideration; for the reason that the science of arithmetic gives us an undeniable answer to the "meaningless formula"; but we have no means of obtaining a similar reply to the question, Does God exist? Therefore I should deem it both injudicious and unphilosophical to answer the arithmetical query by saying, "I do not know." The second question submitted in this paragraph I answered in my article by saying: "The Atheist does not admit that, in practically denying the existence of God, he is guilty of the same fault which he charges upon the Theist—that of attempting to bring such a being into human conception; that is, of holding that the infinite can be comprehended by the finite. God, as portrayed by philosophical believers, is eternal in duration and infinite in extent—terms which no human mind can grasp; they are really unthinkable. The positive assertion that such a being exists is deemed by the Atheist as a rockless piece of dogmatism, because it is not susceptible of proof, and it cannot be even clearly thought of. In a word, the terms convey no definite idea, and hence the words used are meaningless."

5. I fail to see that the two statements I made—the one in the *Literary Guide*, and the other in the *Freethinker*—are not in harmony. In the one case I referred to the dogmatism of the Atheist who positively denies the existence of God, and in the other case I simply recorded my opinion that such positive denial is as dogmatic as the positive affirmation of God's existence. These two statements in no way destroy the distinction I drew between Atheism and Agnosticism.

I have now answered Mr. Ward as fully as the space at my command will allow, and I hope that this friendly criticism will tend to enhance the truth we both have at heart.

CHARLES WATTS.

OUGHT WE TO BE NEUTRAL?

SOMETIMES I notice a disposition among a very good set of people to adopt a position of neutrality with regard to Christianity and Freethought. They say it does not matter what a man believes or disbelieves; we must go by a man's deeds, not his words: if good social results are obtained, we need not concern ourselves with the religion or non-religion that lies behind; and hence, if questions are put to us as to our religious opinions, we may decline to answer.

This sounds logical. It looks fair. It commends itself to the peace-loving person who regards all opinions about the universe as a sort of inconvenient lumber which had better be hidden away in order to avoid disputes.

Does it matter what theories we hold? Now, there may come a time when men will have such a hold upon the facts of nature, and have brought the results of experience to such a practical method of life, that theory will be very much pushed into the background. We have not reached that stage. Our conduct is still largely swayed by theory. Are you a monarchist? I know what you are likely to do

on Jubilee days, or occasions of royal visits to your town, or when grants to the Royal Family are debated in the House of Commons. Are you a believer in the beneficial action of drugs? I know your attitude towards the physician, towards vaccination, towards Pasteurism, and the like. Are you a social democrat? I know what you will say about the proletariat, the capitalist, the landowner. And thus, like so many good or evil spirits, theories float over the world, and move men to action, to heroism, or to fury. I think every man should take a definite stand with regard to social and intellectual theory. Either we should vote for this or that theory, or have clear reasons for dissent. We ought to say whether we are for or against. Our responsibility to society demands that we each play our part as advocate, or opponent, or critic. The indifferent man is a traitor to the commonwealth. He who lounges aloof from the battle is as bad as a deserter.

In reality, a theory which is sincerely held is itself a deed; for it is the mother of a thousand deeds. It supplies the directing thought. It maps out our conduct. It gives the plan to a long succession of words and acts. It is, therefore, an idle excuse to say that theory is only dream and speculation, and may be concealed as a thing of no account. If a man comes into our house or our company, we have a right to know his business. If a man mingles in the work of the commonwealth, we have a right to know his spring of action. It is a part of good manners that a man should say what is his spiritual nationality, what cause he represents, and whither he is bound. If we meet a man who carefully avoids all reference to his work, his objects, or his family, we suspect him. We have no right to pry into his private affairs, but we expect him to tell us enough to explain his relation to the world in general and ourselves in particular.

Now I come to the special point which I have had in view all along. The Christian theory is the popular theory. It governs modern life nominally, and sometimes really. This Christian theory has fallen under suspicion. There is a minority of heretics, so earnest and so thoughtful that even the Church does not despise them. The issue is more and more pressed upon the attention of the world, Is the Christian theory true or false? It is alleged—I allege it; all Freethinkers allege it—that the Christian sacred literature rests upon false claims. It is alleged that the Bible is not the Word of God; that the reputed authors of many of its books were not the real authors; that the origin of these documents was quite different in character from what the Christian Church declares; that the "miracles" are only legends, and the theism only a primitive conception of nature which science is superseding. It is alleged, also, that the Christian theory does not assist us to meet the conditions of modern life; that its doctrines of prayer and atonement do not console or redeem; and that its hopes do not inspire us to labor for social regeneration. In my opinion—in the opinion of an increasing circle of thinking men and women—the Christian theory fails. It is not an asset. It is a bad debt. It must be written off the books.

Will any honest man tell me it is of no consequence whether he calls himself a Christian or not? Will he say his concern is with things more important, with bread, with clothing, with employment, with wage earning, with education? No; he has no right to dodge round the bushes. He ought to come out into the open. Is he, or is he not, a Christian? Is he, or is he not, an Atheist or Agnostic?

I will adduce another reason for plain speech. Heresy has been persecuted; heresy is the badge of the untitled few; heresy lines not the purse; heresy wears the crown of thorns; and therefore heresy implies a moral purpose—and moral purpose is the salt of life. How, then, can any man of integrity pretend that heresy lies beyond the scope of his serious thought? How can he say that he has more important things to pursue? How dare he, while his brother struggles with prejudice and unreason, pass by on the other side, and not join in the magnificent rebellion? I do not understand this velvet philanthropy which will not soil its fingers with the touch of heresy. I do not understand the ideal of life which takes no account of intellectual dignity, which provides food, and wages, and recreation, and yet omits care for the instinct of liberty. To me the power of protest against a crooked and unworthy philosophy is as much a necessary of life as bread.

Of course, discretion is part of the equipment of a propagandist. The unbeliever in Christianity need not carry atheism into every railway carriage, or worry the family

circle every day with observations on the defects of the Church, or mingle Biblical criticism with the amenities of wedding breakfasts. There is, as the Jewish moralist remarked, a time for everything. There is a time to suppress controversy. But there is also a time for self-revelation. There is a time to declare which cause we follow, which king we serve. There is a time when every right-minded man should profess, in the language of the people, his opinion on great religious issues. I do not ask that he should call himself Sceptic in such a way as to lead his neighbors to suppose the label Sceptic covers his whole character. If that were the case, his scepticism would be worth nothing. But it is not likely to be the case. He who entertains a genuine objection to the Christian creed, and says so in honorable English, will probably be straightforward in other departments of thought and practice. He whose warp is honest will almost certainly not cheat in the woof.

F. J. GOULD.

JOSEPHUS AND THE GOSPELS.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

(Concluded from page 549.)

IF we consider the utter improbability that Luke or any other Christian writer in the second century should possess such accurate knowledge of the proceedings within the Sanhedrin as to be able to give, word for word, Gamaliel's speech as it was spoken, we shall probably conclude that it, like so much else in the narrative, is a concoction. That the account in the Acts of the Apostles is utterly untrustworthy, and, moreover, founded on events narrated by Josephus, is evident from the reference to Theudas, which involves a double mistake.

Gamaliel is made to say that before the time of Judas of Galilee there rose up Theudas, "boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought." Now Josephus mentions this Theudas (*Antiq.*, bk. xx., chap. 5, sec. 6). He, like so many others at that time, was an impostor, calling himself a prophet. He persuaded a number to follow him to the river Jordan, telling them that he would, by his own command, divide the river and afford them an easy passage over it. The Roman procurator, Fadus, sent a troop of horsemen against them, who killed many and took the rest prisoners. (Four hundred are mentioned afterwards as slain in another rising.) The head of Theudas was cut off and sent to Jerusalem. But this Theudas lived more than a generation after Judas, for Fadus was procurator of Judea in the days of Claudius Caesar. The discrepancy between the Acts and Josephus is admitted by orthodox Christians; but they say, with the Bishop of Bath and Wells, "Luke is as likely to be as right as Josephus." We venture to hope that no immortal soul will be imperilled by the thought that Josephus is as likely to be right as the anonymous author of the Acts of the Apostles, a book competent critics assign to the latter half of the second century, and which was rejected by the Marcionites and other early Christians. Josephus places the event in its due chronological order, and from his official position could not make a mistake of thirty years in regard to an outbreak which took place within his own lifetime. It should be observed also that, whereas the author of the Acts makes the sect of Judas of Galilee come to nought, Josephus assigns them a most important position.

That the Gospel compilers did make glaring chronological errors in regard to historic facts we have evidence. The anachronism in Matthew xxiii. 35 is of itself sufficient to show this. Jesus is made to declare that the Jews of his generation shall suffer for "all the righteous bloodshed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." Now, Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*, bk. iv., chap. iv., sec. 4) tells us Zacharias, son of Baruch, one of the best and most eminent citizens, was slain in the Temple at the time of the siege of Jerusalem, more than thirty years after the alleged crucifixion of Jesus. Lardner, and other Christian evidence writers, seeing in what discredit the Gospels would be landed by the admission of this anachronism, allege that Zecharias,

the son of Jehoiada, killed in the court of the Temple (2 Chron. xxiv.), is meant. But, apart from the identifying designation "son of Barachias," is it feasible that Jesus, beginning with Abel, the first known innocent blood, would stop with Zacharias, who was killed B.C. 840, when there was a flood of righteous blood shed among the Jews after that date? Zachariah the prophet cannot be intended, for in his time the Temple was in ruins, and nothing is known concerning his death. That the Zecharias referred to is the one spoken of by Josephus is evident; for the writer of Matthew goes on to make Jesus lament over Jerusalem, and in the next chapter detail many other events in connection with the destruction of the city.

These passages simply prove that the writer lived after A.D. 70. The apologists have to confess that the son of Jehoiada is confused with the son of Barachias, which of itself is instructive of the process by which events, belonging to different ages, got mixed up in the course of a few generations.

Another instance of the untrustworthy nature of the Gospel statements concerns the date assigned to the census or enrolment for taxation under Cyrenius (Luke ii. 2). According to the gospeller, this census was synchronous with the birth of Jesus. According to the Jewish historian, it took place ten years later—viz., after the deposition of Archelaus, Herod's son and successor, who had already ruled some time as king, and then for ten years as tetrarch (*Antiq.*, xvii., 13, secs. 2, 5). No reason can be assigned for Josephus misdating this event, which, as an annalist, he must have been able to determine. Indeed, it is evident that while Herod was living, and acknowledged sovereign, such a census would not have been instituted.

We may also briefly refer to the death of Agrippa, whom the writer of the Acts (xii. 21, 22) evidently confounds with his grandfather, Herod, the king.* Luke introduces the angel of the Lord, whereas Josephus speaks of an owl as being present. Eusebius, pretending to cite from Josephus, has the audacity to substitute "angel" for "owl" to make the accounts the more resemble each other.

But to return to the Galileans and the process by which the founder of that sect got to be considered Jesus instead of Judas. Josephus tells us in the very same chapter of the Jewish Wars (book vi., chap. 5), in which he relates that miraculous signs appeared in the heavens in the year of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed at the Passover, brought forth a lamb—tells of one Jesus, the son of a plebeian, who, four years before the war began, came to the feast of the tabernacle crying: "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people." This was his cry by day and night. Some people in authority took up the man and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did he not either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still went on with the same words which he cried before. Hereupon the rulers, supposing there was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator, where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare, yet did he not make any supplication for himself, but at each stroke of the whip cried: "Woe, woe to Jerusalem." The procurator dismissed him as a madman, and he continued his cry for seven years and five months, when he saw his predictions fulfilled in earnest at the siege. Standing on the wall, he cried aloud: "Woe, woe to the city again, and to the holy house." And, just as he added at the last, "Woe to myself also," there came a stone from a catapult which killed him immediately.

There can be no doubt that the career and fate of this strange prophet must have left a deep impression on his age. The nature of his prediction, his insanity, and the mild, submissive persistence, remind us of traits of the Gospel Jesus. But there is yet another Jesus of a very different character, mentioned by Josephus in his account of his own life, as well as in the *Wars*. This Jesus was the leader of what Josephus calls "a seditious tumult of mariners and poor people" in Galilee. He was ruler in Tiberius, and "an innovator beyond everybody else." Mr. George Solomon, in his curious book, *The Jesus of History and the Jesus of Tradition Identified* (1880), argues that the

* Mark vi. 14 also speaks of "King Herod," who is confounded with Antipas, the tetrarch.

Gospel Jesus is a mixture of these various historic elements. But, manifestly, none of these accounts represent the miraculous elements of the Gospels. Those, however, who hold that the Gospels are really nothing better than romances of the second century will, at any rate, be disposed to think it possible that the romances have distorted events which can be seen more clearly in Josephus. Mr. Richard A. Proctor, the eminent populariser of astronomy, in his articles on "The Beginning of Christianity" in *Knowledge* (Jan., 1887), and in the one on "The Gospel Life of Jesus" in the *Freethinkers' Magazine*, already referred to, endorses this view, and considers that the supernatural parts of the Gospel story are founded on solar myths. After alluding to these, he says:—

"The records of ordinary events, natural in their proper place, which appear with a non-natural aspect in the life of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, are apparently taken from the works of Josephus. They may, of course, have been simply derived from stories of the self-same events, as they really happened, handed on over a generation or two, by ordinary oral tradition. But most of them have undergone less change than is commonly found in stories thus carried on."

But it will be properly asked, How came the evangelists to refer back the story of their Jesus to the days of Herod and Pilate? We have already seen that while, according to Matthew, Jesus was born during the reign of Herod, according to Luke it was not until ten years after, and Jesus must have been but a stripling when brought before Pilate. How little was really known may be seen from the passage in John viii. 57, which implies that Jesus was over forty, while Irenæus in the second century argues on the authority of all the elders in Asia that Jesus reached to fifty years of age.

Now Josephus does tell us of a false prophet of the Samaritans who was put to death by Pilate. That he does so assures us the more that he knew nothing of Jesus. Luke, moreover, tells us (xiii. 1) that Pilate mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices; and this, though uncorroborated by any historian, may indicate that there was a tradition of persecution.

As to the crucifixion, Rabbi Wise, of Cincinnati, makes a suggestion which is surely worth consideration. There existed at the commencement of the Christian era a widespread and deep sympathy for a crucified King of the Jews. This was Antigonus, the last of the famous Maccabees. Herod, with the assistance of the Romans, defeated Antigonus and took Jerusalem after an obstinate siege. Antigonus was handed over to Mark Antony, who had him executed as a common malefactor. Strabo, Plutarch, Dion Cassius, and Josephus all relate this as a remarkable event, for never previously had the Romans put a king to death so ignominiously. Strabo says that, because the Jews obstinately refused to recognise Herod, Mark Antony was persuaded to try this severe method of removing their respect for their lawful king. Josephus tells us he was beheaded, but the seeming contradiction which probably arose from Josephus's well-known suppression of offensive truths is explained by Dion Cassius, who tells us that he was first whipped and crucified, and then had his throat cut. Rabbi Wise, in his *History of the Hebrew's Second Commonwealth*, writes:—

"Dion Cassius says: 'Antony now gave the kingdom to a certain Herod, and, having stretched Antigonus on the cross and scourged him—which had never before been done to a king by the Romans—he put him to death.' The sympathies of the masses for the crucified King of Judea—the heroic son of so many heroic ancestors—and the legends growing, in time, out of this historical nucleus, became perhaps the source from which Paul and the Evangelists preached Jesus as the crucified King of Judea."

There was another event, unnoticed by either Mr. Solomon or Mr. Proctor, which may have contributed to place the advent of a Messiah in the days of Herod. It was a Messianic conspiracy which took place in his days, and which he quenched in blood. The passages in Josephus relating to this intrigue were first pointed out to me by my friend Mr. W. J. Birch—a gentleman deeply versed in all the literature of the first ages of Christianity, and who has written at some length on this point. They may be found in the *Wars of the Jews* (bk. i., chap. xxix.), and in the *Antiquities* (bk. xvii., end of chap. ii.). The wife of Pheroras the Tetrarch, brother of Herod, seems to have been prophesied to bear the coming King. Pheroras, being a just man, was

asked to put her away, but was not so minded. Josephus, strangely enough, puts the blame of this conspiracy on the Pharisees, the principal of whom were slain, together with those of Herod's own family, who had consented to what was foretold; and one Bagoas, an eunuch, who is declared by Josephus to have "been puffed up by them, as though he should be named the father and the benefactor of him who, by the prediction, was foretold to be their appointed king; for that this king would have all things in his power, and would enable Bagoas to marry, and to have children of his own body begotten." Perhaps this was in allusion to Isaiah lvi. 4, 5.

Lardner says of this curious business: "Josephus's account is a perfect comment upon St. Matthew's." But may not the account of the author of the Gospel according to St. Matthew be a comment on the transactions related by Josephus? That Herod should be concerned, and should stifle in blood a conspiracy in which were engaged the heads of the court and some six thousand Pharisees, bears all the air of probability; but that he should be alarmed at the prophecy by Magi of the birth of a poor child, and, when he did not find the child, should slay all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, from two years and under, without one word of notice from any historian, demands greater faith than is possessed by the present writer.

THE DEITY AS A HUMORIST.

A COLD-BLOODED ESSAY FOR THE HOT WEATHER.

ONE of the best-quoted proverbs is that which bids us give even the devil his due, the same devil who has been facetiously termed "the fourth person of the Trinity." If this should be so, there is no reason why the same courtesy should not be extended to the other august persons composing this "household of three." Oddly enough, the Ghost, the third member of the family, has been credited with being the only literary gent among them, though how the devil this comes about the present writer cannot guess. The Ghost, it is true, has been celebrated for other matters not entirely connected with theology, but history and Mrs. Grundy wisely avert their eyes. Raking up ancient scandals is dirty work, and only well paid if one is a lawyer. Now Mr. Froude has whitewashed the character of Henry the Eighth someone may turn his attention to our Ghost, the most famous Ghost in history, with all due respect to Hamlet's papa, Scrooges' partner, and the eminent one of Cock-lane.

As was said a sentence or so back, the Ghost is an author, and until recently was considered a very dull one too. The contention of the present writer is that the Ghost is a humorist, and that he challenges comparison with Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, G. L. Mackenzie, and Dod Grile. The latter has told us that he was inspired by his "scholarly friend, Mr. Satan," and it is to be feared the same thing is true also of Mr. Mackenzie, "the Laureate of Secularism."

But to return to our "muttons," as Shakespeare says. The Ghost's book is called "The Bible," and is usually classed as sober fiction. There is, however, a sprinkling of fun, a day's march between each joke; but what of that? A pearl is none the less a pearl even if it is surrounded by an intolerable deal of oyster, which, by the way, is a simile of solemnity.

The *motif* of the Ghost's book is irresistibly funny: the idea of a "God" who puts himself to death to satisfy himself. The prevailing opinion is, of course, that the whole book is a dreary document of the past. This wrong view is partly owing to the fact that people do not read the volume for themselves, but merely chatter about it. Then, secondly, to stupid persons, who must be serious or nothing.

Of the Ghost's humor the following are good specimens. He tells us that Adam and Eve "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." This is a very fine voice to walk in gardens and elsewhere, and to wear brown boots.

Yet another favorite: "And it came to pass that night the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four score and five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses." How surprised those ASSYRIANS

must have been when they got up in the morning and found "they were all dead corpses."

Mark Twain has quoted another. The Ghost refers in a short story attributed to St. Luke to a "street which is called straight." The American humorist says that the street in question is "straighter than a corkscrew, but not as straight as a rainbow."

The cultured readers of this journal will say that the above specimens are examples of very elementary irony. Quite so, but they were written many centuries ago, and by a Ghost. Further criticism is disarmed by the fact of the Ghost being "one" with two other gentlemen. We shall never be absolutely sure whether this congenital puzzle did not have a blighting effect upon the "humor" of the writer we are referring to.

Another example is where the Ghost refers to a lady's nose as resembling a "tower that looketh towards Damascus." Really this is an ungentlemanly joke, and must have provoked a quarrel. It is nearly as bad as if he had suggested that her face was like "a fly-blown beefsteak with a tin-tack in the centre." If he had always written in that strain, he might have avoided that unfortunate business with a carpenter's wife which clouded his later years.

A more delicate irony is contained in the two accounts of the death of Judas. In the one he falls and his bowels gush out, and in the other he hangs himself. There is no contradiction. Judas simply strangled himself with his own entrails. This, probably, was the germ of the oft-quoted passage of Diderot's.

But I must desist. I am anxious to contemplate the beauties of Nature, to amuse the little ones by throwing stones into the sea, the while I listen to their chatter. On another occasion I must return and reperuse the effusions of the high and mighty author, the Ghost.

MIMNERMUS.

THE BEDBOROUGH PROSECUTION.

MR. GEORGE BEDBOROUGH'S trial takes place in the September sessions at the Old Bailey. Our readers will recollect that he is indicted for "obscenity," and that his actual offence was selling a copy of Dr. Havelock Ellis's book on *Sexual Inversion*. We have already given our opinion of this book, and we are glad to see that it is shared by the editor of the *Review of Reviews*. "I have read the book," Mr. Stead says, "and no person who reads it with an impartial mind could come to the conclusion that it was published with the intention of corrupting the morals of Her Majesty's subjects." It appears to us that this is a case in which the right of publication (there is nothing else at stake) should be strenuously defended. We have pleasure, therefore, in announcing that another "protest" meeting will be held on Monday evening (Sept. 5) in St. Martin's Town Hall. Several well-known speakers will be upon the platform, and we hope there will be a large gathering of sympathisers in the body of the hall. All who value the freedom of the press should try to make this meeting as large and influential as possible, if only to compel the attention of the press, which has not given this prosecution the attention which it demands. We also beg to state that funds are urgently needed for Mr. Bedborough's defence. Competent counsel are engaged on the expectation that the friends of liberty will find the necessary cost. Subscriptions should be sent—and the sooner the better—to the honorary secretary of the Free Press Defence Committee, Mr. Henry Seymour, 51 Arundel-square, Islington, London, N. We may add that the Committee is now very large and representative, including clergymen, artists, editors, authors, and publicists. Amongst the Secularists upon it are G. J. Holyoake, G. W. Foote, C. Watts, J. M. Robertson, C. Cohen, and W. Heaford.

How to Help Us.

- (1) Got your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
- (6) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

ACID DROPS.

NAPLES has an "ecstatic virgin," who is certainly ecstatic, whether she is a virgin or not. Her name is Almerinda Ettore, and she is revered by the ignorant and credulous multitude as a "saint" of the first water. She prophesied that she would die on August 5, that the earth would then be convulsed and the sun darkened, while a great black cross would appear in the sky. Unfortunately for her reputation as a prophet, she is still living, though the most elaborate preparations were made for her funeral; the explanation being that her spirit refused to leave her body. "Had I expired," she says, "I must have risen again from the dead on the next day." But, despite her egregious blunder, she is still regarded as inspired, and Italian pressmen crowd about her to obtain copy for their journals. Who would have thought, a hundred years ago, that such phenomena would mark the close of the nineteenth century?

Catholics in England, where they are in a minority, and a poor one at that, talk unctuously about toleration and freedom; but Catholics, where they are in a majority, are insolent persecutors of all who differ from them. Take, for instance, the following story from Ischl, a famous Austrian summer resort. We give it in the words of the Vienna correspondent of the *Daily News*.

"The Dutch pianist, M. Sieveking, who is a pupil of Leschetitzky, was spending a week in Ischl, and, on being requested to join in a concert given for the benefit of the poor of Ischl, willingly promised his help. On Sunday he was walking through a street, when a priest of inferior degree—a co-operator, as he is called in Austria—passed on his way to a death-bed. He was accompanied by a sexton, who, to all Catholics, announces by a tinkling of the bell that he carries the sacred wafer, the Body of Christ. Sieveking did not take any notice, as no doubt any Englishman would have done in the same situation. The priest stopped and cried out angrily: 'Whatever religion you may belong to, you are certainly an uneducated man; otherwise you would have taken your hat off.' Sieveking, no doubt, gave an impatient answer, but he cannot recall what he said, and in a few moments he was surrounded by a group of threatening natives, who crowded round him so closely that he made his escape by entering a house. He went to see the Mayor later, who is a Liberal, and he advised him not to go home, as two gendarmes were waiting to arrest him; so he dressed at the Mayor's house, and went direct to the concert, which was crowded, and where he was enthusiastically applauded. The Mayor, in the meantime, endeavored to prevent his being arrested, but the gendarmes were waiting for him in the artists' dressing-room. A supper was to be given in the artist's honor, and the police allowed him to join it, they sitting at a side table close by. The Mayor offered to stand bail for him, all to no avail. After supper he was marched off to prison, which he reached about midnight."

M. Sieveking did not insult that Catholic priest, but simply took no notice of him, yet he was charged with "disturbing a religious ceremony." What a mixture of humbug and impudence! It reminds one of Ingersoll's caustic remark about the Catholic bigots who, when they burnt a heretic alive, gagged his mouth or cut out his tongue, lest he should say something that might hurt the feelings of the gentlemen who were piling up the fuel.

M. Sieveking was taken off to prison in evening dress. He was not allowed to change his clothes. He had to lie down on a long board fixed to the wall. His pockets were emptied, and he had neither light nor water. In the morning he was allowed a little water, but no towel. Some one sent him in a meal, or he would have had nothing to eat. Such is Catholic Christianity.

Mr. Justice Phillimore, who is a High Churchman, had to sit in court the other day in the Divorce Court and register the dissolution of nineteen marriages. That was all he had to do, but his Christian conscience prompted him to deliver a sermon on the matter. "I cannot," he said, "take this step as a Christian man without saying how very much I regret, on social, moral, and religious grounds, that these facilities should be given to people to dissolve the marriages which they have contracted." Of course the judge had no more right to say that than any other man in court. "Judges," as the *Daily News* remarked, "had much better stick to the law and leave theology alone." A court of law is not a church, and a judge's seat is not a pulpit.

The Khalifa, who lives near the Mahdi's tomb, has a reputation for miraculous powers, which will soon be put to the test. The Sirdar is upon him with a well-disciplined and scientifically-equipped army; and prayers to Allah, like

prayers to Christ, will hardly stop the flight of bullets and shells.

Curiously, however, there is an English Field-Marshal, Sir J. L. A. Simmons, who thinks that the Sirdar and his army should be supported by prayer. We at home, he says in the *Times*, should "render them all the assistance in our power." He suggests that "earnest and united prayers in our churches and all places of worship" should be offered up to the King of Kings for their success. But won't the Khalifa's army be supplicating the same God for the same result? And how the deuce is he to oblige both? Or why should he oblige one rather than the other? The only way, apparently, is to let them fight it out.

Bailie Monro, of Pollokshaws, is so pious a man that he catechises and preaches to the prisoners who are brought before him. He is laughed at in the local *News*, and broad hints are thrown out that the Bailie, while remarkably pious, has a keen eye to his own advantage in business dealings, even with the Town Council.

Klondyke seems a barren field for missionary enterprise. A soul-saver writes from the spot to the *London Times*. "Scepticism," he says, "is rife among miners, and, while most of them are respectful when talking to the minister, very few even pretend to lead Christian lives"—whatever that means. As a result of a year's work this missionary has made only one convert.

The *Daily Chronicle* refers to the "fights that have recently taken place between Christians and Secularists on Peckham Rye." This is very misleading. Secularists have not interfered with Christian meetings; Christians have interfered with Secular meetings. The Secularists are guilty of nothing but self-defence.

Kensit, the Protestant Reformer, used to be a feeble opponent of "infidelity," and amongst his wretched publications was a filthy libel on Colonel Ingersoll. Perhaps he found it didn't pay after all. Anyhow, he has struck oil in a new direction. The noble Kensit appeals to the British public for £10,000, to be expended by himself in sending what he calls "Wicklif preachers" throughout England. A few of them are already on the job. Their chief business seems to be disturbing High Church services. This is a proceeding with which we have no sort of sympathy. Rowdyism is no cure for illegality.

The Romish Church, says the New York correspondent of *Secular Thought*, Toronto, received an illustrious convert into its bosom during the current week. The murderer Thorn, the partner of Mrs. Nack in the murder of Gulden-suppe that created so much sensation some months back, died in the electric chair with a crucifix in his hand, and an invocation to Jesus to save him on his lips, while a priest recited sentences appropriate to the occasion in his hearing. It is the regular fashion here for murderers to turn Roman, as there have been occasions when commutations of death that have been previously refused have been granted on the convict professing his belief in the doctrines of Mother Church.

The Rev. G. W. Peel is rebuked by the *Advocate of India* for declaring that God has sent the plague over there because the English had tolerated idolatry. "The heavy charge at which India has to support an alien Church," it says, "is not enough for Mr. Peel. He is not satisfied that his Church receives the money of the impoverished people of India, who do not belong to it. He goes further, and urges the Indian Government to begin a crusade against the old religions of the country, in defiance of the most solemn pledges, and at the risk of the most frightful suffering." But what are these things to the salvation of immortal souls? to say nothing of the welfare of the clergy.

Children have done a lot of cadging for missionary societies, and five lads at Penge decided to get even with the soul-savers, so they broke into a Sunday-school and emptied the missionary-boxes, realising the sum of £1 6s., which they spent on cycle-riding, two of them taking a trip to Brighton. The spree ended, however, with an introduction to a magistrate.

Sabbatarian bigots at Chatham have had a youth named Harry White fined 7s. 6d. for selling artificial flowers in the street on Sunday. The Act thus cruelly enforced was passed in the reign of Charles II. of pious and unclean memory.

Mr. Wilson Barrett's head appears to have been turned by the financial success of his *Sign of the Cross*. He seems to fancy himself a great public teacher, with a sort of divine mission to elevate the morality of the British public. "I like my plays to have a purpose," he says, "and an earnest one, too. I like them to be true; true to what is best in

men and women." This is sickening talk on the part of a man who has pretensions to being an artist. Perhaps it is blasphemy to say that William Shakespeare was a greater dramatist than Wilson Barrett. Still, a great many people think him so. And, according to Shakespeare, the business of the dramatist is to "hold the mirror up to nature"—not only to "show virtue her own feature," but also to show "scorn her own image." Surely the man who wrote *Hamlet* would smile at the ethical antics of Mr. Barrett. What a conception of art, to fancy that the function of a dramatist is to be a clergyman in a theatre!

Hall Caine's flashy novel, *The Christian*, has been separately dramatised by the author and Wilson Barrett. Caine's version will be played in America, and Barrett's in Australia. The version to be played in London will be the joint production of novelist and dramatist. It ought to be something at the finish.

Wilson Barrett is to play the part of John Storm, the celibate priest. Of course it will fit him to a nicety. Who was that laughing? Silence, sir, in the presence of moral greatness!

A coroner's jury has returned another verdict of manslaughter against two of the Peculiar People—James and Grace Cook, of Lambeth—for not providing medical assistance for their child, who died of whooping-cough, bronchitis and diarrhoea. A full report of this case appears in another part of this week's *Freethinker*, to which we refer our readers. Both parents are committed for trial, and we shall notice the case further when it comes before a judge and jury in the criminal court.

Commenting on this new "Peculiar" case, the *Christian World* says: "It is not to be wondered at that there should be such lamentable folly among poor and ignorant people when 'Christian Science,' which is several degrees more absurd, is fashionable in the West-end." We quite agree that Christian Science is the height of absurdity, but why does a Christian paper call it lamentable folly to obey Jesus Christ?

The *Wolverhampton Express and Star* is unintentionally very funny over the case of these poor "Peculiar." "These strange people," it says, "evidently translate the Scriptures literally." What is meant is that they read it literally; in other words, they think the Bible means what it says. The editor of the *Express and Star* is not such a fool. No doubt he thinks it is a poor Christian who can't make the Bible mean anything.

A curious electrical Prayer-book, "used in converting Indians," was recently bought (the *Christian World* says) by a collector of rare volumes from a New York bookseller. Brass plates are rivetted to the covers, at the top of which there are appliances for the insertion of electric wires. The story is that it belonged to a backwoods missionary who owned a small battery. When he wanted to convert an Indian he placed the book in the redman's hands, and surreptitiously turned on a current which sent mild but appreciable thrills through the latter's frame, giving him indisputable proof that he had "found religion."

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, President of the Wesleyan Conference, thanks God for the School Board system. No doubt he does. It is Nonconformist religion, as Lord Salisbury said, which is taught in Board schools.

Piety and good taste do not always go together. Mrs. Spurgeon tells the story of her courtship and marriage by the famous preacher, as part of the second volume of *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, just published. She also prints some of his love letters. Now if this had been done by a third person when husband and wife were both dead, it would perhaps have been pardonable; but for a widow to publish her dead husband's love letters argues, in our judgment, a decided lack of delicacy. What public justification can be pleaded we are at a loss to discover. Can it really be maintained that the people who heard Spurgeon preach had a right to hear how he made love to a woman? Are there no sacred intimacies in life which it is a profanation to expose to the general gaze?

Mrs. Spurgeon tells us that her husband introduced his declaration of love by drawing her attention to some lines—very wooden lines—from Martin Tupper, who was just fit to be the poet of the Tabernacle. Tupper had a great vogue in those days, and he was read admiringly by the Queen. He had a multitude of admirers in America too, one of whom asked Thackeray "what the English people thought of Tupper." "Sir," said Thackeray, "they do not think of Tupper."

Ruskin, in his younger days, was an admirer of Spurgeon, and used frequently to hear him preach. "In later years,

however," as Mrs. Spurgeon says, "there came a change of feeling on Mr. Ruskin's part, and he strongly repudiated some of the theological opinions to which Mr. Spurgeon closely clung to the end of his life." This, of course, was inevitable. Ruskin's mind developed, Spurgeon's did not. The great writer lived to see the nonsense of the great preacher's belief, for instance, that every word of the Bible came from the mouth of God; and to despise and ridicule his paltry little theory of salvation, according to which the great majority of mankind were going to everlasting hell, and a little minority of the "elect" complacently rejoiced in the prospect of being saved themselves while all their fellow-men were damned. Spurgeon never developed a bit. He was taught a certain theology as a boy, and he went on preaching it to the day of his death. What distinguished him was not any originality of mind, but a musical voice, immense self-confidence, a large command of simple vigorous English, and a power of homely illustration exactly on the level of the particular crowd he addressed.

"Blessed be ye poor!" said Jesus Christ. That's the text, and now for the commentary. Canon Chapman, of St. Paul's Cray, was summoned the other day at the Bromley Police-court for keeping three unlicensed male servants. For the defence it was stated that the three "under gardeners" were only partially employed, and the Canon had no desire to evade payment of any licences; indeed, he had already paid for two footmen, a coachman, a gamekeeper, and a gardener. All these servants were necessary to one man, and that man a minister of the gospel promulgated by the poor carpenter's son of Nazareth! Why, if that gospel be true, Canon Chapman is as sure of hell as he is sure of dying; for Jesus Christ not only said "Blessed be ye poor," but "yours is the kingdom of heaven." All the rest go elsewhere.

There is a haunted house, called St. Austin's in the Forest Hill-road, near Honor Oak railway station. Crowds of people gather there to see the "ghosts," and, owing to the evil reputation of the place, all efforts to let or sell it have failed, although it stands in an acre of ground, and is charmingly situated, commanding some of the finest views south of the Thames. The caretaker, however, who has lived in the house with his family for years, laughs at the "ghosts." He has never seen them himself, and declares they are old women's inventions. But this is exactly what a sensible man would expect. In superstition, as in landscape, distance lends enchantment to the view. Knock at a haunted house and enquire for the ghost, and the occupiers will tell you to go to the devil; go round the corner in the next road, and the people shake their heads and say there is something strange; go a mile away, and they swear there is a ghost, and tell you to a minute when it is visible.

The Duke of York commanded the *Crescent*, which acted as guardship at Cowes during August. He piously read the lessons on Sunday morning, and the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, of which he is patron, sent him 600 New Testaments to be distributed amongst the crew, who would, no doubt, have sooner had a quarter of a pound of tobacco.

Evangelist Moody boasts of having distributed thousands of New Testaments (what price the Old?) amongst the American soldiers. "Nearly all the regulars," he says, "now before Santiago were given Testaments before they left Tampa." Well, John Fox, Harper's correspondent at Santiago, writes that the way to Caney was strewn with Bibles on both sides, where the soldiers threw them before going into action.

Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on an ass, but the German Emperor will enter it in a much more imposing fashion. The *Christian World* is bold enough to remark that pious Emperor William will be honored by the assassin of the Armenian followers of Christ, and all "because the Kaiser prevented Europe from rescuing the rest of the Armenians from the blood-stained clutches of the Sultan."

Pious Emperor William has been photographed in forty different ways in the new uniform he intends wearing at Jerusalem. What a man he is! There has been nothing like it since Nero.

Joseph Lewis, who was hung a few days ago at Swansea Gaol, made a confession of his guilt. He prayed for the widow of the man he murdered, and declared that he had no ill-feeling towards anybody in the world. What kindness! And what condescension! Murderers often die forgiving everybody they have ever injured.

"I am not going to tell a lie about it. I am in the presence of God." So said William Viney at the Stratford Police-court, where he was committed for trial on the charge of wilfully murdering his three children. Evidently the "presence of God" is not sufficient to keep a man from com-

mitting murder. The presence of a policeman is much more effective.

A speaker at a missionary meeting told how he was entertained by a cannibal king. The principal dish was a pie, which, when it was opened, disclosed two human fingers. Everybody shuddered except a man at the back, who called out: "I'll bet that finger was our parson's; he's got a finger in every pie."

At the Highgate Police-court some days ago a woman who keeps a restaurant in the Archway-road applied for "protection" against the Salvation Army. A meeting was held outside her house every Sunday evening from half-past six till nine; there was a band and lots of singing, and the noise drove away most of her customers. The applicant was told that she must request the Salvation Army people to go away before anything could be done to redress her grievance. When she has done that, however, she will probably find herself far from the end of her trouble. The Boothites are very obstinate disregards of everybody's comfort but their own. Besides, making a noise unto the Lord is distinctly recommended in the Bible.

According to the New York *Truthseeker*, the prosecutions and fines for profanity in the city and its vicinity work out rather curiously. A "damn" costs ten dollars in Harlem, twenty-five on Staten Island, only five in Jersey City, and merely two in Brooklyn. It would pay a New Yorker who wanted to let off steam badly to cross the East River.

Men of God have their little peculiarities in America as they have here; witness the following cases from one number of the New York *Truthseeker*:—"The Rev. Ralph Baldwin, of Saginaw, Mich., took a young lady from London, Ont., and eloped with her to Detroit, Mich., where the couple lived a gay life. He returned to Saginaw to attend to his religious duties, but inquisitive neighbors at last reported his goings-on, and a scandal is the result.—The Rev. James Ross, of Jacksonville, Fla., is to be tried for cruelly beating and abusing his fifteen-year-old daughter, whom he stripped and thrashed with a half-dozen switches, throwing her upon the floor, holding her down with his foot, and kicking her in the mouth. In his defence he charged that the girl used profane language.—An attempt was recently made to lynch the Rev. R. E. Howell, who is in jail at Warrensburg, Mo. The Rev. Howell's offence is preaching and praying to the wife of William Henderson, and converting her—to his own use. The mob that tried to lynch him was frustrated. He will not be tried for eloping, but there is a charge of arson against him that is likely to land the reverend gentleman in the penitentiary."

The blood of Christ will henceforth be drunk in grand style at St. Matthew's, Bayswater. The church has been presented with "two chaste and handsomely jewelled flagons" for the holy communion. There are also two gold patens for the body of Christ. Canon Bristow also announces that he has received some beautiful jewels for a chalice at St. Savior's, Southwark, and that he will be glad to receive more. Why, certainly. Who doubts it?

The Jew-hunt still goes on merrily in France. Its latest participant is the aristocratic lady who writes as "Gyp." She is very clever, and, according to English taste, frequently blue. But she is a good Christian, and she hates the Jews—perhaps because they killed Jesus, though he was a Jew too, which makes it a domestic quarrel after all. Well, the lady wrote an article in a Paris paper proposing that all Jews should be boycotted. She apparently forgot that her own publishers were Jews. Messrs. Calmann-Levy, it is rumored, have turned the boycott upon her by informing her that she can find another publisher for her future works, and also for reprints of her former ones.

An Ayrshire clergyman, the Glasgow *Evening News* says, in praying for the Prince of Wales introduced a feeling reference to his accident. "And now, brethren," he continued, "we will join in singing hymn No. So-and-so, 'Courage, brother, do not stumble.'" The congregation giggled, but the minister never saw the joke.

WHEELER MEMORIAL FUND.

Per R. Forder:—From Rangoon, Burmah, per C. Burgess: A. Harris, 5 rupees; C. Burgess, 5; Rainford, 5; E. H. Sepings, 5; D. Costa, 5; Harwood, 5; Mrs. Dale, 5; Matthews, 3; Buttery, 2; total 40 rupees = £3 5s. R. Rattray, 5s.; A. Hurren, 2s. 6d.; H. Slater, 2s. 6d.; J. Bradley, 2s. 6d.; G. Smith, 1s.
Chas. Lewis, 3s.; J. G. Thompson, 10s.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 4, 3.30, Freethought Demonstration, Peckham Rye; 7.30, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham-court-road, "The Czar's Appeal to Europe: A Freethinker's View." 11, Athenæum Hall; 18, Birmingham; 25, Liverpool.

October 2, Glasgow; 9, Leicester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—September 4, Peckham Rye; 18 and 25, Athenæum Hall, London. November 27, Birmingham. December 4, Glasgow; 11, Liverpool.—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.

S. TRUMAN.—Dr. Karl Pearson's *Ethic of Freethought* is a book well worth your reading. It contains other Essays than those indicated by its title. The one on Martin Luther is particularly vigorous and outspoken. He charges the great Protestant hero with having been a hindrance instead of a help to European progress. Dr. Pearson's *Grammar of Science* is an important work, displaying very great ability. "We must turn a deaf ear," he says on the last page, "to all those who would suggest that we can enter the stronghold of truth by the burrow of superstition, or scale its walls by the ladder of metaphysics. We must accomplish a task more difficult to many minds than daring to know. We must dare to be ignorant."

C. E. S.—Many thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for your weekly batch of cuttings.

HORACE SEAL applies for membership in the Secular Society, Limited. This correspondent's subscriptions to two other objects are acknowledged elsewhere.

WALT SPARROW, applying for membership in the Secular Society, Limited, writes: "The argument raised by Christians, that it is unfair to insult and ridicule their beliefs, has kept me from joining your movement before; but on hearing the Christian Evidence men in the recent demonstration, and John Kensit and Job Williams in their crusade against Ritualism, I have come to the conclusion that it is only a piece of pious humbug on their part. A certain Christian Evidence lecturer advised his audience to compare the speeches and the appearance of the speakers in Finsbury Park the other Sunday. I have done so, with the above result."

JOSEPH MALING, joining the Secular Society, Limited, writes as one who "has only recently found an adequate philosophy of life in Secularism."

G. THWAITES.—Glad you are joining the Secular Incorporation. We hope others will hurry up during the next week or two. Copy of prospectus forwarded.

A. B. MOSS.—You must indeed have had a hard day's work on Sunday with three open-air meetings. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Heaford were similarly engaged. We hope the Freethought party duly recognises the value of such arduous service. Thanks for copy of the *Mail*. Trust you received those of the *Freethinker*.

J. G. THOMPSON.—Subscriptions acknowledged in their respective places. Thanks. Also for your application for membership in the Secular Society, Limited.

CHILDREN'S EXCURSION.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—George Anderson, £3 3s.; W. H. Harrap, 2s. 6d. We have received: Horace Seal, £1. R. Forder acknowledges: R. Rattray, 5s.; R. H. Side, 10s. More subscriptions are urgently needed for this good object.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges: S. Burgoyne, 5s.

T. DUNBAR.—In our next.

C. MASCALL.—It was acknowledged in the *Freethinker*. Certificates will be sent out with the notices for the General Members Meeting.

OMICRON.—Shall appear in our next issue. "With regard to advertising the *Freethinker*," you say, "I think it is desirable you should state the amount you require as a commencement, and over how long a period such contributions would be needful, as then contributors would have something to guide them as to the amount of their donations." There should be £50 at least—£100 would be much better—to operate with as soon as possible. £200 spent during the winter would cover what we are contemplating. Of course there is a great saving when advertising is paid for in advance over a lengthy period.

JOHN GRAHAM asks us to announce that the Wigan meeting for reorganising the N. S. S. Branch adjourned until September 11 at the Bull's Head Hotel. A full gathering is then earnestly requested.

E. D. JONES.—Thanks for cuttings.

WILLIAM TIPPER applies for membership in the Secular Society, Limited. This correspondent's letter is being attended to.

JAMES NEATE.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. H. HOWARD.—Shall be dealt with in our next.

"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—Horace Seal, £1; R. T. Nichols, 10s. 6d.; J. G. Thompson, 10s.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Ethical World—Truthseeker—Crescent—Free Society—Progressive Thinker—P'ollokehaws News—Liberator—Wolverhampton Express—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—Isle of Man Times—Sydney Bulletin—Public Opinion—People's Newspaper—South London Mail—Advocate of India—Secular Thought—Torch of Reason.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

FREETHOUGHT lectures will be resumed at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham-court-road, this evening (Sept. 4), the chair being taken at 7.30. Mr. Foote occupies the platform, and will discourse upon "The Czar's Appeal to Europe: A Confidence-Trick or an Inspiration? A Freethinker's View of the Matter." There ought to be a crowded audience on this occasion. Freethinkers should try to bring Christian friends along with them.

Another grand Freethought Demonstration was held on Sunday afternoon in Victoria Park. Mr. Wilson kindly supplied a brake as before, but, although it was used to drive to and from the Park, it was not used as a platform for the speakers. Demonstrations are not very frequent there, and the place allotted for them is not the one where the multitude gathers on Sundays to hear the orators of different persuasions. It was therefore decided to leave the brake on the roadway, and to hold the Demonstration at the spot usually occupied by the local N. S. S. Branch. This secured a larger audience. It also "sold" the Infidel Slaughterers, who were there with a rival brake, and who had been heard to say that they meant to get as close as possible to the Freethought meeting—with what object is easily understood. They arrived first, and had driven to the demonstration ground, where they postponed business until the Secular party arrived; and their astonishment was a sight for the angels—white and black—when they beheld the Secular party leave their brake and coolly walk to the ordinary place for public meetings. Those polite, amiable, and peace-loving Christians had the one spot all to themselves; consequently their sweet compliments were wasted, and their meeting was comparatively insignificant. They will remember Victoria Park for a long time.

Mr. Waldron, of the Christian Evidence Society, was shouting away at a great rate not far from the N. S. S. Branch station, but of course he couldn't keep that up long, and his meeting was soon over. There was a large crowd around the big and lofty Branch platform, on which Mr. Moss was standing as a landmark, and a loud cheer went up as Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, and Heaford made their way through with Mrs. Foote, Miss Brown, Miss Bater, and other ladies, for whom seats were provided. Mr. Moss led off as chairman in a little speech marked by much vigor and humor. Mr. Heaford followed with a longer speech, and one of considerable force and eloquence, which merited all the recognition it received. Then came Mr. Watts, who was heartily greeted. His speech made a great impression, and was hotly applauded at the finish. Mr. Moss then introduced Mr. Foote as President of the National Secular Society and the gentleman about whom the Christian orators were always talking. They had heard a lot about Mr. Foote, and now they would hear Mr. Foote himself. Enthusiastic applause greeted the new speaker, and the meeting, which was a remarkably fine one when he rose, swelled into magnificent proportions as he proceeded. He was in a humorous vein, and his speech was punctuated by frequent laughter; but he was serious enough in finishing, and the final quotation from Shelley provoked a storm of cheers. Mr. Cohen spoke last. He said he was suffering from toothache, and he certainly looked pale; but he warmed to his work as he went along. His speech was instructive and entertaining, and there could be no mistaking the warmth of his reception. He has done a lot of good work in Victoria Park, and the hostility he first aroused has given place to respect and admiration.

Miss Brown, Miss Bater, and other friends, went through the vast crowd while Mr. Foote was speaking and took up a gratifying collection, which will go with the other collections towards defraying the expenses of these Demonstrations.

Any Freethinker who wasn't present, and feels that he would have given something if he had been, can send the amount (or more) to Miss Vance, at the N. S. S. office, 376-7 Strand, London, W.C., or, if he prefers, to the editor of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Foote is responsible for the conception and organisation of these special efforts, and cannot very well take anything himself in the circumstances; but some acknowledgment must be made to the other speakers, who have even given up previous engagements to take part in this particular work.

Another Freethought Demonstration will take place this afternoon (Sept. 4) on Peckham Rye, at the usual time—namely, half-past three. The speaking will be from Mr. Wilson's brake. No doubt there will be an immense gathering. The *South London Mail* devotes five columns more to the denunciation of Secular "blasphemy," and calls still more fiercely upon the authorities to stop these pernicious attacks on the faith of the English people. This incendiary journal is doing its best to set the neighborhood on fire. But it will not frighten the Secularists. They will be on the Rye, and the *Mail's* ravings will only serve to swell their audience. We scarcely need say that South London Freethinkers should rally in strong force on this occasion—for reasons that are too obvious to be recited.

Mrs. Ritchie, Thackeray's daughter, is bestowing valuable annotations upon the new edition of her father's writings. One of these annotations, in the latest (fifth) volume, throws light upon the problem of his orthodoxy. In a letter, written when he was engaged on the "Journey from Cornhill to Cairo," he says: "I have been reading lots of books—Old Testament—Church histories, travels, and advance but slowly in the labor. I find there was a sect in the early Church who denounced the Old Testament; and get into such a rage myself when reading all that murder and crime which the name of the Almighty is blasphemously made to sanction, that I don't dare to trust myself to write, and put off my work from day to day."

The New York *Truthseeker* appears to be profiting by the resumption of Watson Heston's cartoons. From the latest number of our contemporary to hand, we see it is reported that James M. Tuttle, a wealthy resident of Lincoln, Illinois, has made a provision in his will to pay a thousand dollars to Colonel Ingersoll for a funeral oration. Mr. Tuttle is 92 years old.

By the way, why does the *Truthseeker*, in congratulating John Hay on his recall from London to fill a higher position at Washington, say that he will have greater opportunities for usefulness there than in "loafing round the throne"? The American Ambassador in London does very little loafing round the throne. He is kept very busy, not only by the regular duties of his post, but also by the numerous social calls upon him. He is a welcome figure at literary, educational, and benevolent gatherings, where he does a great deal to promote friendship between America and England. We hope this is not lacking in "usefulness."

The Glasgow *Weekly Citizen* takes the Rev. Dr. Robert Drummond to task for asserting that "The Sabbath is a Christian Institution." "As a matter of fact," it says, "it was an institution long before the dawn of Christianity, and, indeed, before the growth of the Mosaic law." The orthodox Professor Sayce is quoted in support of this statement, which is of course incontrovertible except by ignoramus. Another article in the *Citizen*, over the familiar initials of "A. G. W.," gives some fine quotations from Guyau's book, recently reviewed in our own columns.

The Liverpool Branch opens afresh at the Alexandria Hall, Islington-square, to-day (Sept. 4). Addresses will be delivered by Messrs. Ross, Bergman, and Hammond. Local Freethinkers will please note.

The Manchester Branch re-opens its hall to-day (Sept. 4) for the new lecture season. Mr. Percy Ward is the lecturer. Those who heard his vigorous speech at the N. S. S. Conference will probably want to hear him again.

Mr. Robert Buchanan in the London *Star*, vigorously denounces the prosecution of Mr. George Bedborough. With regard to Dr. Ellis's book, for selling which Mr. Bedborough has to stand his trial, he writes: "A few benighted sceptics like myself are foolish enough to think that the best way to save foolish people from sin and disease is to enlighten them scientifically. We do not find that the study of corruption encourages us to concupiscence; on the contrary, were we not morally inclined already, the dreadful truths detailed in such books as this of Dr. Ellis would appal us into continence and self-respect. We think, therefore, that to insult a man of science and to punish the unfortunate publisher for carrying out what is in point of fact a noble bit of work, done in the interests of suffering humanity, is more worthy of savages than of sane men living in the nineteenth century."

Mr. J. M. Robertson started a monthly magazine called the *Free Review*, and conducted it, for a couple of years we believe, with marked ability. It ought to have succeeded, but of course it was doomed to go the way of all really advanced monthlies. The public for them, unless the bulk of the matter is popular padding, is very limited, and trade obstacles prevent even that limited public from being reached effectively. Mr. Robertson eventually transferred his magazine to other hands. Under the new auspices it was enlarged, and its title was altered to the *University Magazine*—not a very happy designation. Some excellent articles have appeared in it, but it has not succeeded. We hear that it is to be dropped, the September number being the last issue. The Bedborough prosecution is used as a cover for the retreat, but the real fact is that an advanced periodical which has to depend upon its circulation, without commercial adjuncts, such as advertisements, is very difficult to maintain. The repeated failure of such gallant ventures ought to convince everybody concerned of the necessity of giving every possible support to a journal like the *Freethinker*, which has braved every danger and survived every trouble for more than sixteen years. We also are unable to obtain advertisements which are given to papers with a smaller circulation than ours. We have to depend almost exclusively upon our circulation, and we are asking our friends, who can do it easily if they choose, to enable us, by judicious advertising, to promote the circulation of the *Freethinker*, and to make it, if possible, more accessible to the multitude of liberal-minded people who might purchase it weekly if it were only procurable like other journals.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED.

(Company Limited by Guarantee.)

MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION.

- 1.—The name of the Company is The Secular Society, Limited.
- 2.—The registered office of the Company will be situated in England.
- 3.—The objects for which the Company is formed are:—
 - (a) To promote, in such ways as may from time to time be determined, the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action.
 - (b) To promote the utmost freedom of inquiry and the publication of its discoveries.
 - (c) To promote the secularisation of the State, so that religious tests and observances may be banished from the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary.
 - (d) To promote the abolition of all support, patronage, or favor by the State of any particular form or forms of religion.
 - (e) To promote universal Secular Education, without any religious teaching, in public schools maintained in any way by municipal rates or imperial taxation.
 - (f) To promote an alteration in the laws concerning religion, so that all forms of opinion may have the same legal rights of propaganda and endowment.
 - (g) To promote the recognition by the State of marriage as a purely civil contract, leaving its religious sanctions to the judgment and determination of individual citizens.
 - (h) To promote the recognition of Sunday by the State as a purely civil institution for the benefit of the people, and the repeal of all Sabbatarian laws devised and operating in the interest of religious sects, religious observances, or religious ideas.
 - (i) To purchase, lease, rent, or build halls or other premises for the promotion of the above objects.
 - (j) To employ lecturers, writers, organisers, or other servants for the same end.
 - (k) To publish books, pamphlets, or periodicals.
 - (l) To assist, by votes of money or otherwise, other Societies or associated persons or individuals who are specially promoting any of the above objects.
 - (m) To have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.
 - (n) To co-operate or communicate with any kindred society in any part of the world.
 - (o) To do all such other lawful things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of all or any of the above objects.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRESS.

THE newspaper press is a powerful institution, and might be still more potent but for its ill-disguised venality. There is no need of sensational disclosures to prove its amenability to "influence." Bribes and subsidies may be, and no doubt are, rejected with scorn by organs of the higher class. The indignation of these journals at the bare suggestion of "being bought," in the vulgar sense of the term, is probably justified by the policy they pursue. Albeit their wrath is occasionally so extravagant as to become somewhat amusing, even if it does not confirm the suspicions it is intended to allay. It may, however, be readily admitted that the leading journals are above and beyond any species of coarse corruption. But that does not say that they are insusceptible to blandishments and inducements of other kinds. And in regard to the numerous class of inferior organs, so much goes on behind the scenes that all the vauntings and vaporings as to the general incorruptibility of the press can only be described as sheer humbug.

Freethought owes nothing to the newspaper press. We cannot buy its support, nor always secure from it fair play. When a century or two hence some historian sets himself the task of describing the progress of the Freethought movement, he will have to sorrowfully admit that the newspaper press—from its inception to the end of the present century—rendered not the slightest assistance in the march of emancipation. He may discover one or two newspapers that, in a more or less equivocal fashion, have accorded recognition to the swelling tide of Rationalist thought. But they are exceptions of comparatively recent date. They serve but to mark that lack of discernment, or of honesty, or of courage, which will be remembered to the eternal discredit of the bulk.

Ever since Freethought became an organised movement it has had to fight the newspaper press. And the fight has been on most unequal terms. The press has had a giant's strength, and used it like a giant. When it has not joined in a conspiracy of silence, it has resorted to malignant misrepresentation. In earlier days it circulated the vilest fabrications, and suppressed all denials or statements of the truth. Its libels were innumerable, and for the most part unpunishable. It gave no publicity to any Freethought proceedings except such as it thought might be turned and twisted to the discredit of the cause. Freethought was never referred to except to be reviled. Of late years there has been an improvement, but it is small, falling far short of what should have taken place. There is decidedly less calumny, but no disposition to accord that publicity, in the way of adequate and impartial record, which the importance of the movement demands.

Newspapers, of course, are not to be expected to turn themselves into vehicles for the dissemination of Freethought views. No such proposal is made. Proprietors regard it as their first duty to consider the tastes of their public, and to supply the material which they believe will yield the most profitable return. Hence the religious communities receive a considerable share of attention in the daily columns, though probably not so much nowadays as formerly. There is no objection to that, but what really is open to objection is the boycotting of information respecting the advanced movements that proceed on lines antagonistic to what are supposed to be orthodox beliefs.

The explanation of the present backwardness of the press is that its conductors quite fail to appreciate the volume and extent of the Rationalist thought which permeates society. If they but once realised the numerical strength of the *clientèle* which is still waiting to be served, it is certain that an enlargement of their policy would speedily ensue. Why they should be so blind to the existing requirements in this direction is indeed a matter for surprise. It is not to be supposed that they estimate the Rationalist strength by the mere numbers enrolled in organisations. That would be taking an estimate within absurdly narrow limits. Those who have the means of observation know how vast is the Rationalist realm, how innumerable are the units by which it is peopled, and how little likely the bulk of them are to be discovered except by those who look beneath the surface. The religious communities are very much in evidence, but, loud and obtrusive as they are, they do not comprise everybody. The proprietor of a powerful newspaper could well afford

to offend such of them as are bigots if, on the other hand, he secured the zealous adhesion of the hundreds of thousands of liberal-minded, progressive, freethinking people who at present have no accredited organ in the daily press.

Occasionally one is startled by some little heretical remark, or some outspoken leader that finds its way into newspapers even as now conducted. Therein one sees the spirit of Freethought—which is cribbed, cabin'd, and confined in many an editorial sanctum—trying to find an outlet even at the risk of subsequent managerial remonstrance. Any paper that for once in a way will thus speak the honest truth undoubtedly deserves, and will hardly fail to receive, the support of Freethinkers. The misfortune is that there are so few leading papers that dare to admit, either in their editorial or news columns, anything that smacks of heretical thought.* For ever in front of the managerial eye is the terrible religious "Mrs. Grundy." Space may be found and prominence given to the most inane utterance if it should be made by a Bishop or a dissenting minister whose clap-trap had secured a following. But a Rationalist discourse, though brimful of current interest, of original thought, and epigrammatic expression, is dismissed in a few lines, or, what is more frequently the case, entirely ignored.

That this system of exclusion can for ever continue is quite beyond the bounds of reasonable probability. There are indications in many quarters of the barriers breaking down. I notice, as one of the signs of the times, that the *Record* takes a Lincoln newspaper severely to task for inserting a contribution which, it says, could only be equalled by the kind of thing that appears in "Secularist publications." The extracts which are given are in themselves so extremely sensible, and so exactly hit the mark, that the "Secularist publications" ought really to ironically thank the *Record* for its unintended compliment.

FRANCIS NEALE.

THE N. S. S. CHILDREN'S EXCURSION.

THE Committee are pleased to announce that the arrangements for conveying the children to Pinner on Saturday, September 10th, are now complete. It being impossible to make a starting-point for each branch, the following places, accessible and well known to London Freethinkers, have been chosen. Each conveyance will be in the charge of members of the Committee. For Camberwell, East London, and Bethnal Green branches, brakes will start from South Place Chapel (which is situated between Liverpool-street and Moorgate-street stations) at 10.15 a.m.

Finsbury Park and Wood Green Branches: Holloway Castle, Camden-road, Holloway end, at 10.30.

Finsbury Branch and members of the parent society: Clerkenwell Green (usual meeting-place), 10.30.

North-west London and members, usual meeting place, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, 10.30.

West London Branch and members, Marble Arch (corner of Edgware-road), 11 a.m.

Tickets for the return journey, luncheon, and tea, are now obtainable.

Branch secretaries and parents are requested to at once inform the N. S. S. secretary—Miss Vance, 377 Strand, W.C.—the exact number of tickets required, together with the names and ages of the children, as seats can only be provided in accordance with the number issued.

The time of return can be ascertained before the departure in the morning.

The secretary will, upon the receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, be pleased to advise as to the easiest method of reaching the nearest starting point, or helping in any difficulty which may arise—in seeing safely home any children living at a great distance.

Yankee Soldiers' Menu.

The following is a description from camp of the first dinner of some of the American soldiers:—"From Uncle Sam: Soup, hard tack, beans, and coffee. From our parents: Roast chicken, pickles, gingerbread, mince-pie, jam, and cheese. From our girls: Angel cake, everyday cake, bride cake, and sur-enough cake. Captured: Bananas, strawberries, peanuts, cigarettes."

* The *Star* and *Morning Leader* are to be honorably exempted from any censure in this respect.

"PECULIAR PEOPLE" IN LAMBETH.

VERDICT OF MANSLAUGHTER.

MR. W. SCHRODER, deputy coroner, held an inquiry at the Lambeth Coroner's Court on Tuesday, August 22, into the circumstances attending the death of Ethel Grace Cook, aged twenty months, daughter of James Cook, a carman, living at 67 Lambeth Palace-road. The parents of the deceased are members of the sect known as the "Peculiar People." Grace Cook, the mother, said that the child suffered very frequently from colds.

The Coroner: Did you ever consult with your husband as to whether you ought to call in a doctor?

The Witness: We did not think of such a thing. We trusted in the Lord. We belong to the sect known as the "Peculiar People."

The Coroner: Is it part of your religion to refuse to have medical advice?

Yes, sir.

Continuing, the witness said that about six weeks ago the deceased had a cough, which developed into whooping-cough. She gave the child no medicine of any kind. She remained in about the same condition until about a fortnight ago, when bronchitis set in. The witness then kept her in bed; but about two days later she got worse and had diarrhoea. The witness administered arrowroot and brandy, but the diarrhoea did not cease, and the child gradually wasted. On Sunday, August 14, convulsions ensued, and death just a week later.

The Coroner: What did you do to relieve the child?

The Witness: I had hands laid on the child by an "elder." Anything else?

She was anointed twice with oil, and we prayed for her in the chapel.

In what way—that she might be relieved of her pain and sickness?

Yes; if it was the Lord's will, and if not that she would be taken away. We left it entirely to the Lord.

If medical advice had been offered by a medical practitioner or any person, would you have refused it?

Yes, sir.

James Cook, the father, gave evidence corroborating that given by his wife.

Thomas Gentry, stableman, said he was an "elder" of the sect. He was called in in that capacity to see the child, and he laid hands on her, and anointed her with oil, and prayed for her, believing that the Lord would then restore her if it was His will.

Dr. George Nicol Henry, police divisional surgeon, of 175 Kennington-road, said he had that day made a post-mortem examination of the body in conjunction with Dr. Roe. The body weighed 14lb. 3oz. Death was due to asphyxia supervening upon bronchial pneumonia. It was his opinion that if the child had had proper medical attention it would have lived. Dr. Roe gave similar evidence.

The coroner told the jury that he could only advise them to return a verdict of manslaughter against the parents, and, after consideration in private, they found unanimously "That the parents were guilty of criminal neglect in not providing medical assistance when they knew that their child was so ill."

The coroner said that was a verdict of manslaughter against the parents, and he committed them on his warrant, but said he would release them on bail, as their position was due to a conscientious belief on their part. They would, however, have to be arrested and taken to the police-station and charged, which was done. Bail was fixed at £100 for each.

BOOK CHAT.

THE September number of the *Literary Guide* is perhaps rather more "reviewy" than usual, though bookish readers will probably regard this as a merit rather than a defect. There are some independent articles, however, one of them entitled "Why?" by Amos Waters, being a spirited vindication of scepticism. The paragraphs on various topics are bright and informing. A letter from an irritated Agnostic seems to show that Mr. Watts's article in the August number on "Agnosticism and Atheism" has given offence in both directions. It reminds one of Butler's shrewd couplet:—

Those who in quarrels interpose
Must often get a bloody nose.

* * *

The MacMahon; or, The Story of the Seven Johns, by Owen Blayney (Archibald Constable), is pre-eminently a book worth reading. In this volume we meet once more the old delightful characters with which we have been familiarised in the novels of Charles Lever, Maria Edgeworth, Samuel Lover, and F. M. Allen, authors who have seen in the versatility of the Irish character material for

stories which combine, either in matter or the manner of telling, the light and shade of a people, whom to know, be it only through works of fiction, is to love.

* * *

The period of this novel is the closing years of the seventeenth century, when Ireland, where the scenes are laid, was torn by the fierce fighting between the armies of Kings William and James. The real hero of the book is John McKinley, and he does not hesitate to speak out, as in the following passage:—

"'It's the religion o' the creeds that makes the professors. Good men it turns into persecutin' cruel wolves, while it provides a cloak for the villainies o' knaves..... See the Church o' Englan' persecutin' Papists; an' Presbyterians persecutin' Papists an' Presbyterians; the Presbyterians in Scotlan' persecutin' all who differ from them; an' the Papists in Spain an' France burnin' the Protestants.....It wur religion did it. Religion! God give me patience! A've got an account to settle wi' it!.....My God! What wickedness hez it not provoked men to? It hez kindled the toarch o' all but universal war. It hez slain, an' racked, an' burned. Did ye hear the death wail o' that band o' poor Jews who wur burned alive not twenty years ago to grace the weddin'-feast o' Spain's most holy Christian King? It wuz done to plase the Holy Father, an' to win a blessin' from God on the married pair. Religion! he exclaimed, throwing up his hands with a fierce gesture, and bringing them down with a bang on the fox-skin cover of *The Christian's Consolations*, 'tell me o' any deed o' infamy over which hell fiends may grin an' gloat, an' A'll fin' ye it's pattered an' example in excess in the doin's o' religion.'

"'But it has done some good, Mr. McKinley, hasn't it?It's all a case of reward and punishment—I mean the world's made up of right and wrong, and religion teaches that right shall be rewarded and wrong punished.'

"'That's how it ought to be; and maybe it is what pure religion teaches, if ye go into the question. But plainly, it's not the religion o' the hour, an' decidedly it's not a religion taught be any Church at this minit. "Maintain an' reverence me, an' respect the Pope an' King James," cries one set; "Maintain me, an' swear be Protestantism, King William, and Luther," shouts another. That's here; in other lan's the cry's different. Give me the people who do good fur the love o' doin' it, un' fur love o' their fellas, un' not fur the hope o' reward. But that's not what the Churches say: "On'y b'lieve what A tache ye, accept me creed, conform to me practices an' ceremonies, an' ye're all right.'"

This extract is by no means the best; but it is of interest to Freethinkers. The first portion of *The MacMahon* has some passages which, for mirth and humor, are scarcely excelled in recent fiction. Should this short notice induce a single reader to read Mr. Blayney's book, we are confident that he or she will enjoy many hearty laughs, and will peruse a commendable story.

* * *

Place aux dames! We heartily welcome a new volume from the pen of Constance E. Plumtre, the author of *Natural Causation* and a masterly study of *Bruno and His Philosophy*. Her new book, which is issued by Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., is entitled *Studies in Little-Known Subjects*. There are eighteen essays in this volume, which is divided into two parts—"Studies in Times Past" and "Studies in Times Present." Perhaps the most generally interesting of the papers are those on "Japan," on "Thackeray's Letters," and on "John Francis and the Athenæum." Miss Plumtre writes exceedingly well, and of course writes from the Rationalistic standpoint.

* * *

The good old *Daily News* reviewed Miss Plumtre's book on August 25 last. The reviewer did his utmost to belittle the volume, and referred to the author as "Mr." Plumtre. Of course the creature knew better, but he was paid to tickle the long ears of the Nonconformist fools.

* * *

Rationalistic writers have a great deal to bear with. Their books are either boycotted altogether, or else they have to put up with notices which are grossly unfair. Even in the case of an intellectual giant like Buckle the same game was played, only on a larger scale.

* * *

The cream of the joke is seen when a series of wretchedly-written "anti-infidel" pamphlets, by a manikin of the name of Hastings, directed against Secularism, meets with a storm of approval, and sky-pilots and journalists write flattering notices by the yard.

* * *

Messrs. Macmillan have earned the thanks of all lovers of good literature by the publication of *The English Men of Letters*, a series of most admirable monographs, edited by the Right Hon. John Morley, M.P. One of the best is that

on Shelley by John Addington Symonds, an author of world-renowned reputation. Unfortunately, the book was originally written before the publication of Professor Dowden's authoritative *Life of Shelley*, and Mr. Symonds found it necessary to rewrite a portion of his monograph. One would think that Messrs. Macmillan would have printed a new edition; but, for some absurd reasons best known to themselves, they merely printed the new matter as an appendix, and asked the reader to consider all those earlier pages, marked with brackets, as being cancelled. The result is that the early editions of Symonds's *Shelley* are inaccurate, and the later ones simply unreadable; and the poor reader, like the man in the tale, is between the devil and the deep sea.

* * *

This is the era of cheap publishing. Messrs. Bliss, Sands, & Co. have produced an edition of *Shakespeare* at 3s. 6d. This *Falstaff* edition, as it is named, is an admirable book for the price, well-printed, well-bound, and a most desirable volume for any working-man's library. A companion volume issued by the same firm is Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, the best biography in the English language. As a matter of fact, Johnson's fame rests more on his biography by Boswell than on his own writing.

* * *

No more prejudiced man ever lived than Dr. Johnson. Goldsmith was right when he said: "There is no arguing with Johnson, for when his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt end." Johnson could not tolerate a man who thought independently on traditional orthodoxy. He calls Bolingbroke "a scoundrel and a coward." And yet Johnson had never read a syllable of the works whose author he so savagely pillories. "I have never read Bolingbroke's impiety," he remarked. To Johnson Freethinkers are vermin, which his rhetoric would fain exterminate. Hume, Gibbon, and Voltaire are all scoundrels. At best, Voltaire is allowed but "a petty wit." Men like Priestley and Price were an abomination. Boswell says that he was present at Oxford when Dr. Price came into a company where Johnson was, who instantly left the room. Rousseau was "one of the worst of men, a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society." His hatred of the Scotch is well known, and even appears in his definition of the word "oatmeal" in his dictionary. For real fun it would be difficult to match his definition of "network," which a small boy once described as "a number of holes joined together with string."

* * *

A vigorous attempt to oust the sea serpent and the big gooseberry has been made by the editor and staff of the *Daily Chronicle*. A correspondence has been published in that paper asking why a cheap edition of Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam is not issued in England. We hope that Messrs. Macmillan will take the hint and allow a silly season boom to bear a practical result.

CORRESPONDENCE.

STREET RUFFIANISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The above question should be of special interest to Freethinkers just now, because the Dean of St. Paul's attributes the state of affairs to the lack of religious teaching in Board schools. As among the ruffians convicted there is a plentiful sprinkling of Irish names, it is probable that the Irish Hooligan at least has not been contaminated by a Board school. The fact is, that for some reason or other our magistrates and judges, and more especially country magistrates, among whom there is more than a fair sprinkling of the clergy, do everything possible to encourage ruffianism. I give one sample out of thousands—from truth. Daventry Divisional Petty Sessions; before C. Rodhouse and W. Asheby; Ernest Pike charged with assaulting Alfred G. Coles. Defendant struck complainant in the face, cutting his lip, and knocking him down. Coles complained to a policeman, and defendant then gave him another violent blow, knocking him down again, and rendering him insensible. There was a long list of convictions against defendant, and he was under a bond of five pounds to keep the peace. Fined ten shillings and seventeen shillings costs, and allowed time to pay the amount of the forfeited bond. A trifling theft would have been mercilessly punished; but, for all that, there can be no doubt that Christianity exalteth a nation.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

OF THAT ILK.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I notice that the writer of "Book Chat," in the *Freethinker* of August 7, uses the phrase, "of that ilk," as if the words meant "of that sort," "of that kind," "of that

kidney." This is a most reprehensible error with many writers who ought to know better. Is there any call for adding to the variety of forms in English speech which denote "of that sort"? Is it fair to the Scottish tongue to take a phrase, that has a special and particular meaning when correctly used, and turn it to some other purpose which is altogether away from its proper meaning? "Ilk" does not mean "sort." In the present-day Scottish vernacular it means "each," as "Ilk lass lifts her leggin," etc.; and in some earlier generation it has denoted "same." The words, "of that ilk," where they occur in territorial designations—and I have never seen them apart from designations—can only mean "of that same." Thus Hugh Logan, of that ilk, means Hugh Logan of Logan, or otherwise Hugh Logan of that same.

The Irish have the same form of expression, which is more general with them, and more special with the Scotch. In English speech the form is not unknown. A Scotchman might say, "I told you else"; while an Englishman would say, "I told you otherwise." If I am correct in construing the old form of words as above, then it must be apparent that the use complained of is stupid and in bad taste.

A. B.

SONNET TO THE HOLY SABBATH.

MEAN are our days; meanest of all art thou,
 Poor jaded relic of a played-out creed!
 Thine hour hath come; yea, thou hast sown thy seed,
 And reaped the golden fruit thereof; but now
 Time sits in judgment on thy senile brow,
 Deep-scarred by many a priest-burdened deed.
 Go; for thy knell hath tolled! No more impede
 The strides of thought before which thou must bow.

The tell-tale seams upon thy withered cheek
 Are witness to the crimes that thou hast fed.
 Thine aims are not the aims that we would seek.
 Dark day of Ignorance, we wish thee dead.
 Go; take thy wizened visage from the week!
 We greet the day of Reason in thy stead!

BERTA C. E. BUSS.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

It is bad enough for adult men and women to have to kneel, weekly or monthly, at the feet of a priest (usually one whom they know intimately), and detail every unworthy thought and act into which they have been betrayed; but for girls and young women to discuss their innermost thoughts and feelings with a person of the opposite sex is vicious and lamentable. If they are still of a refined character, such a practice is a source of exquisite pain, and often leads either to duplicity or to actual debasement; if they are less refined already, the temptation to abuse their condition is overpowering.—*Joseph McCabe.*

Biblical scholars have concealed their discoveries from us and talked to us in hieroglyphics long enough, quieting our doubts with claims of false translations, interpolations, and hidden mysteries that we should not try to penetrate. But if the book was given to us for a moral guide through this earthly life, and our salvation depends upon it in the heavenly life to come, surely our religious teachers should tell us in plain English what the writers intended to say as to the character of God and the duties of men to him and to each other.—*Elizabeth Cady Stanton.*

Ethically, we are required to do no evil that good may come; theologically, to worship a deity who is doing just that all the time.—*M. D. Conway.*

For thousands of years men have been writing the real Bible, and it is being written from day to day, and it will never be finished while man has life. All the facts that we know, all the truly recorded events, all the discoveries and inventions, all the wonderful machines whose wheels and levers seem to think, all the poems, crystals from the brain, flowers from the heart, all the songs of love and joy, of smiles and tears, the great dramas of imagination's world, the wondrous paintings, miracles of form and color, of light and shade, the marvellous marbles that seem to live and breathe, the secrets told by rock and star, by dust and flower, by rain and snow, by frost and flame, by winding stream and desert sand by mountain range and billowed sea.—*Robert G. Ingersoll.*

Of all my seeking this is all my gain;
 No agony of any mortal brain
 Shall wrest the secret of the life of man:
 The Search has taught me that the Search is vain.

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, "The Czar's Appeal to Europe: A Freethinker's View."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A Concert.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, O. Cohen, "Some Lessons of Evolution."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, O. Cohen. Peckham Rye: 3.15, Freethought Demonstration, addressed by Messrs. G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, O. Cohen, A. B. Moss, and W. Heaford.
EAST LONDON BRANCH (Mile End Waste): 11.30, A. B. Moss; 7, W. Heaford. September 7, at 7, O. Cohen.
HAMMERSMITH (near Lyric Theatre): 7.15, Mr. Davis.
HAMPSTEAD HEATH: (Fleet-road, corner of Downshire-hill): 7, R. P. Edwards.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 3.15, Mr. Davis.
KILBURN (High-road, corner Victoria-road): 7.15, E. Pack.
KINGSLAND (Kidley-road): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Secularism."
LIMEHOUSE (The Triangle, Salmon-lane): 11.30, W. Heaford. September 6, at 7, O. Cohen.
WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, H. Courtney, "What is Secularism?"
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "The English Bible."

COUNTRY.

DERBY (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, J. Brownsword, "Some Fallacies of Trade Unionism."
GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): H. P. Ward—11.30, "Charles Bradlaugh, Atheist"; 2.30, "The New Woman and the Old Man"; 6.30, "Shall we Live after we are Dead?"
HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall): 7, W. Ledger, "Peace on Earth."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday evening, musical and other recitals.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton—September 4, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Bye; e., Camberwell; 7, Mile End Waste.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—September 4, m., Mile End; 11, m., Mile End; 18, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn; 25, m., Finsbury; a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 526 Moseley-road, Birmingham.—September 4, Glasgow; 11 and 18, Manchester. October 2, Sheffield; 16, Birmingham. November 27, Liverpool. December 18, Birmingham.

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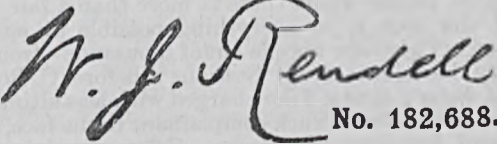
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