

The Freethinker

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THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

EIGHTEEN hundred and ninety-eight years ago, if we are to believe the gospel, a number of astrologers came from a wide region called "the east" to Judea. They were led thither by a wonderful star, which apparently accommodated itself to their rate of locomotion, and descended low enough to journey visibly over the earth's surface. This bit of celestial pyrotechny was of course the star of some great person's nativity, and on arriving at a house in Bethlehem, over which it rested, they learned that an uncrowned and unanointed King of the Jews had just been born in a stable and was cradled in a manger. After giving him the presents they had considerably brought with them, they returned to "the east," and were never heard of afterwards. What is still more curious, they were never mentioned in the whole course of that wonderful child's career, although their visit to Bethlehem, and the subsequent massacre of the innocents, should have kept them fresh in the memory of every inhabitant of Palestine.

It is also recorded in the New Testament that the birth of this wonderful child was marked by the appearance of angels to some nameless shepherds in an unknown place. These angelic visitors proclaimed peace on earth and goodwill towards men, or peace among the restricted class of men in whom the Lord "is well pleased," as the Revised Version expresses it.

Accordingly, it has been the custom of Christian scribes and preachers to celebrate the astral herald of Christ's nativity as the morning star of a new day. Every fresh Christmas sees this threadbare theme new-worn. Pulpiters and pious journalists expatiate *ad nauseam* on the immorality and brutality of pre-Christian civilisation, and the goodness and tenderness which have gradually crept over the world as Christianity has advanced. Fortunately for these professional apologists, they can presume on the most utter ignorance of their readers and hearers, and, neglecting history and the logic of facts, they are able to give a free rein to their cheap and tawdry rhetoric. Nor does it in the least interfere with their periodical jubiliations that while they praise their perfect system, which has had eighteen centuries to produce its perfect fruit, they are obliged to bewail the ghastly diseases of Christian civilisation; its chronic pauperism, its rampant vices, its widespread drunkenness, its criminality, its costly military systems, outvieing anything which even Rome ever witnessed, and the frightful scale of its wars, as well of its warlike preparations, which are a strange commentary on the gospel of peace. True, there are some dissonant voices in this well-practised chorus, but they are nearly lost in the swelling volume of sound. A Shelley sings of "the Galilean serpent," and a Swinburne of "the poison of the crucifix." Such voices, however, are only audible to discriminating ears, and so the sweet songsters of orthodoxy keep the concert pretty much to themselves.

Glancing back over eighteen centuries of history with a free and fearless eye, who can truthfully assert that the Star of Bethlehem was the herald of a better day? It is quite obvious to the candid student that Christianity wrought no practical improvement on the great body of the Roman Empire, either before or after it secured the patronage of Constantine. The early Christian emperors were not a whit more moral than the pagan Cæsars. They were simply pale copies of great originals; and if their

vices were less flagrant and monstrous than those of a Nero or a Caligula, their virtues were insignificant beside those of an Augustus or an Antoninus. Nor is it easy to see in what respect the gladiatorial shows at Rome were worse than the faction-fights at Constantinople. Still less is it easy to see how the burning and torturing of Christians by pagans were any worse than the burnings and torturings of heretics by their fellow Christians.

Intellectually, Christianity merely substituted a new and vigorous superstition for an old and dying one, which was gradually being supplanted among the educated classes by a prudent, though spirited, philosophy. The gods of Olympus gave place to the Trinity and the Devil, who wielded all the arbitrary power of their predecessors without exhibiting any of their grace or *bonhomie*. The national religions succumbed to one of universal pretensions, and their spirit of mutual toleration was succeeded by a malignant fanaticism which regarded every difference of opinion as a crime. And while the national religions were always more or less subservient to temporal welfare, the new religion dwarfed this world into the mere vestibule of heaven or hell.

Borrowing the bigotry of Judaism, exalting faith as the supreme virtue, and denouncing unbelief as the blackest sin, Christianity did its best to obscure and degrade morality. At the same time it arrested intellectual progress, which always follows mental dissatisfaction and the restless spirit of inquiry. The proof of this can be given in a sentence. During six or seven centuries of undisputed supremacy Christianity could not point to a single new discovery in science, or to a single new book of the least importance to literature. What more damning impeachment than this could be conceived? Nor can it be answered by pointing to what Christendom has since produced, for there was no sign of improvement until Arabian science flashed its light upon the darkness of Europe. Even then the Church intercepted its rays as far as possible, and she might have succeeded in restoring the old darkness had it not been for the Renaissance, which was simply the revolution of the classic art, literature, and philosophy of Greece and Rome, and the political reconstruction of Europe, which, by inducing quarrels between princes and popes, led to the so-called Reformation.

Since the Reformation the progress of Europe has been wonderful, but it has not been inspired by Christianity. The leading minds in every branch of intellectual activity have been accounted heretics by their own generation, and the nearer we approach to our own day the more distinct is the line of separation between the Churches and the great discoverers and thinkers. It is now impossible to give an accurate list of the chief scientists and writers in Christendom without including three sceptics for every believer.

But while the progressive movement is wholly inspired by scepticism, and mainly conducted by Freethinkers, the government, that is the organised forces of society, is in the hands of orthodoxy, which rules in our legislative halls, our courts of justice, our universities, our schools, and in every department of the public service. Obviously, therefore, it is orthodoxy that must bear the responsibility for the chronic evils and the low tone of society. Let us look into these phenomena and see what that responsibility amounts to.

What has the Gospel of Peace brought us to? Europe has now more than ten times as many soldiers as sufficed to preserve the peace and integrity of the Roman Empire

when it was surrounded by hostile and predatory barbarians. Europe is, in fact, an armed camp, not for the repulsion of barbarians, but for internecine war among Christian states. After eighteen centuries of the Gospel of Peace, Christendom is darkened by the shadow of the sword, and the highest honors are paid to successful generals who are skilled in the art of slaughter.

Treating man as a spiritual instead of a material entity, Christianity has no remedy for the vices it perfunctorily reprobates. Drunkenness is not diminished by sermons, nor are the grosser forms of vice lessened by unctuous texts, while families crowd in single rooms, while filth breeds fever, and promiscuous herding destroys modesty and self-respect. Not by futile appeals to the will, but by wise political and social changes, can this state of things be altered. Christianity wastes its breath in preaching "righteousness," while Freethought strives for practical reform.

Hypocrisy, which is one of the meanest vices, is essentially a Christian product. Orthodox travellers tell us that they find very little of it in the heathen world, but when they return to Christendom they find it circulating in the very atmosphere. The reason of this melancholy fact is not remote. The evil is entirely due to the exaltation of belief over conduct, and the erection of false and impossible standards which are openly revered and privately neglected. Theophrastus gives us one Character of a Hypocrite, and not a particularly offensive one. The literature of Christendom gives us scores of the most disgusting type.

The benefits of Christianity appear in the apologies of its professional champions, its evils are written large on the pages of impartial history. What real good has it ever achieved? Deny it the right to appropriate all the improvement of the secular intellect and the natural growth of humanity, and how much has it to boast of its own? But the miseries it has inflicted on mankind are appalling in their magnitude and number. It has shed oceans of blood, and bitter tears have rolled from myriads of eyes under its iron tyranny. It closed every thinker's lips. It kept men in darkness and slavery. It made men bow at the foot of the altar and the throne. It preached poverty to the poor and took its share of the wealth of the rich. It invented the rack, the thumbscrew, and the wheel. It illustrated its love of man with the flames of a thousand stakes. It has been a curse rather than a blessing. And its star of Bethlehem was not the herald of a glad new day, but the portent of a long and dismal and disastrous night.

G. W. FOOTE.

BIBLE FAITHS AND THEIR DEFENDERS.

(Concluded from page 578.)

IN concluding our remarks upon the above subject, which were commenced in last week's *Freethinker*, we wish to draw the attention of our readers to the habit Christian defenders have of tenaciously refusing to attempt to justify in debate the Jewish faith and its leading teachings. They will not discuss the character of the God of the Old Testament, and for its "heroes" they will hold no brief. This may be discreet, but it is not consistent, for upon that faith their own rests. If the Bible God be ignored, where does the Christian find his deity? The truth is, the Jewish God, as represented and delineated in the Old Testament, is so thoroughly bad, he being guilty of almost every crime known to man, that Christian defenders will have nothing to say on his behalf. Practically, all Christians are atheists to the God of the Bible, for they believe him not. Again, it is in the Jewish faith that we find the stories of the Fall and Original Sin, upon which are based the doctrine of the atonement and the theory of rewards and punishments as taught in the orthodox churches. Destroy the Hebrew basis of Christianity, and the essential part of it falls to the ground. This is so palpable that no Christian exponent of any marked ability has the courage to discuss the doctrines of his faith.

Another point is that, in the Jewish religion, some of the prominent moral teachings of the Gospels are set forth. The inculcation of such virtues as love, justice, humility, and forgiveness, about which Christians talk so much, but practise so little, is found in the Old Testament, and there-

fore they are not of Christian origin. Far be it from us to champion the faith of the Jews, with its numerous absurd, brutal, and immoral injunctions; but it is only fair to say that, with all its drawbacks, it is more humane in reference to the lower animals than is Christianity. In the Hebrew Bible there are many humane precepts as to the treatment of what are termed the brutes. For instance, the muzzling of the ox when threshing, the slaughter of the dam and the young on the same day, the taking of the mother-bird with the nestlings, are all forbidden; and a command is given that animals shall share with their masters the rest of the Sabbath day. Lecky observes: "In the range and circle of duties inculcated by the early Fathers those to animals had no place. This is indeed the one form of humanity which appears more prominent in the Old Testament than in the New." Lecky might have gone further, and said the claims of the lower animals on man's consideration are entirely overlooked in the Christian system.

Christian defenders are fond of boasting that their faith "is a grand old city, built of the pure white marble of truth." They assert "it has existed through the storms of two thousand years, and is as strong to-day as when first it rose to view." If this statement were true, it would certainly say but little for the inherent power and invigorating influence of Christianity. A constitution that is sound and healthy should possess greater strength in its manhood than it had in its infancy. But what is the fact with the teachings of the New Testament? After being in existence for nearly eighteen hundred years, supported by the wealth of the nation, with prayers to assist it, grace to support it, and a God to protect it, we are told that it is as strong as it was when it was first promulgated. But the fact is, Christianity is not so strong as it was in its "palmy days." The older it gets, the weaker it becomes. If Christianity is as strong as ever, what means so much alarm on the part of the clergy about the spread of infidelity, and the falling off of church attendance? Besides, if this faith is so potent for good upon the minds of those who profess it, why is it that the Church that teaches it has always been, and still is, the foe of human progress? The *Church Gazette*, in a leading article in its issue of August 20, makes the following significant confession: "There is no doubt that London churches at present strike the eye and ear more than any other Anglican churches; yet it is equally undoubted that the London population does not go to church, excepting merely a few holy women and devotees, and if this state of things is to be paramount everywhere, our Church will have sealed its doom. But how will it have sealed it? By utterly ignoring the intellectual needs of its people, and so driving them elsewhere. Of the same omission the entire English Church is more or less guilty, and the fact is testified to by ninety-nine out of every hundred church-goers throughout the length and breadth of the land, except, of course, such as do not think at all, and whose opinions are therefore worth nothing. Between the Church and thought there has always been a certain rift, but this mattered not so very much as long as the people were retained. Now that the people are being lost to her because they now can think, the position becomes threatening and peremptory, especially to such Churchmen as wish limits to be extended so as to include these very people, instead of driving them elsewhere or nowhere..... A Church like our own may be truly and wisely conservative in the sense of declining to modify her belief or her practice without very sound and well-verified ground, and unless the demand is undeniably solid. But her conservatism has gone beyond that; because, in directions where it is clearly admitted that there is flagrant need of speedy and thorough change, she has all along shown that she had no goodwill to carry out changes of any adequate kind at all, but has hung back from doing anything, and resisted all such as would do it for her, against her own best interests. All this is so intensely out of keeping with the reforming and advancing spirit of the age we live in that she has thus greatly forfeited the confidence and sympathy of both masses and classes." This is a strong indictment of the faith, coming as it does from one of its own expounders.

Let us now return to the defenders of Christianity. As a rule, they present a sad picture of humanity and a poor sample of intellectuality. Moreover, the majority of them do not indicate that they are overstocked with modesty and the love of honest and fair disputation. With

them egotism precludes the possibility of calm discrimination, and conceit renders them oblivious of the legitimate nature of their opponent's position. They suffer from the delusion that they have "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" upon their side, and therefore they assume that those who differ from them must be wrong. Of course these remarks do not apply to all the defenders of the Christian faith. It has been our pleasure to meet in public debate such gentlemen as the Rev. T. D. Matthias, Dr. Harrison, and Dr. McCann, disputants who discussed principles and avoided personalities. Where, however, are their successors to-day? Most of the Christian defenders at the present time are of the Brewin Grant and Dr. Brindley type, minus the ability of those "theological clowns." We have recently taken part in some special open-air Freethought demonstrations in the London parks, which afforded us an opportunity of witnessing and hearing the conduct and language of many of the present reckless defenders of Christianity, for they "pitched their tent" in close proximity to our gatherings. A more lamentable exhibition of theological lunacy than that exhibited by these unfortunate fanatics it would be difficult to conceive. In them the demon of intolerance was let loose, and religious bigotry was unrestrained. Being destitute of the power of reasoning, they indulge in the use of the vilest epithets against their opponents, whose arguments these defenders of the faith are incapable of answering. Their usual policy is to retail silly and oft-repeated stories about "infidel death-beds," to indulge in wild prophecies of the social ruin that would ensue from the supremacy of heterodox opinions, to heap calumny upon the heads of some of the noble thinkers of all ages, and to misrepresent Secularists, whose characters they continually malign. Yet they are constantly prating about "Christlike" love, purity, and meekness. Such a mode of advocacy is the very quintessence of hypocrisy and vulgarity. To attack the personal character of opponents is to employ a contemptible weapon, and such a course must damage any cause in whose interest it is adopted. Those Christian calumniators should remember that, if their base charges against Secularists were as true as they are false, it would prove nothing in favor of Christianity, for the numerous instances recorded of irregularities, immoralities, and crimes committed by clergymen show that, if Freethinkers have not a monopoly of virtue, neither are they alone in practising any of the vices which degrade the human kind.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE WORSHIP OF THE UNKNOWN.

MR. HERBERT SPENCER'S doctrine of the Unknowable is well known to all students of philosophy, and, thanks to the illegitimate use made of it by religious advocates, to a great many who are not. Although its place in the *Synthetic Philosophy* is comparatively unimportant, the bulk of the work standing quite clear of it, it has yet received a very large share of public attention owing to the fancied support given by it to current religious ideas. From men of the type of the late Professor Drummond or Mr. A. J. Balfour, down to the Christian Evidence lecturer, whose whole knowledge of Herbert Spencer is derived from a newspaper cutting, there comes the assertion that the greatest thinker of the age is in fundamental agreement with Theistic beliefs. It matters little that Spencer explicitly repudiates Theism, and that even language with Theistic implications is strikingly absent from his later writings; so long as the words used can be made to bear the desired meaning it is enough; the use of a great name is secured, and the unthinking religionist, who has had qualms of uneasiness concerning his creed, is once more lulled to rest.

It is superfluous here to dwell upon the philosophic import of the "Unknowable," although a few words are necessary in passing. Following a line of investigation that has been steadily gaining ground since Hume, Mr. Spencer holds that all our knowledge of the universe is ultimately reducible to a knowledge of mental states and their mutual relations. Concerning the universe, apart from our conscious states we know nothing, and can know nothing. Nevertheless, he holds that we are bound by the conditions of thought to think of something existing as the

external cause of our sensations, and this something he calls the "Unknowable," the "Unconditioned," or the "Absolute." It is this Unknowable, printed with a bewildering array of capital letters, which has figured so largely in the apologetic literature of recent years.

A very obvious criticism upon this Unknowable is, that, in asserting its existence, it is annihilated. In the very nature of the case, the only way to prove its existence would be by our ignorance that it did exist. Existence can only be predicated of that which affects consciousness in some manner, and if we have a consciousness of anything as existing, although our knowledge of it may be imperfect, it ceases to be unknowable. To say that we have a consciousness of the unknowable is to frame a sentence one-half of which destroys the remainder. Unknowableness is not a property of existence, it is simply the name for a complete and irremovable mental blank; and I, for one, fail to see any justification for converting a pure negation into a positive conception, and speaking of a consciousness of things unknown as though that were anything else than a consciousness of ignorance.

A close study of the first part of *First Principles* shows that Mr. Spencer frequently falls into the curious error of confounding the unknown with the unknowable. He rightly points out that "Positive knowledge does not, and never can, fill the whole region of possible thought. At the uttermost reach of discovery there arises, and must ever arise, the question—What lies beyond?" but is obviously in error in regarding this, or the statement that "A known cannot be thought of apart from an unknown," as a proof of the existence of an *unknowable*. It is perfectly true that at no time do the limits of thought equal the limits of existence, that the very limitations of thought suggest something beyond, as a boundary suggests land on either side the line of demarcation; but this unknown rises in thought, not as something different in kind to the known, but as something fundamentally identical with it. The unknown is the conceivably knowable; it is thought of pretty much as a traveller thinks of an unexplored country—a place concerning which nothing is known, but which, when known, will present at most only fresh modifications of soil, vegetation, or animal life.

But it is with the use made by Mr. Spencer of the unknowable as an object of religious worship that I am specially concerned; and here it is much to be regretted that he continually uses language which can have no other effect than to bolster up ideas which he specifically rejects over and over again. To speak of "The Infinite and Eternal Energy," "The Creative Power," "The Ultimate Cause," or to assert that "when the Unknown cause produces in him (man) a certain belief, he is thereby authorised to profess and act out that belief,"* with much more of the same kind, is to use theological language with but slight modification, and to play into the hands of those who, disregarding the writer's avowed Agnosticism, will not hesitate to claim him as one of the supporters of their own unscientific theism.† Indeed, as the language stands, one feels tempted to say that it reads like the philosophic equivalent of the three incomprehensibles of the Athanasian Creed.

Mr. Spencer's teaching concerning the nature of religion and science may be briefly summarised as follows:—

1. The function of religion, from the earliest time to the present, has been to assert the existence of an unknowable reality, and to keep alive a consciousness of the insoluble mystery surrounding it.
2. The function of science is to deal with the known or the knowable, with all that is presented in experience, with the world of phenomena exclusively.
3. Religion and science are consequently not antagonistic, but complementary; conflicts arise when either trespasses on the other's department, and a recognition of the proper line of demarcation is the only method of reconciling these hitherto hostile forces.

The first objection to this position is that, in support of his main thesis, Mr. Spencer describes two lines of development where only one exists. Religion and science do not represent parallel lines of development, both of which may increase simultaneously, but two stages along the same

* Italics mine.

† To name only one illustration out of scores that might be given, the *Christian World*, June 5 and July 3, 1884, identifies Mr. Spencer's "Absolute" with the Christian God, and affirms that his language might have been used by Butler or Paley.

line of mental evolution, one of which necessarily suffers by the increase of the other. It is the reasoning of early ages, which might fairly be called science under the then existing conditions, that has crystallised into the religions of to-day. Mr. Spencer has himself shown clearly enough (*Principles of Sociology*, vol. i.) that all religious ideas have their origin in man's misunderstanding of ordinary natural phenomena, both internal and external, and there is certainly nothing in his investigations of primitive religious ideas that will support the view of religion laid down in *First Principles*. Existing religions constitute man's earliest attempts to explain or modify natural phenomena; they are a kind of primitive science, and are marked with all the imperfections of generalisations based upon imperfect and inadequate data. Man pictures the universe as alive, and consequently his science is a science of "wills" rather than of forces. This early volitional theory is gradually replaced by the mechanical, and the characteristic of religion is not the assertion of an "Unknown Verity," but a clinging to the earlier view instead of the later one. Religion is, therefore, no more concerned with an Unknowable than is science. Both aim at bringing the *unknown* within the region of the known, while the difference between religion and science to-day lies simply and exclusively in the method of investigation followed and the explanation offered.

It is certain that the bare affirmation of an unknowable existence is not enough to constitute a religion. At least, it must maintain the existence of some definite relations between this existence and humanity; and it must stand or fall upon the strength of the explanation offered. The essence of religion is, therefore, not the assertion of an "Unknowable Reality," of a "Supreme Verity transcending experience," or "A Mystery that is Ultimate and Absolute," but in the propounding of a set of relations held to exist between an assumed existence—God—and humanity. Man never did, and never will, worship anything, or fight for anything, of which he is convinced that he knows nothing, and can know nothing. Whatever may be the ultimate truth concerning the object of religious worship, so far as it is worshipped, it is believed to be known, and, if that belief could be destroyed, religion would be bound to go with it. As I have said elsewhere, "It was man's misunderstanding of the objects he knew that gave religion birth; his fears gave them shape, and the cunning and tyranny of his rulers gave them permanence." It would be as reasonable to picture primitive man worshipping the differential calculus as worshipping the Unknowable; and it is just as reasonable that modern man should erect an altar to that of which he knows nothing, as to express religious reverence for what is, after all, but a simple euphemism for his utter and irretrievable ignorance.

Mr. Spencer's method of reconciling religion and science is still more curious. The history of the conflict between religion and science, he rightly points out, is that of the constant retreat of the former before its ever-victorious enemy. Still, "as the limits of possible cognition are established, the causes of conflict will diminish. And a permanent peace will be reached when science becomes fully convinced that its explanations are proximate and relative; while religion becomes fully convinced that the mystery it contemplates is ultimate and absolute." That is, when science has monopolised the entire field of human knowledge, actual and possible, and when religion is convinced that it knows nothing of what it is worshipping, and can know nothing; that it can offer man nothing in the shape of counsel or advice, but that its sole work is to eternally offer man a conundrum that he must eternally give up, and its sole function to sit in owl-like solemnity contemplating an insoluble mystery, like a Hindoo fakir meditating on nothing at all, then there will be peace between science and religion. And this is called a reconciliation! It is the same plan on which Poland was reconciled to Russia, or the Dervish Army and its leaders have just been reconciled to the British Army in the Soudan. Mr. Spencer finds two combatants engaged in deadly conflict; he murders one of them, and then offers the corpse to the survivor, with the pious wish that now they will become reconciled and live on friendly terms for the future. The religion that is reconciled with science on these terms is simply committing suicide to save itself from slaughter.

Mr. Spencer cannot well be regarded as a humorist, or

one would imagine that in the sentence above quoted, as well as in such remarks as "Religion is distinguished from everything else in this, that its subject matter is that which passes the sphere of experience," or "Science has been obliged to abandon the attempt to include within the boundaries of knowledge that which cannot be known, and has so yielded up to religion that which of right belonged to it," he is simply poking fun at religion in general. The religious man will derive but small comfort from the perception that science must eventually monopolise the entire field of conduct and of knowledge, while religion is left to work in an unknowable region, to worship an unknowable object, and to cry, "Mystery, mystery—all is mystery," while its old enemy is steadily monopolising a larger and larger share of human attention.

There is doubtless some truth in Mr. Spencer's conclusion, although not in the direction he indicates. Religion always has preferred mystery to enlightenment, and depended for support far more upon man's ignorance than his knowledge; but to have this much gravely propounded as a theory that will reconcile religion and science is only one degree less startling than the fact that there are not wanting even ministers of religion who adopt it as a means of defence against modern scepticism.*

To my mind, Mr. Spencer's account of the function of religion, as given in *First Principles*, is hopelessly wrong; and, even were it right, its only purpose would be to rob religion of every shred of practical value. Religion, to be of service, must teach man something. Fundamentally, it must teach man his relation and duties towards the object of religious adoration. To do this it must possess some knowledge, however defective, of the object of its adoration; and, therefore, to admit that it is completely ignorant of the very thing it is its business to expound is for it to confess the hollowness of its claims and the uselessness of its existence.

Happily, the "Unknowable" does not constitute an essential part of Mr. Spencer's philosophy. His invaluable work in Biology, Psychology, Ethics, and Sociology is independent of it. But it has been eagerly seized by hard-pressed theologians to prop up a decaying system of ideas, and it therefore becomes urgently necessary to rightly estimate its value in the world of thought.

C. COHEN.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

THE injunction, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets," has been extolled as the very pith of Christian ethics. It has been emphatically denominated "the golden rule," and it has been supposed that nothing less than a divine revelation could have imparted to humanity the knowledge of so important a standard of conduct. This position, however, has been modified somewhat since evidence has been forthcoming that the rule is neither peculiar nor original to Christianity, but is found in authors anterior to the Christian era.

The sentiment of reciprocity in truth is one that is early developed in humanity. It springs from the notion of right evolved from the sense of special possession, and is even seen in animals, who find a *modus vivendi* in recognition of mutual rights. "The germ of conscience," it has been said, "lies in the struggle for existence having become aware of itself in the mind of a thinking person." When once a savage felt that it was wrong to take his life and the means whereby he lived, and saw the same feelings manifested by others, the transferring of the sense of wrong, and the contrasted sense of right, to others, would only be a work of time depending on the development of the reflective faculties and the social instincts by the ever constant action of natural selection weeding out the socially unfit.

No great mental effort would be needed for the savage, who feels it is wrong for another to deprive him of his property on a particular occasion, to infer that it is wrong

* Dean Farrar, for instance, says: "The revelation of God's light lies beyond the region of modern science." While Canon Curteis, in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*, adopts what he calls "Christian Agnosticism."

for anyone else, at any time, so to act. No doubt there was a difficulty in recognising the equivalence of duties by and to the self, for, as Schopenhauer says, pure egoism would kill a man for the fat wherewith to grease its own boots; but mutual dependence and tribal living in common unfailingly bring the sense of identity of interests. "Do not wrong me, and I will not wrong you; I do not hurt you, why do you hurt me?" are the natural and spontaneous utterances of the sense of right as seen alike in savages and children. The rule of reciprocity beginning among friends extends itself as relationships of interests are extended.

Unsocial instincts also develop on the line of reciprocity. The wild feeling of revenge for injury inflicted grows into a principle of returning a similar injury. The *lex talionis*, a life for a life, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," is the primitive rule. "Tit for tat" is the justice of the savage, and is not without its relics in the criminal codes of the civilised world.* Yet this is the germ of reciprocity, and "the golden rule."

Professor Max Müller has recently cited instances of this feeling directed towards the gods, from what is probably the oldest writing in the world, the Rig-Veda of the Hindus. In the notes to his translation of the "Hymns of the Marats," or "Storm Gods," he says:—

"I think it best to connect the fourth and fifth verses, and I feel justified in so doing, and by other passages where the same or a similar idea is expressed—viz., that if the god were the poet, and the poet the god, then the poet would be more liberal to the god than the god is to him. Thus I translated a passage (vii., 31, 18) in my *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 565: 'If I were lord of as much as thou, I should support the sacred bard, thou scatterer of wealth; I should not abandon him to misery, I should award wealth day by day to him who magnifies, I should award it to whosoever it be.' Another parallel passage is pointed out by Mr. J. Muir (on the interpretation of the Veda, p. 79, viii., 19-25): 'If Agni thou wert a mortal, and I were an immortal, I should not abandon thee to malediction or to wretchedness; my worshippers should not be miserable or distressed.' Still more to the point is another passage, viii., 44, 23: 'If I wert thou, and thou wert I, thy wishes should be fulfilled.'"

The Rev. J. Stevenson, in his translation of the Sama Veda (p. 276), puts the following in the mouth of the singer: "When I, O Indra, shall become a possessor of wealth like thee, then assuredly my singer of sacred hymns shall possess abundance of cows." In the *Odyssey*, Calypso tells Ulysses she acts as she would wish to be done to were her fate the same. Hesiod enjoins "To all a love for love return." Herodotus relates how, when Mæandrius yielded up the supreme power to the citizens of Samos, he said: "I shall certainly avoid doing that myself which I deem reprehensible in another." The same historian tells how, when the Spartans, who went to Xerxes as a voluntary atonement for their country, were asked by the Persian Hydarnes to enter the service of the king, they replied: "To you servitude is familiar; but how sweet a thing liberty is you have never known; if you had, you yourself would advise us to make all possible exertions to preserve it." So, in Xenophon's *Cyropædia*, Cyaxares says to Cyrus: "If I appear to you to think unreasonably in this, do not consider these things as in my case, but turn the tables and make the case your own." Diogenes Laertius relates of the Greek sage Thales that when asked how we might live virtuously, he replied: "If we never do ourselves what we blame in others." Isocrates, in one of his orations, tells the Athenians: "You err against the first principle of wisdom, condemning in others what you yourself pursue." In his admonition to Nicocles, Isocrates says: "Do not those things to other people which you dislike when others do." "Put yourself in my place," says Scipio to Hannibal, as recorded by Polybius. A similar idea occurs in the precepts of Buddha (*Dhammapada*, 159): "Let each man make himself as he teaches others to be." "All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death; remember that you are like unto them, and do not kill nor cause slaughter." Max Müller cites in a note to this

passage from the *Ramayana*, v., 23, 5: "Making oneself a likeness—i.e., putting oneself in the position of other people, it is right to love none but one's own wife." The sentiment is also found in the ancient Hindu book of fables and counsels, the *Hitopadesa*: "Good people show mercy unto all beings, considering how like they are to themselves."

Confucius, in China, distinctly enunciated the so-called golden rule. In Dr. Legge's translation of the *Confucian Analects* we read, p. 266: "Tsze-kung asked, saying, 'Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?' The master said: 'Is not *reciprocity* [in Chinese *chou*] such a word? What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others.'" In his article upon Confucius, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Dr. Legge—who, as a missionary, shows little disposition to accord bare justice to the Chinese sage—admits: "It has been said that he only gave the rule in its negative form, but he understood it also in its positive and most comprehensive force."

As reported by his grandson, Tsze-sze, in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (in Chinese *Chung-Yung*), chap. viii., sec. 3, Confucius taught that "when one cultivates to the utmost the principles of his nature, and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity, he is not far from the path." And again, in the *Ta Hio, or Great Learning*, chap. x., section 2: "What a man dislikes in his superiors let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors; what he dislikes in inferiors let him not display in the service of his superiors; what he hates in those who are before him let him not therewith precede those who are behind him; what he hates in those who are behind him let him not therewith follow those who are before him; what he hates to receive on the right let him not bestow on the left; what he hates to receive on the left let him not bestow on the right. This is what is called the *principle with which, as with a measuring square, to regulate one's conscience.*"

In his translation of the Chinese sage, Mencius, p. 327, Dr. Legge gives the following passage: "If one acts with a vigorous effort at the law of reciprocity when he seeks for the realisation of perfect virtue, nothing can be closer than his approximation to it"; and in a note on the word translated "reciprocity" he says it is "the judging of others by oneself, and acting accordingly." Pauthier translates the passage: "*Si on fait tous ses efforts pour agir envers les autres comme on voudrait les agir envers nous, rien ne fait plus approche de l'humanité que cette conduite.*"

The sentiment was not new to the Jews. The Book of Leviticus ordained: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Do that to no man which thou hatest" appears in the apocryphal book of Tobit (iv. 15). "Judge of thy neighbor by thyself," says Jesus, the son of Sirach (*Ecclesiasticus* xxxi. 15). Emanuel Deutsch says that the maxim, "Do unto others as thou wouldst be done by," was quoted by Hillel the President—at whose death Jesus was ten years of age—"not as anything now, but as an old and well-known dictum, 'that comprised the whole law'" (*Literary Remains*, p. 27). It is also found in Philo Judæus.

The wide spread of the sentiment, of which we could give further evidence, doubtless shows that it has been an important factor in the evolution of morals. As a sort of ready, general guide to conduct, it has contributed towards the repression of actions which, being noxious to the individual, are at the same time hurtful to society, and it has tended to encourage actions promoting the welfare of both. But we deny that it is an infallible criterion of morals. It does not, indeed, appear to us a golden rule at all, but at the best only silver-gilt. Its essential principle does not ring true. It appeals primarily to self-interest, and assumes that what one wishes to be done to oneself is right. But it is not true that we wish for ourselves what would be best for the general welfare. The Christian who molests the last hours of a Freethinker excuses himself on the plea that he is doing as he would be done by. He would like his mind directed to thoughts of God and heaven in his last moments. Perhaps the strongest instance of the exhibition of the golden rule is to be found among those numerous savage tribes who, when they have a visitor, offer him a wife or sister by way of hospitality. If the formula is supposed to mean, "Do unto others as ye would they should do, providing it is right," this is at once conceding it to be useless; since, if the person already knows what is right to do, the rule is superfluous. If he does not know, the rule supplies no adequate criterion.

* Mr. Komble (*The Saxons in England*, vol. i., p. 263) points out that the right of retaliation lies at the root of all Teutonic legislation, and that it is especially recognised by early English law, which "admits as its most general term that each freeman is at liberty to defend himself, his family, and his friends; to avenge all wrongs done to them, as to himself shall seem good; to sink, burn, kill, and destroy, as amply as a royal commission now authorises the same in a professional class, the recognised executors of the national will in that behalf."

My child wishes ice cream. In its place I should desire the same. Must I, then, supply it? Evidently to decide so simple a question other considerations must be imported. A man can no more be sure of doing the right thing simply by putting himself in another man's place than he can learn to box by sparring at himself in the looking-glass. It may sometimes give a useful hint as to what he must not do, but it will not help him much as to what he should actually do. Brown, who is fond of a drink, stands Robinson a glass because he would like one himself. Jones, a teetotaller, persuades Robinson not to drink because he would wish to be deterred in the like circumstances. Smith, doing as he would be done by, gives Jones, who is hard up, a sovereign, which perhaps he spends foolishly; Robinson, who likes hard work, gives him a stiff job for which he is perhaps unfit, and Brown gives him brandy, which perhaps kills him. Yet each acts on the golden rule. The principle enunciated by Kant is evidently safer. Only those maxims must be adopted as ruling motives which are susceptible of being made universal. But the golden rule, so far from affording a universal law, varies in its application according to the subjective idiosyncrasies of each person. It may suffice to deter from evident wrong and injury, but in the minutiae of conduct, which, after all, make up the important affairs of life, if weighed in the balance it is often found wanting.

OMAR, THE ASTRONOMER-POET OF PERSIA.

THERE was born in Persia, in the latter half of the eleventh century, a certain Omar. He was a great man among the Persians, famous for learning—especially astronomy—and poetry and Freethought. He was one of the eight men who reformed the Calendar; he was the author of astronomical tables, and of a treatise on the extraction of cubic roots, and another on algebra, and of sundry poems. His poems consist simply of quatrains, little epigrams of four lines apiece, arranged in alphabetical order, and to read them in the original must be as festive as reading through a dictionary. Their subjects are praise of love and wine, and speculations in religion. That is practically what all Persian poetry is.

Omar was an Epicurean. The way he enforces his Epicureanism is, of course, by praising wine; for he is a Persian and a Mohammedan, to whom wine is forbidden by his religion, thus having the double advantage of being naughty as well as nice. Wine with Omar is a type of the enjoyment of the world in general. This old Persian poet remained more or less forgotten for some eight centuries. Maybe because of his infidelity and his alphabetical arrangement, and his having written in Persian. Then his writings fell into the hands of one Edward Fitzgerald, who, says Swinburne, has made Omar one of the greatest of English poets. Fitzgerald began studying Persian in 1853. He presently began turning odd stanzas of Omar's into English, and soon he strung them together into a golden chain. Fitzgerald himself was a Freethinker, and he boldly adopted the principle that what is wanted in a translation is to give people, who do not know the original, an idea of the effect it produces on people who do.

Fitzgerald's version of Omar has been before the world about forty years, but it is not popular. At least, there is no reasonably cheap edition of his to be had. Some translations are finer than the originals. Witness the New Testament written in "canine" Greek and rendered into divine English. What a translation of Omar was Fitzgerald's! "A planet larger than the sun which cast it," said his friend Tennyson. The magnificent opening is pure, unadulterated Fitzgerald. In one of the later quatrains, by the addition of two words, Fitzgerald has turned a commonplace idea into the most fearful indictment ever uttered by man against his Maker:—

O Thou, who man of baser Earth didst make,
And even with Paradise devise the snake,
For all the sin wherewith the face of man
Is blackened, man's forgiveness give—*and take!*

In particular, Omar voices Materialism in his rebellion against orthodoxy:—

Oh, threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—*This* life flies.
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown for ever dies.

Such lines as the following haunt the memory of the reader:—

They say the lion and the lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;
And Bahram, that great hunter, the wild ass
Stamps o'er his head, but cannot break his sleep.

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every hyacinth the garden wears
Dropt in her lap from some once lovely head.

And this reviving herb, whose tender green
Hedges the river lip on which we lean;
Ah! lean upon it lightly, for who knows
From what once lovely lip it springs unseen!

Ah, my beloved, fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regret and future fears.
To-morrow! Why, to-morrow I may be
Myself with yesterday's seven thousand years.

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his vintage rolling time hath prest,
Have drunk their cup a round or two before,
And, one by one, crept silently to rest.

Lamentation, just as in Æschylus or Marcus Aurelius, or even the book of Job, is apparent in his poem:—

Yet, ah! that spring should vanish with the rose,
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close;
The nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah, whence and whither flown again—who knows?

But the nightingales of Fitzgerald will live, and shall sing to generations yet unborn when we have all "crept silently to rest."

ACID DROPS.

THE tropical heat has abated but little up to the time of our going to press. Many persons have collapsed in the streets of London, some of them dying; but matters have been much worse in New York, where several people went raving mad, and nearly fifty deaths were recorded daily. How, in the name of wonder, will these unfortunates stand the heat in the other place? Most of them, presumably, have jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire.

Mohammedam and Christian have been exchanging the usual civilities with each other at Candia. Hundreds of Christians were massacred, and the Christians were only prevented from retaliating by the presence of the European battleships. How religion makes men love each other! Cats and dogs live together better than men of different creeds.

Had the Khalifa remained in Omdurman and compelled the Sirdar to shell and storm the city, the British and Egyptian losses would have been much heavier. It appears that he was led to his doom by a prophecy of the Mahdi that the English would advance to Korreri, where they would be defeated. This spot came to be known as the deathfield of the infidels. The Khalifa went there to fight, and found it the deathfield of the true believers. So much for trusting to prophets instead of generals in time of war.

The assassin of the Empress of Austria must be mad. No doubt he calls himself an Anarchist, but madmen have often a taste for *outré* labels. There are moral lunatics as well as intellectual lunatics, and this assassin is one of them; and that's all there's in it, as the Americans say.

The poor Emperor of Austria, who has been badly hit so often, speaks of the "inscrutable decree of Providence" which permitted this last blow to fall upon him. Of course it sounds strange to Rationalists, but it is the appropriate language of a sincere Christian. Even the great Hungarian novelist, Maurus Jokai, remarks that the good Empress was "not protected from above." True, and who is? Whenever does "Providence" or "the One above" foil the efforts of madmen or criminals? A lady passes by, a criminal lunatic rushes out and stabs her with a file, and in a few minutes she is a corpse, while he is chuckling over the success of his monstrous enterprise. And all the time the great detective of the skies looked down and winked. Bah! The doctrine is too absurd for refutation.

The captive King of Benin has now, it seems, become a Presbyterian, and regularly attends the Mission established near his house at Old Calabar by the United Presbyterian body. As his only knowledge, so far, of the English language extends to "Hello" and "Good-bye," there must have been a great deal of interpreting going on. The Old Testament, with its code of sacrifices and records of bloody cruelties,

has probably presented no difficulties to his Majesty's mind. And he has, no doubt, readily understood the divinely-ordered crucifixion on Calvary. But one would have thought that he would have more readily become a Roman Catholic. The doctrine of transubstantiation—eating the body, and drinking the blood, of Christ—would have been very much to his taste. He is still allowed two or three wives.

The vicar of All Saints' Church, Marstham, Surrey, announces that, failing a much-needed cloak-room, he has decided to utilise the porches, and to fix wardrobe hooks on them. He says: "Wet mackintoshes and damp cloaks do not conduce to worship." There seems to be a taint of heresy in this objection to humidity. Christenings, baptism by total immersion, and holy water have always seemed to us to be special features of the Christian faith. Perhaps the distaste, in this instance, arises from the fact that the clergy have had no hand in sanctifying the water. Yet even common or garden rain is sent by the Lord, as we may learn from the Book of Common Prayer, according to the forms of which we pray when he sends us too much, and we pray when he sends us too little. Thus we regulate the Divine Waterworks according to our needs.

The Rev. William Davies, vicar of Llanllawddog, in Carmarthenshire, has committed suicide by hanging himself in a store-room above his coach-house. There is no particular moral. We only mention it as an illustration of Talmage's theory that most suicides are Atheists.

The Archbishop of Canterbury said recently in that city that "he had no doubt there were inaccuracies in the Old Testament narratives, though the writers told the truth, as far as they knew it." This statement was deemed "astounding" by the editor of an evangelical paper called the *King's Own*, who accordingly wrote asking the Archbishop whether he had actually made it. The Primate, through his chaplain, replied as follows: "His Grace did make the statement to which you refer, and he thinks it; and for an instance he would refer you to 2 Samuel xxiv. 13 and 1 Chronicle xxi. 12." In the first of these passages a threatened famine in the time of David is spoken of as "seven years," and in the second as "three years." Of course it is a flat contradiction, though it is only one of hundreds in the Bible.

Now come the "harmonisers," and as they work separately they make a pretty mess of it. One who signs himself "W." writes to the *Westminster Gazette* that the Archbishop has found "a very old chestnut"—as though that made it any better. "Every tyro in Bible study," he says, "knows that De Wette, many years ago, indicated that the Hebrew for three had been mistaken for seven." But the orthodox De Wette was not inspired; that was only his opinion, and it has not been accepted by the editors of the Revised Version.

The second "harmoniser" writes to the same paper as a "Country Parson." According to this gentleman there is no discrepancy at all. The writer in Samuel refers to seven years of famine, and the writer in Chronicles to three years, and the latter was part of the same famine, only the four years that had elapsed were not mentioned! No doubt the Archbishop will find this very convincing. It recalls the old story of the lushington who was accosted by an acquaintance in this fashion: "Why, you were drunk when I saw you a week ago, and here you are drunk again." Where to the lushington replied: "I'm not drunk again; it's the same drunk."

The "Holy Land" is being transmogrified. All the romance is being fast swept out of it by railways, hotels, and other western devices. You can take a ticket at Jerusalem for Jericho, or a steamboat at Jericho for the Dead Sea. Not so much as Lot's wife, turned into rock salt, is left to testify that wonders were once done in the land.

We are continually being reminded that this is a Christian country. One cannot go into any hotel or boarding-house without finding that beautiful text framed, and hanging in a conspicuous position: "The proprietor is not responsible for any articles left in the bedrooms."

Two other members of the Peculiar People, this time at Southend, have been committed for trial on the charge of manslaughter. Ruby Gladys Feltham, aged eight weeks, died of diarrhoea, without medical assistance, and the coroner's jury returned a verdict against both parents. Robert Feltham, the father, on being questioned, said: "I do not wish to argue. We put our trust in God." That is the proper attitude for all sincere Christians, but sincerity is so rare that it is called "peculiar."

John Kensit has been lecturing at Glasgow on Idolatry

in the Church of England. He did not, however, according to expectation, have it all his own way. One clergyman in the audience got up and protested against John Kensit's language, and several other persons withdrew. This is said to have surprised him, and he asks dolefully, "Stands Scotland where it did?"

Henry Spicer, one of "General" Booth's young men, went singing for the Lord outside the "Barley Mow" public-house, Ranelagh-road, Pimlico. He was asked to go away—nearer heaven or nearer the other place, it didn't matter which—but he wouldn't budge, and the landlord brought him before Magistrate Shiel. He was asked whether he would undertake not to go there again, but he declined "on principle" to give such an undertaking. "Then as a matter of principle," the magistrate said, "you will have to pay forty shillings and two shillings costs, or one month." Failing to pay up, he was removed to the cells, leaving behind him a number of Salvationists to bewail his fate. One of the "soldiers" broke down and wept like a child. Fancy a month's imprisonment! It is enough to make a hero snivel—at least, a Salvation hero.

The Rev. C. Pierrepont Edwards, of the Borough, London, is known as "the fighting parson." He may not be as eloquent as a Jeremy Taylor, but he is readier with his fists, and has often used them in helping the police—with whom, by the way, his master, Jesus Christ, was not apparently on good terms. This fighting parson has been preferred to the vicarage of West Mersey, Colchester, where he will perhaps find a sturdier lot of opponents. Before leaving the Borough, however, he was presented by the police with a solid silver tea and coffee service, "as a token of their appreciation of the help he has rendered them during the four years he has been curate of St. Savior's." Mr. Edwards regards himself as a "real good" Christian; but just fancy Jesus Christ putting up his "dukes"! This gentleman and Count Tolstoi ought to hold a public discussion; and if they never left off until they settled the matter it would be the longest debate on record.

In some new American churches small rooms are attached known as "babies' corners," where mothers may leave their children while attending service. This is a new interpretation of the injunction, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God." If all the (intellectual) babies who go to church were dropped in these corners, what a surprising diminution would take place in the bulk of the congregations!

During a service in the Congregational Church, Maritzburg, a bullet crashed through one of the windows, and killed a worshipper engaged in prayer. It is believed that the shot must have been fired from one of the surrounding hills, a distance of over 5,000 yards. Another instance of the saving power of prayer.

We wonder whether the Rev. Arthur Robins, chaplain to the Queen and to the Household Troops at Windsor, is descended from Robins the famous flowery auctioneer. This is how the reverend gentleman burst forth from the pulpit on Sunday morning: "The God of battle and of Gordon gave the victory to those who, thirteen years ago and more, took an oath before the God of heaven that, for each drop of Gordon's blood that had been shed, there should be rivers in requital of the blood of them who slew him. Gordon was avenged when in Khartoum the flag of England floated where the butchers of the Mahdi marked him down."

No doubt the Rev. Arthur Robins thinks himself a very good Christian, and perhaps he is. Gordon's sister, however, says that her brother would not have approved such sentiments. "What he wanted," she says, "was help at the time, not vengeance after." After all, it seems to us that the men who killed Gordon had as much right at Khartoum as he had. It was much nearer their residence than his.

Sir William Crookes's presidential address to the British Association was alarming from one point of view, and reassuring from another. The using up of nitrogen on this planet threatened our future food supplies, he said; though this is far from obvious, and is flatly denied by other specialists. On the other hand, he declared that the universe was at bottom spiritual, not material. Sir William felt the truth of this, and said that science was on the way to prove it. But prophecy is always a risky business, and Sir William Crookes may be no better at it than his less scientific fellow-citizens.

Bishop Brown seized upon President Crookes's address as a good opportunity for putting in a plea for that "wonder-worker," Jesus Christ. Preaching in the Cathedral to a congregation which, of course, was not allowed to raise a question, or debate, Dr. Brown remarked that, according to Sir William's address, the men of the future might have to make artificial bread. Now that was what Jesus Christ

did, and his action was a prophecy of what man would be able to do by discovering the secrets of nature. Bishop Brown may be sufficiently ignorant or idiotic to imagine that he was talking sense; but, as a matter of fact, the multiplication of loaves and fishes in the Gospel was not a chemical process at all. Man will never be able to produce loaves of bread by simply saying "Let them be." Really it would be well to have a great brewer and distiller as next year's President of the British Association. Bishop Brown would then be able to preach on the miracle at Cana in Galilee, and to explain that Jesus Christ had an apparatus in the backyard, by which he turned water into wine without violating the laws of nature. In other words, he will show the world that Jesus Christ was not God the Son, but one of Mrs. Besant's "Mahatmas."

A correspondent asked us recently whether we had seen Mr. Reader Harris's little book entitled *The Case Against Atheism*. We replied that we had not seen this volume, but we had seen some of his outpourings in evangelical papers, and thought them almost imbecile. We now see that the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* pretty nearly shares our estimate of this gentleman. In a review of his book it gives him credit for good intentions—which, by the way, Flaubert grimly said was every fool's excuse—but denies that he possesses the necessary equipment to wage war against Atheism. Our contemporary does not say so plainly, but any sagacious reader can see that it regards Mr. Reader Harris as a great fool.

The *Glasgow Herald* is still more severe on Mr. Reader Harris. "We have seldom," it says, "read feebler apologetic lectures than these. Their chief characteristic is a shallow dogmatism that often verges on actual ignorance." Mr. Harris is a perfectionist, and his faith saves him from all sin; but the *Herald* says it doesn't save him from errors and misrepresentations.

Archdeacon Wilson's sermon on Christianity and War—a fruitful theme which he by no means exhausted—is reported at length in the *Rochdale Observer*. "The sword was placed in our hands," he said, "for use, and we ought to use it"—not against our fellow-Christians, of course, but against Turks and heathen whose "sense of humanity was on a lower plane than ours," and who could only be taught by brute force. Every now and then it would be necessary to slaughter these people, children of "Our Father" though they were. Christian nations, however, should dwell together in peace. Jesus Christ meant them to. The world was progressive, and to deny it "was, in fact, sheer atheism." Indeed, Mr. Archdeacon! Pray stop there, and let us have a word together. It is precisely the Atheist who has preached the doctrine of natural progress, and it is precisely your Church which has denied it and preached the inherent wickedness and helplessness of man. Yet you turn round now and declare that your doctrine belongs to the Atheist, and that his doctrine belongs to you; which only shows, though, what parsons will do rather than lose their livings. Sooner than face the abomination of desolation, in the shape of having to earn an honest living in the ordinary labor market, they would argue, and if necessary swear, that white is black, and black white, and blue no color at all.

The Belper Board of Guardians has had a stormy sitting over the admission of certain "nuns" as visitors to the Workhouse. It was contended that they really carried on a subtle system of proselytising amongst the inmates. The Church party was worsted in the voting.

What humbugs are these soul-savers, devil-dodgers, and gospel-grinders! They have had small-pox at Middlesborough. Everybody with a tincture of science knows that this is a disease of dirt, springing from unsanitary conditions. It can only be fought by science; not the quack science of vaccination, but the true science of good drainage, clean homes, and ample breathing spaces. When small-pox fastens on a place the medical authorities wake up, and by and by they drive it out. They have done this at Middlesborough. And now that the town is clear out crawl the clerical impostors, crying: "We did it! We did it!" We have a handbill before us emanating from All Saints' Church, and announcing a "Thanksgiving Service for the Removal of the Plague of Small-Pox," and this is how the thing opens: "For many weary months we prayed at all our services for the removal of the terrible plague of small-pox, with which it had pleased God to afflict this town. It has now pleased God to hear our prayer, and the plague has ceased." The pious charlatans who issue this handbill know they are talking lies and nonsense, but they also know that there are plenty of fools in Middlesborough who can easily be imposed upon.

The Rev. C. J. Finch, vicar of St. Peter's, Hoxton, has a young daughter, who was walking in the garden with her brother the other night, she being dressed in white while

he was carrying a bicycle lamp. A child in the road cried out "There's a ghost," and, although the vicar has explained the matter, hundreds of people gather every night to see the apparition. Well, if that happens in London at the end of the nineteenth century, what trouble could it have been to persuade a handful of people in Jerusalem, nearly two thousand years ago, that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead?

"Dean Farrar and the Scriptures" is the heading of a paragraph that is going the round of the newspapers. It runs as follows: "A correspondent called the attention of Dean Farrar to the fact that Atheistic lecturers are in the habit of affirming that he does not believe in the Bible (referring to his works as a confirmation of the statement), and observed that, if such a grave assertion were allowed to be propagated without contradiction, the young and the ignorant might be deceived by it. The Dean, who is at present staying in Yorkshire, replied as follows: "The statement to which you refer is ignorant nonsense. The doctrine of the Church of England about Holy Scripture is stated in her Sixth and Seventh Articles, and that doctrine I most heartily accept."

This paragraph looks inspired; perhaps it is circulated by Dean Farrar himself. Not only "Atheistic lecturers," but ardent Christians, like Father Ignatius, have declared that Dean Farrar "does not believe in the Bible" in the ordinary sense of the words. It is highly necessary, therefore, that he should say something to clear himself; and what he does say is characteristic of the man. The Sixth and Seventh Articles of the Church of England do not state the full Christian belief as to the Bible, but only the Protestant belief as against that of the Church of Rome. They emphasize two points, and two points only; first, that the Scriptures contain all that is necessary to salvation, so that no man is at the Pope's mercy for a seat in heaven; secondly, that fourteen books of the Roman Catholic Bible are apocryphal, and cannot be used to establish any doctrine. The general Christian view of the Bible, common to Catholics and Protestants, is taken for granted, as it had not then been brought into controversy. Dean Farrar must be well aware of these facts, and his new profession of faith strikes us as a very paltry evasion.

There is one word in the Sixth Article, however, to which we beg to draw Dean Farrar's special attention. The last clause explains what is meant by the expression, "Holy Scripture," and is as follows:—"In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." Now, unless Dean Farrar means to juggle with the word "authority," it is idle for him to say that he believes in the Bible according to these terms. He does not believe in the "authority" of Jonah; on the contrary, he believes that Jonah did not write it, and that it is not history, but romance, from beginning to end. If this is believing in the Bible, then Atheistic lecturers believe in it as well as Dean Farrar, and thus he finds himself on the same platform with them at the finish.

What asses some of the magistrates are making of themselves over the "conscientious objection" clause of the new Vaccination Act. One says to an applicant: "You know I have to satisfy myself that yours is a conscientious objection, and I must take time to consider." Another says: "It must be a conscientious objection, and some people have no consciences." And so they go on doddering; trying to be very smart and subtle, but being foolish, not to say impudent, all the time. Any man of common intelligence could easily see that a father wouldn't move in such a matter at all unless he had a conscientious objection. Is it likely that he would lose time, take a lot of trouble, and run the risk of being publicly insulted, merely for the fun of the thing?

Colonel W. H. Champion, chairman at the Haywards Heath Petty Sessions, got up on his hind legs in the police-court, and offered a prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty for "the great and glorious victory in the Soudan." At that very moment ten thousand of the Dervish army lay dead, and five thousand wounded were bleeding to death without medical assistance on the parching sand under the broiling sun. What a sweet thing to thank God for! And what a lovely thing religion is when you probe it to the bottom!

How these Army men in France are striving to prevent a revision of the Dreyfus case! After all that has happened recently their conduct is positively insane. They appear to be backed up by President Faure, who does not seem to have any idea of the duties of his post beyond figuring at military reviews and state functions, or exchanging fulsome telegrams with the Autocrat of all the Russias. It is quite certain, however, that revision must come. The civil element in the Ministry will have to break from the military element, and if M. Faure comes to grief in the hubbub we shall regard it as a just nemesis.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 18, Bristol-street Board School, Birmingham; 11, "War Within the Church"; 3, "The Czar's Appeal to Europe"; 7, "The Meaning of Death."
September 25, Liverpool.
October 2, Glasgow; 9, Leicester; 16 and 23, Athenæum Hall.
November 6, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—September 18 and 25, Athenæum Hall, London. October 2, New Brompton. November 20, Sheffield; 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.

C. BAKER.—Will look into it, if possible, for next week.

E. R. WOODWARD.—We quite agree with you in a general way. But when a Christian rowdy tries to break-up Freethought meetings, and vents the most filthy libels against Freethought advocates, it is not malice, but mere common sense, to tell the public the truth about him. If a man commits a crime, pays the penalty, and then behaves decently, it would be cruel to rake up the past. Don't you see the distinction?

J. G. DOBSON joins the Secular Society, Limited, and hopes "its effect will soon be felt from one end of the country to the other."

WIGAN Freethinkers are requested to note that a meeting will be held to-day (Sept. 18) at the Bull's Head Hotel, for the purpose of reorganisation and renewed propaganda.

T. ROBERTSON.—Received with thanks. Subjects forwarded.

A. B. MOSS.—Glad to hear you had such good meetings on Sunday. We have not seen the *South London Mail*, which you say is full of abuse again. No one thought of sending us a copy.

P. THWAITES.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—Per Miss Vance:—S. J. W., 2s. 6d.; D. C., 2s. 6d. Per R. Forder:—R. Gibbon, 5s.; R. Davison, £1; A Few Rangoon Sinners, 10s.; W. M., 5s.—A. R. B., 1s.; H. Good, 5s.

MISS VANCE has received for the Truelove Fund: D. C., 2s. 6d.

S. J. W. sends 2s. 6d. to our Circulation Fund, and "hopes 1,000 others are sending 2s. 6d. each by the same post." He also sends "congratulations on the very successful Demonstration in Hyde Park."

H. HUNTER.—Yes, we heard that Mr. Heaford, assisted by Mr. Edwards, kept the meeting going in Hyde Park when the Demonstration was over. Our movement is evidently respected in that quarter.

C. HARWOOD.—We believe Mr. Engström when he says that he abhors personalities, but we also believe you when you say that you have listened to very vile personalities from several of the Christian Evidence Society's speakers.

N. S. S. CHILDREN'S EXCURSION.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Collected at Mr. Foote's lecture, 10s. 6d.; Captain Cross, 10s.; C. Bowman, 2s.; A Friend, 2s. 6d.; W. Davy, 1s.; G. Bowers, 1s.; D. C., 2s. 6d.

R. CHAPMAN.—Sorry to hear that no hall is available for lectures by Mr. Foote at South Shields. You are worse off now than you were ten years ago, if this is really true. Are you quite sure?

G. BERRY.—Mr. Foote will gladly pay Stockton a visit when he comes north, which he is trying to arrange to do this side of Christmas.

J. N. LEEDS.—Perhaps the magistrate, Mr. D'Eyncourt, is a Roman Catholic himself. His remarks seem to justify that conclusion. But the people of London are not going to ask him whether they shall oppose the Roman superstition or not.

W. P. BALL.—Sincere thanks for your valued weekly batch of cuttings.

A. MILLER.—We do not remember the incident you refer to. Glad to hear you derive so much enjoyment from reading the *Freethinker*. Thanks for the cuttings.

H. E. S.—Mr. Voysoy's religious views have more than once been criticised in our columns. We never had a very high opinion of his abilities, and we do not know that we are called upon to be always opposing his comparatively harmless form of superstition. The other matters you raise do not concern us—at least not primarily. If you are anxious about them, you should write to Mrs. Bonner.

H. GOOD, subscribing to our Circulation Fund, says he would be very pleased if the *Freethinker* found its way into a much wider circle of readers. "I have taken it," he adds, "ever since it started, and always enjoy reading it. May it live and flourish!"

WELL-WISHER (Newcastle).—Thanks for the cuttings, etc., which we shall use in our next issue, not having room this week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Daily Mail—Ethical World—Free Society—Open Court—New York Truthseeker—Isle of Man Times—Progressive Thinker—Sydney Bulletin—People's Newspaper—New Century—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—Public Opinion—Liberator—Crescent—Bristol Evening News—Eagle and the Serpent—Torch of Reason—Birmingham Daily Gazette—Lucifer—English Mechanic—Rochdale Observer—Two Worlds—Derbyshire Times—Malthusian—Boston Investigator.

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.

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

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

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.

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.

SPECIAL.**ANOTHER SHILLING WEEK.**

READERS of the *Freethinker* during the last seven or eight years will probably recollect that I have made several special appeals for various objects in connection with the work of the National Secular Society. A certain week has been fixed upon as "Shilling Week." During that time my readers have been invited to send me a subscription of one shilling or any number of shillings. Well, I am now going to make an appeal of this kind on behalf of the *Freethinker* itself. Friends are sending me some contributions every week towards the Circulation Fund, but the pace is very slow, and driblets during a long period will not serve the purpose as well as a reasonable sum at once. Consequently I have decided to make another "Shilling Week" of the first week in October. During that week I invite my readers to get a postal order for one shilling, or for several shillings if they can afford it, and to forward the same to me before October 8. Of course I have no objection to cheques. But I am anxious that the mass of the party should do something. If they all act together on this occasion, they will never miss what they give, and they will enable me to push the circulation of this journal, which is the right arm of all my work for Secularism, and, I venture to think, of very considerable importance to the whole party.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE is announced to deliver three lectures to-day (September 18) at Birmingham. The subjects should prove attractive, and it is to be hoped that the weather will not cause a necessity for an inquest on the lecturer.

In spite of the hot weather, a good audience assembled at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Good without God." Mr. Watts occupied the chair, and Mr. Heaford a seat on the platform. The lecture was much applauded.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures this evening, Sunday, Sept. 18, at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham-court-road. He takes for his subject "Atheism and Agnosticism: Their Value and Relation to Each Other." Mr. Watts's views upon these questions have recently caused considerable comment, and he will be glad, therefore, for his opponents to attend the Athenæum this evening, when the subject can be debated.

Mr. C. Cohen goes on a lecturing tour through the south of Scotland, the north of England, and the Midlands during October. All the Sundays are booked already, but Mr. Cohen is open to deliver week-night lectures, and Branches, etc., that wish to engage his services should communicate with him as soon as possible. It is to be hoped that he will not be allowed to have many idle evenings. Mr. Cohen's new address is 17 Osborne-road, Leyton.

Mr. Forder writes:—"On Sunday, September 4, being at Yarmouth, I agreed to give an open-air lecture on Freethought in that Sabbatarian watering-place, the first for

many years. Consulting our good friend Headley on the Saturday as to the probability of a row, he assured me the stalwarts would see to my safety. A written placard in his window was the only public announcement, but it brought a big crowd. Mr. Headley was not only an excellent chairman, but a good speaker, and I should imagine from his twenty minutes' address that he has the capacity for lecturing. The audience was a very large one, and I found after the lecture that friends were present from Nottingham, Leicester, Kettering, and other places. I have promised to go again, but the hope of the friends there is that Mr. Foote will soon pay them a visit."

The first of the Sunday Freethought Demonstrations was to have been held in Hyde Park early in August, but had to be given up in consequence of the rain. An extra Demonstration was therefore arranged for last Sunday afternoon. Mr. Harry Snell acted as chairman, and opened the proceedings with an effective speech. Further addresses were delivered by Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Heaford, who were all in good form, and heartily applauded. There must have been three thousand people around the platform, and a more intelligent and appreciative audience could not be desired. Not an interruption, not a shadow of disorder, from beginning to end. This ends the Freethought Demonstrations for the present. The places visited have been Clerkenwell Green, Regent's Park, Finsbury Park, Victoria Park, Peckham Rye, and Hyde Park. A big crowd gathered at each place, and the Gospel of Freethought has been preached to many thousands, who listened to it out of doors when nothing would tempt them inside a hall. The weather has been remarkably hot, and the speakers will be glad of a seasonable winter to cool off in, so as to get ready for more Demonstrations next year.

Mr. Foote took the full responsibility for these Demonstrations, though Miss Vance made the detailed arrangements for him, and Mr. Wilson kindly supplied a brake and a pair of horses for each meeting. Collections could not be made in Hyde Park or in Regent's Park. The other collections, taken up and retained by Miss Vance, have had to be supplemented out of Mr. Foote's own pocket. He has thus taken nothing for his own services, and substantially helped to meet the expenses, which are reckoned on the lowest possible scale. This is one of the perquisites of the N. S. S. presidency.

The Children's Excursion was a great success. Nature was kind, and gave a comparatively cool day. The sun shone gloriously, but its heat was tempered by a refreshing breeze. Five big brakes were crammed with children, and a few adults to see that the youngsters got safe and sound to the journey's end. We haven't heard of any missing, so we suppose they all got home again; though we hear that a Sunday-school party that way, some years ago, lost no less than eighteen juveniles. Mr. Watts has written on this Excursion in another column, so we need not dilate upon it here. All we want to say is that Miss Vance, 376-7 Strand, London, W.C., is anxious to receive further subscriptions, in order that she may clear off the balance of expenses immediately.

The New York *Truthseeker* celebrates its twenty-fifth birthday. The issue for September 3 contains portraits of D. M. Bennett (who founded the paper and his wife, of E. M. Macdonald, the present editor, and his brother George, and of Heston, the *Truthseeker* artist. Colonel Ingersoll contributes "A Look Backward and a Prophecy," which we reproduce for English readers, and George Macdonald chats agreeably about the younger days of himself and "Gene." There are also contributions by J. E. Remsburg and Lucy N. Coleman. We congratulate our American contemporary on having lived so long. It is not exactly easy to keep a Freethought paper going. They tell a story of an old French gentleman who, after the Revolution, was asked what he had done in it. "I have lived," he replied. That was something, anyhow. And the *Truthseeker* has lived, and promises to keep on doing so, with credit to its conductors and advantage to Freethought.

Mr. Brabrook, delivering the presidential address in the Anthropological Section of the British Association at Bristol, spoke as follows: "When my friend Mr. Clodd shocked some of the members of the Folk-lore Society by his frank statement of conclusions at which he had arrived, it was said we must fall back on the evidences of Christianity. What more cogent evidence of Christianity can you have than its existence? It stands to-day as the religion which, in most civilised countries, represents that which has been found by the operation of natural laws to be best suited for the present circumstances of mankind. You are a Christian because you cannot help it. Turn Mohammedan to-morrow—will you stop the spread of Christianity? Your individual renunciation of Christianity will be but a ripple on a wave. Civilised mankind holds to Christianity,

and cannot but do so till it can find something better. This, it seems to me, is a stronger evidence of Christianity than any of the loose-jointed arguments I find in evidential literature. Meanwhile, I cannot for a moment assent to the theory that Christianity or any other religion is unchangeable. It would be like nothing else in all God's universe if it were. Those who say it is know better. They would not do in its name what Christians did in that name three centuries ago. If they wished to do so, as perhaps some of them do, they would know full well that even so short a space in the world's history as three hundred years has placed it out of their power. Upon this thorny subject I will say no more."

A PLEASANT DAY.

Those who delude themselves that Secularists and Freethinkers lack the secret of real happiness should have witnessed the National Secular Society's Children's Excursion on Saturday, September 10. They would then have seen that, whatever doubts Secularists may entertain as to the alleged joys of some future state, they have a keen sense of the true pleasures of the present existence. To me it is one of the highest enjoyments of life to see children spending a day in the health-inspiring country air, where the charms and beauties of nature are not marred by the exigencies of our so-called modern civilisation. If I possessed means, a large portion should be devoted towards enabling children to indulge more than they do at present in rational recreation. It is the sunshine of their lives, and it endears them to those to whom they are indebted for their pleasurable gratifications.

The National Secular Society has always been impressed with this fact, but unfortunately its lack of finance prevented the carrying out of that which the Executive recognises as most pleasing and desirable work. Still, through the benevolence of many friends who subscribed to the Excursion Fund, the officers of the N. S. S. were last week enabled to take 150 children to Pinner, and to provide them with all that was necessary for their comfort. About eleven o'clock five brakes started filled with happy faces. The day was an ideal one, not too hot, and the scenery through which we passed was really delightful. Among those who accompanied the excursion were Mr. and Mrs. Foote, with their four children, Mr. and Mrs. Cohen, Mr. and Mrs. Seisemann, Miss Annie Brown, Mrs. Henderson, and Messrs. Harry Brown, Quay, Loafer, and Leat. Of course, Miss Vance was well to the front. All the above-named were most indefatigable in their efforts to make the children have "a good time." On arriving at Pinner ample provisions were at hand to satisfy the appetites of the little ones. Various games were arranged in a spacious field, while swings and donkey riding were well patronised. Mr. Foote did his share in conducting the running matches, and was assisted by Messrs. Cohen, Quay, Leat, Loafer, H. Brown, and many ladies. Miss Brown devoted most of her time in superintending the swings and donkey riding, and Miss Vance did "much in everything." In the afternoon many parents and friends came down, Mr. Heaford being among the number. At six o'clock preparations for the home journey commenced, and before ten o'clock the party reached London with happy recollections of a well-spent day.

I joined the "happy family" in the morning at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham-court-road, and I am bound to say that the remembrance of the day's pleasure will have an abiding place in the storehouse of my memory.

CHARLES WATTS.

WHEELER MEMORIAL FUND.

Per R. Forder:—H. Croughan, 2s. 6d.; W. M., 5s.; Mr. Moses, 6s.

Per Miss Vance:—D. C., 2s. 6d.

How to Help Us.

- (1) Get 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-shoots, 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.

A LOOK BACKWARD AND A PROPHECY.

THE STEADY GAIN OF SCIENCE, FREETHOUGHT, AND REASON.

I CONGRATULATE the *Truthseeker* on its twenty-fifth birthday. It has fought a good fight. It has always been at the front. It has carried the flag, and its flag is a torch that sheds light.

Twenty-five years ago the people of this country, for the most part, were quite orthodox. The great "fundamental" falsehoods of Christianity were generally accepted. Those who were not Christians, as a rule, admitted that they ought to be; that they ought to repent and join the Church, and this they generally intended to do.

The ministers had few doubts. The most of them had been educated, not to think, but to believe. Thought was regarded as dangerous, and the clergy, as a rule, kept on the safe side. Investigation was discouraged. It was declared that faith was the only road that led to eternal joy.

Most of the schools and colleges were under sectarian control, and the presidents and professors were defenders of their creeds. The people were crammed with miracles and stuffed with absurdities. They were taught that the Bible was the "inspired" word of God, that it was absolutely perfect, that the contradictions were only apparent, and that it contained no mistakes in philosophy, none in science. The great scheme of salvation was declared to be the result of infinite wisdom and mercy. Heaven and hell were waiting for the human race. Only those could be saved who had faith and who had been born twice.

Most of the ministers taught the geology of Moses, the astronomy of Joshua, and the philosophy of Christ. They regarded scientists as enemies, and their principal business was to defend miracles and deny facts. They knew, however, that men were thinking, investigating in every direction, and they feared the result. They became a little malicious—somewhat hateful. With their congregations they relied on sophistry, and they answered their enemies with epithets, with misrepresentations and slanders; and yet their minds were filled with a vague fear, with a sickening dread. Some of the people were reading and some were thinking. Lyell had told them something about geology, and in the light of facts they were reading Genesis again. The clergy called Lyell an infidel, a blasphemer; but the facts seemed to care nothing for opprobrious names. Then the "called," the "set apart," the "Lord's anointed," began changing the "inspired" word. They erased the word "day" and inserted "period," and then triumphantly exclaimed: "The world was created in six periods." This answer satisfied bigotry, hypocrisy, and honest ignorance; but honest intelligence was not satisfied.

More and more was being found about the history of life, of living things, the order in which the various forms had appeared, and the relations they had sustained to each other. Beneath the gaze of the biologist the fossils were again clothed with flesh, submerged continents and islands reappeared, the ancient forest grew once more, the air was filled with unknown birds, the seas with armored monsters, and the land with beasts of many forms that sought with tooth and claw each other's flesh.

Haeckel and Huxley followed life through all its changing forms, from monad up to man. They found that men, women, and children had been on this poor world for hundreds of thousands of years.

The clergy could not dodge these facts, this conclusion, by calling "days" periods, because the Bible gives the age of Adam when he died, the lives and ages to the flood, to Abraham, to David, and from David to Christ; so that, according to the Bible, man at the birth of Christ had been on this earth four thousand and four years, and no more.

There was no way in which the sacred record could be changed, but of course the dear ministers could not admit the conclusion arrived at by Haeckel and Huxley. If they did, they would have to give up original sin, the scheme of the atonement, and the consolation of eternal fire.

They took the only course they could. They promptly and solemnly, with upraised hands, denied the facts, and denounced the biologists as irreverent wretches, and defended the Book. With tears in their voices they talked about "Mother's Bible," about the "faith of the fathers," about the prayers that the children had said, and they also

talked about the wickedness of doubt. This satisfied bigotry, hypocrisy, and honest ignorance; but honest intelligence was not satisfied.

The works of Humboldt had been translated, and were being read; the intellectual horizon was enlarged, and the fact that the endless chain of cause and effect had never been broken, that Nature had never been interfered with, forced its way into many minds. This conception of Nature was beyond the clergy. They did not believe it; they could not comprehend it. They did not answer Humboldt, but they attacked him with great virulence. They measured his works by the Bible, because the Bible was then the standard.

In examining a philosophy, a system, the ministers asked: "Does it agree with the sacred book?" With the Bible they separated the gold from the dross. Every science had to be tested by the Scriptures. Humboldt did not agree with Moses. He differed from Joshua. He had his doubts about the flood. That was enough.

Yet, after all, the ministers felt that they were standing on thin ice, that they were surrounded by masked batteries, and that something unfortunate was liable at any moment to happen. This increased their efforts to avoid, to escape. The truth was that they feared the truth. They were afraid of facts. They became exceedingly anxious for morality, for the young, for the inexperienced. They were afraid to trust human nature. They insisted that without the Bible the world would rush to crime. They warned the thoughtless of the danger of thinking. They knew that it would be impossible for civilisation to exist without the Bible. They knew this because their God had tried it. He gave no Bible to the antediluvians, and they became so bad that he had to destroy them. He gave the Jews only the Old Testament, and they were dispersed. Irreverent people might say that Jehovah should have known this without a trial; but, after all, that has nothing to do with theology.

Attention had been called to the fact that two accounts of creation are in Genesis, and that they do not agree and cannot be harmonised, and that, in addition to that, the divine historian had made a mistake as to the order of creation; that, according to one account, Adam was made before the animals, and Eve last of all, from Adam's rib; and, by the other account, Adam and Eve were made after the animals, and both at the same time. A good many people were surprised to find that the Creator had written contradictory accounts of the creation, and had forgotten the order in which he created.

Then there was another difficulty. Jehovah had declared that on Tuesday, or during the second period, he had created the "firmament," to divide the waters which were below the firmament from the waters above the firmament. It was found that there is no firmament; that the moisture in the air is the result of evaporation, and that there was nothing to divide the waters above from the waters below. So that, according to the facts, Jehovah did nothing on the second day or period, because the moisture above the earth is not prevented from falling by the firmament, but because the mist is lighter than air.

The preachers, however, began to dodge, to evade, to talk about "oriental imagery." They declared that Genesis was a "sublime poem," a divine "panorama of creation," an "inspired vision"; that it was not intended to be exact in its details, but that it was true in a far higher sense, in a poetical sense, in a spiritual sense, conveying a truth much higher, much grander than simple fact. The contradictions were covered with the mantle of oriental imagery. This satisfied bigotry, hypocrisy, and honest ignorance; but honest intelligence was not satisfied.

People were reading Darwin. His works interested not only the scientific, but the intelligent in all the walks of life. Darwin was the keenest observer of all time, the greatest naturalist in all the world. He was patient, modest, logical, candid, courageous, and absolutely truthful. He told the actual facts. He colored nothing. He was anxious only to ascertain the truth. He had no prejudices, no theories, no creed. He was the apostle of the real.

The ministers greeted him with shouts of derision. From nearly all the pulpits came the sounds of ignorant laughter, one of the saddest of all sounds. The clergy, in a vague kind of way, believed the Bible account of creation; they accepted the Miltonic view; they believed that all animals, including man, had been made of clay, fashioned

by Jehovah's hands, and that he had breathed into all forms, not only the breath of life, but instinct and reason. They were not in the habit of descending to particulars; they did not describe Jehovah as kneading the clay or modelling his forms like a sculptor, but what they did say included these things.

The theory of Darwin contradicted all their ideas on the subject, vague as they were. He showed that man had not appeared at first as man; that he had not fallen from perfection, but had slowly risen through many ages from lower forms. He took food, climate, and all conditions into consideration, and accounted for difference of form, function, instinct, and reason by natural causes. He dispensed with the supernatural. He did away with Jehovah the potter.

Of course the theologians denounced him as a blasphemer, as a dethroner of God. They even went so far as to smile at his ignorance. They said: "If the theory of Darwin is true, the Bible is false, our God is a myth, and our religion a fable."

In that they were right.

Against Darwin they rained texts of scripture like shot and shell. They believed that they were victorious, and their congregations were delighted. Poor little frightened professors in religious colleges sided with the clergy. Hundreds of backboneless "scientists" ranged themselves with the enemies of Darwin. It began to look as though the Church was victorious.

Slowly, steadily, the ideas of Darwin gained ground. He began to be understood. Men of sense were reading what he said. Men of genius were on his side. In a little while the really great in all departments of human thought declared in his favor. The tide began to turn. The smile on the face of the theologian became a frozen grin. The preachers began to hedge, to dodge. They admitted that the Bible was not inspired for the purpose of teaching science—only inspired about religion, about the spiritual, about the divine. The fortifications of faith were crumbling, the old guns had been spiked, and the armies of the "living God" were in retreat.

Great questions were being discussed, and freely discussed. People were not afraid to give their opinions, and they did give their honest thoughts. Draper had shown in his *Intellectual Development of Europe* that Catholicism had been the relentless enemy of progress, the bitter foe of all that is really useful. The Protestants were delighted with this book.

Buckle had shown in his *History of Civilisation in England* that Protestantism had also enslaved the mind, had also persecuted to the extent of its power, and that Protestantism in its last analysis was substantially the same as the creed of Rome.

—New York "Truthseeker."

R. G. INGERSOLL.

(To be concluded.)

BOOK CHAT.

Sunday, the People's Holiday, is the title of an interesting and useful little volume by Dr. W. W. Hardwicke, published by W. R. Hill, Holywell-street, London. Dr. Hardwicke points out the Akkadian origin of the week, which he says is really astronomical, the week being a quarter of the lunar (that is, the *original*) month of twenty-eight days. Seven could not be further divided, and for that, and another reason, which Dr. Hardwicke does not mention and we need not now dwell upon, it became the most sacred of numbers. The Hebrew Sabbath was borrowed by the "chosen people" from their conquerors. With regard to the early Christians, Dr. Hardwicke argues that "such an institution as a Christian Sabbath" was unknown to them. In support of this view he gives many pertinent extracts from the Fathers, and from historians like Heylin and Mosheim. Sunday was definitely adopted by the Christians under Constantine. Its very name reveals its Pagan origin. The first day of the week was the Sun's Day, and it was the people's holiday, which Dr. Hardwicke wants to see it become again. It was during the Middle Ages that the Church laid Sunday as a burden upon the masses. Luther and other "Reformers" wrote against it. Dr. Hardwicke gives apposite quotations from Erasmus, Melancthon, Zwingle, Beza, and Calvin. A chapter is devoted to the Puritans, who are responsible for the dull, unlovely Sabbath in this country. Dr. Hardwicke defies them to prove their position either from the New Testament or on grounds of common sense and public utility. Altogether he has produced a very serviceable

volume, which might be placed with great advantage into the hands of persons who, while not being exactly Free-thinkers, have sense and taste enough to be dissatisfied with the Puritan abuse of our weekly day of rest.

* * *

Mr. Paul Laurence Dunbar, the negro poet, is of pure African blood. His father and mother were both slaves. The former escaped from Kentucky, and the latter was liberated in the civil war. Mr. Dunbar was in England some time ago on a visit, and was much liked and esteemed by those who met him. He now resides at Washington where he holds a post in the new Congressional Library. Two volumes of his poems have just been published in London, and are a proof that the negro race has possibilities which the white race is too apt to deny. Here is a verse, for instance, which many present-day English poets might be proud to have written:—

Love is no random road wayfarer
Who where he may must sip his glass.
Love is the King, the Purple-Wearer,
Whose guard recks not of tree or grass
To blaze the way that he may pass.
What if my heart be in the blast
That heralds his triumphant way
Shall I repine, shall I not say:
"Rejoice, my heart, the King has passed"?

* * *

The contribution to which most readers of the *Nineteenth Century* for September will give their first attention is Herbert Spencer's "What is Social Evolution?" In the same number Father Clarke writes strongly on "A Catholic's View of *Helbeck of Bannisdale*," and the irrepressible W. S. Lilly on "What was Primitive Christianity?" a question he by no means satisfactorily answers. We are pleased to see Mr. Frederic Harrison's article on "The Historical Method of J. A. Froude," and the veteran George Jacob Holyoake's opinions on "Emigrant Education." The September issue of this periodical is unusually interesting, and not, as frequently happens, a mere waste-paper basket for eminent writers.

* * *

At last we have sixpenny editions of Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. Stevenson, like Dumas, was a born story-teller, and abhorred the methods of the modern school of novelists, which has ever the eye fixed upon morality, and carries the didactic tongue thrust in the cheek of the story. *Treasure Island* deserves to be as well known as *Robinson Crusoe*. Every male reader who has a smack of youth left may be a boy again for some happy hours, and for the trifling sum of sixpence. Only genius could have invented John Silver. As for *Kidnapped*, it is as fine a piece of writing as anyone has written since Scott died. It is Stevenson's masterpiece, as anyone who has made Alan Breck's acquaintance will readily admit. To those of us who are very tired of sex problems in novels, it is refreshing to remember that in neither of these stories are there any interfering petticoats.

* * *

Lower middle-class existence is generally supposed to be very humdrum. Mr. George Gissing has treated this subject with rare skill in a number of novels, which no student of contemporary fiction should miss reading. He is, however, a pessimistic author; but, on occasion, he can write both lightly and brightly. In his new story, *The Town Traveller*, he has abundance of humor, in the style of Dickens, and has even permitted himself to finish his story happily.

* * *

Detective Sweeney and the other censors will be distressed to hear that the first large edition of George Moore's book, *Evelyn Innes*, has been sold, and that a second edition is about to be issued. The disapproval of the "unco guid" has apparently not prevented the sale of ten thousand copies of this outspoken novel, with promise of even a larger circulation in the future.

* * *

Most exponents of what has been facetiously called "the new humor" are sadly wanting in fun; but the richest volume we have come across for a very long time is *The Modern Marriage Market*, by Marie Corelli, Lady Jeune, Flora Annie Steel, and Susan, Lady Malmesbury. The author of *The Sorrows of Satan* is generally known as a somewhat amiable preacher of woe, but in this volume she runs amuck with a coke-hammer. For example:—

"Never in all the passing pageant and phantasmagoria of history did a greater generation of civilised hypocrites cumber the face of the globe than cumber it to-day; never was the earth so oppressed with the weight of polite lying; never were there such crowds of civilised masqueraders, cultured tricksters, and social humbugs, who, though admirable as tricksters and humbugs, are wholly contemptible as men and women."

Poor world! Such language has not been heard since the Sage of Chelsea declared that the thirty million inhabitants of England were mostly fools. Later on Miss Corelli

observes: "What is marriage?" Really, now, surely! We must respectfully refer her to Detective Sweeney. Thank goodness! Lady Jeune comes to the rescue, with a few pailfuls of shrewd, motherly platitudes, and she manages to rebuke Marie very severely. Mrs. Steel is nothing if not philosophic, and the Countess of Malmesbury is a serene prophet of the practical. This is quite the most delightfully funny book on the subject of Love with a capital "L," although we fear it would not survive the test of a second reading.

* * *

Mark Twain used the platform to make money by in order to pay off the creditors of the publishing house he was connected with. Having apparently achieved that task, he has determined to be only an author henceforth. "After a good deal of deliberation," he writes to an applicant, "I have concluded to give up lecturing, and go on the platform no more."

* * *

The *Open Court* for September contains a fine portrait of Malebranche and a sketch of his philosophy by Professor L. Lévy-Bruhl. Mr. Moncure D. Conway continues his essay on "Solomonic Literature." Dr. Carus, the editor, who writes interestingly on philosophical questions, persists in demonstrating that he is no poet—at least in English.

* * *

According to Dr. Reginald R. Sharpe's recent work, *London and the Kingdom*, mainly based on the archives of the Guildhall, there were, between the years 1400 and 1440, no fewer than sixty clerks in holy orders who were "taken in adultery and clapped into prison by the ward beades."

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE WATCH STORY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In view of your recent article on General Booth and Mrs. Besant, the following extract may be of interest. It is from a speech delivered in the *Mechanics' Hall*, Nottingham, October 8, 1849, by Rev. W. Griffith, jun.: "The three most distinguished, but least famous, men in the recent French revolution—Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, and Proudhon..... That last-named Frenchman, the blasphemous Atheist, what did he say at a recent assembly of the most solemn occasion? He denied the existence of a God, called God 'that infinite absurdity, that abortion of the human intellect, that ridiculous nothing,' and, proceeding in his career of bold infidelity, ventured to raise his right arm to heaven, and challenge God, if there was such a Being, to vindicate his insulted majesty by striking him down with one of his thunderbolts."

Excepting the watch and the five minutes, this is the same story which has been applied to so many different individuals.

Previous to coming across this version the oldest one I can remember occurred either in *The Cottager and Artisan* or *The British Workman* of about five-and-twenty years ago. By that time, however, the watch and the fixed time, five minutes, had been added. As to the truth of the story, I have not the opportunity of making an investigation; but sufficient is known of the truth of the later versions to make one extraordinarily dubious about it. E. G. B.

THE "CAT" AND THE PREVENTION OF CRIME.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In an article on the new Prisons Bill which appears in the *Law Magazine*, Lord Norton, discussing what he describes as the "excesses of alternate severity and leniency" in the reform of penal legislation, gives as an instance the case of flogging. He says: "A period of brutal floggings in our army has led to nearly total disuse of a species of punishment of proved and sole suitability to certain classes of crimes in its proper application." I suppose the writer refers to what may be generally termed crimes of violence, including that of garroting; at any rate, I know of no other class of crime that it could well refer to, and I am confirmed in this view by some remarks made by Lord Norton in a previous paper contributed to the *Prisons' Service Review*. Writing on the subject of whipping as a punishment for juvenile offenders, he says: "..... We have recent full experience of the lash's efficacy in the way of counter-motive. It stopped the annual shooting at the Queen, it arrested frequent damages to works of art in the National Museums, it saved old gentlemen from being garroted for their watches, and it might have ignominiously extinguished the heroism of the dynamitards."

Periodic shootings at the Queen, and so forth, are not

crimes which call for the lash, whatever its merits. People who do these things stand in need of being looked after by the Commissioners in Lunacy. As to garroting, the facts are as follows, and do not square with Lord Norton's assertion. In the year 1862 there was a sudden outbreak of garrote robberies in the streets of London. The epidemic began in July, and lasted just four months. At the November Sessions of the Central Criminal Court twenty-seven persons were indicted for this offence, and twenty-one were convicted, each receiving exemplary punishment. At the following Sessions, in January, the calendar showed very few offences of this character, and at the March Sessions the Recorder observed to the grand jury: "I am glad to say that there is an absence of those peculiar charges of robbery with violence of which there was a large number towards the end of last year, and which have been gradually decreasing during the last two or three months." On July 13, 1863, a Flogging Bill was passed into law by the House of Commons. According to these facts, it is clear that flogging did not put down garroting, for the crime had been suppressed several months before the Flogging Bill was even introduced into the House. Garroting at that time was practised by a particular gang of criminals, which was captured by the police, and the crime disappeared. In the transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 1867, the late Mr. T. B. Baker stated, as though a matter within his knowledge, that the police were instructed to go round to the ticket-of-leave men known to be in the Metropolis, and inform them that if the garrote continued their tickets-of-leave would be cancelled. This, he said, put a sudden stop to garroting save for an occasional attempt by outsiders.

Lord Aberdare, when Home Secretary, stated to the House that robbery with violence had not decreased by means of the lash. Taking the country throughout, all crime, he said, was slowly diminishing, but this particular form decreased no faster. This statement has since been repeated by other Home Secretaries, and Mr. Asquith stated a few months ago at a public meeting that the lash was not approved by him for crimes of violence. Garroting declined elsewhere than in England, and I believe that in Scotland it was never punishable by flogging. It is a legal punishment in Ireland, but rarely employed. What we hear of the efficacy of flogging in our penal system is of the most shadowy description, and always melts away when brought to the test of statistics. JOSEPH COLLINSON.

A REVIVAL MEETING.

SAY! What's become of all the boys?
Where's Joe? and where is Tim?
And what's become of Masher Ted,
And high-tone, stuck-up Jim?

Well, if you seeks them pious crowd,
Doan't fule yer time round here.
They're way down at the Sunday-skulo
With their best gals at prayer.

It's "Holy Moses! Abraham!
Jesus, hear our prayer!—
O Lord, save us!"—Who's that gal—
That one with the golden hair?

Lord, I loves 'em, short or tall,
Loves 'em, dark or fair.
Jesus!—guess I loves 'em all!
Savior, hear my prayer!

Wot gal comed along o' you?
Sally! Tell yer, Joe,
There ain't no gal like Sal—Amen!
She's hard ter beat, yer know.

Maud's a daisy, too—O Lord,
Have pity on us!—Say,
Who's yonder dark gal dressed in blue?
Jane Jones!—Let us pray.

—*Secular Thought.*

AMEN.

Scotch caution is well illustrated in the story told by a minister who taught a Bible-class in Edinburgh. Having missed one of his students for several Sundays, he said to one of her relatives: "I haona seen yecr cousin Bell at the class for a long while. Ye ken it's her duty tae attend the schule. Whaur has she gaen?" "I canna very well tell ye that, minister," was the careful reply; "but she's deed."

At the first Paris exposition in 1798 there were only 110 exhibitors; at the second, in 1801, there were 220; at the fourth, in 1806, there were 1,422; and at the eighth, in the reign of Louis Phillippe, there were 2,247. The first world's fair in Paris was in 1855. At the exposition of 1889 there were 55,486 exhibitors and 32,500,000 visitors.

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, C. Watts, "Atheism and Agnosticism: Their Value and Relation to Each Other."

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, A lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. Cohen. Peckham Rye: 8.15, A lecture.

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Mile End Waste): 11.30, S. Jones; 7, W. J. Ramsey. September 21, at 8, C. Cohen.

FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Doom of the Gods."

FINSBURY PARK (near bandstand): 8.15, E. Calvert, "History of the Shakespearean Drama."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen.

HAMMERSMITH (near Lyric Theatre): 7.15, E. Calvert.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH: (Fleet-road, corner of Downshire-hill): 7, E. White, "Jesus Christ."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): A. B. Moss—11.30, "Conversion of the Devil"; 8.30, "Saviors of Mankind."

KILBURN (High-road, corner Victoria-road): 7.15, A. B. Moss, "Conversion of the Devil."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, A lecture.

LIMHOUSE (The Triangle, Salmon-lane): 11.30, F. Pack. September 20, at 8, S. Jones.

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, E. White, "Was Jesus a Socialist?"

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Historical View of the Old Testament."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Bristol-street Board-school): G. W. Foote—11, "War Within the Church"; 8, "The Czar's Appeal to Europe"; 7, "The Meaning of Death."

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion class, Business meeting; 6.30, "Veritas," "The Curse of Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Joseph McCabe, "Secularism and the Social Problem."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Read.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. P. Ward—11, "Thomas Paine and His 'Age of Reason'"; 8 (Stevenson-square), "The Gospel of Secularism"; 6.30, "Freethought and Free Love."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton—September 18, m., Camberwell; a., Victoria Park; c., Edmonton; 21, Mile End; 25, m., Camberwell; a., Finsbury Park; e., Camberwell. October 2, Motherwell; 9, Glasgow; 16, Newcastle; 28, Sheffield; 30, Leicester. November 6 and 13, Athenæum Hall, London.

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

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

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