

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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BIBLE BLUNDERS.

It has come at last. The foremost oracle has spoken. The Archbishop of Canterbury not only admits, but declares, that the Bible contains inaccuracies. One Christian editor regards this as "astounding." We are left to conclude for ourselves whether the adjective applies to the fact or the confession. This gentleman may regard it as extraordinary that the Bible is not absolutely free from blunders, seeing it is trumpeted as the Word of God; or he may think it marvellous that an Archbishop has the courage or the folly to admit in public what is perfectly well known to every clergyman in private.

People who have given the subject fair attention have long known that the Bible does more than *contain* inaccuracies; it positively *abounds* in them. There are hundreds of substantial contradictions, and thousands of formal discrepancies. This fact must have been known, at least to a considerable extent, by the old orthodox divines, who went through the Bible with exemplary diligence, and sprinkled their sermons profusely with well-stocked pepper-dridges of more or less apposite texts. But they never admitted it. They kept on saying that Holy Writ was without a single mistake, and that the man who found one had an infidel squint or was misled by the Devil. Their theory was well expressed by the late Mr. Spurgeon, who once affirmed that every sentence of the Bible was written with an Almighty pen, and every word fell from Almighty lips. Spurgeon said that nearly fifty years ago. There is not one Christian minister who will say it now.

Bible blunders are indeed an inexhaustible theme. Mr. Gladstone, one of the prosiest and dullest of harmonisers, never touched more than the fringe of the subject. He confined himself to the stock illustrations which had been dealt with by hundreds of writers before him—a fact, by the way, which exemplifies the Grand Old Man's terrible lack of originality. He devoted whole pages to showing, in his peculiarly vague and diffuse manner, that the word "day" in the fantastic Creation Story really meant a chapter, that it had nothing to do with chronology, but was a device of composition. He devoted many more pages to showing that if the narrative were read slowly and carefully, attaching a Gladstonian meaning instead of a dictionary meaning to every word, and adding of all sorts of amplifications and qualifications between the lines, that old Creation Story was a magnificent manual of astronomy, geology, and biology, and that all the writings of Darwin (supposing them to be true—which Gladstone would never admit or deny) were but commentaries on the science of Moses. But clergymen like Canon Driver and Dean Farrar laughed at him as politely as possible. They knew it was all nonsense, and that the man who "reconciled" the Bible and Modern Science did not understand either.

The ground taken by the new school of Bible defenders is this. They frankly admit that it contains a multitude of mistakes in science and history, and from the point of

view of common sense. They no longer declare that it is the Word of God; they say it *contains* the Word of God. The revelation is not formal, but suggestive. Somewhere or other within it, if we seek aright, we shall find all that is necessary to our salvation, and that is all it was ever intended for. Its writers *were* inspired as religious teachers; they were *not* inspired as scientists or historians; nay, they were not even preserved from falling into any of the errors, superstitions, and prejudices of their own age and nation.

This theory sweeps away all the common difficulties of the case. It gets rid of the science of Genesis, the inaccuracies of the historical books, the absurdities of Balaam's ass and Jonah's whale, and all the self-contradictions between "In the beginning" and "Amen." It will serve the Church for some time. But it cannot last for ever. It is essentially a transition theory. It marks the progress of clerical surrender up to date. Simply this and nothing more. "Inspiration" cannot be given up all at once. It becomes slowly diluted by reason, until at length there remains but a trace of the original spirit, which finds its expression in the paradox, "That is inspired which inspires me."

The Bible is indeed a blunder altogether. Supposing there be a God, who is the Creator of all of us, and who communicates with us spiritually, it is childish to suppose that he said all he had to say two or three thousand years ago, speaking in two languages that are only understood by comparatively a handful of his children, and taking no care whatever to preserve the written word from the accidents of time and change. No one can ever be assured that God has spoken unless God speaks to him individually. Revelation must always be personal. What is revelation at first-hand is only hearsay at second-hand. He who has God's authority for anything only brings me his own authority when he conveys it to me.

Supposing God spoke to Moses, how do I know that this is what he said to him? The very lapse of time raises insuperable difficulties. It will not do to tell me that similar difficulties occur in regard to the works of all ancient writers. *Similar* is not the *same*. There is a fundamental difference at the starting point. It does not materially affect my life or my principles to believe or disbelieve that Caesar wrote the "Commentaries," or Cicero delivered those Orations. As the man in the street would say, nothing hangs to it. But an alleged revelation involves the greatest and most decisive consequences, in private and public life, and in all modes of thinking and feeling. So much hangs to it, that the revelation should be unquestionable, which it cannot be in the case of a book like the Bible.

Freethought must keep on attacking the Bible. It is the Alpha and Omega of Christian theology and priesthood. Theoretically the Christian has a God in heaven; practically his God is the Bible, and this is none the less true because he reads it in all sorts of different ways, for that is precisely how every God is understood by his devotees.

G. W. FOOTE.

PROGRESS OF FREETHOUGHT.

It is pleasant to us to notice the still rapid progress of Freethought which is manifesting itself in our midst. This advancement is not confined to the Secular ranks, but, as we shall show presently, it is evident in nearly all the Christian sects. In spite of the existence among us of the relics of an arbitrary faith and narrow creeds, the love of inquiry and the desire to be free from theological restrictions have taken a firm hold upon the minds of the present generation. It must be understood that for this advantage we are not indebted to what is called "progressive Christianity," or to the boasted tendency towards a fuller appreciation of "Christlike toleration." In the presence of the results of modern thought, both these phrases are absolutely meaningless. Christianity, *per se*, can never progress if it is based upon the teachings of the Bible, which are supposed to be those of an unchanging God. Men's conceptions of the nature of the faith may change, as intelligence supplants ignorance; but this does not alter the faith itself. It does, however, afford evidence that the emancipated intellect of man can evolve more useful views of human life than those supposed to be taught by Christ. When Dean Farrar uttered the truth that "in the mirror of the Bible each partizan will practically see nothing but his own face," he stated that which is equally true in reference to Christ and Christianity. Protestants of the Kensit type have very different notions to those held by Roman Catholics as to Christ and his teachings. And to learn the kind of "toleration" practised by the followers of the "meek and lowly Jesus," it is only necessary to read the pages of the pious *Rock*, and the recent correspondence which has gone on in the *Times*. It will be there seen how very "tolerant" Christians are towards each other, to say nothing of their treatment of Secularists and unbelievers in general. In those journals Catholics have been charged by their "brothers in the Lord" with the worst kind of immorality, while, on the other hand, Cardinal Vaughan retaliates by saying: "It is simply a lie" (*Times*, Sept. 6). A happy and polite family, truly, are these members who pride themselves on having Christ at their head!

No, the cause of that progress of Freethought at which we rejoice is not to be found in the Christianity associated with Christ's name; on the contrary, it is to be discovered in that scepticism which Buckle and Lecky have shown to be the forerunner of all advancement. It is this sceptical spirit, to which Christ and his system are thoroughly opposed, which has broken down the theological barriers, and foiled those who would endeavor to crush the liberal aspirations of modern times. Bonham, in his *Secularism: its Progress and Morals*, writes: "Every step of advance since then [the Reformation] has been marked by some degree of scepticism due to the underlying force of the law of diversity. Every Protestant to-day owes his Protestantism to a degree of scepticism generated by this law" (pp. 7, 8, and 9). Canon Farrar also remarks in his *Modern Claims upon the Pulpit*: "No one who is acquainted with the history of science, and has sufficient honesty to accept facts, can possibly deny that scarcely a single truth of capital importance in science has ever been enunciated without having to struggle for life against the fury of theological dogmatists. In every instance the dogmatists have been ignominiously defeated. The world moved, as Galileo said it did, in spite of the Inquisition. A great Puritan divine thought that he had checked the progress of astronomical inquiry when he said that he preferred to believe the Holy Ghost rather than Newton; yet Newton was absolutely right, and the Puritan divine was hopelessly wrong. . . . In our own time, to give but one instance more, we have heard from preachers, and sometimes from men who could barely scrape through the matriculation examination of a tenth-rate college, the most furious denunciations of Darwinism and the doctrine of evolution" (*The Forum* for November, 1889, p. 254). When we read of these gloomy and retarding effects of the traditional faith, and contrast them with the scepticism within the Church of to-day, who can doubt the onward march of Freethought?

But it is not only in the National Church that Christianity is dying, for we have striking evidence that Nonconformity is also falling off. Mr. Arthur Clayden, who can speak with authority upon this subject, writes thus in a letter to the *Times* of September 6: "Nothing has impressed me more, as an old Nonconformist, since my return

from the Antipodes, than the declining force of British Nonconformity. In all directions one hears of the scions of once powerful dissenting families deserting their colors and going over to the Anglican or Romish faith. I have just been spending a week in my native county of Berks, and throughout that once Nonconformist stronghold I found, with here and there an exception, only weakness and decay. As the old standard-bearers have died off, chapel after chapel has been left either to drag on a hopeless existence, or, like the once flourishing 'market-place chapel' of my native town of Wallingford, to drop out of existence. At Reading, where I remember, a generation back, at least three powerful Congregational chapels flourished, I found two out of the three with empty pulpits, and a fourth, which had been erected in view of the rapidly-increased population, had ignominiously failed, and fallen into the hands of an enterprising theatre company." The avowal of regret made by Mr. Clayden exhibits the lack of harmony and brotherly love within the Christian fold. He says: "The much-vaunted Anglicanism of the hour has as its supreme task the crushing out of British Nonconformity. In two out of every three English parishes the enemy to be vanquished is dissent. No pains are spared to draw the Nonconformist youth from their chapels to the church. The natural pleasure-seeking of young folk is unscrupulously appealed to. Instead of the gloomy morning and evening services of the dissenting conventicle, with their various conventional restrictions, the youngsters have put before them a brief eucharistic early celebration as an abundant fulfilment of Sabbath-day devotions, and for the rest of the day they are free to pursue their respective cycling or boating enjoyments. Hundreds of British Nonconformist ministers are doomed to see one after another of their hopeful youth thus diverted from their religious lead, and borne away to what they conscientiously believe disastrous moral influences." And thus the work of mental freedom goes on. Here we see not only discord in the religious camp, but also an increasing fondness for secular recreation rather than an adherence to old ecclesiastical restrictions.

We are not at all surprised at the present decay of Nonconformity, for the reason that its leading professors ignore the very principle upon which their dissent from the Church of England is based. That principle is that all should be allowed to judge for themselves upon religious matters without being exposed to the penalty of persecution, or of any form of ostracism for so doing. When Nonconformists consistently act upon this principle they will have our support. The truth, however, is that in their attitude towards Secularists and Freethinkers in general they practically ignore the right they claim for themselves. They assume that with them the height of intellectual liberty has been reached, and to those who seek to soar above them they seem to say: "Thus far shalt thou come, but no further." This love of ruling tyrannically the human mind is common to all theologians, and it is the force of Freethought alone that will curb its disastrous influence. The doctrine that a wrong belief, or no belief at all, will lead to the consignment of the soul to eternal fire prompts men to exert all their powers towards preserving their fellow men from becoming victims to Satan. The bigot has thus always pleaded, in extenuation of his intolerance, his anxiety to secure the salvation of souls. Happily, to a large extent, Freethought has destroyed this fatal error by exposing the utter fallacy of the belief either in hell or the devil. Still there are bigots now who are ready to—

Deal damnation round the land
On each I deem thy foe.

A further testimony to the progress of Freethought is given by Mr. Clayden in his letter to the *Times*. He says: "In Laurence Oliphant's *Scientific Religion* there is a remarkable confession of a 'parish priest,' which so exactly bears out my experience of the value of the teaching which is to be substituted for Nonconformist teaching that I venture to give it. Referring to certain unsettling convictions which had come to him as a clergyman, he says: 'The first thing that I remarked was that all my preaching, all the services of my church, all my religious functions and sacraments, had very little, or rather no practical, effect on the daily life and conduct either of myself or of those to whom I ministered.' This, no doubt, would be the testimony of many "ministers of the gospel" if they were in a position to "speak out." We hail with profound satisfaction the Freethought progress which is now going on, and for

this advance we feel indebted to no National Church, nor to the Nonconformists, but to those brave and honest Free-thinkers whose Nonconformity meant a deep-rooted aversion to every power which presumed to hold inquiry in check, and to keep reason in abeyance; to those grand martyrs, such as Vanini, Bruno, Voltaire, and Paine, who cared nothing for the obloquy and abuse of society in comparison with liberty and truth.

CHARLES WATTS.

SPREADING THE GOSPEL.

IMPORTANT as the out-door propaganda undoubtedly is, when one has to address three meetings every Sunday—in addition to lectures delivered during the week—at places as far apart as Camberwell, Victoria Park, and Edmonton, in a temperature registering 88 degrees in the shade, and sometimes with a free fight to round the whole affair off, one begins to feel like the frogs in the fable—that, while it is pleasant enough for those looking on, it is a far more serious matter for those engaged in the work. In fact, for keeping down one's weight, I should say that open-air speaking—plenty of it—on a summer's day is without a rival.

Still, as a method of propaganda, open-air speaking is far too valuable to be neglected. Provincial visitors usually express great surprise at the appearance presented by our London parks on the "blessed Sabbath." Speakers representing High Church, Low Church, and no Church; Roman Catholics, Protestants, the lost ten tribes, and tribes that should be lost as speedily as possible; the Society for relieving the Jewish community of its chronic loafers and cadgers by bringing them to Christ; Socialists, Anarchists, and others whom it would puzzle that astute gentleman, a "Philadelphian Lawyer," to properly classify, gather within a stone's throw of each other to propound remedies for all the ills that flesh is heir to. And, what is more striking still, thousands of people attend these meetings with far greater regularity than others attend church, eager to listen and willing to be informed. There are exceptions to the latter, but of that more presently. Consequently, the parks and open spaces of London present a rare opportunity for propaganda; and, to paraphrase a statement reported of another open-air speaker, wherever people are gathered together willing to listen, there should we be in the midst of them.

The time I have spent in London this summer has been unusually brief, but during that period I have addressed more meetings, faced larger audiences, and received more enthusiastic support than at any other time. I have visited few stations, but have visited them frequently; and, while I can only speak of my own meetings, I have no reason to believe that others have not been quite as successful in other parts of the metropolis.

In the East of London Victoria Park more than holds its own. At my own meetings the audiences range from 1,000 to 2,000, and the determination of the people to listen to what is being said has completely crushed the rowdiness that was so prominent at these meetings a few years back. The numbers of these disorderly followers of Jesus have diminished to a mere handful, which usually locates itself at the back of the meeting, reminding one of those rudimentary organs characteristic of a lower stage of animal development. Messrs. Neate and Clogg are two indefatigable workers here, the latter being untiring in his efforts to disseminate our literature among the bystanders.

The East London Branch is making capital headway both at Mile End Waste and Limehouse. Mr. Loafer, who is present at all the meetings, and never idle at any, is the principal worker, but is well supported by a small but devoted band of workers. At Mile End the meetings are always large and orderly, but Limehouse leaves much to be desired from the standpoint of conduct. I had resolved not to lecture there this season, as I began to find that I was over-rating my strength; but, as there were several disturbances, I changed my mind. My meetings were fairly quiet until August 30, when, owing to the importation of a number of rowdies from different parts of London, a disturbance took place. I was sorry to learn the following day that one of our young friends had received a stab in the hand from a knife. I was told that it was intended for me, but the aim was evidently as

defective as the reasoning that emanates from the same quarter. However, I returned the following week, and had a very large, attentive, and enthusiastic meeting.

Before I leave the East End, it is well to note the latest growth of Christian evidences. The withdrawal of the better class of Christians from the various anti-Secularistic societies that have been formed from time to time has left the field clear for the rise of a class that could not be very conspicuous while respectable people were associated in the work. The result has been the formation of a new body, which contains the very dregs of metropolitan Christian advocacy. When I say that on its limited platform it has one ex-burglar and three others who have been convicted for stealing, it will be seen that it is a body admirably adapted to inspire public confidence and regard. One of its members a Sunday or so ago declared, in opposition to my lecture, that Christianity was not a history, but a conviction. Both myself and the audience fully agreed that there was a strong air of probability about the statement. It was this body that made itself so prominent at the Freethought demonstrations, and assured the public that the President of the N.S.S. was unworthy of respect because he had actually spent twelve months in Holloway Gaol. Needless to say, the nature of the offence was not indicated.

In the North of London I have visited Wood Green, Edmonton, Finsbury Park, and Ridley-road, Dalston; the three first-named places always provide good and attentive audiences, which leave one little to chronicle, but which are perhaps all the better on that account. The work goes steadily forward, and new friends and converts are being made in a very quiet and unobtrusive fashion. Dalston, however, has witnessed several disturbances this season, and on more than one occasion the behavior of the defenders of Christianity was such that the police threatened to take them into custody unless they behaved in a more decent manner. However, Mr. Simons and his small band of helpers stick manfully to their work, and although they are working in a district where middle-class snobbery is conspicuous, and where Christianity is regarded as an indispensable piece of household furniture, they are making capital headway.

South London has the questionable honor of having provided the greatest disturbances during the season. The Camberwell Branch maintains its hall in New Church-road, an open-air platform at Station-road, and afternoon and evening meetings on Peckham Rye. Nearly all of the meetings on the Rye leave little to be desired, either in size or attention. This year, however, has proved an exception. Led on by a fellow named Taylor, a Christian by conviction—three months, I believe, was its length—a crowd of young rowdies from Deptford and various parts of South London have gathered round the Secular platform and made the air as hideous with their yells as it was rendered unpleasant by their presence. Usually, I am pleased to say, by far the larger portion of the crowd have shown their strong disapproval of such tactics; but of late these "holy Hooligans," as my friend Mr. Heaford aptly called them, have received support from a South London paper, the editor of which rejoices in the name of B. Sykes, who has not only incited the readers of his not over-odorous journal to acts of violence, but has actually suggested a public subscription for the purpose of prosecuting Secular speakers for blasphemy. I have sufficient faith in Christians generally to believe that money may be raised for that purpose, but I think I can safely say that the fools who part with their money will never see any of it spent in the direction indicated by the editor.

At the demonstration held on the Rye on September 4 this band assembled, singing (?) and howling during the whole of the meeting. Fortunately, they were not numerous enough to seriously disturb the meeting, the only effect of their presence being to still further increase the size of an enormous audience, and to secure a good sale of Freethought literature. Personally, I have delivered nearly twenty lectures this season in this part of London, and I think I may say, without egotism, that on each occasion we have more than held our own. So far the only result of the filthy lies circulated concerning Secularism and Secularists—and some of them have been the filthiest and vilest I have yet heard—have been to secure us a number of new friends, fresh members, the formation of a new branch in Peckham, and preparations for extended work during the winter.

A special feature of the present season has been the open-air demonstrations held in different parts of London. I was present and spoke at Regent's Park, Finsbury Park, Victoria Park, and Peckham Rye. All the meetings were very large, and some were simply enormous. In Victoria Park, and on Peckham Rye, one's lungs were taxed to the very utmost to make the fringe of the crowd hear. There can be no doubt as to the success or value of these demonstrations. To have the leading speakers of the Freethought party placing our views before audiences ranging from 1,500 to 3,000 people, the majority of whom are Christians, many of them probably never having heard Secularism publicly advocated before, must do a considerable amount of good. Some doubts are bound to be removed, while others are suggested; the spirit of inquiry is quickened, and so long as we succeed in doing that we have gone a long way towards winning converts.

These demonstrations were made all the more effective by the gratuitous advertisement given them by the band of Christian Evidence-mongers already referred to. They, too, hired a brake, and held a counter demonstration at each place. Their object was not so much to hold a meeting themselves—I am speaking upon reliable information—as to create a disturbance, and by that method prevent the Secular speakers being heard. Unfortunately for their plan, the authorities compelled them to hold their meeting at a reasonable distance from ours, where, to comparatively small audiences, they dwelt, in language more or less truthful, and in epithets more or less choice, upon the manifold evils of unbelief in general, and Secularism in particular.

Personally I am pleased they were there, and hope they will keep at it. They can never hurt Secularists, they are bound to disgust Christians, and they always serve as a dark background to throw Freethought into better relief.

On the whole, I think I may safely say that the out-door propaganda of 1898 is in every way satisfactory. It is hard work for those who are engaged in it, and the best thanks of the party are due to those who are on the spot at these meetings, ready to assist the speakers by every means in their power. Next summer I have hopes that new stations will be opened at places where none now exist; but by the time this article is printed my share of the season's work in London will be concluded. I leave for Scotland at the end of the month. I have a fairly extensive programme mapped out, and shall be pleased to communicate with friends along my line of travel, where week-night meetings might be held, and branches of our Society established.

C. COHEN.

CHRISTINA THE WONDERFUL.

ANYONE who visits the little church of St. Catherine at Milen, in Belgium, may behold the relics of Christina the Wonderful. If he attends the holy building on July 24, he will hear the priest say a mass in Christina's honor. For some six hundred years the country folk have paid the tribute of respect to her memory. For six hundred years she has been enrolled among the saints.

But she was mad. The Christians have canonised a mad woman.

Being left an orphan at the age of fifteen, Christina was sent by her two elder sisters to look after the cattle. Had Europe then arrived at the civilised stage when lunatics were sheltered in proper asylums, Christina would have been taken care of under skilled medical attendance, and never heard of by a pious posterity.

Christina suffered from catalepsy. One day she fell down in a fit, and people said she was dead. They carried her to the church in an open coffin, and the priest began muttering the funeral service. Suddenly Christina recovered, sprang out of her coffin, and, as most of the mourners ran shrieking from the building, she climbed a pillar, and sat, as if roosting, upon one of the cross-beams of the roof. In mortal terror the priest finished his appointed—though now somewhat unnecessary—task, and then proceeded to review the situation. He could see a mistake had been made. Christina was alive, according to all the tests of science and philosophy. The priest coaxed her down, and sent her home with her sisters. She related to them how she had been borne away to Hell and to Purgatory, and in each place she met old friends. Thence

she was led to Heaven, and a choice was laid before her: she could either stay there, or return to earth and pray for the souls which she had seen wreathed in penal fire. Good-naturedly, she preferred to come back, and help in the emancipation of the slaves of God. But with all her good nature she felt a repugnance for too close a contact with her kind. She hated the smell of human beings, and, in order to escape their company, climbed up trees, and even scaled church steeples amid the wondering gaze of the rustics.

"She is full of devils," her sisters declared, thus logically applying New Testament doctrines in the diagnosis of this peculiar case. They placed her in chains, and kept her confined. She broke out, impelled by her misanthropic hysteria, and tore away to the forest, and found a haven of rest among the boughs of the trees. In this leafy retreat she dwelt for nine weeks, during which period, so the chronicles aver, she suckled herself from her own miraculously-filled breasts. The people captured her, and fettered her, and again she set herself free. Her antics furnished the staple gossip of the district. Village bakers were startled by her precipitate plunges into their ovens. In mid-winter she would stand waist-deep in the river Meuse until the parish priest bade her come out. She jumped into the mill-stream, and wriggled under the wheel, and emerged as scatheless as Jonah from the great fish's crypt. Hauling herself up the gallows which stood by the roadside, she suspended herself along with the decaying bodies of criminals. At night she incited the dogs of the town of St. Trend to pursue her, as she flew, unkempt, ragged, and panting, through the streets, and out into meadows and woods. These labors were undergone for a sacred purpose. She was wrestling with the Lord of Heaven, that he might take compassion on the souls in Hell and Purgatory. If these performances were prayers, they were more symbolical than liturgical. When she did actually offer up supplications, her attitude was extraordinary. She twisted her arms, legs, head, and spine as near as possible into a heap—a "globe" the old Latin history calls it. People knew her prayer was concluded when Christina kicked out her legs, and ran off to balance herself on the points of railings.

The neighborhood was now too much roused and scandalised to endure these freaks any longer. A stout villager was ordered to seize Christina and put her in an appropriate lock-up. So swiftly did she run that she had all but eluded him. He brought her to the ground, poor soul, by striking her on the thigh with a cudgel. The bone was apparently broken. They carried the maniac to a surgeon's house. He had her put on a mattress in his cellar, and chained to a post. After dark she wrenched the chain loose, made a hole in the cellar wall, and fled into the open country. Henceforward she was allowed to wander whither she would. Not quite so much distaste did she now feel for human society. The change was due to her one day leaping into a font; the immersion rendered her more sociable. She begged for crusts from door to door. Her gown was patched. Its sleeves were of different patterns. She haunted the locality like a ghost, and delighted to thrust herself into the chambers of the dying, and warn the departing Christians of the terrors of the Nether World. When the nuns of St. Catherine's took her in pity to their convent, she assumed her marvellous globe-form (her allotropic form, one might call it, in the language of chemistry), and rolled round the room. Then she sang a hymn, and vanished. To the convent, however, she often returned. The nuns were always tender with the poor waif. In this convent she died, an old woman of more than three-score years, on July 24, 1224. Twenty-five years afterwards the people conceived the notion that Christina the Wonderful was a saint. They dug up her body, and committed it to a shrine. Her life was written by Thomas de Chantpré, a contemporary.

This disagreeable story suggests reflections under two heads—psychological and medical.

It is perfectly clear that Christina was a mad woman; and yet she was raised to sainthood by the Flemings of the Middle Ages. Now, I believe some of the noblest characters in the history of Europe are registered in the book of the saints of the Catholic Church. Auguste Comte indicates a group of them in his Calendar of Great Men—St. Gregory, St. Bruno, St. Francis Xavier, St. Ignatius Loyola, and others. Even these noblest saints were tainted with fanaticism. They did not see things whole and clear.

Their judgment was warped by their creed. Nevertheless, like ourselves, they could not rise beyond their age, and we may rank them as splendid personalities in relation to the moral standard of the time. But how comes it that a mere lunatic like Christina could be set in the same gallery as Loyola or Xavier? It was simply that Loyola and Xavier were elevated to sainthood by educated Spaniards and Italians. Christina was the darling of Flemish clowns and milkmaids. Like people, like heroes.

The second aspect is the medical one. The narrative of Christina reminds us that, from the first to the eighteenth century, the lunatic was practically neglected by Christendom. The gospel which was supposed to bring peace to nations could not invent a little consolation for the unhappy soul of the idiot, the imbecile, or the madman. I do not want to digress to the question of Theism, else I might dwell on the problem why an Almighty Master of the Skies permits the earth to be overlaid with swarms of men and women bereft of the princely quality of reason. I merely point to the evidence that Christian medicine looked on helpless at the sad spectacle of lunacy until the century dawned which gave us the beginnings of modern Free-thought, and saw the Rights of Man proclaimed in America and France.

F. J. GOULD.

LOCKE'S "LETTERS ON TOLERATION."

MILTON'S *Areopagitica* made no apparent impression on his age. It was written in too high a vein for the populace, and it was never the characteristic of members of Parliament to pay much heed to literary men unless they exercised a wide influence on the masses. The great poet's plea for the liberty of unlicensed printing seems to have been almost entirely forgotten in the next generation, so that his arguments, and even his very words, could be safely plagiarised by inferior pamphleteers. When the licensing system was finally abolished, it fell by the hand of commerce rather than by the hand of genius. The booksellers revolted against it, and their opposition was more powerful than that of the noblest writers in whose productions they trafficked.

Notwithstanding the "glorious revolution," scarcely a voice was raised on behalf of a free press in the earliest years of William's reign. But when the Licensing Act of 1685, which was passed for eight years, came to be renewed in 1693, it obtained a fresh lease of life with considerable difficulty. Edmund Bohun was then Licensor, and a trick played upon him by Charles Blount brought the whole system into public odium. Charles Blount is described by Macaulay as "a man of good family, of some reading, and of some small literary talent." Dryden speaks of his abilities in higher terms. Macaulay was biassed by his antipathy to Blount's "flippant profaneness," or he would have allowed him greater merit as a writer. Such a fervent believer as our great Whig historian could not forgive the editor of the *Oracle of Reason*, who "worried the priests" with his criticisms, and appended the most shockingly blasphemous notes to the Life of Apollonius of Tyana. Besides, Blount was not only "an infidel," but he was "the head of a small school of infidels who were troubled with a morbid desire to make converts." That is, they were not content with cherishing their own convictions, but actually had the audacity to disseminate them.

Although Blount was a wicked infidel, Macaulay allows that "it is in a great measure to him that we must attribute the emancipation of the English press." More than one of his heterodox treatises had been mutilated by the Licensers, and he was provoked into making war on the censorship. Under the name of Philopatrius, he issued an unlicensed pamphlet entitled *A Just Vindication of Learning and of the Liberty of the Press*. For the most part it consisted of extracts from Milton's forgotten *Areopagitica*. This act of plagiarism rouses the ire of Macaulay, who likens Blount to the barbarians who employ the remains of class architecture to build hovels and prop cowhouses, forgetting that in this case the arguments and eloquence of Milton were employed for the very purpose for which he intended them. Blount ended, as Milton had done, by recommending that books should be printed without a licence, provided that the name of the author or publisher were registered.

This pamphlet being well received, Blount followed it

up with another entitled *Reasons for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*. "To these Reasons," says Macaulay, "he appended a postscript entitled a Just and True Character of Edmund Bohun. This Character was written with extreme bitterness. Passages were quoted from the Licensor's writings to prove that he held the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance. He was accused of using his power systematically for the purpose of favoring the enemies and silencing the friends of the Sovereigns whose bread he ate."

Right on the heels of this second pamphlet, Blount requested Bohun to authorise the publication of an anonymous work entitled *King William and Queen Mary Conquerors*. Bohun was in raptures with this work. It echoed his own sentiments more melodiously than he had ever expressed them. But a few hours after it was published poor Bohun learned that "the title-page had set all London in a flame." The odious word "Conquerors" had raised the patriotic pride of the multitude. A few days afterwards he was summoned to the bar of the House of Commons. The work he had licensed was ordered to be burnt in Palace Yard by the common hangman; he was himself taken to a place of confinement; and the King was requested to remove him from the office of Licensor. Poor Bohun was ruined, and Blount must be held responsible for whatever moral guilt attaches to his clever plot. Yet his efforts and intrigues produced great public good. Hitherto licensing acts had been passed without a division, but now people inquired whether they were, after all, of any value. Instead of passing the Commons unopposed, the Act of 1685 was only renewed for two years by a majority of ninety-nine to eighty. In the Lords the suggestion of Milton, and after him of Blount, was moved as an amendment. It was rejected, but eleven peers signed a protest against subjecting all learning to "the arbitrary will and pleasure of a mercenary, and perhaps ignorant, licenser." Tillotson and Burnet were present, but as good Churchmen they voted against liberty.

After the death of Mary, in 1695, a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to ascertain what temporary statutes were about to expire, and to recommend which should be renewed. The Licensing Act of 1693 was included in their list, but when the Speaker asked the House if it should be continued, he pronounced that the Noes had it. When the list went up to the Lords they reinserted the Act, but the Commons would not agree to the amendment, and they appointed a Committee to confer with the Lords on the subject. Their reasons were carefully drawn up in a lengthy document. Every one was of a practical or commercial character. According to the *Craftsman*, as cited by Macaulay, this able document was drawn up by John Locke. Its arguments were suited to the taste and capacity of ordinary Englishmen, and they were so cogent that the Lords yielded without a contest. The peers probably thought that an improved bill would be sent up to them; but it never came, and the censorship of the English press was abolished for ever.

Directly the Licensing Act expired, on May 3, 1695, the press began to show its activity. Prior to that time, the only real newspaper in England was the *London Gazette*, and that was edited by a clerk in the office of the Secretary of State. But after that epochal Third of May, which is infinitely more important than the date of many decisive battles, newspaper followed newspaper in rapid succession, until there was enough for all parties and all tastes.

Whether John Locke did or did not compose the paper against the Licensing Act, it is certain that he hated such pettifogging tyranny. He was a friend of freedom in the broadest sense in which it was then understood. His famous *Letters on Toleration* show that he was imbued with the spirit which shone from the pages of Milton and gleamed from the pages of Taylor. Yet, although more than a generation had elapsed since the great poet and the great divine had written their defence of liberty, it is curious that Locke made no practical advance beyond their positions. His contribution to the debate on this transcendent question was theoretical. It consisted in the pregnant idea, which was destined to produce an offspring he never anticipated, that the civil magistrate had nothing to do with any man's religion.

Locke composed his first Letter on Toleration, of which the subsequent letters are only a defence, while he was an exile at Utrecht. Under James II., in 1685, he had been illegally deprived of his studentship of Christ Church in

the University of Oxford, the Bishop acting as political pimp to the king's ministry. The prelate's letters to Lord Sunderland, as printed in Lord King's *Life of Locke*, show to what a depth of baseness a priest could descend to serve the party in power. Locke was on the continent when he heard of his deprivation, which robbed him of his home and his bread, and he did not hasten to return. But the tyrant had an implacable hatred for the philosopher, and his name was included in a list of the proscribed whom the king's minister at the Hague demanded of the States General. The Government, however, would not hand over a man of such an innocuous life. Yet he thought it prudent to retire to Utrecht, where he spent several weeks in seclusion with his friend M. Veen. It was there that he composed his first Letter on Toleration. The subject had long occupied his mind. From his *Common-place Book*, dated 1667, Lord King quotes some notes of a projected essay, in which the main points of the Letter are clearly stated.

The Letter on Toleration was first printed in Latin at Tergou. It bore no author's name, but the initials J. L. A. signified Joanne Lockio Anglo. This did not, however, reveal his identity; and, in a letter to Limborch, Locke reproaches him for having disclosed to a friend that he was the author of the *Epistola*. It was translated and printed in London after the Revolution, still without his name, and he defended it anonymously in a second Letter in 1690 against the attack of a Churchman.

Lord King says of Locke's first Letter that it is "in some sort the most useful, because the most practical, of all his works." Mackintosh calls it "the most original of Locke's work." Warburton said that those who subsequently wrote on behalf of "the divine principle of toleration" went back to it for their arguments.

Locke's object being, as he says, to "distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other," he naturally gives a definition of both.

"The Commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, the preserving, and the advancing of their own civil interests.

"Civil interests I call life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like.

"It is the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure unto all people in general, and to every one of his subjects in particular, the just possession of these things belonging to this life."

The definition of a Church is equally concise. It is "a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they may judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls." The powers of such a Church are entirely moral, and only over its own members. It may exhort, admonish, and excommunicate; but in casting a member out of its pale it has no right to subject him to any temporal punishment, and if the magistrate assists it in such an outrage he is guilty of persecution. Not only must no injury be inflicted, but charity, bounty, and liberality must be shown. "If any man err from the right way," says Locke, "it is his own misfortune, no injury to thee: nor, therefore, art thou to punish him in the things of this life, because thou supposest he will be miserable in that which is to come."

There are three reasons why the magistrate should not meddle with religion. First, because "the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men." He can be of what religion he chooses, and so can his subjects, and he is as liable to be mistaken as they are. Secondly, his power consists in outward force, whereas religion is an inward persuasion of the mind. Confiscation, imprisonment, and torture cannot compel the judgment. "It is only light and evidence," Locke finely says, "that can work a change in men's opinions." Thirdly, because if penalties could change men's minds it would not therefore save their souls.

"For, there being but one truth, one way to heaven; what hope is there that more men would be led into it, if they had no other rule to follow but the religion of the court, and were put under a necessity to quit the light of their own reason, to oppose the dictates of their own consciences, and blindly to resign up themselves to the will of their governors, and to the religion, which either ignorance, ambition, or superstition had chanced to establish in the countries where they were born? In

the variety and contradictions of opinions in religion, wherein the princes of the world are as much divided as in their secular interests, the narrow way would be much straightened; one country alone would be in the right, and all the rest of the world put under an obligation of following their princes in the ways that lead to destruction; and that which heightens the absurdity, and very ill suits the notion of a deity, men would owe their eternal happiness or their eternal misery to the places of their nativity."

A shrewd thought! But it applies to all forms of salvation by faith as well as to the right of private judgment. As a matter of fact, the faith of nearly the whole human race is decided by the geographical accident of their birth; and if they are to be saved by faith, as the majority of Christian teachers assert, is it not true (however absurd and ill-suiting the notions of a deity) that they "owe their eternal happiness or their eternal misery to the places of their nativity"?

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

ACID DROPS.

A FIRE was discovered early in the morning, a few days ago, in the machine room of the University Press at Oxford. A pile of printed sheets of an Oxford Bible was alight. Perhaps it was a case of spontaneous combustion. There are some very hot texts in that volume.

Dean Farrar has been preaching at Abbey Church, Hexham, to "overflowing congregations," and giving them a bit of his mind on the subject of Christian liberality. He drew attention to a certain Dean (Lefroy, of Norwich) who earnestly appealed for a week of self-denial on behalf of the needs of his cathedral, and got only £30. This was shameful, and it was to be hoped that the Hexham Christians would rise to a loftier sense of their responsibilities in the sight of God. What men spent on themselves they lost; what they gave to God was all they really saved; it was "invested in the treasures of heaven." In other words, give to the clergy, open a bank account with God, and look for good interest in the life to come; which is a most beautiful way of doing business, especially for the clergy.

A German lady named Christensen fasted fifteen days at Schleswig, and twenty days at Copenhagen. She is now attempting a thirty days' fast at the Westminster Aquarium. If she succeeds, she will probably try again and again until she beats the Bible record of forty days. Succi and Jaques have both considerably beaten that record already. But they were men. Just fancy Jesus Christ beaten by a woman!

The *Westminster Gazette*, the other evening, gave the whereabouts of most of the Bishops. London, Southwell, Chichester, Ely, Norwich, Manchester, Oxford, Salisbury, and St. Albans were all abroad; Gloucester was at Birchington, Lincoln at Buxton, Liverpool at Lowestoft, Newcastle at a country house on the Cheviots, and Chester in North Wales. Poor overworked right reverend fathers-in-God!

To use the language of paradox—and nothing else is equal to this occasion—the Welsh Nonconformists have reached the bottom of the bottomless pit of Sabbatarianism. They have Sunday closing of public-houses in the Principality, which of course has multiplied drinking-shops disguised as clubs. But this does not satisfy their fiery fanaticism. What they are now contemplating is almost incredible. They actually aim at a raid on lozenges and lemonade. "Nonsense," some people will say, "that is a *Freethinker* invention." Well, it isn't; it is sober, gospel truth.

The following is extracted from the *Daily News* of Friday, September 16:—"At a meeting of Nonconformist ministers and laymen, held at Llanely last night, the Rev. Thomas Johns brought forward a proposition that the authorities should step in and compel all sweet-shops to be closed on Sundays. They kept thousands of young persons from Divine Service, he said, and others were eating lozenges during the whole time they were in chapel, and thought of nothing else. The shops in question were a great evil, and definite steps should be taken against their continuance. One speaker said it was a crying shame that shops should remain for indulgence in all kinds of games and improper practices, and another asked why the sale of milk on Sunday should not be stopped. Another speaker deprecated the sale of teetotal drinks, saying that the facilities thus afforded to young men often brought to them the longing for stronger drinks, which was followed by drunkenness. The matter is to be brought to the attention of the Standing Joint Committee of the County Council."

There you are now. Who on earth can beat that? Shutting up the public-houses doesn't suffice to fill the gospel-shops. Men and women must be swept in from the ginger-beer shops, and boys from the toffy-houses. Not even dairies must be allowed to compete with the establishments that dispense the blood of the lamb. We daresay the very cows will be sternly warned against the awful crime of yielding milk on Sunday.

Note, by the way, the subtlety of the out-and-out teetotal section of these Welsh Nonconformists. If you make it too easy for a young man to drink lemonade or ginger-beer, to say nothing of that dangerous beverage soda-water, he is likely to go on to beer, and then to whiskey, and then to God knows what, in a most deadly progression. You must stop him, therefore, at the very beginning of his evil career. Cut off his teetotal drinks, make him drink nice microby fresh water; and, if that doesn't answer, go the whole hog and muzzle him, and compel him to come to the minister periodically to be watered at the chapel trough.

The Chinese have burst out again and wrecked missionary buildings, American and French, at Hochow; but as the missionaries themselves are reported as "safe," it is probable that China won't be ordered to hand over more territory by way of compensation.

The Baptist Foreign Mission, in the Huddersfield district, has just held its annual meeting, at which the treasurer reported subscriptions amounting to £344 2s. 7d., against £358 19s. 3d. in the previous year. Evidently the Huddersfield district is a little wiser than it was twelve months ago. Several reverend gentlemen gave glowing accounts of how the black heathen were being saved in West and Central Africa; but there are plenty of white heathen in Yorkshire on whom that £344 odd could easily be spent; at least it might be spent on their children, not so much in making them Christians as in giving them a chance to become decent citizens of England.

It is not surprising to find that many people are puzzled by the apparent powerlessness of the law to suppress lotteries in Ireland. Gambling for the glory of God is a favorite expedient used by priests and nuns for raising the wind for religious purposes. The authorities are unwilling to provoke the inevitable outcry which would be raised if any serious attempt were made to suppress the nuisance. The masses of the Irish people could easily be persuaded that a prosecution of the kind was really an attack upon their Church, a wicked attempt on the part of the government of Protestant England to persecute the poor Catholics of Ireland, and the authorities are at all times anxious to avoid any enforcement of the law which would furnish the Irish Catholics with a pretext for making a charge of that character. The police run in small boys for playing pitch and toss, but the "strongest government of modern times" is powerless to suppress gambling by the priests of what Carlyle calls "the great lying Church."

Our Spiritualist contemporary, the *Two Worlds*, in its last number, prints drawings from photographs of the foot of a materialised spirit known as "Bertie." If this sort of thing is capable—and why should it not be?—of further development, there is no reason why artists should not have materialised spirit models in their studios, and save the cost of hiring females who want money to buy food and clothes. On the whole, we are not in love with this curious philosophy of a future life.

The police have had to interfere with the crowds that assembled at St. Peter's Church, De Beauvoir Town, Kingsland, to see the "ghost." Three young fellows were brought before the magistrate, who bound them over to keep the peace for three months, by the end of which period "the ghost would probably have disappeared."

The trial of James and Grace Cook, two of the Peculiar People, at the Old Bailey, on a charge of manslaughter, for not calling in medical assistance to their dying child, has resulted in a hopeless disagreement of the jury. Mr. Justice Darling bound them over to appear again at the October sessions. Perhaps the jury will disagree a second time, and what will be done then? It doesn't seem feasible to go on trying them forever.

Mr. Justice Darling had his little joke at the expense of these poor Peculiar People, who belong to the same religion as himself. Being asked by the Deputy Clerk of Arraigns whether they had any counsel to defend them, they replied: "Yes, the Lord Jehovah." Whereupon the judge turned to the jury and said: "Gentlemen, the defendants are defended by the Lord Jehovah." Of course it is very funny from a sceptical point of view, but it ought not to be funny at all to a Christian. But then Mr. Justice Darling is not a Christian. He is only a make-believe one.

In addressing the jury Mr. Justice Darling frequently referred to the belief of the Peculiar People as something special to themselves. "They say this," and "they say that," he remarked. But this is all nonsense. They don't say it. They say the Bible says it. And as that happens to be the volume on which the judge himself was sworn in, and is declared to be God's Word by the law of the land, it is gross humbug and hypocrisy to saddle these Peculiar People with the whole responsibility of the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer.

The Bishop of Truro desired all the clergy in his diocese to offer a thanksgiving to Almighty God on Sunday, September 18, for the "new hope of the Evangelisation of Africa given to us by the victory at Omdurman." Not a word about the ten thousand slaughtered dervishes, or the frightful number of wounded. What do their death and sufferings matter when a new field of enterprise and emolument is opened up for Christian missionaries?

The Rev. John Sharp, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, jumps to the conclusion that the Soudanese are lax Mohammedans, because some of them have been fighting in our army against their co-religionists. But does the reverend gentleman seriously think that men of the same religion will not fight each other? If so, he is singularly blind to the facts of European history. Christians have been fighting Christians for more than a thousand years.

"General Booth—one must give the reverend gentleman his military title, though it is sometimes absurdly misleading—is credited with repeating in Newcastle one of the most ridiculous fables ever invented. Twenty-five years ago, he is reported to have said, 'Mrs. Besant stood with her watch in her hand, giving the Christians' God five minutes to strike her dead.' This horrible story has been told of almost every Freethinker that has attained prominence in this country during the last fifty years. Freethinkers may be ignorant, conceited, wrong-headed—anything you like; but they are certainly not fools. Yet they would be utter fools if they were capable of anything so stupid and outrageous as the performance ascribed to Mrs. Besant. The late Mr. Bradlaugh had to contradict the same offensive falsehood respecting himself almost every year; sometimes he compelled the libellers to publish apologies; more than once, I believe, he made them not only retract the lying statement, but pay handsome sums to public charities, in lieu of running the risk of actions for damages. If it be true that Mr. Booth has really given new currency to the stale old slander, it is possible that he may yet hear from Mrs. Besant's solicitors. Let us be fair, gentlemen, even to our opponents. But it is decidedly not fair to bear false witness against them."—*Newcastle Chronicle*.

Mr. G. W. Foote was lecturing at Birmingham on Sunday, and his meetings were enthusiastic but orderly. John Kensit spoke at Birmingham on Monday, and there was a free fight on the Town Hall floor. The moral is obvious.

"Providence" has been very busy, or very negligent—we don't know which—in the West Indies. Hundreds of people have been killed, and nearly fifty thousand were rendered homeless, by a terrible hurricane, which swept everything before it.

What is the matter with the *Daily News*? It refers to the assassinated Empress of Austria as "singled out, by the mysterious permission of Providence, as the victim of the blindest fanaticism the world has yet produced." If Providence permitted this crime, the human assassin ought not to stand alone in the prisoner's dock.

Mr. G. R. Sims, in the *Referee*, says that Anarchist assassins don't fear death, because they have no belief in a hereafter. This may be true enough, but we do not see its relevance. There have been hundreds, nay thousands, of assassins in human history, and the overwhelming majority of them have believed in a future life. Mr. Sims should try again.

A conscientious objector under the new Vaccination Act, at the Birmingham Police-court, on being asked his grounds said: "I think our Creator would—" "Oh, never mind the Creator now," said the magistrate's clerk. They don't want him in the Police-court, though if half the things recorded of him in the Old Testament be true he ought to be there.

Marius Hedges Lewes, a minister of religion, aged fifty-nine, has been sentenced to fifteen months' hard labor at the Old Bailey for altering a cheque for £1 to £61, and getting it cashed for that amount. The Recorder, in sentencing him, said that from beginning to end he had lived a life of fraud.

Rev. Henry Dixon Jones, rector of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Intercession, New York, is in trouble

in fact, he is at large on a two thousand dollar bail. He took to beating his servant girl, and the noise caused a crowd to assemble, who threw stones at him and called him a Spaniard. Jones grew angry and called in the police, who had much trouble in dispersing the mob. When the case comes before the jury, Jones will want a lot of the grace of God to pull him through.

Under the heading of "The Christian Life," our esteemed contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, prints half a column of cases of men of God who have recently gone wrong in the States. Rev. John H. Gill, Methodist, of Aspen, Col., has been expelled from the ministry for playing David to an Abigail of weak mind. Rev. George Kulp, of Grand Rapids, has been caught in *flagrante delicto* with a lady member of his congregation, the wife of his choir leader. These two cases will give our readers a good idea of most of the others. The clerical temperament seems much the same all over the world.

Dr. John Hall, the famous Presbyterian minister of New York, is dead. His income was several thousand pounds a year, and he was supposed to be a Christian. We have read the New Testament, and we shudder to think where he has gone.

Talmage says that "Evolution is up-and-down out-and-out infidelity." We are glad to hear it. Talmage deviates into sense now and then.

"Rotten, deceptive, infidel, and blasphemous evolution," exclaims Talmage. He can't deviate into good manners.

Talmage believes in the corruption of human nature. Perhaps his belief is founded on a pretty fair knowledge of himself. "When you can evolve autumn pippins from a basket of decayed crab-apples," he says, "then you can by natural evolution from the human heart develop goodness." We are quite satisfied with Talmage's description of himself. An old decayed crab-apple! What an exquisite piece of self-criticism! It is good to catch Talmage in his confidential moments.

Where, by the way, did Talmage learn that John Stuart Mill wrote his own epitaph: "Most unhappy!"? Mill never said that of himself, and it is not on his tombstone. Probably it was manufactured in some pious laboratory on the other side of the Atlantic.

The *Devon Weekly Times* draws attention to the Romanising business which is going on in St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Exeter. It also says that the children in the Exeter Central Schools are taught "the doctrine of the Real Presence and the duty of attending the Confessional." Yet these schools are maintained out of taxes levied upon citizens who abhor such teaching.

The *South London Mail*, assisted by Teapot Taylor and Happy Jack, continues its crusade against Peckham Rye "blasphemy." Its know-all editor, however, displays his ignorance by falling into a pretty little trap which we laid for him. He takes it for granted, on the strength of a satirical allusion of ours, that the law of maintenance would prevent his prosecuting us with other people's money. Well, it wouldn't. The law of maintenance applies to civil suits, not to criminal prosecutions. Let the editor of the *Mail*, then, beg, borrow, or steal the money, and come on.

We need not trouble about the *Mail's* nonsense as to Atheism breeding murderers. Nobody in South London believes it, not even the editor of the *Mail*. It would be a great mistake to suppose that this gentleman is really in a passion. He is simply engaged in business. At present he is paid to write against everything "Progressive," but he would probably have no objection to writing against the other side for a higher "consideration." One ought not to take the prostitutes of journalism too seriously. We did him the honor of replying to one of his articles, and now we have other fish to fry. We leave him collecting the half-pence of orthodox idiots for the purpose of "driving these Atheists back into their holes." And as a colossal sum of money is sure to be obtained, and a safe, substantial treasurer will be wanted, we dare say he will fall back on his friend Teapot Taylor.

The Sydney *Bulletin* prints a capital little sketch of a lushington sprawling on the ground, and exclaiming: "They shay—hic—the wicked shtand on slippery places, but I'm blowed—hic—if I can." "A Strange Scriptural Blunder" is the headline.

The Lympington Nonconformist ministers have obtained permission to conduct an evangelistic service once a month in the workhouse, and the chaplain says he doesn't mind, for forty-four of the fifty inmates belong to the Church of

England, and of the remaining six available for Nonconformist manipulation two are deaf and one is imbecile.

The Rev. Robert Ransford, vicar of St. Paul's, Upper Norwood, has published a manual of Confession intended for children, who are told to ask themselves some pretty questions on the Seventh Commandment. Here are some lovely samples: "Have I detested indecency and all immodesty with all my heart? Have I resisted temptations immediately and bravely? Have I willingly dwelt on impure thoughts? Have I imprudently exposed myself to occasions of danger? Have I mixed with bad companions? Have I talked and laughed with them about bad things? Have I been so unhappy as to act indecently? How often gravely and wilfully?" Parson Ransford may mean well, but he has an odd way of showing it.

The Church Congress ought to be a splendid and useful gathering. The Bishop of Ripon has had special prayers offered up for it. "What is needed in such an assembly," he says, "is the spirit of Christ." A large supply of that article is solicited, but will it arrive? When one of Cromwell's soldiers was told to clear out a certain church, and found the parson and his friends in it praying, he asked them what they were at, and they replied that they were "seeking the Lord." "Then," said he, "you had better go elsewhere, for to my certain knowledge he has not been here for years."

How these Christians love one another! The Rev. Forbes Phillips, vicar of Gorleston, calls the Rev. Andrew Leggatt, Congregational minister, of Yarmouth, a "vulgar, hypocritical, ranting, smug-faced tub-thumper."

This same vicar of Gorleston is referred to in the *Vegetarian* as one who "has had the boldness to announce from the pulpit his convictions with regard to the immortality of animals"—including, we presume, Nonconformist preachers. It appears that the reverend gentleman—who is full of the subject, apparently not knowing its antiquity—holds that all animals will live again. He makes no exception even in the case of lice, fleas, bugs, scorpions, and mosquitoes. Well, we hope all those varieties will be gathered together in the place the reverend gentleman is booked for. It will be some consolation, at least, for those of us who are booked for the other establishment.

The *Church Gazette* thanks the Archbishop of Canterbury for admitting that there are inaccuracies in the Old Testament. This opinion, it says, is commonly held, and it is high time to put an end to the "conspiracy of silence" upon the subject. Nay, the New Testament should be treated with the same frankness as the Old Testament; for it also "contains inaccuracies," and, as one case is as good as twenty, the *Church Gazette* instances the following: "How," it asks, "can the most ingenious and determined harmonist, on any natural principles, reconcile the circumstantial narrative which tells us that the Ascension took place near Jerusalem with another which locates it on a mountain in Galilee?" Surely this is pretty plain speaking for a Church paper.

Referring to the Archbishop of Canterbury's letter on Bible inaccuracies, the *Oban Telegraph* ventures to print a few more of them. However, it is good enough to add that it is easy to see how these "verbal" mistakes happened. "The marvel rather is," it says, "considering from how many sources we have the sacred narrative, that there are so few of them." Surely "how many sources" is an unlucky expression. Christians generally assert that the Bible came from one source—God; but the *Oban Telegraph* says it came from many sources, which must have been human. This is the Freethought view of the matter.

Judge Willis has been relieving the monotony of his legal duties by discoursing to young men at Norwich on Christianity. We should like to have a full report of his address, but in the absence of it we must make what we can of the brief summary in a Christian journal. Judge Willis appears to have declared that it was a waste of time to argue about Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or about any creed, or about geology and the Flood, or even about the inspiration of the Bible. The one thing of importance, he said, was to trust in Christ as the Savior. But apparently he did not say from what Christ would save us, and without this information it is useless to attempt any criticism.

A Woolwich man named Carver took a very curious "conscientious objection" to vaccination. He told the magistrate that his child was made in the image and likeness of God, and "it was not meant that God's skin should be cut." The magistrate treated this as "ridiculous," as indeed it is in the light of the New Testament. Jesus Christ was God (they say), and his skin was cut. He wasn't vaccinated, but he suffered another operation peculiar to his nation.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, September 25, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool; 11, "War Within the Church"; 3, "The Czar's Appeal to Europe"; 7, "The Meaning of Death."

October 2, Glasgow; 9, Leicester; 16 and 23, Athenæum Hall.
November 6, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—September 25, Athenæum Hall, London. October 2, New Brompton; 9, Athenæum Hall, London. 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.

T. WILMOT.—Sorry we cannot explain the mystery. It is too far back. We do not keep the manuscript of lecture notices.

STANLEY JONES desires to inform Branch secretaries and others concerned that he has changed his address, which is now No. 29 Cromwell-road, Holloway, N.

J. H. FOSTER.—The Treasurer's Scheme is still in operation, nor is there any change in the constitution and policy of the National Secular Society.

A. B. MOSS.—Thanks.

REGULATOR.—Thanks. See paragraph.

R. SEWELL.—Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* is an expensive book. The price is £1 nett. Perhaps you could get access to it at your local Free Library. It was reviewed in our columns by J. M. Wheeler, and we shall probably have something more to say about it shortly.

THOMAS SEARLE.—We understand your question to be this: Which side, the Christian or the Freethought, has the greater array of scientific men and scholars? But is it a wise method to settle what is true and what is false by counting heads or reckoning authorities? Great and good men have been on all sides, and have often opposed each other most vehemently. The only profitable discussion is on principles, not on personalities. Still, a cause has no reason to fear in any way which numbers men like Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Clifford, Haeckel, Büchner, Strauss, Renan, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, Holyoake, Grant Allen, and a host of others too numerous to recite.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—Thanks for enclosure and your good wishes, though we are sorry to hear of your misfortune.

W. TURNBULL joins the Secular Society, Limited, and wishes the scheme all success.

W. M. MCCLYMONT.—We think you attach too much importance to the leaflet you enclose. It is not in our opinion calculated to do Secularism any injury with thinking people, and what is the use of troubling about the rest?

JOSEPH McCORMACK.—Robert Forster, the man at Spennymoor who says he debated three nights with Charles Bradlaugh, in the City Hall, Glasgow, and that Charles Bradlaugh acknowledged his defeat, may be a very good Christian, but he is a very bad liar.

W. W. LEAVIS.—Received.

SHAKESPEARE STUDENT.—You cannot do better than read, and if possible keep by you, the *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps. It is a bulky volume, and contains practically all that is positively known about our greatest poet.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—H. Good, 10s.

"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—Omicron, £1 (this contributor sends another £1 for the general benefit of the paper); W. Waite (per Miss Vance), 5s.; A. J. Marriott, 1s.; Charles Daviss, 2s. 6d.; Anonymous, 1s.; M. Christopher, 5s.

RHONDA COLLIER.—We have read your letter with much interest. It is pleasant to meet with a hard-working man who devotes some of his scanty leisure to intellectual pursuits. We shall find room for one of your efforts in verse. The pamphlet you inquire about—Mr. Foote's *Folly of Prayer*—is reprinting.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your batches of cuttings.

M. E. PEGG.—See paragraph. We are always glad to hear that young lecturers are making way. Mr. Ward has our best wishes.

A. KOHN, AND OTHERS.—Someone wrote to Mr. Foote, ostensibly on Mr. Waldron's behalf, suggesting another public discussion on Christianity and Secularism, which both have already discussed together at Camberwell. Mr. Foote has not yet replied. He will do so at leisure. He is inquiring carefully of persons who allege that Mr. Waldron has indulged in quite indefensible personalities about him at public meetings, and this is a matter that must be settled before he can give an affirmative answer.

CHARLES DAVISS joins the Secular Society, Limited, and hopes it will be the strong centre of great Freethought activity.

W. C. MARTIN.—Received.

WILL-WISHER.—We are obliged. Talmage is treated to a few "Acid Drops."

A SCOTTISH friend, who joins the Secular Society, Limited, says: "It is my intention to add to my Trust Disposition and Settlement a codicil instructing my trustees, in the event of my death, to pay to this Society one hundred pounds sterling as a gift or bequest absolutely, to be used in furthering the Society's general objects. I hope that by-and-bye hundreds of other members will do likewise, and some even give £1,000, as I have no doubt they could do."

M. CHRISTOPHER (Wolverhampton) and Thomas Stephens (Darlington) join the Secular Society, Limited.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Boston Investigator—Ethical World—Evening Chronicle (Newcastle)—Daily Examiner (Huddersfield)—Two Worlds—Rochdale Observer—Torch of Reason—Sydney Bulletin—Public Opinion—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—Cornish Telegraph—New York Truthseeker—Christian Herald—Devon Weekly Times—South London Mail—Oban Telegraph—Scottish Nights—Secular Thought—People's Newspaper—Isle of Man Times—Liberator—Progressive Thinker—Blue Grass Blade.

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 dribbles 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 delivers three lectures to-day (September 25) at Liverpool; not in the Oddfellows' Hall as hitherto, but in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. Local Freethinkers will please note the change. We understand that the (large) Alexandra Hall is just as commodious as the Oddfellows' Hall, and far more comfortable. Mr. Foote's subjects should attract large audiences, including Christians as well as Secularists.

Mr. Foote wrote to the secretary of the Birmingham Branch saying that if the hot weather continued he would not run the risk of delivering three lectures on Sunday. Morning and evening might be all right, but the afternoon too might lead to an inquest. Fortunately the weather cooled down suddenly; indeed, there was a tremendous drop in the temperature; so all three meetings took place as advertised. The morning and afternoon audiences were first-rate, and there was a great crush in the evening, every inch of standing room being occupied, while many people had to be turned away at the door. The utmost enthusiasm

prevailed throughout the day, and the members of the Committee were all as happy as boys on a holiday. At the bookstall there was a large sale of literature, including six quires (162 copies) of the *Freethinker*. Altogether the Birmingham season opened most promisingly, and the Branch looks forward to a good winter's campaign.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured last Sunday evening to a good and enthusiastic audience in the Athenæum Hall upon "Atheism and Agnosticism." His exposition of the two "isms" was appreciated by the attentive listeners, judging from the repeated applause. Mr. Thurlow occupied the chair, and expressed "his great delight" at the lecture. He was pleased to see Mr. Watts "still, as of old, on the war-path."

Mr. Watts again occupies the same platform this evening, Sunday, September 25, taking for his subject "The New Bible." We hope defenders of the "Grand Old Book" will attend and offer some pertinent opposition.

The *Boston Investigator* for September 3 prints an article on "Some Epitaphs," by the late J. M. Wheeler, but (no doubt inadvertently) omits the acknowledgment.

One of the most useful and best-conducted societies in London is the Humanitarian League, which offers to send speakers, when possible, to clubs, institutes, school-rooms, etc., to open discussions on the following questions from the human standpoint: Criminal Law and Prison Reform, Capital Punishment, The Sweating System, The Poor Law, Women's Wages, Dangerous Trades, The Game Laws, Rights of Animals, Inhumanities of Science, Vivisection, Cattle-ships and Slaughterhouses, Cruel Sports, Treatment of Horses, and Protection of Birds. All communications to be addressed to the Hon. Sec., Humanitarian League, 53 Chancery-lane, W.C.

Of course the Humanitarian League is not a sectional body; still, our readers will be glad to know that some of its best workers are Freethinkers.

Mr. Hodgson, a member of the Reading School Board, did good work by moving that moral instruction on a non-theological basis should take the place of the present religious instruction. He supported this motion in a careful and able speech, which is well reported in the local *Observer*. It was seconded by Mr. Wilson in another excellent speech. Of course it was opposed by the Rev. A. Cheales, who said "it was impossible to have morality without the Bible," and by the Rev. Canon Ducat, who insolently said that the arguments of the other side were not worth replying to. The motion was lost, but the question was ventilated, and that is a considerable gain. Thousands of people will read the speeches of Messrs. Hodgson and Wilson, and some of them will perhaps have their eyes opened.

The Manchester Branch secretary informs us that Mr. Percy Ward's opening lectures there have been very successful, in spite of the hot weather. He had very large open-air audiences at Alexandra Park and Stevenson-square. His evening lecture last Sunday on the Bedborough case gave rise to long and animated discussion.

The Bedborough trial is adjourned until the next sessions at the Old Bailey, commencing on October 24. This gives further time for the Free Press Defence Committee's appeal for moral and financial support. Subscriptions should be forwarded to the honorary secretary, Henry Seymour, 51 Arundel-square, London, N.

Insuring the Kirk.

Nearly two generations ago the question of having their church building insured against fire was discussed by the kirk session of a religious sect in a country town. The economics of fire insurance might be sound enough as applied to their own personal property, but they took a different view of the matter where a sacred building was concerned. The climax of debate was reached, and with it the finding of the meeting, as one of these worthy men with the faith of a Peter said: "If God was not able to keep His own building, it was time to roup the business."—*Scottish Nights* (Sept. 17).

WHEELER MEMORIAL FUND.

J. Bandin, 2s.; H. M. Ridgway, 10s.

ANIMALS IN HEAVEN.

To deny a life hereafter for a beast,
And affirm it for humanity,
Shows a lively lack of logic at the least,
And perhaps a lack of sanity.

All the arguments for man's eternal ghost
Are the ditto for the sewer-rat's;
And though Heav'n may not have drains, 'twill nathless
boast
That it won't for that have fewer rats.

Does a paradise for parasites exist
In menageries celestial?
Will an entozoic soul itself encyst
In a spirit erst terrestrial?

Will the souls of men, and beasts that prowl by night,
Lose their inter-animosity?
Will the spirit of the tapeworm wing its flight
To a heav'nly sinuosity?

If a heav'n's reserved for witless louts that snoozed
In the Garden of Gethsemane,
Is it likely that a heav'n will be refused
To a shrimp, or sea-anemone?

Will the *moulted* prophet's *callow* critics find
That the bears that made a mess of them
Are in limbo with the spirits of their kind,
Say a billion, more or less, of them?

If the spirits of Jehovah's chartered whale
And its undigested passenger
Have a reminiscent chat "behind the veil,"
So will maggots from a "sassenjer."

If the talents folk exhibit here below
Are continued when they rise again,
Will the monkey's soul resume the *status quo*
And the bird's be catching flies again?

If the risen souls of men and fleas employ
Their correlative proclivities,
Will they mutually relish and enjoy
Their reciprocal activities?

Will the parasitic parsons, when they die,
Be endowed with immortality,
And impose on ghostly simpletons on high
With ethereal rascality?
Preaching person, answer!
Sniff not! Fly not!
Answer, if you can, sir!
If not, why not?

G. L. MACKENZIE.

J E E M S .

JUST like a boy, he had been playing around all the morning. Other boys were getting ready for Sunday-school, and had their hair combed down behind their ears, and a religious look in their eyes, while this boy was drawing a cart up and down the walk, and encouraging peace-loving dogs to assault each other, and still further disturb the harmony of the pleasant morning. At length his mother walked down to the gate, caught sight of him half a block away, and she shouted: "Young m-a-n!"

He rose up from his seat on the walk, and brushed away at his pants as he turned his eyes towards her. "Young man, you had better stir your stumps!" she shouted.

He stirred them. Travelling half the distance which separated them, he halted, and queried: "What yer want?"

"What do I want?" she screeched. "I want you!"

"I'm here, ain't I?"

"Yes, you are out here, cantering around, and yelling and howling on the Lord's Day. It's a wonder to me that Providence hasn't put some great affliction on you!"

"Biles!" he queried.

"Biles! Worse than biles! Now you come in here."

"What fur?"

"Come in here and get ready for Sunday-school!"

"I hate ter."

"Come here, young man!"

He slowly approached her, and as he came within reaching distance she seized him by the hair, shook him right and left, and remarked: "Hate to, do you? Want to be an heathen, eh! Don't love the Lord, eh!"

"Yas—oh!—oh, goll!" he yelled.

"Well, I thought you did. Now stump into the house and get ready for Sunday-school. I've been thinking over your case lately, and I've made up my mind to lick you to death, and hang your hide on the fence if you don't get religion and be somebody!"

And she hauled Jeems into the house, gave him a push through the hall, and exclaimed: "I don't care for the neighbors! It's my duty to save you from fire and brimstone, and I'll do it if I have to break every bone in your body!"

A LOOK BACKWARD AND A PROPHECY.

THE STEADY GAIN OF SCIENCE, FREETHOUGHT, AND REASON.

(Concluded from page 604.)

HEGEL, in his first book, had done a great work, and it did great good, in spite of the fact that his second book was almost a surrender. Lecky, in his first volume of *The History of Rationalism*, shed a flood of light on the meanness, the cruelty, and the malevolence of "revealed religion," and this did good, in spite of the fact that he almost apologises in the second volume for what he had said in the first.

The Universalists had done good. They had civilised a good many Christians. They declared that eternal punishment was infinite revenge, and that the God of Hell was an infinite savage.

Some of the Unitarians, following the example of Theodore Parker, denounced Jehovah as a brutal, tribal God. All these forces worked together for the development of the orthodox brain.

Herbert Spencer was being read and understood. The theories of this great philosopher were being adopted. He overwhelmed the theologians with facts, and from a great height he surveyed the world. Of course he was attacked, but not answered.

Emerson had sowed the seeds of thought—of doubt—in many minds, and from many directions the world was being flooded with intellectual light. The clergy became apologetic; they spoke with less certainty, with less emphasis, and lost a little confidence in the power of assertion. They felt the necessity of doing something, and they began to harmonise as best they could the old lies and the new truths. They tried to get the wreck ashore, and many of them were willing to surrender if they could keep their side-arms—that is to say, their salaries.

Conditions had been reversed. The Bible had ceased to be the standard. Science was the supreme and final test.

There was no peace for the pulpit; no peace for the shepherds. Students of the Bible in England and Germany had been examining the inspired Scriptures. They had been trying to find when and by whom the books of the Bible were written. They found that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses; that the authors of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Esther, and Job were not known; that the Psalms were not written by David; that Solomon had nothing to do with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the Song; that Isaiah was the work of at least three authors; that the prophecies of Daniel were written after the happening of the events prophesied. They found many mistakes and contradictions, and some of them went so far as to assert that the Hebrews had never been slaves in Egypt; that the story of the plague, the exodus, and the pursuit was only a myth.

The New Testament fared no better than the Old. These critics found that nearly all of the books of the New Testament had been written by unknown men; that it was impossible to fix the time when they were written; that many of the miracles were absurd and childish, and that, in addition to all of this, the gospels were found filled with mistakes, with interpolations and contradictions; that the writers of Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not understand the Christian religion as it was understood by the author of the gospel according to John.

Of course the critics were denounced from most of the pulpits, and the religious papers, edited generally by men who had failed as preachers, were filled with bitter denials and vicious attacks. The religious editors refused to be enlightened. They fought under the old flag. When dogmas became too absurd to be preached, they were taught in the Sunday-schools; when worn out there they were given to the missionaries; but the dear old religious weeklies, the *Banners*, the *Covenants*, the *Evangelists*, continued to feed their provincial subscribers with known mistakes and refuted lies.

There is another fact that should be taken into consideration. All religions are provincial. Mingled with them all, and at the foundation of all, are the egotism of ignorance, of isolation, the pride of race, and what is called patriotism. Every religion is a natural product—the result of conditions. When one tribe became acquainted with another, the ideas of both were somewhat modified. So

when nations and races come into contact a change in thought, in opinion, is a necessary result.

A few years ago nations were strangers, and consequently hated each other's institutions and religions. Commerce has done a great work in destroying provincialism. To trade commodities is to exchange ideas. So the press, the steamships, the railways, cables, and telegraphs have brought the nations together, and enabled them to compare their prejudices, their religious laws and customs.

Recently many scholars have been studying the religions of the world, and have found them much the same. They have also found that there is nothing original in Christianity; that the legends, miracles, Christs, and conditions of salvation, the heavens, hells, angels, devils, and gods, were the common property of the ancient world. They found that Christ was a new name for an old biography; that he was not a life, but a legend; not a man, but a myth.

People began to suspect that our religion had not been supernaturally revealed, while others, far older and substantially the same, had been naturally produced. They found it difficult to account for the fact that poor, ignorant savages had, in the darkness of nature, written so well that Jehovah thousands of years afterwards copied it, and adopted it as his own. They thought it curious that God should be a plagiarist.

These scholars found that all the old religions had recognised the existence of devils, of evil spirits, who sought in countless ways to injure the children of men. In this respect they found that the sacred books of other nations were just the same as our Bible, as our New Testament.

Take the devil from our religion, and the entire fabric falls. No devil, no Fall of Man. No devil, no atonement. No devil, no hell.

The devil is the keystone of the arch.

And yet for many years the belief in the existence of the devil—of evil spirits—has been fading from the minds of intelligent people. This belief has now substantially vanished. The minister who now seriously talks about a personal devil is regarded with a kind of pitying contempt.

The devil has faded from his throne, and the evil spirits have vanished from the air.

The man who has really given up a belief in the existence of the devil cannot believe in the inspiration of the New Testament—in the divinity of Christ. If Christ taught anything, if he believed in anything, he taught a belief in the existence of the devil. His principal business was casting out devils. He himself was taken possession of by the devil, and carried to the top of the temple.

Thousands and thousands of people have ceased to believe the account in the New Testament regarding devils, and yet continue to believe in the dogma of "inspiration" and the divinity of Christ.

In the brain of the average Christian contradictions dwell in unity.

While a belief in the existence of the devil has almost faded away, the belief in the existence of a personal God has been somewhat weakened. The old belief that back of nature, back of all substance and force, was and is a personal God, an infinite intelligence who created and governs the world, began to be questioned. The scientists had shown the indestructibility of matter and force. Büchner's great work had convinced most readers that matter and force could not have been created. They also became satisfied that matter cannot exist apart from force, and that force cannot exist apart from matter.

They found, too, that thought is a form of force, and that consequently intelligence could not have existed before matter, because without matter force in any form cannot and could not exist.

The creator of anything is utterly unthinkable.

A few years ago God was supposed to govern the world. He rewarded the people with sunshine, with prosperity and health, or he punished with drought and flood, with plague and storm. He not only attended to the affairs of nations, but he watched the actions of individuals. He sunk ships, derailed trains, caused conflagrations, killed men and women with his lightnings, destroyed some with earthquakes, and tore the homes and bodies of thousands into fragments with his cyclones.

In spite of the Church, in spite of the ministers, the people began to lose confidence in Providence. The right

did not seem always to triumph. Virtue was not always rewarded, and vice was not always punished. The good failed, the vicious succeeded, the strong and cruel enslaved the weak, toil was paid with the lash, babes were sold from the breasts of mothers, and Providence seemed to be absolutely heartless.

In other words, people began to think that the God of the Christians and the God of nature were about the same, and that neither appeared to take any care of the human race.

The Deists of the last century scoffed at the Bible God. He was too cruel, too savage. At the same time they praised the God of nature. They laughed at the idea of inspiration, and denied the supernatural origin of the scriptures.

Now, if the Bible is not inspired, then it is a natural production, and nature, not God, should be held responsible for the scriptures. Yet the Deists denied that God was the author, and, at the same time, asserted the perfection of nature.

This shows that even in the minds of Deists contradictions dwell in unity.

Against all these facts and forces, these theories and tendencies, the clergy fought and prayed. It is not claimed that they were consciously dishonest, but it is claimed that they were prejudiced—that they were incapable of examining the other side—that they were utterly destitute of the philosophic spirit. They were not searchers for the facts, but defenders of the creeds, and undoubtedly they were the product of conditions and surroundings, and acted as they must.

In spite of everything, a few rays of light penetrated the orthodox mind. Many ministers accepted some of the new facts, and began to mingle with Christian mistakes a few scientific truths. In many instances they excited the indignation of their congregations. Some were tried for heresy and driven from their pulpits, and some organised new churches and gathered about them a few people willing to listen to the sincere thoughts of an honest man.

The great body of the Church, however, held to the creed—not quite believing it, but still insisting that it was true. In private conversation they would apologise and admit that the old ideas were outgrown, but in public they were as orthodox as ever. In every church, however, there were many priests who accepted the new gospel—that is to say, welcomed the truth.

To-day it may truthfully be said that the Bible in the old sense is no longer regarded as the inspired word of God. Jehovah is no longer accepted or believed in as the creator of the universe. His place has been taken by the Unknown, the Unseen, the Invisible, the Incomprehensible Something, the Cosmic Dust, the First Cause, the Inconceivable, the Original Force, the Mystery. The God of the Bible, the gentleman who walked in the cool of the evening, who talked face to face with Moses, who revenged himself on unbelievers, and who gave laws written with his finger on tables of stone, has abdicated. He has become a myth.

So, too, the New Testament has lost its authority. People reason about it now as they do about other books, and even orthodox ministers pick out the miracles that ought to be believed, and when anything is attributed to Christ not in accordance with their views they take the liberty of explaining it away by saying "interpolation."

In other words, we have lived to see science the standard instead of the Bible. We have lived to see the Bible tested by science, and, what is more, we have lived to see reason the standard, not only in religion, but in all the domain of science. Now all civilised scientists appeal to reason. They get their facts, and then reason from the foundation. Now the theologian appeals to reason. Faith is no longer considered a foundation. The theologian has found that he must build upon the truth, and that he must establish this truth by satisfying human reason.

This is where we are now.

What is to be the result? Is progress to stop? Are we to retrace our steps? Are we going back to superstition? Are we going to take authority for truth?

Let me prophesy.

In modern times we have slowly lost confidence in the supernatural, and have slowly gained confidence in the natural. We have slowly lost confidence in gods, and have slowly gained confidence in man. For the cure of disease, for the stopping of plague, we depend on the natural—on science. We have lost confidence in holy water and religious

processions. We have found that prayers are never answered.

In my judgment, all belief in the supernatural will be driven from the human mind. All religions must pass away. The augurs, the soothsayers, the seers, the preachers, the astrologers and alchemists, will all lie in the same cemetery, and one epitaph will do for them all. In a little while all will have had their day. They were naturally produced, and they will be naturally destroyed. Man at last will depend entirely upon himself—on the development of the brain—to the end that he may take advantage of the forces of nature—to the end that he may supply the wants of his body, and feed the hunger of his mind.

In my judgment teachers will take the place of preachers, and the interpreters of nature will be the only priests.

—New York "Truthseeker."

R. G. INGERSOLL.

PURITAN BOOZERS.

OUR Puritan ancestors hardly imagined that water is either a healthful or a sufficient beverage, if we may judge from some paragraphs in their letters and diaries. Governor Bradford bitterly complains of the hardship of having to drink water, as no beer or wine was to be had. In 1629 an appeal was sent to the Home Company for "ministers," a "patent under seal" that their legal status as colonists might be clear and stable, and also they want "vine planters," wheat, rye, barley, and also "hop planters." When the answer to this appeal was sent by a ship that was provisioned for the three months, it carried "forty-five tuns of beere," "two casks of Malega and Canarie," "twenty gallons of aquavita" (brandy), and for cooking, drinking, and all, only six tuns of water. The Rev. Mr. Higginson, the first minister, in writing back an account of the attractions of the country, said his health had been benefited by the fine air, and he added: "Whereas my stomach could only digest and did require such drinks as were both strong and stale; now I can, and do, oftentimes, drinke New England water verie well." One Wood wrote in the New England's Prospect that the country was well watered, and with a water unlike that to be found in England. "Not so sharpe, of a fatty substance, and of more jetty color. It is thought that there can be no better water in the world, yet dare I not prefer it to good beere, as some have done. Those that drink it be as healthful, fresh, and lustie, as they that drink beere." Those hop roots must have flourished, for as early as 1631 the people of the colony had passed a law putting drunkards in the stocks, and brew-houses multiplied, and an "ale quart of beere" could be bought for a penny. The manufacture of other drinks developed rapidly. Fifty years later Judde Sewall names ale, beer, mead, metheglin, cider, wine, sillabub, clort, sack, canary, punch, sackposset, and black cherry brandy. Everybody drank cider, which was produced on every farm in abundance. Besides these there was "beveridge" and "swizzle" made from molasses and water, and many kinds of beer; but the grand and universal drink was rum. Ships took corn, pork, and lumber to the West Indies, and brought back raw sugar, and molasses, which, once here, was speedily converted into rum. There was a distillery in every inland town, while those on the coast had scores of them. The significant name "kildivil" was universally given to it, and it was shipped to the African coast in exchange for slaves. "Flip" and "punch" were made and drunk on all imaginable occasions. Laborers would not work at the harvest, nor builders at the trades, without a liberal allowance of rum.

Large quantities of liquor were consumed when a minister was to be ordained, as is witnessed in many of the parish records still extant. The following record is that of the town of Beverley, Mass., at an ordination in 1785:—

"Thirty bowles punch before they went to meeting, £3; 80 people eating in the morning at 16d., £6; 10 bottles of wine before they went to meeting, £1 10s.; 68 dinners at 30d., £10 4s.; 44 bowles punch at dinner, £4 8s.; 28 bottles wine, £2 14s.; 8 bowles brandy, £1 2s.; cherry rum, £1 10s.; and six people drank tea, 9d."

Even at a raising of a meeting-house large stores of intoxicants must be laid in. When the meeting-house at Medfield, Mass., was raised, there were provided four barrels beer, twenty-four gallons West Indian rum, thirty gallons New England rum, thirty-five pounds loaf sugar, and four hundred and sixty-five lemons. When, a century ago, General Washington was engaging a gardener, it was explicitly stated in the contract that he should have "four dollars at Christmas with which he may be drunk for four days and nights; two dollars at Easter for the same purpose, two dollars at Whitsuntide to be drunk for two days, a dram in the morning, and a drink of grog at dinner at noon."

—New York "Independent."

BOOK CHAT.

We usually associate ghost stories with Christmas, but in this very hot September we have a volume, *Ghosts I Have Met*, by John Kendrick Bangs. The author, a well-known American humorist, is here at his best. A more amusing volume it would be difficult to find, and we are pleased to note that Transatlantic humor has not lost its savor.

* * *

M. De Rougemont has suffered a very severe heckling since his British Association address, and the columns of the *Daily Chronicle* have had some lively reading on this subject. The London *Figaro* is sceptical also, and has commenced in its pages "The Preposterous Adventures of George Washington Munchausen de Spoof." The story, which is illustrated, is a clever skit upon that related by M. De Rougemont, the writer substituting shrimps for pearls, and a winkle for the octopus. The hero's partner is named Peter Jackson, and the adventures occur off Southend.

* * *

It is a thousand pities that our very old friend, Captain Noah, didn't read his story before the British Association. We don't think he would have come through the heckling ordeal quite so well as his French successor.

* * *

Mr. Israel Zangwill has made a big reputation since he wrote *The Old Maids' Club* and *The Bachelors' Club*, and it was inevitable that these delightfully humorous volumes should again see the light. Mr. Zangwill has now incorporated the two books in one volume under the title of *The Celibates' Club*. It is some years since we last saw either of these efforts of Mr. Zangwill, but they bear a second perusal very well indeed, and no publication of his so displays the marvellous versatility of his powers as a writer.

* * *

We hear that Mr. William Sime, the well-known artist, is about to republish in book-form the very clever series of "supernatural" cartoons he contributed to *Pick-Me-Up* and the *Idler*. In their new form they should prove at least as popular as Punch's "Prehistoric Peeps," which made millions laugh.

* * *

The following advertisement appears in a leading literary paper:—

"Readership in British Museum. Advertiser, a graduate and clergyman's son, will work eight hours a day for £1 a week."

This appears to be the market value of a "gentleman" who has received an expensive University education, which has fitted him for nothing. He would have spent less and earned more if he had learned plumbing.

* * *

An interesting table has recently been compiled which gives the fortunes left during the last ten years by 1,000 persons engaged in ten of the most lucrative businesses and professions. Art, literature, music, and the drama are conspicuous by their absence, and the learned professions, law and medicine, are placed at the bottom. The list includes bankers, coalowners, ironmasters, engineers, money-lenders, brewers, newspaper proprietors, printers and publishers, stockbrokers, and distillers. The moral of it all is that what we are pleased to term "brains" is the least lucrative of all the accomplishments, unless the owner also possesses "commercial ability," which latter is usually unaccompanied by any other form of talent.

Religious Assassins.

A lamentable affair, which lately occurred not far from the city of Savannah, Georgia, reveals what many forget, that the disabilities under which the Southern negro suffers are largely such as naturally result from his own attitude. Mr. Fletcher, a colored Congregational minister and missionary, while organising a Congregational church at the town of Gimley, Georgia, was shot and dangerously wounded by assassins, who fired at him in the pulpit through a window. Detectives report the guilty parties, one of whom was speedily arrested, to the officials of a colored Methodist church. The antipathy of a certain sort of negro preachers and their adherents to the men of their own race who stand forth for pure teaching and moral living is notorious, though hardly ever shown in a murderous way. It is not too much to say that the non-moral and immoral type of religion is fostered among the Southern blacks—and whites—and many of their religious teachers is at the bottom of the most stubborn difficulties in the race problem. Only the influences only can transform such conditions, and such transformation can only be gradual and slow.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CIRCULATING THE "FREETHINKER."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With your permission I should like to add a few words to those of Mr. Dunbar as to the mode of circulating the *Freethinker*. I may say I have followed out the plan of Mr. Dunbar times out of number, by leaving the *Freethinker* in trains and in omnibuses; and after having come home after a hard day's work, I have taken out a large bundle of *Freethinkers* and gone down some streets in Battersea, and placed them in the letter-boxes; for I had in mind Mr. Dunbar's adage, "Being saved ourselves, we should try to save others." I might recall another time: working near Charing Cross, I have walked from there to Stonecutter-street in my dinner-time, and, instead of dining sumptuously on sixpence, I have laid out the enormous sum of twopence on bread and cheese, and fourpence on *Freethinkers*. For saying this my only reason is that our fellow Freethinkers might do the same. When taking a holiday at Ramsgate with a Freethinker of Battersea, Mr. George Dickenson—and this comes to my mind if all other Freethinkers had been as anxious as he for the enlightenment of our fellow-creatures, Battersea must inevitably have been the centre of Freethought—we essayed to combine pleasure with wisdom, for we went down several long streets, and delivered a *Freethinker* to each house.

H. C. L.

AFTER OMDURMAN.

[After killing 11,000 dervishes and wounding 16,000, the troops assembled at Khartoum, and the bands played "Abide with Me." It is suggested that a new version of this beautiful hymn, adapted to such occasions, would be desirable.]

ABIDE with me, fast falls the eventide,
The shadows lengthen by the Nile's dark tide,
When the last remnants of the foemen flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Swift to its close draws near the sultry day,
The blood, the life of thousands ebb away,
Anguish or death in all around I see,
O Thou that changest not, abide with me!

Thou need'st my presence every passing hour,
Who but myself can crush barbaric power?
Whose arm but mine Thy rod and scourge should be?
'Mid smoke and slaughter, Lord, abide with me!

I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless—
If he be savage, poor, and Maxim-less—
I give Death's sting and Grave its victory,
And triumph still if Thou abide with me!

Hold Thou Thy cross before my dreaming eyes;
With pious thoughts imperial visions rise!
With sleep restore my strength to fight for Thee,
In charge, in massacre, abide with me!

—*Rochdale Observer*.

PROFANE JOKES.

AN Irish missionary returned from China was expatiating on the immorality of the Chinese, and their low estimate of the value of human life. "Why," said he, "a rich criminal condemned to death can easily hire a substitute to die for him!" Horror was depicted on the countenances of his hearers, and he continued: "I believe, indeed, that large numbers of the poor people make their living by acting as substitutes in that way."

Young Mr. Paine was holding singing-school at Ryefield one winter, years ago. And, by the way, he was much enamored of Miss Patience White. Being so, in his arrival on this particular evening, he was struck at random. His audience seemed to be in a state of something. Turning to find the first Pain."

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, O. Watts, "The New Bible."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Animated Photographs.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Cohen.
WEST LONDON BRANCH (20 Edgware-road): September 29, at 8, Debate on "Secularism" followed by open discussion; opener R. P. Edwards, opposer Mr. Boyce (O.E.S.).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15, Stanley Jones.
CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. Cohen. Peckham Bye: 3.15, W. Heaford, "Christ and Common Sense."
EAST LONDON BRANCH (Mile End Waste): 11.30, E. Pack; 7, W. J. Ramsey. September 28, at 8, O. Cohen.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Pack.
FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "A Crumbling Creed."
FINSBURY PARK (near bandstand): 3.15, C. Cohen, "Is the Bible a Moral Guide?"
HAMMERSMITH (near Lyric Theatre): 7.15, E. White.
HAMPSTEAD HEATH: (Fleet-road, corner of Downshire-hill): 7, E. Calvert.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): Lucretius Keen—11.30, "Foundations of Religion"; 3.30, "The Fall and the Redemption."
KILBURN (High-road, corner Victoria-road): 7.15, Stanley Jones.
KINGSLAND (Bidley-road): 11.30, W. Heaford.
LIMEHOUSE (The Triangle, Salmon-lane): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. September 27, at 8, S. Jones.
WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, E. White, "Was Jesus a Socialist?"
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Is Christianity Original?"

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Bristol-street Board school): E. J. Sale—11, "Shelley's 'Queen Mab'"; 7, "A Criticism of the Sermon on the Mount." September 26, at 8, A. Concert.
GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick street): 12, Discussion class, P. Shangnessy, "On the Soul"; 6.30, P. McGivern, "Civilisation: Ancient and Modern."
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Joseph McCabe, "Secularism in History."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote—11, "War within the Church"; 3, "The Czar's Appeal to Europe"; 7, "The Meaning of Death."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, E. Wainscott, "What should the Liberal Party do Next?"
NEWCASTLE ON-TYNE (Quayside): 11, J. Reid.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, W. Dyson, "The Liberty of the Press."

Lecturers' Engagements.

O COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton—September 25, m., Camberwell; a., Finsbury Park; e., Camberwell. October 2, Motherwell; 9, Glasgow; 16, Newcastle; 23, Sheffield; 30, Leicester. November 6 and 13, Athenæum Hall, London.

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

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

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