

The Freethinker

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THE SHAM OF ORTHODOXY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the many changes which Christianity has undergone, and the various phases which it now assumes, the orthodox form is the only consistent one. By the term "orthodox" is here meant the faith based upon the New Testament when it is taken in its legitimate signification, without any fanciful interpretation. Orthodox Christianity involves the belief in the God of the Bible, the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the fall of man from his original state of purity, the Atonement through the death of Christ, his divinity, dependence upon him for personal salvation, and, finally, everlasting punishment in hell for the rejection of the faith. That there are *professed* Christians who have no belief in any of the above doctrines we readily admit; but this shows the sham of the Christian profession. The more we study this faith, and the more we observe the conduct of its votaries, the more are we convinced of the delusion and hypocrisy associated with the name of Christ. His alleged followers present him as a model of perfection, whose character and conduct should be emulated, and yet they never attempt to emulate either. They claim for the system which he is supposed to have originated an inherent vitality which it in no way possesses. As it has frequently been pointed out, the secular elements in Christianity are its principal supports. Remove these agencies, and the boasted supernatural structure would soon disappear.

That the fundamental pretensions of orthodox Christianity are delusive the following illustration will, we think, make clear. In passing through a city, we may behold a vast building constructed on no particular plan, with a wing here of Gothic character, a Greek pillar there, and a piece of Egyptian architecture at another part. We find that the dwellers in this building are divided into hostile parties, who are constantly warring against each other. One large flag is to be seen waving over all the various divisions, but it is evident that each separate section is fighting for its possession. Each party, however, has its own little flag, bearing upon it a distinctive inscription. These rival flags are so numerous that it is almost impossible to enumerate them all; but, with a little patience, we are enabled to discern the chief of those floating signals. We recognise the names—"Greek Church," "Latin Church," "Lutheran Church," "Armenian Church," "Anglican Church," "Episcopalian," "Presbyterian," "Wesleyan," "Baptist," "Congregationalist," "Trinitarian," "Unitarian," "Calvinist," and "Baptismal Regenerationist." Such are a few of the many banners which are waving over the strife and disputes which are heard between the conflicting hosts within the building. On minute inspection, it is evident that the strength of the fabric is but apparent; the only strong parts about it are the iron shutters which cover every window through which rays of light could penetrate. All else is uncertain, rickety, and crumbling. On still closer examination, it is clearly perceptible that the structure does not stand by its own strength at all, but that it is supported by a number of piles and buttresses which are there for the purpose of propping up the fragile edifice. Upon those various supports are such designations as "Superstition," "Intolerance," "Social Persecution," "Inquisition," "Star Chamber," "Church Property," "Priestcraft," "Imprisonment for Blasphemy," etc. All these appellations, it appears, have been furnished, and are protected, by the powers and

potentates of the different nations. Upon inquiry, we ascertain that these powers and potentates supply a permanent garrison of soldiers of the Cross, who are encamped outside for the double purpose of preventing all intrusion by the armies of the common enemy, and at the same time to prevent, if possible, the escape of the residents.

Now this we regard as being a fair, though allegorical, representation of orthodox Christianity. Its signs of strength are only apparent, unreal, and external, kept up by hired defenders, and supported by buttresses that in no way belonged to the original faith. Take these away, and then the Christian's occupation will be gone. No men ever boasted so much of being able to stand alone as the professors of orthodoxy have done, and yet there was never a supernatural faith—Fetish, Pagan, or Monotheistic—that claimed and received so much external support. Remove all such appliances and secular agencies from the so-called spiritual fabric; leave it to stand, if it can, upon its own foundation; then, and not till then, can we fairly judge of its inherent stability. Then, and not till then, will Christians have a legitimate right to taunt Secularists with not being able to successfully compete with them in grandeur of buildings or extent of propagandism. When Christians are ready to have the value of their system tested by its own intrinsic worth; when they are willing that its principles shall be judged by reason and experience; when they are able to harmonise their faith with progressive humanity; when their conduct in everyday life is consistent with their belief; then, and then only, can they consistently challenge the statement that the external support they receive from a world they profess to despise is a clear and undeniable proof of the inherent impotency of their system.

Orthodoxy is not only one of the greatest shams of the age, but it is also cowardly and arrogant. In the early days of its history questions were allowed to be put in its churches by the hearers to the teachers, and thus an opportunity was given to endeavor to elicit the truth. To-day no minister dares to follow the custom of his predecessors. His pulpit is a castle into which no invader must be admitted, and his so-called sacred building is an entrenchment behind which he makes as cowardly an attack upon his enemies as a man does who shoots another from behind a stone wall. No charge is too mean, no accusation too dastardly, and no misrepresentation too vile, for some of those orthodox ministers of the "meek and lowly Jesus" to make against Freethinkers. Moreover, from the pulpits the most unfair, reckless, and misleading statements regarding our principles are constantly being made. But so cowardly are these pious slanderers that they persistently refuse to attempt to defend, in open debate upon the platform, the unjust aspersions in which they indulge from the pulpit. Again and again have we invited their principal leaders to a fair and honest discussion of their allegations, but no response has come from the orthodox exponents of the faith. They content themselves by hoodwinking their credulous followers, and by indulging in falsehoods as mean as they are unjust. Such is the influence of orthodox Christianity. It robs its victims of the power of intellectual discrimination and of moral aptitude. There is but one explanation that can be honestly given for this undignified and superstitious attitude of orthodox believers, and that is this:—Ministers of all denominations, who occupy a representative position, are afraid to submit their teachings to the only crucible by which truth can be distinguished from error—free and

open discussion. They thus prevent their followers from hearing "both sides," and, in keeping them in partial ignorance, a superstitious adherence is secured. Knowing this, as we do, to be true, are we not justified in designating orthodoxy a sham, a delusion, and a snare?

But orthodoxy is injurious in other directions. Its exponents have placed themselves in antagonism to unfettered thought and secular progress. In many districts the *ipse dixit* of a Protestant clergyman is considered almost as authoritative, and nearly as infallible, as the bull of a Pope, and he who does not accept it not only jeopardises his worldly position, but is told that he perils his soul's eternal salvation. "I have said it, therefore it must be," is the dictum of orthodox preachers, and in this the whole business is summed up. This is terrible to think of when we consider that the enormous power wielded by the clergy is in nine cases out of ten used on the side of oppression and wrong. Liberty is a word which is hateful to them, freedom to think their especial aversion, and controversy a weapon of Satan. It is the endeavor to remove these orthodox evils that constitutes the destructive work of the Secular party. Before our constructive efforts can meet with thorough success this long-dominant and despotic theology must be deprived of its power, and orthodoxy, with its shams, must be no longer allowed to pervert the human mind.

CHARLES WATTS.

CHRISTIANITY AND SCHOOL BOARDS.

It has often been pointed out that, apart from certain fundamental weaknesses, the Roman Catholic Church has a far more logical case to place before an impartial jury than has any of the different Protestant bodies. Paradoxical as it may sound, the fact that it is more reasonably unreasonable, more consistently illogical, than any other Christian body gives it a strength of front and an apparent continuity of teaching which are sadly wanting with its rivals. With Protestantism the spirit of compromise is so strong, its counsels so divided, that it is impossible for it to present a solid and coherent body of doctrines to a critical public. In relation to fresh developments of thought, particularly those inimical to current religious beliefs, the policies of the two bodies are strikingly different. Both agree in doing their utmost to suppress any new discovery; but while the Protestant Churches generally accept it while the sense of conflict is fresh, and thus accentuates the discordance by its own conduct, the Catholic Church waits for a century or two (as in the case of Galileo, whose teachings were not accepted by the Church until 1822) until the new knowledge has been thoroughly assimilated by the majority of people, and then gravely informs the world that Catholics may believe it without running the risk of eternal damnation. In this manner the Catholic Church performs quietly and unobtrusively an evolution which the Protestant bodies carry out in a way that does them far more harm than good.

In the matter of our School Board system the leaders of Catholicism in this country have never ceased to raise protests against it on account of its un-Christian or anti-Christian character. True, Manning and Newman and Vaughan have not always been alone in their protests; it is only a matter of five or six years since Dean Gregory of St. Paul's declared that "nothing had done so much to lower the moral and religious tone of the people as the Education Act of 1870"; but, on the whole, the Protestants have confined themselves to a policy of obstruction, content to try and hinder the development of that which they were unable to altogether destroy.

The most recent utterance on this matter from an official Roman Catholic comes from Dr. Bagshawe, Bishop of Nottingham, who, a few days ago, made the following confession of faith in a letter to a correspondent: "The School Board system I do believe to be 'the work of the Devil,' because it is calculated to destroy Christianity. (1) Because it uses for its teaching a mutilated and falsified version of the Holy Scripture. (2) Because it entrusts the teaching of religious truth to sectarians of every color; to unbelievers, Agnostics, and Atheists; to men who are, or may be, without religious training, examination, or certificates, and altogether incompetent; to men concerning whose belief and competency to teach the truths of religion no

question may be asked. This brings religion into contempt, since in secular subjects the children know well that no one is allowed to teach who is not educated, trained, examined, and approved. (3) Because it expressly forbids the teaching of any positive Christian dogma, thereby setting aside the teaching of the keystone as revealed by Christ, and the principles which He gave to His disciples. Thus it roots up from the minds of thousands of children every vestige of Christianity, and leaves a great many with no knowledge even of God. I think Christianity can hardly have a worse enemy than the School Board system, which, therefore, I hold to be 'the work of the Devil.' The teaching of the Board schools is poisonous—(1) because it gives sectarians, Agnostics, and Atheists abundant opportunity to scoff at sacred truths, and to insinuate their own heresies, blasphemies, and unbelief into the children's minds; (2) because the system itself of teaching religion by untrained, unexamined, unauthorised, and often unbelieving teachers, and of so teaching it that its principal truths must be eliminated, inculcates these false, pernicious principles—(a) that religious doctrine is uncertain and valueless—a mere matter of opinion; (b) that its only source is a false version of the Bible; and (c) that every one is at liberty to make what he likes out of the Bible, or to reject it altogether."

With the exception that the language here used is a little stronger and plainer than usual, I cannot see how any Christian can logically take exception to the Bishop's confession of faith. It cannot be denied that the teaching of religion in Board schools may be done either by believers or unbelievers, or that by not giving definite and dogmatic religious instruction it fails to adequately protect children against the assaults of unbelief. I do not believe that giving them dogmatic religious instruction would do this; but then I am not a Christian, and I am trying to look at the matter from that point of view. Nor can it be denied that the careful exclusion of religion from nine-tenths of the school-time of pupils, with the spectacle of many children not receiving religious instruction in any form, must suggest to some that "religious doctrine is uncertain and valueless—a mere matter of opinion," to be rejected without serious loss or accepted without any special gain.

To me it has always been a cause of astonishment that any sincerely religious man could ever accept the present School Board system as satisfactory. Its whole constitution is a standing declaration of the subsidiary importance of religious opinions. It is the secular interests that receive by far the larger share of attention, the ability of teachers to impart secular instruction that forms the subject of their examinations; their religious convictions are of little or no account; right through the secular is first, and religion a very bad second. There can be no more humiliating spectacle to a religious man than that of seeing beliefs which he believes to be the most essential to a child's welfare, here and hereafter, lightly brushed on one side as being of very minor importance compared with a knowledge of reading and writing.

From both the Christian and Freethought points of view I can agree with Dr. Bagshawe that "Christianity can hardly have a worse enemy than the School Board system." From the Christian standpoint because it fails to saturate the child's mind with dogmatic religion which will serve to some extent to check the influence of religious unbelief, and from the Freethought position because the impetus given by a study of the natural sciences even in an elementary form, and by awakening the love of inquiry, must serve as a powerful force in breaking down the spirit of mental submission and dependence upon which religion lives. And I venture to predict that whatever adverse criticism Dr. Bagshawe receives will come, not from unbelievers, but from his brother Christians. The less astute will attack him because they fail to realise the soundness of his position; the more intelligent, but less honest, for the same reason that many Christians howled at Archbishop Temple for saying there were contradictions in the Bible, because, however true the statement may be, it is bad policy to say it. Dr. Bagshawe has only said what a great many believers must feel, but what few people have the courage to speak out.

Dr. Bagshawe's letter indirectly emphasizes yet another point deserving the notice of all advocates of a really effective national school system—namely, that the interest of the Christian world in education is a religious interest from beginning to end. Why is it that Voluntary schools

are in existence? Not on behalf of education as education. The Board school system provides amply for that. Not because the education given in voluntary schools is superior to that given in its Board schools. This is notoriously not the case, while improvements in Voluntary schools are usually forced on school managers by the secular authorities. Nor can it be because the Voluntary schools are better staffed, or the staff better paid, for in both respects they fall far below the level of Board schools. So far as any of these legitimate educational interests are concerned, it is not claimed that Board schools do not, or cannot, subserve them in a thoroughly efficient manner. Why, then, do Voluntary schools exist? Simply as religious institutions, maintained on behalf of this or that sect. The question of education, in the secular sense, is the last thing these schools concern themselves about. Their essential object is to breed members of a religious sect, not to develop good and useful citizens. It is for sectarian purposes they are called into existence, for sectarian purposes they are maintained in existence, and the fact that this interest does not bulk larger than is actually the case is due entirely to the rivalry of Board schools and the conditions under which the Government grant is obtained.

There is not even a generous rivalry among them as to which shall teach religion, as religion, most effectively. Nine-tenths of them would rather see religion banished from the schools altogether than see them supplied with an article not retailed at their own private dispensary. Dr. Bagshawe complains that they use a Protestant Bible; the Evangelical party cry out against the surreptitious introduction of High Church doctrines; Episcopalians protest that the religious teaching is not definite enough, and each in turn say they would sooner welcome secular education pure and simple than see any form of religion taught to children with which they are not in complete agreement. It is this petty niggling sectarian spirit exhibiting itself where such vital and tremendous interests are concerned that makes the whole thing so hatefully contemptible.

And note, finally, the hypocrisy of the position of such Christians as agree to the present plan of teaching religion in Board schools. If Christianity is as necessary to the welfare of the child as secular education itself; if, moreover, instruction divested of Christianity is useless, or worse than useless, then every reason that will justify compulsory education will justify compulsory religious education likewise. The opinions of individual parents have no more right to decide the one case than they have to decide the other. And yet, side by side with the general assertion that education divorced from religion is useless, there is given support, openly at least, by a large majority of Christians to a "conscience clause," enabling parents to withdraw their children from any religious instruction whatsoever. Practically, they say: "Religion is essential to the child's welfare here and hereafter; without it it is an impossibility for your children to grow up good and useful citizens. Nevertheless, if you think otherwise, while our children are being instructed in the mysteries of godliness yours can go outside and play peg-top." Surely Christians must realise that in granting or accepting the existence of a conscience clause they are admitting that religious beliefs are not essential to the child's welfare, that they are not certain about the matter, and that the balance of probability is, after all, on the side of the Secular position. Personally, I am convinced of two things: first, that the plain and honest course for Christians to adopt in the schools under their control is to refuse to entertain the "conscience clause," and thus forfeit the Government grant; and, second, that they will not do anything of the kind. Consistency will no more be displayed here than elsewhere, and, after all, the spectacle of religious people arranging for the exclusion of religious beliefs, where their absence is desired, is no more absurd than many other ridiculous compromises effected during the past generation.

Brutally ignorant as the Bishop of Nottingham's attitude is, it is yet thoroughly Christian. It is the expression of a man who *believes* his creed, and is not ashamed to say so. I sympathise heartily with those who say: "We believe that life without religion cannot be worth the living, and we therefore demand that the State shall enforce religious instruction as it enforces instruction in other branches of knowledge." The demand is a simple and, granting the premises, a logical one. But I sympathise still more with those who say that the school is not the place to teach

speculative beliefs and metaphysical religious doctrines. The child is not there to be trained into a customer for this or that Church. It is there to be prepared for the larger school of life beyond, where knowledge alone is the key that unlocks problems, where conduct, and not speculative opinions, determine whether it shall sink or swim in the sea of life.

C. COHEN.

BORING.

"The only riches God cares about are souls saved; He reckons Himself poorer by every soul that is lost, because it did not endure the temptation or trial. It was so that he 'tried' Abraham, and Jacob, and many more; and how He honored them when they bore the trial successfully! It is a curious word in the Hebrew that is sometimes used in speaking of these trials. It is a word that means *bore*. Isn't that how we 'try' things? When we want water we bore here and there where we hope we may find it; if we do find it, we honor the place and build a well there. So the Lord bores into us, and if He finds the good stuff there He is looking for, He quickly honors us."—REV. J. REID HOWATT.

OUR first impulse is to be tickled with the humor of the notion. We have heard that men bore deep holes in the crust of the earth that they may discover the vicinity of coal or iron or gold. We know that engineers will bore into the recesses of a mountain or the bed of a river to test the practicability of constructing a railway tunnel. We have ourselves seen the grocer bore into the heart of a cheese so that he may prove its sterling quality to a prospective customer. We can understand why well-sinkers bore vast pits in the ground; humanity might otherwise go waterless. But the purpose of the Lord who made us in boring holes to ascertain the sort of "stuff" he put inside us is one of those inexplicable mysteries which pass our small finite comprehensions.

The matter does not admit of the explanation that God makes up his parcels of humanity without duly labelling them, and so forgets the nature of the contents; for it is written in the infallible book that God understands our thoughts afar off, and that he is acquainted with all our ways, and that there is not even a word on our tongues which is spoken without his knowledge. Since, then, God possesses so wondrous a faculty of penetration, his motive for boring into us must ever remain an unsolved problem.

Meanwhile it must not be said of Freethinkers that they fail to make use of the newest light. For instance, let no man in our ranks be ignorant that the latest revised version of Genesis xxii. 1 reads: "And it came to pass that God did bore into Abraham."

Of course, we are next prompted to inquire: What was the result of the operation? What was the nature of the "stuff" that the Lord brought to the surface? The answer comes that God found in the ancient patriarch a cheerful willingness with his own hands to put his only begotten son to a bloody and barbarous death. It has not been left on record that the Lord was in any way shocked at his discovery, although he has elsewhere instructed men that they should do no murder. Is it possible, however, that God acted upon the principle, laid down by himself, of not letting his left hand know what his right hand was doing? We should, in such circumstances, understand that his left hand manipulated the drill which perforated Abraham, whilst the finger which inscribed the ten commandments on tables of stone belonged to his right hand. I venture to submit that this explanation is an eminently practical solution of a serious Biblical problem, and I offer it gratuitously to all apologists for Holy Writ. How otherwise can we account for the fact clearly indicated by subsequent events, that God was delighted beyond measure with the result of his investigation? Indeed, so enraptured was God with the quality of the "stuff" disclosed in his servant that he caused it to be written in his infallible book for the information of unborn generations that Abraham was called the friend of God. Verily, the reputation of God will not be heightened by too close a scrutiny of the list of his acknowledged friends.

Retribution is slowly but certainly overtaking God. The process of boring still goes on, but the drill has changed hands. To-day we do not hear so much of God boring into Man and his works, as of Man boring into God and his works. The result of our boring is that the book of a New Revelation is being opened to us. The drill of scientific investigation performs its relentless task, and in our hands we hold the very "stuff" of which God is

composed. Marvellous is the apocalypse which is unfolded to us. We discover that it is not Man that is God-made; it is God that is Man-made.

We have now two Revelations, the Old and the New. The Old Revelation explained to us how God created Man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. It further showed how God provided for the ruin of Man; how he invented a wonderful scheme for his redemption; how he prepared a heaven of rapturous joy for the FEW who should comply with the condition of that scheme; and a hell of intolerable agony for the MANY who, from inability, neglect, or obstinacy, should fail to meet its demands. The Old Revelation was begotten in Ignorance, fostered by hireling priests, and nourished by Folly.

The New Revelation tells us how man created God in his own image; in the image of man created he him. Numberless are the chiliads which have since dissolved into the illimitable past. So vast are the ages which have for ever fled that Man has even forgotten the work of his own hands. The New Revelation demonstrates more than this bare fact of creation; it shows how Man added to his God attribute upon attribute; how he moulded and re-fashioned him to meet changing environments; and how he founded orders of priests to formulate doctrines, to elaborate ceremonies, to offer sacrifices to his God, and to live luxuriously upon the credulity of the people. The New Revelation is the offspring of Knowledge, is fostered by strenuous seekers after Truth, and is nourished by the conclusions of Scientific Research.

Far, far away, beyond the utmost limit of our seeing, stretches the pathway of progress. The road, however, which should be free for the unrestricted march of humanity, is impeded by many vexatious and dangerous obstacles. Prominent amongst these are three towering rocks, and foremost stands that God which Man himself has made.

O God! in thy own most holy word thou art called by many names; but no name is more fitly chosen than that of the Rock. Thou art indeed a strong Rock, a high Rock, a mighty Rock. A rock is the type of pitilessness, of menace, and of obstruction. Such art thou, O God of Abraham, God of the Bible, and God of the Nineteenth Century—three persons and one God.

O God, we are at present mainly concerned with the third of these resemblances. Thou art a strong rock of obstruction, and thou art the stronger because of our blindness and our ignorance. From our earliest years, parent and teacher and priest have combined to instruct us that the chief end of our brief existence is to glorify thee and enjoy thee for ever. In our manhood nothing is harder for us than to unlearn this lesson. We are so slow to realise that this energy were more wisely expended in the service of humanity. Thou dost stand between us and the pathway of progress, O God.

G. DAWSON BAKER.

(To be concluded.)

PROFANE PARABLES.

VII.—DISILLUSION.

A BAND of knaves assembled together, arrayed in solemn mummery; and they pointed the people to a veiled figure, saying:

"Fall down and worship, O people; for this is God."

And many prostrated themselves in awe, and worshipped the veiled thing; but one remained unbowed, and stood aloof, whereat the mummers were angered, and commanded him to worship.

"First let me see thy God *unveiled*," said he.

"Fool!" cried the mummers. "Thou canst not see the face of God, and live."

But the man sprang forth, and tore away the veil, so that the figure stood revealed. . . . And the man laughed as he looked; and the people arose ashamed; and the mummers departed in silence.

VIII.—CREED.

A company of theorists declared that the planet Mars was inhabited by dragons; and in the fulness of time they caught a heretic.

"What!" said they. "You deny that Mars is peopled by dragons?"

"No," said the heretic. "But, you see, Mars is so far off, and dragons are such rare animals, that really, gentlemen, I—"

"Blasphemy!" yelled the Theorists. "To the rack with him!"

IX.—ETHICS.

The Elders of the Church assembled in holy conclave, and communed among themselves concerning the vices of the children.

"We must guide the infant in the path of righteousness," said they. "And, to this end, we will erect an edifice wherein the young may assemble together, male and female, and read the records of ancient morals; and we will call the place Sunday School."

Thereupon a moralist who was present blew his nose so wantonly that the Elders sprang from their seats alarmed, thinking it was the final fanfare.

X.—NEMESIS.

A certain Bishop, luxuriating in his palace, heard a great noise. And he inquired the reason thereof.

"There are angry Atheists without!" cried the porter. "They have menace in their looks. Heaven forefend their vengeance!"

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Bishop. "Ask 'em what they want."

And the porter, having conferred with the Atheists, made his report.

"They say," said he, "they have no desire to harm thee; but they demand that thou shalt publicly declare the truth, and unfold thy mind honestly before the people."

"Mercy on us!" cried the Bishop.

XI.—EMANCIPATION.

A great Logician instructed his pupils in the way of truth, to the end that earlier impressions might be removed, and their young minds freed from the cobwebs of credulity. And, as they grew older, he watched the seed ripen within them, and was glad.

Until, in after years, he met one who had been his brightest follower.

"Art thou still free from the errors of thy fathers?" said the Logician. "Hast thou abandoned altogether the worship of the gods?"

"Yes! yes!" cried the other, with enthusiasm. "I abjure them all. *I am a Spiritualist!*"

And the Logician turned away, and wept.

XII.—CONSISTENCY.

On a Sunday the Devil happened within a church.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," sang the owner of broad acres.

"Blessed are the meek," thundered the local martinet.

"Love your enemies," quoth the prize persecutor.

"Body o' me!" gasped the Devil. "*Just hear 'em!*"

E. R. W.

THE SECULAR INCORPORATION.

I PROPOSE to begin this article with a few words about the legality of the Secular Society, Limited. Let me say, first of all, that the solicitor who assisted me in devising the scheme, and drafting the Memorandum and Articles of Association, was Mr. Harper, of the firm of Harper and Battcock, who acted for the late Charles Bradlaugh. It was not until the scheme was thus completed to our own satisfaction that we took counsel's opinion. One or two slight verbal alterations in the Memorandum were made at counsel's suggestion. He then gave us his opinion, in writing, that the scheme would stand at law. He could not be absolute and peremptory, because there was no precedent; but Mr. Brett's own opinion, which was really all we wanted, was distinctly in favor of the scheme's legality; and as it left his hands it was printed and registered. Mr. Harper was perfectly satisfied with counsel's opinion, which is at the service of the Board of Directors, who are free whenever they please to publish it *in extenso*, although there does not seem at present to be any particular necessity for so doing. For the rest, I desire to say that it is nonsense to talk about the certain illegality of the Society's objects, as set forth in its Memorandum. Collectively and severally, its objects are

legal. Those who criticise, without the slightest intention of helping, whether the scheme be unsound or otherwise, are invited to point out a single object which is illegal. Of course they must not go back to the law as it was long ago. What is called "blasphemy," apart from mere swearing and profane language, is determinable by appeal to the statute and common law. Now the only statute is that of William III (1694), which has never once been applied, having been drafted so stringently as to defeat its own object. That statute is obsolete. All prosecutions for blasphemy have been at common law. And what is the common law of blasphemy? In answering this question, it is idle to go back to ancient decisions. Laws passed by parliament—such as the admission of Jews to the legislature, and the Oaths Act which allows citizens to affirm instead of swearing, on the ground that they have no religious belief—have changed the old state of things. Lord Chief Justice Coleridge's decision, on the occasion of my trial in the Court of Queen's Bench in 1883, settles the common law of blasphemy for us. "I lay down as law to you," Lord Coleridge said to the jury, "that, if the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without a person being guilty of blasphemous libel." Of course it might still be easy enough to persuade a Christian jury that the decencies of controversy are violated in a journal like the *Freethinker*, but I defy anyone to persuade anybody that the decencies of controversy are violated in the Memorandum of the Secular Society, Limited.

There are a few people, who never had a good word for Charles Bradlaugh when he was living, who now talk as if wisdom died with him. They want to know why I have done what he did not attempt. Is it meant that he is to rule and guide us for ever from his grave? He himself would be the first to pour scorn upon this idea. When the greatest man dies, something is left for posterity to do. There is room for new poets even after Shakespeare. Moreover, it must be remembered that Charles Bradlaugh was in the thick of his own fight when Lord Coleridge's judgment was delivered; and that, during the few years of life left him, all his time and strength, not expended in earning his bread, was given to his parliamentary duties. Had he lived and kept his health, this task would probably not have devolved upon me.

Let us now suppose for a moment, just for the sake of argument, that the Society should turn out to be illegal. Even then we should gain something by forming and supporting it. If a bench of judges declared its objects to be illegal, this would be a splendid and decisive announcement of our peculiar grievance as Freethinkers, and would soon lead to the passing of an Act of Parliament for its redress. But I have only taken this point, as I said, for the sake of argument; and I may add that while the Society's registration stands, it is not competent for any person to rob it because he disapproves its objects, or for any executor to withhold a legacy due under the will he is administering.

So much for the legality of the Society. As to its future, I can only say that I am not a prophet. What will be will be. It is for the Freethought party to decide. I have fashioned the instrument, but I cannot say how they will use it. Up to the present we have enrolled nearly a hundred and thirty members. There is room for five hundred, and when we reach that number we can easily provide for the inclusion of more. We have a preponderance of laymen (so to speak) over lecturers on the Board of Directors. I do not count myself as a lecturer, because I am determined that the Board shall not employ me in that capacity. Neither directly nor indirectly will I receive any of the Society's money, at least until I make a public announcement to the contrary. It was my hope that some influential and well-to-do layman would take the chairmanship of the Board, but for this we must apparently wait another year. The new Board has pressed me to take the office for the present, and I have accepted it, not seeing any alternative. But the sooner I can relinquish it, consistently with the Society's welfare, the better I shall be pleased.

Every member of the Board is a member of the National Secular Society. With two exceptions, they are all members of the N. S. S. Executive. The idea of any hostility, or conflict of interests, may therefore be dismissed as ridiculous. No one can be quite sure of the future, but even if the Incorporated Society should in time absorb other agencies, as two or three persons seem to apprehend, it could only

do so by proving itself a superior instrument for the work; and in that case there would be little occasion for grief and tears. Wise men care for the substance rather than for shadows and names.

Some of the poorer members of our party who wish to become members complain that the entrance fee of ten shillings is a barrier. Well, to meet their case, the Board has authorised Miss Vance, the secretary, to take their fees in instalments. Their subsequent payment will be only five shillings a year, and that could be easily managed, as it is only about a penny per week.

Early in the new year the Board will issue an official circular to the Freethought party. Meanwhile I venture to press the claims of the Society upon the attention of my readers. There ought to be a considerable accession of new members during the present winter. Freethinkers who put the Society in their wills for legacies—and some have done this already—should communicate the fact (in confidence if necessary) to the Chairman. Those who can afford donations are earnestly invited to contribute them as soon as possible. Whatever they give will be paid into the Society's bank account, and be held or expended according to the Board's decisions. I shall be glad to hear from friends who will figure in a list of promises, which I will keep standing in the *Freethinker*. These promises may relate to either of two objects: the general work of the Society, or the establishment of headquarters for the Freethought party in London. Towards the latter object a generous friend of the movement has promised a thousand pounds, on condition that others contribute adequately. Promises may be for any amount from one pound upwards, and the list ought to be started next week.

Freethinkers should put it to themselves whether they really support the movement as they should. Concentrated and continuous effort is impossible without regular and sufficient resources. Instead of merely living from hand to mouth, and doing what little we can from month to month, we ought to be in a position to strike out vigorously in many directions. A great many Freethinkers are too careless. They appear to imagine that all *must* go well, that evolution or something will do all the work of progress without their assistance. But this is a very great mistake. There are signs of reaction everywhere in Europe. They are visible enough even in England. Largely by means of the Voluntary schools, religion has been stealing a march upon the forces of progress. It is now growing more and more audacious. The attacks made upon our Sunday meetings at Hull, Liverpool, and other places; the present attack upon them at Birmingham; all point to a coming fierce struggle, in which Freethought may have to put forth all its strength, courage, and resources.

G. W. FOOTE.

ACID DROPS.

The climax has come at last. Judge Wills has sentenced one of the Peculiar People, Thomas Senior, to four months' imprisonment with hard labor for obeying Jesus Christ. Mr. Foote is writing an Open Letter to the judge, which will appear in next week's *Freethinker*.

The Chairman of the Birmingham School Board, the Rev. E. M. F. MacCarthy, reported at a recent meeting that he had received letters complaining of "offensive placards" outside the Bristol-street Board School, having reference to Sunday meetings held there—by the Secularists. He formally moved that the matter be referred to the consideration of the Sites and Buildings Committee. The Rev. J. Wood said, as chairman of the committee, that he had taken action in the matter, which he hoped would prove satisfactory to the Board and the public. But this did not satisfy the Bishop of Coventry, who declared that the matter was "most serious." He moved that the committee should be instructed to frame such a regulation for letting the Board schools as should forbid their being used for the propagation of avowed Atheism. Evidently his lordship was well primed with the most ardent spirit of bigotry. It did not occur to him that Atheists are ratepayers as well as Christians, and have just the same right to the use of public buildings. Professor Windle, who supported the Bishop, referred to a lecture entitled "Why I am an Atheist," as something horrible. He also referred to "An Exposition of

Romish Errors," by an ex-Catholic priest—Mr Joseph McCabe; and said that, as discussion was invited, the result might have been most undesirable—which is rather a reflection on Catholics than on Secularists. Fortunately, the Rev. J. Hulme and the Rev. J. Sharpe stood up for the sacred cause of liberty of conscience, and we congratulate them on their honesty and courage in so doing. However, the matter ended in a compromise; the committee being instructed to "consider the question of the lettings of schools as well as placards." It remains to be seen how this will practically affect the Secularists. Meanwhile it is worthy of note that the bigots who are seeking to drive them out of public halls are the very persons who are constantly twitting them with their lack of progress. When the Secularists get a little fair play, and achieve some success, these persons agitate to have them gagged and suppressed.

The Bishop of Coventry, following the time-honored tactics of his species, mixed up Atheism with immorality. Upon this head he spoke like a reckless and libellous liar. It is utterly false that Secular lecturers indulge in "indecent allusions," and just as false that there is any "obscenity" in Secularist literature. Let his lordship look a little nearer home. He preaches from a volume called the Bible, in which there are hundreds of filthy passages which we defy him to read out aloud to a mixed congregation. Yet he unhesitatingly thrusts that volume, unexpurgated, into the hands of as many children as possible; and, having given them to read what many a prostitute would probably object to in a brothel, he turns up the whites of his eyes and whines about the "indecent" of Secular publications, which really has no existence outside his own dirty imagination.

We are sorry to see the Birmingham *Daily Post* joining in the chorus of bigotry. It does not go "so far" as the Bishop of Coventry. It does not want to debar Atheists from the use of public buildings. Oh dear no! It only wants to stop their offensive advertisements—for instance, the advertisement of a lecture on "Did God Make Man, or did Man Make God?" Well now, we put it to the *Post* whether every Atheist on earth does not believe that man did make every god that was ever worshipped? If the *Post* wants to stop that question being put, it wants to stop the advocacy of Atheism. The *Daily Gazette* takes much the same line, and naturally adds something about "indecent literature." But this is the veriest humbug. It is a hypocritical attempt to confuse the real question at issue. The fact is, that the Christians have become afraid to stand forth as absolute bigots. They no longer like to face the task of suppressing Freethought as such. So they couple it with something else, in the hope that the fact and the falsehood together may do their disreputable business.

The Birmingham Branch has had a well-written, temperate, but firm letter inserted in the daily papers in reply to the slanders of the Bishop of Coventry and Professor Windle. It is pointed out that sexual questions have not been treated at any of the Branch meetings. With regard to the marriage question, it is observed that Mr. G. W. Foote, the President of the National Secular Society, has written: "I believe that marriage, with the probability of offspring, is not a private, but a social act, and should be surrounded by social sanctions."

We regret to state that the Birmingham Branch has already received notice that the sale of literature must be stopped at its meetings in the Bristol-street Board school. This petty act is quite unworthy of the School Board. Of course it will delight the bigots. They reckon it "fine" to prevent a hundred people from obtaining a copy of the *Freethinker*.

The Alcade of Socorro resolved recently that he would "have no more of such obscene books offered for sale in that town." And what was the obscene book? No other than the Holy Bible. The real nature of it had apparently been represented to him, because we may not assume that he did more than ordinary professing Christians, and went to the length of reading the volume itself.

Following this prohibition of the Bible, an appeal was made to the authorities of the United States of Columbia, and the government of Bogota ordered the restriction to be withdrawn. In the meantime a number of copies of the Bible had been confiscated as a book dangerous to the morals of the community.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, preaching at Oxford, took occasion to denounce those wretched, peripatetic Christians who went to hear Dr. Parker on Sunday morning, Canon Gore in the afternoon, and Mr. Hughes in the evening. No doubt this is very unfair. Every Christian is bound to let one minister have a good chance at him. Moreover, it is mean to divide the collection money.

The Rev. C. H. Goodman addressed a meeting of Huddersfield Wesleyans on "Life in the Mendi Country." He denounced the superstitions of the natives, and praised the self-sacrifice of the missionaries. "All that the missionaries asked," he said, "was that they would give them some financial help and their prayers." Financial help first, prayers after.

Here undoubtedly we see the finger of Providence. The church of St. Nicholas at Stroud, near Rochester, has been nearly burnt down. It is described as the "ugliest church in Kent." Still, they tried to save it, though parishioners with architectural taste are now wondering why the Almighty was not allowed to have his fling.

That highly emotional, though not always rational, preacher, Canon Gore, has been accorded the dignity of a reproduction of one of his sermons in phonographic outline in the *Phonetic Journal*. We work out, amongst the advanced phraseograms, that Canon Gore says: "I speak soberly"—which is reassuring. And, speaking soberly, "it is hard to believe that we are making any actual moral progress"—which is a fine commentary on all the past centuries of Christian work.

The *Christian*, a weekly journal, in view of Christmas and New Year festivities, urges special attention to abstinence from intoxicating drinks, and speaks with pleasure of the zeal exhibited by Guardians in eliminating these drinks from Christmas observances in the workhouses. The zealous Guardians probably take good care that no one limits their creature comforts at home.

The observations of the editor are so full of the customary ignorance as to what the Bible really teaches on the subject that if anyone would send him a copy of Mr. Foote's pamphlet on the *Bible and Beer*, it would not only be a seasonable, but a very useful gift.

That admirable work, Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*, is the subject of an inquiry in *Notes and Queries*. "XL" refers to the following passage: "The King of Arabia, Felix, in the fourth century, received an embassy from the Byzantine ambassador, requesting that Christians might be allowed to settle in his kingdom, and also that he might make Christianity the religion of the State. He assented to the first proposition; but with respect to the second he replied: 'I reign over men's bodies, not over their opinions.'" "XL" wishes to know more about that Arabian king.

Cardinal Vaughan, with the innate politeness and becoming dignity characteristic of the leaders of his Church, has replied in the *Catholic Times* to a lady correspondent who apparently has been moved to say something on behalf of Agnostics.

His Eminence says: "So far from thinking virtue in an Agnostic almost an impossibility, I am quite sure that Agnostics may be, and frequently are, extremely virtuous. My own contention was, and is, that whatever virtues an unbaptised unbeliever possesses are virtues in the natural order. An infidel may be a faithful husband, a devoted father, and a steadfast friend, and so kind and charitable to the poor as to spend all he has upon them."

Whilst, however, Cardinal Vaughan is willing to give Freethinkers credit for "these and a thousand other admirable qualities," he thinks that such virtues, "being exercised by one who (*ex-hypothesi*) is not united to Christ, are utterly useless so far as their power to merit eternal life is concerned, and absolutely valueless as compared with supernatural acts performed by one in a state of grace."

The meaning of which is, that not good works, but faith, is the saving power. So that the more credulous a man is, the greater his chances of heavenly favor.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford makes a very pointed observation. He says: "In the judgment of many, the Bishop of Manchester would be better employed, at the present day, in defence than in attack; in repairing the breaches in the walls of Evangelicalism than in wasting his powder in vain assaults upon the impregnable towers of the Catholic Church."

Henry Scott Anderson, a pupil residing with the Rev. C. H. Drake, at the rectory, Leverington, shot himself accidentally while cleaning a gun. The coroner's jury expressed sympathy with all concerned; but they pointed out that the gun was a dangerous one, and ought to be taken more care of. They omitted to notice that the deceased handled the gun on a Sunday morning. This explains the accident to the satisfaction of every good Sabbatarian Christian.

"A Wandering Scribe," who certainly is wandering mentally, contributes a long tirade against Secularism in the

Liverpool Review. He rejoices that the local N. S. S. Branch is now unable to charge for admission to its lectures, and denounces Mr. G. W. Foote for his "brazen audacity" in trying to "make Christianity ridiculous"—a thing, by the way, which Mr. Foote never attempted, for Christianity does not need to be made ridiculous. The rest of this wandering scribe's letter is simply abuse, which calls forth the editorial comment, that his letter is "a typical illustration of the serious mistake the well-intentioned but one-sided good person often makes when he deals with great questions affecting religious liberty and equality."

According to a native correspondent of the *Pioneer* (India), a wonderful performance followed Mrs. Besant's lecture at the residence of Maharaja Sir C. Tagore, in Benares. When this romantic lady's sublime discourse was concluded, it was announced that a Hindu Fakir would walk over a tank of fire, which had apparently been prepared for the purpose. Of course the whole company adjourned to witness the performance. The fire had been raging fiercely for hours, and the heat was intense. A crowd of men, women, and children were dancing round it. Presently they desisted, and it was then announced that the fire had been subdued by the power of the incantations, and that anyone could go over it. Men and boys ran over the fire, some going four or five times without being scorched in the least. "Caught by the enthusiasm of the moment," says the native writer, "I threw away my shoes and stockings, and, tucking up my cloth, I ran over the fire and came out of it safely. My feet sank in the fire, and the sensation felt was as if one was running over a hot, sandy place." Colonel Olcott, Mrs. Besant, and other Theosophists "assisted" at this exhibition. Evidently the ex-Materialist and erstwhile ardent Bradlaughite is very far gone in superstition. Some people call it humbug, but they are unskilled in parliamentary language.

President Kruger has given another manifestation of his Dutch rural simplicity. Preaching on Sunday to a three-fold congregation of the Dutch Churches at Pretoria, he declared that "the reason so few burghers were killed in the M'Pefu campaign was, that the Lord was with the nation." Kruger perhaps laughs in his sleeve at this pious declaration. It is a piece of official formality which is expected of all rulers in Christian countries. President McKinley has recently told the Americans the very same thing about their war with Spain. So we needn't laugh too much at the cute old President of the Transvaal.

The London City Mission is reported to have received a windfall (or godsend) of £38,000, left by an old Frenchwoman who lived in a back street and was thought to be as poor as her residence was squalid. As the City Mission was in low water, there will be much jubilation over this "providential" legacy, which will put new life into its 460 soul-savers working in the London slums, some of whom were shaking in their shoes at the possibility of losing their job.

The *Christian World* reports a strange religious play in a Genoa theatre, based upon the resurrection of Lazarus. The actors and singers wore modern garments. Our Lord was represented by a rather stout man in a dress coat and white cravat. St. John the Evangelist was similarly attired. Martha appeared in a blue evening dress. This travesty had the presence and approval of the local archbishop. Well, we smile at Christ being represented by "a rather stout man." But how do we know that Christ, if he ever lived, was not in reality a "rather stout man"? He might have been.

A proposal to vote a sum from the Common Good Fund of the Edinburgh City Council to the Sirdar's Fund was withdrawn after a heated discussion. One of the Council wanted to know whether England had a special mission from the Most High to pose as civilisers of the universe. He pointed out that when he proposed, some little time ago, that a grant should be made from the Fund for the purpose of helping to house some of the working-classes of the city who had been displaced by public improvements, he was told that it could not be done. Charity never does begin at home.

A female defendant in a Mitcham assault case was asked if she had any witnesses. Defendant, raising her eyes: "Only the Almighty God above, sir." As he was not in attendance, and could not be sworn, the case was taken without him, and resulted in defendant being fined.

The Church Missionary Society is in a pickle—or, as a religious print puts it, the Society is in "a delicate position." It must either send a missionary to Fashoda, where the climate will kill him, or it must abandon all hope of establishing missions in the Soudan for the present.

The other day the Northern Primate consecrated a church at Sheffield. It was the third church he had consecrated in

that town within a fortnight, and it cost £10,000. There is evidently plenty of loose cash and piety in Sheffield. The money might easily have been put to a better purpose.

John Morley's step-daughter has just become a nun in High-park Convent, Dublin. She has the courage of her convictions, which may not be said of everybody.

The Rev. Alfred Rowland, delivering the "Merchants' Lecture on the Eastern Church, said that "Christianity had never failed," and that it was "fitted to be the universal religion." At the same time he saw "no hope of re-union" between the Eastern and Western Churches. The boasted universality, therefore, is one of perpetual disunion.

Canon Newbolt yearns for a "healthy public opinion" which "will not tolerate the clergy being accused of lawlessness and disloyalty." Would it not be better if the clergy ceased provoking the accusation?

A young Italian priest named Perosi has composed an oratorio on the Resurrection of Christ, which has just been produced, under his own leadership, at the church of the Santi Apostoli in Rome. The Church was turned into a concert hall on this occasion, and the fashionable gathering did not scruple to indulge in loud applause.

William Hoba has been sent to the workhouse as a wandering lunatic. He haunted the outside of a house in Craven-street, and put cards in the letter-box for a lady inside, whom he claimed as his "spiritual wife." The cards bore pencil scrawls of "mingled blasphemy and obscenity." Perhaps the wretched man had been reading the Bible too carefully, and, worse still, quoting it too freely.

A sly Yankee said some months ago that the Spaniards were probably wishing that Columbus had never discovered America. Well, the women of Granada seem to be actually in this frame of mind. A crowd of them recently threw stones at the statue of Columbus, considering that the man who discovered America was the chief cause of all Spain's misfortunes. It must be admitted, however, that the Granada ladies are too logical. As the *Daily News* remarks, if the world had never been created, we might all have had a very quiet time.

Rev. Dr. Horton, the well-known Congregationalist, objects to a State-aided Catholic University for Ireland, chiefly on the ground that "even good Roman Catholics manipulate the facts of history," and "slide over inconvenient events." But the same thing might be said with equal truth of good Protestants. When the great German said that Christian veracity deserved to rank with Punic faith, he made no exception in favor of Protestantism.

The great passion of the inhabitants of the Philippines is cock-fighting. The man who has a good fighting cock is more proud of it than he is of his wife and children, and a roaring trade is done by the "cock doctors" who attend to the ailments of these feathered bipeds. A native may often be seen on Sundays and festivals trudging to church with his darling cock under his arm.

Providence was too busy watching the sparrows fall, and counting the hairs of people's heads, to prevent the two-year-old child of a cabdriver at Kilburn from being burnt to death through its clothing catching fire.

The Liberator Relief Fund, which is a standing object-lesson of the power of religion to restrain scoundrels, has had to deal with nearly one hundred new cases during the past year. About £80,000 has been expended in relief already, and yet no one doubts but that only a small portion of the wickedness of Balfour, Hobbs, and Co. has been repaired.

A lordly servant of the poor carpenter of Nazareth, known as the Bishop of Winchester, discoursed, in a recent sermon, at some length, on the unreality of the words employed in popular hymns, and instanced the well-known lines, "O Paradise, O Paradise, 'tis weary waiting here." Dr. Davidson said, moreover, that this hypocritical phraseology was to be met with in prayers as well as hymns. Just so. Dr. Davidson calls himself a "miserable sinner" in church on Sundays; he would probably resent the remark during the rest of the week and out of church.

Some of the newspapers have been discussing the question as to whether the Pope is rolling in wealth, or whether he is on the verge of poverty. We do not think that there is much doubt as to whether the present successor of the rocky foundation stone of the Christian Church lays awake of nights wondering where his next day's dinner is to come from.

Nothing new under the sun. The Christian benedictory use of a well-known gesture is found represented in symbolic hands of Pompeii in a pre-Christian period. The subject was discussed at a recent meeting of the Anthropological Section of the British Association.

More humanitarian news from Holy Russia, the sacred land of Mr. Stead's sublime Nicholas the Second, the Czar of Peace! For a long time the orthodox party has yearned for the expulsion of Count Tolstoi, who insists on preaching the Christianity (as he thinks) of the Sermon on the Mount. His influence is regarded as "malevolent," because he does not see the necessity of State priests, and is absolutely opposed to war and every other form of violence. "There can be no toleration of such views," says a Moscow semi-official paper, "and not only the arch-fiend Tolstoi, but all his followers, must be crushed and destroyed." This is beautiful language from the party whose head, the Czar, has just invited Europe to a sort of international love-feast. The expulsion of Tolstoi, the greatest opponent of militarism in the world, would be just the very thing to convince us all of the Czar's absolute sincerity.

Italy believes so much in the coming millennium shadowed forth in the Czar's manifesto that she has appointed a Commission of two Generals of Engineers, and two other superior officers, with General Besozzi as president, to draw up a plan of fortification for the defence of the Italian end of the Simplon tunnel.

We are glad to see that Mr. Justice Mathew is far from sharing Mr. Justice Day's views as to the moral and social virtues of the "cat." Speaking from the bench at Birmingham recently, he said it was inhuman to accompany a sentence which deprived a man of the best years of his life by the torture of the lash; and that any Englishman with good in him, after punishment with the cat, was for the rest of his life a broken-hearted man, or he became a reckless criminal.

Complaints are made that a shilling is charged for administering the oath in connection with vaccination exemption certificates. If the cost of oaths could be raised to some considerable sum—say 5s. a kiss—the abolition of the practice of oath-taking would be within measurable distance of accomplishment.

Sir Forrest Fulton, Common Serjeant at the Old Bailey, had to deal with an uncommon jurymen lately, who claimed to be exempted from serving on the ground that he was irreconcilably opposed to capital punishment. Being told that there was nobody to hang, he raised another objection. He said he was opposed to the present system of punishing criminals altogether. Thereupon he was asked what he would do to an assailant who set upon him, robbed him, and perhaps kicked him to a jelly; and he replied, "I would forgive him." The Common Serjeant expressed a hope that there were "not many more of her Majesty's subjects who held such extraordinary views"; and the jurymen retorted, "I don't think that is a proper observation to fall from you"—which of course it wasn't if the Common Serjeant is a Christian. This jurymen was simply following the teaching of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount; a sermon, by the way, which the common run of Christians are always lauding without ever obeying.

A little boy, aged twelve, was called the other day to give evidence at the Tottenham Police Court. He was asked: "Do you know what it is to take an oath?" He replied: "Kissing the Bible." The magistrate: "And what do you kiss it for?" The boy: "To show you are a witness." The magistrate: "And when you are a witness what have you to do?" The boy: "Tell the truth." The magistrate: "What is likely to happen to you if you break your oath?" The boy: "Get put away." The magistrate: "Not quite so. You will be punished hereafter, if not in this world." That is as much as the magistrate knows about it. His information is probably not greatly in excess of the boy's.

The late Mr. Thomas Cook, the excursion agent, though a Nonconformist, was once elected Churchwarden in order to get a certain road repaired. Churchwardens have been elected before now for much less useful purposes.

Here is a chance to assist someone who wishes to follow in the footsteps of the Kaiser in the Holy Land. It is an advertisement in a continental paper:—"A man on the road to religious conviction seeks for the money necessary to undertake a penitential and prayerful journey to the Holy Land. Letters headed 'Christian Love' to be addressed to the office of this paper."

The chairman of the Hugh Myddleton group of school managers writes to the *Times* from St. Alban's Clergy House, Holborn. He says: "Personally, I share the opinion of the very few who hold that religious teaching should

form no part of a Board School curriculum." That is a very sensible opinion. The trouble is that it is shared by "very few."

A correspondent of the *Chronicle* says he has a letter by General Gordon in his possession which would go to show that Gordon saw the "necessity of grappling with our own unbelief at home, and asking ourselves the question whether finance had not taken the place of faith, and to what purpose?" One would scarcely gather, says the correspondent, that the expenditure of thousands of pounds in sending more missionaries abroad was in Gordon's mind at that time or afterwards.

The bell-ringers of St. Peter's Church, Thetford, have struck. They have been informed that they can no longer be allowed to carry liquid refreshment into the belfry. Furthermore, objection has been taken to their not remaining to divine service on Sundays after summoning the worshippers. These bell-ringers seem to be possessed with a very carnal spirit. They might be excused conveying intoxicating liquors into the belfry; but it is quite unpardonable not to go into the church and sit out the sermon.

The editor of the *Freethinker* is quite unable to shed tears over the downfall—"resignation" is the parliamentary term—of Sir William Harcourt. The fat Knight of Malwood was Home Secretary when Mr. Foote was imprisoned in Holloway Gaol for "blasphemy," and being a good Christian, like his chief Mr. Gladstone, he determined that the "blasphemer" should suffer Judge North's sentence to the bitter end. For that, however, he might have been forgiven; but he was not even an honest bigot. Several influential papers published protests against Mr. Foote's sentence, and finally a memorial was presented for his release, signed by half the leading men in science, art, philosophy, and literature. Well, what did Sir William Harcourt do then? He got up in the House of Commons, in answer to a question by Mr. Labouchere, and declared that he would do nothing for one who was imprisoned for "obscenity." He knew it was a lie, but he also knew that lies are privileged in the House of Commons. It was pointed out to him again and again that Lord Chief Justice Coleridge had handsomely exculpated Mr. Foote from this odious charge; but he took refuge in "dignified silence" and let the lie stand—against himself!

Sir William Harcourt was worse than a bigot on that occasion. He played the part of a liar and knave. Now he has "resigned" from the leadership—if he ever was the leader—of the Liberal party, and will probably never realise his ambition of being Premier. And the really curious feature of the case is this: he has joined in the anti-Ritualistic crusade and alienated the support of a section of the Liberal party, which may be small, but is certainly very active and influential. Fifteen years ago he publicly lied for religion, and now religion is the chief cause of his downfall. Evidently our old friend Nemesis is still alive and flourishing.

Miss Marie Corelli has favored the Kingston Debating Society with her views on suicide. "I do not consider suicide justifiable," she says, "under any circumstances whatever." Of course the opinion of so profound a thinker ought to carry very great weight. But persons bent on committing suicide do not often trouble themselves about anybody's opinions. Miss Corelli goes on to state her reasons, and gives herself away. She starts with the old orthodox wheeze about "free will," which she says God has given us; but, in spite of our free will, we must live out our lives to the end "for some purpose known only to the Creator." Miss Corelli, therefore, takes the place of God Almighty in this argument. She undertakes to tell us what he wishes us to do. Well, we will listen to her with respect when she produces her credentials. Meanwhile we beg to remark that nine-tenths of all the rogues, fools, and fanatics in history have professed an intimate acquaintance with the will of God.

Burnt to death by the Bible! This has often happened in Christian history. But a curious case has just occurred at Limehouse. Two little children were left in a room alone; and the elder, who was under two years old, got hold of a Bible, tore some leaves from it, lit them at the fire, and then set alight the younger child's clothing, the result being that the poor little thing was burnt to death. Of course, it was very sad; but the Bible has frequently been the occasion of mischief.

The super-Christian *Daily Chronicle* did not bestow even a passing word upon poor Thomas Senior, the Peculiar, who was sentenced to four months' hard labor for being a sincere follower of Jesus Christ. Thomas Senior ought to have been a Russian, or anything else at a distance. He would have had a column in the *Chronicle* then.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 1, Birmingham.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

DURING Mr. Charles Watts's absence from England his address will be, c/o *Truthseeker* office, 28 Lafayette-place, New York City, U.S.A.

J. C. MORGAN.—We have always plenty of copy in hand. That is the explanation.

C. H. CATTELL.—Glad to hear that Mr. Percy Ward had large meetings on Sunday at Birmingham. Thanks for papers.

H. THORP.—Hardly up to our mark.

W. H. DEAKIN.—We shall be very pleased to see you at the Annual Dinner on January 9. Don't forget to introduce yourself. We hope to see some other provincial friends as well.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Kindly send us any fresh news you may have from Birmingham.

L. DESPARD.—We have intended for some weeks past to write a notice of Mr. George Meredith's new volume of verse, but we have been too busy with other matters. We hope to write the notice for an early number of the *Freethinker*.

R. HAMSON.—Too late for insertion this week, and would be out of date next week.

W. H. HARRIS.—Received. Will use if possible.

H. J. BARTER.—Pleased to see your handwriting once more.

W. COX.—Thanks for the paper. Pleased to hear that some of the Liverpool friends mean to see Mr. Watts off from the landing-stage.

H. PERCY WARD.—Thanks for your letter and papers. We hoped better things from a city like Birmingham.

J. HALLIWELL.—We are obliged for the trouble you have taken. This week we are too full of other matter, but we will try to give the reverend gentleman a paragraph next week.

CHESHIRE READER.—Your letter is interesting and encouraging; however, we prefer not to print it. It is sufficient for us to know that we have helped your mental liberation.

E. H. T.—Certainly there is nothing in the Bible *against* polygamy, which was practised by all the Lord's favorites in the Old Testament, and is nowhere condemned in the New Testament.

QUERIST.—Lange's *History of Materialism* is an excellent work. The English translation is rather expensive, but of course there is only a limited sale for such books, and this involves a high price, if only to cover the cost of production.

W. SANDERS.—We have a memorandum by us of the matters you refer to—the educational establishment, the subsequent litigation, and all the rest.

F. F. JACKSON.—Mr. Sidney Lee's new *Life of Shakespeare* will give you all the information you require. It is the work of a sober and thorough scholar. Mr. Swinburne's volume on Shakespeare is critical, not biographical. It is extremely well worth reading if you know Shakespeare's writings.

J. E. BARTON.—Mr. Watts will be in America by then, but he will be represented at the Annual Dinner by Mrs. Watts. We are pleased to hear that you hope to bring some of your liberal-minded friends to the Dinner, to let them see what Freethinkers are like on such an occasion.

RECEIVED.—Ethical World—Progressive Thinker—Home Links—Free Society—Wisbeach Advertiser—New York Truthseeker—Birmingham Argus—Birmingham Gazette—Birmingham Post—Record—Liverpool Review—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Isle of Man Times—Public Opinion—Oxford Times—Huddersfield Daily Examiner—Hull Daily News—People's Newspaper—Blue Grass Blade—English Mechanic—Independent Pulpit—Cork Constitution—Newcastle Daily Leader—Brann's Iconoclast—Torch of Reason—Freidonker—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Lucifer—Two Worlds—Crescent—Freethought Ideal—Middleborough Telegraph—Derby Telegraph.

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

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

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

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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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

NEXT week's *Freethinker*, beginning a new year and a new volume, will be printed throughout in new type. A new letter has also been cut for the title. Our readers, being apprised of this fact, will not fancy it is another paper when they perceive the change.

Another large audience assembled at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Babe of Bethlehem" was very freely punctuated with laughter and applause. Two Christians accepted the chairman's invitation, and offered some random remarks which they called criticism. Mr. Watts, who presided, wound up with a few farewell words before his departure for America. He spoke with good feeling, and it was evident that he had the best wishes of all present for his success on the other side of the Atlantic.

There will be no lecture at the Athenæum Hall this evening (Dec. 25), for obvious reasons. On the following Sunday (Jan. 1) Mr. C. Cohen will occupy the platform. No doubt he will have a good audience on that occasion.

Mr. Foote visits Birmingham on Sunday, January 1, lecturing three times in the Bristol-street Board School; and, in the view of the local agitation against the Secularists, crowded meetings may be anticipated.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place as usual at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday evening, January 9. The tickets are four shillings each, and can be obtained at the N. S. S. office, 376-7 Strand, W.C., at 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., or from any London Branch secretary. Mr. Foote will preside, and Messrs. Cohen, Forder, Moss, and Heaford will speak to various toasts. The program will also include some good vocal and instrumental music. We hope there will be a large gathering of "saints" from all parts of London. Perhaps a few provincial friends may be in town then, and if they come they will be very welcome.

Colonel Ingersoll made a capital speech at the Lotus Club dinner in honor of Admiral Schley. He said the Americans started with great advantages; they had good blood, for one thing, and for another they had the heritage of the greatest literature in the world, topped by the matchless genius of Shakespeare. Then they had the Anglo-Saxon type of courage, the highest, courage as hot as you like, but without "a cloud in the heaven of judgment." The poor Spaniards had plenty of the courage of passion, but they had no judgment; they "sprinkled holy water on their guns, then banged away, and left it to the Holy Ghost to direct the rest." Ingersoll's fine peroration was thunderously applauded.

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie will perhaps be gratified to learn that his poem on "Moral Weeds" is reproduced from our columns in the *Boston Investigator*—the oldest, and one of the best, of Freethought papers in America.

Last Sunday morning the final outdoor meeting of the Freethinkers at Limehouse was in every way a great success. Mr. Waldron adorned the rival platform. That gentleman, during the progress of Mr. Edward's address, dismounted his rostrum and charged our platform. Despite confusion and contusions, the mob was successfully held back. During the scuffle Mr. Pack was kicked in the ribs by a prominent supporter of the Christian platform. The police intervened, and Mr. Waldron and the Hooligans had to adjourn to their proper place. Subsequently Mr. Waldron apologised for his part in the disturbance, both from his own platform and ours, and explained that he had not lost his temper, but had become excited. His further words condemning disorder were not relished by the local religious rowdies. Messrs. Pack, Edwards, Davies, Ramsey, and Heaford were the speakers. A public vote of thanks to Mr. Loafer, the indefatigable organiser of these meetings, was passed with acclamation. This station, once the most hopeless anywhere, is now, thanks to Mr. Loafer, one of the chief centres of Freethought activity in London.

"Microbe" has an interesting letter in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* on that old watch story, pointing out its antiquity, and how universally it has been applied to leading "infidels." Such pertinent, well-written letters in the local press are of great service to the Freethought movement.

The *Independent Pulpit*, edited by J. D. Shaw, Waco, Texas, is an exchange that we are always glad to receive. It always contains some good reading. The latest number to hand is dated October. It seems to have been a long

time on the way. Editor Shaw does us the honor of reproducing our article on the Star of Bethlehem.

A meeting of the Plymouth N. S. S. Branch will be held on January 8, at seven o'clock, at the Democratic Club, Whimple-street. Local friends are earnestly requested to attend.

"Are we a Nation of Hypocrites?" is the heading of a vigorous letter by A. E. Elderkin in the *Watford Record*. He points out that we pay an Archbishop £15,000 a year for teaching that the Bible is the Word of God, and then we send a man to prison for four months for obeying it. He appeals to Christian ministers to speak out and say whether Senior was right or wrong, but we fear he will appeal in vain.

Free Society, an Anarchist journal, published at San Francisco, is amongst our American exchanges. We differ from it in some things and agree with it in others—as is natural. It is certainly conducted with ability, and we imagine with self-sacrifice for principle. The latest number before us reproduces our paragraphs on the collapse of the Bedborough case.

An anonymous donor has provided the funds for one hundred free scholarships at Ruskin House, Oxford. This advantage is offered to young men of the artisan class who desire to share in the boon of a higher education. Particulars can be obtained on application to C. A. Beard, 41 Banbury-road, Oxford.

The *Secular Almanack* is having a pretty good sale, but there is a fair number still left at the publisher's, and we hope they will soon be cleared off his hands. The editor and the contributors give their services gratuitously, and every penny of profit arising from the sale goes into the exchequer of the National Secular Society, to be expended on Freethought propaganda. We may add that the price of the Almanack is only threepence.

THE REVIVAL OF CLERICALISM.

"It has been the dream of every Freethinker since the days of Lucretius that the world would, in fifty or a hundred years, be quit of what he called superstition.....Sacerdotalism, mysticism, and clericalism are stronger to-day than was thought possible thirty years ago."—*Westminster Gazette*.

POSSIBLY the above statements are unpleasantly near the truth—so near, indeed, that it is hardly worth while to dispute them. Yet, being admitted, what do they prove? Nothing more serious, we hope, than that Freethinkers have ever been over-sanguine. Without doubt there has been, in recent times, a marked revival of sacerdotalism, mysticism, and clericalism. There is no need to search for evidences of the resuscitation. They present themselves abundantly and obtrusively everywhere; in other countries as well as our own. We may not see in them any occasion for alarm; but we ought certainly to find in them an incentive to more vigorous action.

The revival may mean, at present, a mere "throwing back," the swing of the pendulum, the receding waves of the incoming tide. Unchecked, it may, of course, mean much more—a prolonged reaction, and possibly the work of half a century undone. The Sisyphus of scepticism expects his stone to roll back "many times and oft." But he trusts that his task is not to be like that of Æolus's son—eternal. To escape that unhappy fate, it is necessary that lost ground should be recovered, and that, however slow the progress, some appreciable ascent should be made.

Changes have taken place in the past thirty years that, at least, afford strong encouragement to persevere. They point to the ultimate triumph of Freethought, though the victory may be long delayed. Rationalism has made giant strides, even though "sacerdotalism, mysticism, and clericalism are stronger to-day than was thought possible thirty years ago." Many religious delusions have been forever laid to rest. Science has sapped the foundations of theological belief. The superstructure is crumbling with rottenness.

In the leader quoted above attention is drawn to the fact that the Protestantism of the Established Church has fallen into slovenly decay. Protestant worship, it is asserted, has become a mere dreary formality, carried on in the least

attractive churches. The feminine portion of mankind is always in latent rebellion against it. On the other hand, interest has revived to a remarkable degree in the primitive and the mystical—in the early Church and in Catholic customs. Ritualism is making headway; but not, be it observed, at the expense of Rationalism. Its recruits are drawn from the Evangelical section, which, notwithstanding the efforts of the Church Association and the doughty Mr. Kensit, may wake up some day to find itself in a ridiculous minority.

Side by side with rising clericalism of the Ritualistic type, and the silent, subtle extensions of the Romish Church herself, there is that aggressive Sabbatarian fanaticism which seems to have taken new courage, and has lately achieved some little temporary success. Here the Protestant or Puritan section has made up for the feebleness of its opposition to its natural enemies, by remarkable activity in interfering with the liberty of people who enjoy a happy indifference to churches of any kind. This monstrous and intolerable display of canting Sabbatarian impudence still remains to be adequately resented. But before it is finally scotched the scorpion is certain to make other, and equally venomous, darts. Thus we find that by both sections of the Establishment, and by Romanism too, rational thought and action are to-day menaced to a degree that Freethinkers thirty years ago would not have deemed within the range of reasonable probability.

There is also to be taken into consideration the spread of mysticism which finds its outward expression in Spiritualism, and in that modern jumble of unintelligibilities yclept Theosophy. The disciples of these phases of superstition have, to their credit, freely divested themselves of the "old clo'" of Christian orthodoxy, but the new garments they have donned are scarcely less outlandish and absurd.

What will be the state of affairs thirty years hence? One hesitates to prophesy, lest some keenly-critical leader-writer of the *Westminster Gazette* of that date should point—as he of to-day—to an unfulfilled and over-sanguine prediction. Whilst, however, we refrain from indulging in anticipation—which is usually idle and liable to many rude and disconcerting shocks—we have at hand another and a much better way whereby we may give ease to our minds and outlet to our aspirations. The field of action is wide and invitingly open. Do we not feel impelled, by the duty we owe alike to our traditions and to posterity, to make still stronger and more determined efforts in that arena than ever we have made before?

It astonishes me to discover the existence of a notion that nothing further in the way of demolition remains to be done. That idea must surely be confined to minds of the hermit type. I cannot conceive how it can be entertained by anyone who lives and moves in the world, and keeps his eyes open—who reads the newspapers, and makes the least effort to ascertain what is going on. Probably it is to this imperfect perception and weakness of spirit in the past that we have to attribute the falsifications of prophecy to which the *Westminster Gazette* not unkindly refers.

With an Established Church, the Bible in the schools, the Blasphemy laws still on the statute-books, prayers in Parliament, oaths in the courts of law, absurd Lord's Day Acts unrepealed, millions of money devoted to the "conversion" of the heathen, many Freethinkers still at the mercy of Christian bigotry—it seems to me that there is an abundance of work to be done. An anti-clerical crusade, carried on through the existing Freethought organisations, is, to my mind, an undertaking that, at the present time, is loudly and urgently called for. FRANCIS NEALE.

"And will you be mine for ever?" he asked, after he had her head nicely pillowed on his shoulder. She straightened up with a start. "Now, look here," she said, in her eminently practical way, "if you want to get up a discussion on the future life, you might just as well be moving along. Father is an Agnostic and mother is a Methodist, and I'm marrying as much as anything to get away from controversies about this for ever business."—*Chicago Evening Post*.

"Did you read about that Iowa preacher who was engaged to seventeen girls?" "Yes; I presume the poor man was trying to keep his congregation together through the hot weather."—*Chicago Dispatch*.

THE ANAKIM OF HEBRON.

It has been often shown by unprejudiced Biblical critics that the Bible stories of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, of the wanderings in the desert, and of the conquest of Canaan, are so full of contradictions, absurdities, and downright impossibilities that no rational person can be expected to regard them as anything but fable. As an example of the fictitious character of these narratives, I select one which I do not remember to have seen noticed—viz., the Biblical account of the destruction of the giant inhabitants of Hebron, who are described as “a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim” (Deut. ix. 2).

After the Israelites had left Egypt, and had received the laws at Sinai, Moses, it is said, selected twelve men, and sent them to “search the land” of Canaan. These men, we are told, “went up by the south, and came unto Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the children of Anak, were there” (Numbers xiii. 22). On the return of the spies, the Israelites, discouraged by their reports, became rebellious, and, as a punishment, were condemned to wander thirty-eight years in the wilderness until all the men over twenty years of age should have died—two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, only excepted.

At the expiration of this period, if we believe the sacred narrative, a new generation of Hebrews, under the leadership of Joshua, miraculously crossed the Jordan, and, during seven years, fought against, and defeated, no less than thirty-one kings, and finally took possession of the land.

After this horde of robbers and cut-throats had captured the cities of Jericho, Ai, Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, and Eglon, and had butchered every man, woman, and child found within their walls—say, in the second year of the war—their further progress is thus recorded:—

“And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it: and they took it, and smote it with the edge of the swordhe left none remaining.....but he utterly destroyed it, and all the souls that were therein” (Joshua x. 36-37).

Upon reading this passage, one point at least appears certain—viz., that the Canaanitish inhabitants of Hebron were “utterly destroyed”; that the race of giants, the Anakim, who had dwelt there, had been exterminated. Could there be any possibility of doubt in the matter, it must be dispelled by the following statement in the next chapter:—

“And Joshua came at that time, and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel: Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the children of Israel” (Joshua xi. 21, 22).

This point being satisfactorily settled, we return to the further conquest of Canaan. Having captured and destroyed Hebron and Debir, Joshua “smote all the land, the hill country, and the South, and the lowland, and the slopes, and all their kings,.....Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza.....and all these kings and their land did Joshua take” (x. 40-42). There remained now but the northern portion of the country. Here “Jabin, King of Hazor,” with a number of confederate kings, assembled an immense army, “as the sand that is upon the seashore in multitude.” Against this mighty host Joshua and his freebooters marched, and in a pitched battle routed them with great slaughter, the Israelites chasing the fugitives beyond the borders.

The holy war of extermination having come to an end, and the seven years’ campaign over, Joshua proceeded to divide the conquered land among the Hebrew tribes. But, while this was being done, there stepped forward the veteran Caleb with a request to have Hebron given to him as a possession.

“Then the children of Judah drew nigh unto Joshua in Gilgal; and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, said unto him.....Now, therefore, give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and cities great and fenced; it may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as the Lord spake. And Joshua blessed him; and he gave Hebron unto Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, for an inheritance” (Joshua xiv. 6, 12, 13).

It will be seen by the words italicised that the dreaded Anakim still held possession of Hebron and the surrounding country. Though stated in the plainest language to have been “utterly destroyed” by Joshua some five or six years before, they were living in the city undisturbed, and were presumably as formidable as ever. Caleb hoped, by the help of the Lord, to be able to expel them, and in this hope, according to the story, he was not disappointed, for we read:—

“And Caleb drove out thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak” (Joshua xv. 14).

Thus, first we are told that “all Israel” under Joshua “utterly destroyed” all the Anakim found in Hebron, and next that Caleb, several years later, “drove them out.” If we take the latter statement as fact, the expulsion of these Anakim by Caleb took place forty-five years after the sending of the spies by Moses (Joshua xiv. 7, 10; Deut. ii. 14), and, what is somewhat surprising, the same three champions occupied the city at each period. Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi were the foremost of the Anakim warriors in the time of the spies, and the same three chieftains were in command of the city forty-five years later. Setting aside this very remarkable fact, it may perhaps be thought that now at least—that is, shortly after the division of the land among the Hebrew tribes by Joshua—we may safely assert that the city of Hebron was freed from its Anakim inhabitants. It has, however, to be remembered that we are not dealing with history, but with a God-inspired narrative. Consequently, it would be the height of rashness to hazard an opinion concerning any statement in one part of the narrative without first ascertaining whether that statement was not flatly contradicted by a counter statement in some other portion. Following this admirable and simple plan, we turn to the first chapter of the Book of Judges. There we read:—

“And it came to pass, after the death of Joshua, that the children of Israel asked of the Lord, saying:—Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up.And Judah said unto Simeon, his brother, Come up with me into my lot that we may fight against the Canaanites.....So Simeon went with him.....And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwell in Hebron (now the name of Hebron beforetime was Keriath-arba), and they smote Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi” (i. 1-3, 10).

Here ends the sacred narrative, as far as the Anakim are concerned. It is satisfactory to know that they were really killed at last. We see, however, that it was not “all Israel” under Joshua at the beginning of the war, nor Caleb and his family, after the war was over, who captured the city of Hebron and slew the three great sons of Anak. The grand coup was given by the tribes of Judah and Simeon at a much later period. It is also to be noted that the three Anakim leaders, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi, were warriors of renown not only at, and before, the time of the spies, but during the thirty-eight years’ wandering in the wilderness under Moses, during the leadership of Joshua after Moses’ death (which Josephus gives as twenty-five years), and for some unnamed period after the death of Joshua—that is, all three were renowned chieftains for at least three-fourths of a century—a very improbable fact indeed.

When it is borne in mind that the Hexateuch is made up of a number of short scraps pieced together, and written originally by nobody knows whom, we can in some measure account for the contradictory nature of the narrative, and may then form some estimate of its historical value—which, in this case, may be set down as *nil*.

ABRACADABRA.

Little Archibald was saying his prayers the other evening, while his mother was stroking his curly head, and thinking of something else. Suddenly it struck her that the child had wandered from the text of the supplication that he had been taught to repeat. “What is that, darling?” she interrupted. “Go over that part again.” “Give us this day our daily pie and cake, and forgive—” “Why, my love, that isn’t right,” the surprised mother broke in; “that isn’t what mamma taught you to say.” “I know,” little Archibald replied, “but I don’t want any more daily bread. I’d rather have pie and cake, and when we’re prayin’ for things you might as well ask for what you want the most.”—*Cleveland Leader*.

FAITH-HEALING.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

(Concluded from page 804.)

ALMOST in our own time wonders happened at the tomb of that noble apostle of temperance, Father Matthew. Not only did his eloquence convert thousands of life-long drunkards, but he healed numerous diseases among the crowds who followed him, and after his death many a cripple left his crutch at his tomb. This case is especially instructive, for the cures came without praying; there being no living body, there could be no "animal magnetism"; there being no medium, there could be no spirit; no drugs, therefore no physician; and no prayers, therefore no supernatural answer. It was faith-healing, pure and simple.

Somewhat similar are the cases of healing by the royal touch. Dr. Johnson, as is well known, was touched, without avail, by Queen Anne for scrofula, or "king's evil," as it was called. Mr. Dicken, the sergeant-surgeon to Queen Anne, however, affirmed that, of his own knowledge, several who touched received benefit. In particular, he tells of one poor woman whom he told the touch would do her no good, as he supposed she would sell her medal, which must continue about her neck to make the cure last. She promised to preserve it, was touched, had the medal given her, and soon after was healed. Forgetting her promise, she sold her medal; but then her malady broke out afresh. Upon this she applied to Mr. Dicken a second time, earnestly entreating him to present her again to the queen. He did so, and again she was cured. Aubrey noticed long ago that the royal touch proved equally efficacious, whether our kings were of the house of York or Lancaster.

The healing powers of Prince Hohenlohe and Mr. Valentine Greatorex, which are mentioned in the letters between Miss Martineau and Mr. H. G. Atkinson, were probably rather due to expectant belief than any force proceeding from the laying on of hands or other methods employed. Indeed, the majority of physicians are of opinion that the cures alleged to be produced by mesmerism and magnetic healing are not due to any occult force proceeding from A the healer to B the healed, but are rather the result of the particular mental and emotional state in B excited by A.

Every physician has experience of the truth of Professor Carpenter's words, that "the confident expectation of a cure is in many cases sufficient in itself to bring it about." The observation of every reader will furnish illustrations. We all know the success of quack medicines that have been advertised into reputation. Fancy largely enters into many diseases and cures. Dr. Armstrong said in one of his lectures: "I have cured aneurism of the aorta by a slight purgative, ossification of the heart by a little blue pill, and chronic disease of the brain by a little Epsom salts." Pills made of bread are often known to induce the same peristaltic action as would be caused by castor oil, and colocynth has been known to have the effect of an opiate, instead of a purgative, when believed by the patient to have been meant for the former purpose. Treating of hysterical paralysis, Dr. Briquet says: "I have seen the wife of a workman who had been hemiplegic (paralysed on one side) several months, and who could not leave her room. In June, 1848, at the moment of the Paris insurrection, she got up, followed her husband wherever he went during the three days of the insurrection, and when peace was restored fell hemiplegic again as before, suffering violent pain." Professor Carpenter says: "The want, not really of the power to move, but of belief in the possession of that power, is the characteristic of that peculiar form of paralysis which is commonly designated as hysterical, and the most effective treatment of this remarkable disorder is to work the patient up to the conviction that the power has been or will be restored." The confident assertion that a person subject to fits will have an attack has frequently proved sufficient to produce one; and the mere mention of water will, in a hydrophobic patient, induce the recurrence of the symptoms. Numerous and far more astonishing instances of the intimate relation between the mind and the body may be found in Dr. Noble's book on *The Human Mind in Relation to the Brain and Nervous System*, and in Dr. D. H. Tuke's interesting and instructive *Illustrations of the Influence of the Mind upon*

the Body, which has gone through a second edition, and which fully shows that what Dr. Tuke calls psycho-therapeutics, while of little avail in serious organic diseases, is efficacious not only in nervous affections, but in many other disorders, especially rheumatics, gout, and dropsy. It is indisputable that the emotional frame of mind acts powerfully on the skin, kidneys, and bowels.

Now the common characteristic of revivals is that they all, by various methods, attempt to work up a state of religious excitement. The Salvationists openly profess this in their motto, "Blood and Fire." "Send down the fire" is the constant prayer of these red-hot religionists, and the fire, or "outpouring of the spirit," is supposed to come when their reason quite loses control of their actions. The holy spirit in the heart has much the same effect as alcohol in the head. Religious dram drinkers prefer their theology, like their gin, undiluted. The Salvationists supply their stimulant at full strength—considerably "above proof," indeed. Religious fervor and ferment is excited by representing the eternal destinies of the audience to depend upon their immediate "surrender to God"—that is, coming up to "mercy seat," or "penitent form," the space near the platform, there to be prayed over or pray, and give their testimony of conversion, after which they are assumed to be saved from eternal fire, and unending glory is their adequate reward. It may be laid down as a condition that, in order to effect revivals, the reason must be rendered inactive, the imagination and emotions being excited, and the sentiment of fear being especially addressed and powerfully wrought up. It would have been strange indeed if the Salvation movement had been unattended by miracles. Those of "Major Pearson," which have recently excited so much attention, are in no way removed from the ordinary run of these phenomena. Out of any immense concourse of persons who attend in hopes of being cured, a certain number of persons declare themselves benefited, and of these cases the most is made by excited or interested followers. The cripple who, according to the *Times* account, staggered a few steps, is said in the *War Cry* to have flung away his crutches and gone on his way rejoicing. The great majority received no benefit whatever, and of those who profess themselves cured many appear again, having had a relapse.

A recent report in the *Manchester Evening News* says: "In the early part of the service, after some had been anointed with oil and submitted to the healing operation without any perceptible benefit, the 'Major' said that when on earth Christ was unable to work miracles on account of the people's unbelief, and there were many unbelievers at that service. On their account the meeting would have to be brought to a close, and the poor sufferers who had come to be healed would return to their homes unbenefited. Many persons then left the building, believing the service to be over, but the healing process was continued, and later on about twenty cures were professed to have been effected." It is also noticeable that "Major" Pearson has proved powerless with the diseases of children, infantile minds not so easily being brought under the stimulus of religious faith.

In the case of the Salvationist miracles few will fail to see that such cases as prove on investigation to be genuine are but the effects of natural causes operating on minds predisposed and inflamed by religion, and which have been exaggerated by rumor, if not by the delusion of the patient. Those who see in them manifestations of divine power must also, if consistent, ascribe to the interference of deity the numerous cases of insanity incidental to revivals, many of which in all our large asylums can be traced to the influence of the Salvation Army. This, we presume, they will not be disposed to do. It is not, however, all those who allow that fanaticism is at the present day sufficient for the circulation of stories of miracles who will admit its efficacy in the far more superstitious and excited time which gave birth to Christianity, a time which, says Esquirol, was characterised by its number of religious maniacs. The Gospel narratives are so bound up with the miraculous that most people feel that, if no credence can be placed in the miracles, there is little reason to believe in any such historical character as Jesus of Nazareth at all. The difficulty of supposing the character an invention and the biographies nothing but romances has induced their unconsidered acceptance as a whole. Yet, if we look at the origin of other religions, we observe how rapidly a legendary accretion of miracle will grow around an historic fact. We know that the first

Gospel was oral, and even Papias, who first mentions the writing of Gospels, declared his preference for tradition. If we suppose, as from the evidence in other cases we well may, that some persons actually did receive benefit from coming in contact with a teacher they believed in and revered, we can understand how the impression produced by such cures would suffice to give rise to the legendary ascription to him of yet greater power. No reader of the Testament can fail to notice that the majority of the miracles are works of healing, and exactly of that kind which are found to be successfully treated by psychotherapeutics. The demoniacs are now generally allowed to have been persons suffering from madness and epilepsy. Another point is that called attention to by "Major" Pearson—the dependence of the cures upon faith. Mark vi. 5 says that in his own country Jesus could do no mighty work, and Matthew xiii. 58 says "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Had Jesus really been supernaturally endowed, we might surely believe that the want of faith among his own people and kindred was rather a reason for the performance of miracles.

GLADSTONE AND "SWEAR WORDS."

CANON MACCOLL relates the following of Mr. Gladstone in the *Observer*: "I never heard him utter an oath, even as part of a story, in the presence of ladies, and I have known him postpone the telling of a story, of which the point depended on an oath, till the ladies left the room. Perhaps I may venture to give one instance. I had the honor of being at Hawarden once when there chanced to be a number of distinguished and brilliant men there, three of whom, alas, are dead—the late Lord Bath, Lord Granville, and Lord Odo Russell (as he then was), and also Lord Dufferin. After the ladies had left the breakfast-room, someone related a funny story illustrating the proneness of a certain eminent person to swearing upon occasion. Mr. Gladstone then remarked upon the happy decay of swearing among the educated classes as compared with the recollections of his youth. The greatest swearer he ever came across, he said, was the Duke of Cumberland of that day. 'And the worst of him,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'was that if he repeated the most innocent observations of yours, he took away your character in repeating it by putting some dreadful oath into your mouth.' And then Mr. Gladstone told the following comical story with a facial expression and tone of voice which threw us all into fits of laughter. When the first Bill for the Abolition of Church Rates was introduced into the House of Commons the peers were in a panic. It was the opening of flood gates which might sweep away their House, and even the Monarchy. So the leading peers held a conclave in the House of Lords, at which the Duke of Cumberland was present. After some deliberation it was agreed that the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was known to be within the precincts of the House, should be asked to move the rejection of the Bill in the event of its reaching the Upper House. The Duke of Cumberland was accordingly deputed to see the Primate and return to the peers with the answer, 'Now,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'you cannot appreciate my story, as none of you knew Archbishop Howley. He was a saintly man, of gentle character, with whose name it would be almost a sacrilege to associate the mildest of oaths. Presently the Duke of Cumberland returned with the Primate's answer, and, being very deaf, he spoke very loud. "It's all right," said he, "it's all right. I've seen his Grace, and he says he'll be d—d to h—ll if he don't move the rejection of the Bill." Some time afterwards Mr. Gladstone did me the honor of dining with me, to meet some friends, including Dr. Magee, then Bishop of Peterborough. One of the company asked the Bishop if the 'bloody shovel' story about him was true, and this led the talk again to the decay of the habit of swearing. I asked Mr. Gladstone in a whisper to relate the Duke of Cumberland story. 'What,' said he, sotto voce, 'before a Bishop?'"

A well-known firm in the Strand displays a notice in its shop window saying that, in deference to the wishes of the National Vigilance Association, it has been decided to withdraw a certain popular Christmas card for sale. We really cannot imagine anybody being frightened by the bullying of a representative of the so-called National Association, whose offices are appropriately situated at one end of Holywell-street, of indifferent memory.

BOOK CHAT.

MR. EDWARD CARPENTER'S new book, *Angels' Wings*, is in reality a dozen or so of essays on Art and its Relation to Life, although the fanciful title hardly suggests it. We forgive Mr. Carpenter his title for the sake of the subject-matter. One essay on Art and Democracy, in which he discusses some characteristic comparisons between Whitman, Millet, and Wagner, is delightful reading. Another essay deals with Beethoven and his works, and will be read by all music lovers with feelings of gratitude towards the author. Other essays deal with Manners as a Fine Art, the Simplification of Life, and the Return to Nature. The book is very well illustrated, and will prove a most seasonable gift-book to all lovers of the poet who gave us *Towards Democracy*.

The Boston *Literary World* says that Mr. Hall Caine had explained to a lady that the lower part of his face was like Shakespeare's, and the upper part like that of Christ. We believe half of this statement. We have no difficulty in classing his intellect as Christlike.

Talk about the "Best Hundred Books" reminds us that the deservedly popular Scott Library has just reached its 105th volume. The latest addition is *The Principles of Success in Literature*, by George Henry Lewes. It would be commonplace to say that some most excellent writing has here been rescued from oblivion; the fact is self-evident. All lovers of literature will welcome this admirable volume.

It is not generally known that Mark Twain (or his publishers) have omitted the very facetious passage concerning Joseph and Potiphar's wife from all recent editions of the *New Pilgrim's Progress*.

Mr. Bernard Hamilton's rationalistic novel, *The Light: A Romance*, which we reviewed in these columns a short time since, has, we are happy to say, reached a second edition.

Mr. J. Shufflebotham, of the Bolton School Board, has issued a pamphlet (1d.) entitled *The Christian, the Atheist, and the Socialist*, through the Twentieth Century Press, Clerkenwell-green, London. Mr. Shufflebotham thinks the Christian and the Atheist should work together for social reform. Well, that all depends on the Christian. We hope Mr. Shufflebotham's pamphlet will be widely read—especially by Christians.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A NEW PLEA FOR THEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am much obliged to you for the prominent notice you have been good enough to take of my small book, *Quero*, and also to your reviewer for his very able and full critique. Just now I am closely occupied with urgent professional work, but in January, if you will kindly grant permission, I shall be glad to give, in your columns, such answer as I can to the comments in your issue of December 4 and 11. In this case, I venture to suggest that any of your readers who are interested in the subject would do well to keep by them the excellent review which appeared on these dates.

JAMES H. KEELING.

Obituary.

YESTERDAY morning (Dec. 18th) we laid to his long rest in Plymouth Cemetery, amid universal expressions of regret, Mr. Gad Roberts, aged forty-two years, late secretary of our Plymouth Branch N.S.S., who died from an attack of pneumonia. A consistent and energetic worker in the cause, a model husband, a true friend, hospitable in his Secular home, large-hearted and generous to many who will sadly miss him, he died firm in his convictions; and his oft-repeated request for a Secular burial was bravely and faithfully carried out by his widow, notwithstanding that some of his orthodox relatives and friends (?) declined, for that reason only, to attend the funeral. Their absence, however, was fully compensated by a large attendance of Secularists, to whom Mr. G. McClusky read most impressively the beautiful service of Col. Ingersoll, after which our veteran worker, Mr. R. T. Smith, delivered a short eulogistic address. The ceremony was a strange but welcome contrast to the monotonous and depressing chapter of absurdities usually drawled out by our surpliced friends, and made a visible impression on the many who stood round the open grave.—H. J. BARTER.

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

BLADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): December 24, at 8.30. Social Evening. December 25, closed.

WEST LONDON SECULAR CLUB (15 Edgware-road): Every evening 7—10.50. Visitors invited. The resort of Freethinkers in the district. Lectures every Thursday. Thursday next, Mr. Milnes opens a discussion on "Theosophy."

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class: Essay, "The Holy Ghost"; 6.30, J. F. Turnbull, "Thomas Paine Glorified."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): December 25, Closed. January 2, Annual Soirée. Tea at 5.50, dancing at 7.30.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Musical and other Recitals. December 28, Members' and Friends' Soirée and Ball. Tea at 5.30.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton—January 1 and 8, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 15, Camberwell; 22, Sheffield; 29, Bradford Labour Church. February 5, Glasgow.

H. PERCY WARD, 5, Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—January 7, Birmingham; 14 and 21, Manchester; 28, Chester.

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