

# THE Freethinker

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## Episcopal Cackle.

THOMAS GEORGE SENIOR, one of the Peculiar People, is doing four months' hard labor for his practical belief in the efficacy of prayer; and the Bishop of Stepney chooses this particular time as most appropriate for publishing his own convictions on the subject. Short of going to prison, or risking sixpence, he is a profound believer in the doctrines of the New Testament. He is confident—up to the aforesaid point—that Jesus Christ spoke the exact truth when he said that whatsoever his disciples asked, believing, they should receive. Indeed, he relates certain "direct and distinct answers to prayer" in his own personal experience. Curiously—some might say naturally—these answers from the Lord were all of a financial character. His lordship introduced them to a Shoreditch congregation, who probably envied his success in this special direction. In doing so he drew a parallel between his own case and that of the late Mr. Müller, of Bristol. That old gentleman used to perambulate the Christian world, incessantly advertising the fact that his Orphanage was never advertised. He told many thousands of people so in the course of every year, and the fact that he did without publicity was constantly published in a multitude of religious journals and daily newspapers. When money poured in for his secretive establishment, it clearly came from the Lord. And it has been just the same with the Bishop of Stepney. When he was contemplating the building of the Oxford House Settlement, and in sore difficulty over the funds, he prayed about the matter; and quite unexpectedly (of course!) a gentleman drove up to the door and offered him £3,000 of the £15,000 he wanted. Mark you, the gentleman did not walk or come by the tram-car; he drove in a brougham or a hansom; which shows how quick the Lord is in fulfilling the petitions of his faithful servants.

Case number two was, if possible, still more convincing. His lordship wanted £1,000 for the laying-out of old Bethnal-green churchyard, and of course he made it the subject of special prayer. Equally of course a strange lady called soon after and gave him the £1,000. That settles it. Even infidels must yield to this cogent demonstration. A thousand pounds was wanted, and a thousand pounds came. It was the exact figure. Had it been a farthing less, there would have been just that amount of room for hesitation. Moreover, the gift was brought by a "strange" lady. This makes assurance doubly sure. The wheel of proof comes full circle. The Lord's hand is evident. It may almost be seen hovering over the Bishop's saintly head, or, better still, pushing the strange lady with her thousand pounds along.

Case number three is not more convincing. That would be impossible. But it was just as pat. A churchwarden had become liable for £100, and they did not know how they could possibly get out of the difficulty. Well, the Bishop went to St. Paul's Cathedral and preached a sermon on "Pain," which must have been a happy inspiration; at any rate, a gentleman sent up a note saying he was so pleased with the discourse that he enclosed a cheque for £100 for the Bishop to spend as he pleased. Here again the exact amount wanted was forthcoming. We are not informed, however, though it would be very interesting to know, whether the donor had a cheque for £100 already written out and payable to bearer, or whether he obtained the use of pen and ink on the premises and made the cheque payable to the

Bishop. It would be no less interesting to learn the identity of this providential gentleman. Was it Terah Hooley? We put the question without a tinge of sarcasm. Mr. Hooley's piety is well known, and his name is closely associated with St. Paul's Cathedral. Is it not engraved on the famous gold communion plate? And may it not also have figured on the Bishop of Stepney's cheque?

Evidently the Bishop of Stepney is a most prevailing supplicator. Paul says that the Lord is not very far from any one of us, but he seems to sit close to this fortunate prelate. The divine aural apparatus is spread out like an ear-trumpet to catch every whisper of his necessities. It appears to us, therefore, that the Bishop of Stepney should immediately be promoted; or rather, that a special office should be made for him in the Church of England—namely, that of Supplicator-General to the Establishment. There is obviously no need to beg painfully for poor curates, or for church restoration, or for home or foreign missions. All that is requisite is to decide what sum is wanted, and to put the matter unreservedly into the hands of this gentleman, who will duly inform the Lord and obtain the precise amount to a halfpenny. Of course, there are people who will object to anything. They may urge that, while the Lord might send three thousand pounds readily, he would hesitate about sending three millions. But this involves a misconception of Omnipotence. With the Lord a single day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a single day; and the divine arithmetic must be as elastic as the divine chronology.

This matter ought to engage the attention of the next Church Congress. Perhaps it should be taken up at the next Convocation. There is not a minute to be lost, for the Bishop of Stepney is mortal. He may die at any moment, and it might be very difficult, if not impossible, to appoint another Supplicator-General with the same prevalence in prayer.

Meanwhile the Bishop of Stepney should devote himself to an act of justice and reparation. He is bound in honor, nay, in common decency, to demand the release of Thomas George Senior, and to protest against any further persecution of the Peculiar People. It is really monstrous that a poor man should be languishing in prison for acting upon a doctrine which is thus pointedly preached and illustrated by a dignitary of the State Church. Are free and independent citizens of the greatest country in the world, as the Christians are fond of describing England, to tolerate this shocking contradiction? Is there to be one measure for a laborer and another measure for a bishop? Is the latter to tell lies for a living, and the former to be punished for believing them?

We regret to express our opinion that the Bishop of Stepney will do just nothing for Thomas George Senior or any other member of the Peculiar People. We should be glad to see him acting honestly, but we do not expect to witness that cheerful spectacle. In all probability the Bishop will believe that the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and yet call in a doctor; in all probability he will go on hedging, and take good care that the divine assistance is duly fortified by profane precautions. Perhaps he would only laugh at us for cherishing even the smallest hope of his staking anything on the doctrines he preaches so unctuously. This would reduce him to the level of a showman, and his proper place would be at Barnum and Bailey's. But let us not be too hard, even on a Bishop. Prelates must talk, and we must bear with episcopal cackle.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Christianity and Persecution.

No careful reader of history can be oblivious of the fact that for ages professed Christians have been associated with the various phases of persecution that have marred the peace, the liberty, and the personal rights of some of the noblest men and women of our race. The saddest chapters in the records of the past are those which relate to the acts of cruelty perpetrated by the followers of Christ towards those who could not accept their faith. We hear much of brotherly love, but Christians have been slow to manifest it, not only towards heretics, but also towards their fellow-believers in religion. This is a fact admitted by Christian writers themselves, and substantiated by so many well-known historical proofs that it is quite unnecessary to adduce the evidence here to show that, wherever Christianity has flourished and possessed the power, persecution of the severest kind has obtained. The question which it is my desire to consider is this: "Is Christianity a persecuting religion?" My answer is "Yes," and from its very inception down to the present time it has afforded ample proof of my affirmation.

It has frequently been urged that the persecutions here referred to must be attributed to the civil magistrates, or to professed Christians who were untrue to the faith which, it is said, was once delivered to the saints. In other words, it is contended that Christianity does not teach or justify persecution. Even some persons who do not profess to be Christians point to the founder of Christianity as a model of love, kindness, and mercy, and they allege that no persecution could have come from him. Still, the truth remains that persecutions for the rejection of the Christian faith have occurred. From whom did such persecutions emanate? Surely it will not be said that they came from the unbelievers themselves. To say that man is by nature a persecutor is not true, and, even if it were, that would not exonerate Christians, while it can be shown that they have been the greatest of all persecutors. Of what value is their faith if it will not subdue the cruel passions of their natures? If unbelievers did not persecute, as history attests, and if believers are incapable of so doing, we have either false history or effects uncaused. To say that men who are sincere and in other respects good do not, when under the influence of theology, persecute, is the very opposite of fact.

But this question has been fully investigated by Mill and Buckle, with the result that it has been found that professed religious men of undoubted sincerity, and of more than average good character, have been stern and persistent persecutors. Jesus is held, even by some Rationalists, to be an ideal of what humanity should be, and yet there is no difficulty in showing that a spirit of persecution may be traced home to the very words ascribed to him. It would be easy to verify this allegation with numerous texts from the New Testament; but probably the readers of this journal are quite familiar with the passages referred to. The first company of missionaries Jesus despatched unto other nations he sent forth with the declaration: "He that believeth not shall be damned." And he gave them instructions to shake off the dust of their feet against those who would not receive them. There was no love in what Jesus here said, for shaking the dust from the feet was an oriental mode of expressing hate. This, however, was not the worst feature in Christ's instructions. The fate of those who rejected the teachings of his disciples was to be sealed at the Day of Judgment. Then they were to be placed among the goats on the left, and were to be told to "depart ye cursed into everlasting fire," simply because they "believed not." Who can be surprised that with such injunctions as these before them, and believing that they were uttered by their "Divine Master," the conductors of the Inquisition, the Star Chamber, and other Christian institutions of torture, practised the diabolical cruelties they did upon unbelievers?

It is not overlooked that the secular force of modern times has impelled certain writers to put a new interpretation upon the words "damned" and "hell-fire"; but in so doing they rob the language of Christ's meaning, and show themselves more humane than he was. Theo-

logians, with a view of extenuating this Christian doctrine of future punishments, allege that unbelief in science and other things is also visited by pains, penalties, and deprivations. Granting that this is so, there is a marked difference in the two cases. All who reject any truth may suffer, but not in a Christian's everlasting hell-fire. Scientists do not declare that whosoever does not believe in the facts of science shall, "without doubt, perish everlastingly." If Jesus had been familiar with the laws of thought, he would not have ignored its first principles. Among the concepts involved in his utterances are, that all things are possible to him that believeth, and that anything can be believed as an act of the will. If such statements had been made by any other man, they would have been declared unphilosophical and psychologically absurd. It is useless quoting "love your enemies" from one who showed no love to his, and who sends unbelievers to hell. Of what service is the command to "love one another," when it proceeds from the tongue of him who also said that any one who denied him here he would deny before his father in heaven? This is a manifestation of a spirit of revenge that is sometimes found among the untutored Indians or cannibals, but it should have no place in the teachings of one who is supposed to be the "light of the world." Further, he said that anybody who was ashamed of him here in this generation, he would be ashamed of when he was in power with his angels. As a ruler, he says: "Mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them at my feet." His road to heaven was so narrow that only a few could find room to travel in it, while the emphatic statement is made: "Many are called, but few are chosen." He even admitted that his teachings and discipleship, and even his mission, would set families at variance, and thus break up the harmony of the domestic circle. That his immediate followers imbibed his narrow teaching is shown by St. Paul, who said, if an angel from heaven preached any other gospel than his, let him be accursed.

Buckle and Mill were right in their conclusions that those who sincerely believe, and are the most concerned about their beliefs, would, if they had the power, persecute. This is the legitimate outcome of their faith, and the condition of mind which it engenders. They delude themselves with the notion that theirs is the one true religion, and that all who do not accept it will be "for ever lost." They ignore the fact that there are thousands of honest men and women who cannot endorse their faith, and, as they are also regardless of the consequences of their acts, they deem it their duty to adopt any possible means to make others come to the knowledge of the truth which they say is "in Jesus," and, like him, they would "compel them to come in" and join the fold. The feeling of enmity towards unbelievers, which Christ manifested, was early developed. Hence persecution was soon resorted to by his followers. The account of Christian propaganda presents a history of blood, torture, and cruelty wherever the faith has been predominant. The stock-in-trade of orthodox believers has been threats to frighten those who did not agree with them, with persecution in this world, and with hell-fire in the next. The first threat they have carried out in a most relentless manner, and they feel certain that Jesus, according to his promise, will enforce the second one.

It must not be supposed that I regard *all* professors of Christianity either as persecutors themselves, or as being favorable to others persecuting. Some natures are too noble and too humane to injure any one. Such persons no theology will contaminate; they are kind, generous, and good, despite their religion. It is their nature to be so, and their excellence will exert itself for the love they bear to humanity. Unfortunately, the Christian Church has not been, and neither is it to-day, composed as a whole of such specimens of nature's noblemen. Bigotry and dogmatism have controlled the authority wielded by most of the religious organisations. The consequence has been that independent thinkers who avowed their scepticism to the prevailing doctrines and creeds of the Churches have either been ostracised or openly persecuted. Against this unjust action Secularism protests. Persecution is the weapon of the tyrant, the foe of liberty, and the destroyer of that friendly feeling which is desirable to promote the mutual

happiness of the human family. One of my reasons for rejecting Christianity is that Christ taught persecution, and that his followers have practised it in all its hideous and revolting forms.

CHARLES WATTS.

## The Tyranny of Speech.

(Concluded from page 19.)

BEFORE I close the list of scientific words the misunderstanding of which is the chief cause of so much inaccurate thinking, it may be as well to notice the manner in which Darwin's phrase, "Natural Selection," has been utilised by semi-scientific Theists. Often it has been argued that the process of "selection" of necessity involved the existence of a selective intelligence in nature, preserving the better type of animals and allowing the inferior to perish. Here, again, the meaning of a word, when used in one connection, is made to rule when the same word happens to be applied with a totally different meaning. All that Darwin meant by "Natural Selection" was, that the process by which breeders produced a particular variety of animal or plant was roughly analogous to the process by which, in a state of nature, animals least in harmony with their environment were killed in the struggle for existence, leaving the better adapted to perpetuate the species. The term "selection" may have been unhappily chosen, but, as Darwin distinctly pointed out that in nature the directing intelligence of man is replaced by the struggle for existence, there is really little excuse, for anyone exercising moderate care, adopting such an absurd interpretation.

Even Spencer's alternative phrase, "Survival of the fittest," although more exact, was not free from abuse. Fittest sounds much like best, best suggests moral qualities, and it has been argued by more than one writer that the doctrine cannot be true, because, in actual experience, the individual who survives is not always of the most desirable type. Of course, all that the phrase means is, fittest in relation to a given set of "conditions"; whether it has a moral significance or not depends entirely upon the sense in which it is used. And yet a large part of the fashionable, evolutionary Theism is practically built upon such glaring misreadings of scientific terms as those I have noted.

The study of ethics furnishes numerous illustrations of the tyranny of phrases over thought. Indeed, a very large part of the opposition to rationalistic ethics consists, as Mill pointed out, in the judicious use of such fine-sounding terms as "Duty," "Conscience," "Sacrifice," etc.; as though anyone, who attempted to place conduct upon a scientific basis, was necessarily destitute of the lofty feelings enjoyed by his opponents. Here, for instance, is a fine example of high-sounding words, suitably like an idiot's tale—"full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"—from no less a personage than Dr. Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury: "My conscience tells me, as an absolute truth, that what is good is higher, is better worth possessing, and is stronger than what is evil; that what is true is higher, is better worth possessing, is stronger than what is false; that what is holy is higher, is better worth possessing, is stronger than what is unholy." As though any man ever denied that the good was better than the bad, or the true better than the false. The real difficulty is to determine what is true, what is good, what is holy, and to that end such childish twaddle as the above, from a man receiving the colossal salary of Dr. Temple, is beneath contempt. And yet one can picture the glibness with which the phrases was rolled out, and can imagine the pious congregation listening as though they were receiving a valuable lesson in the science of conduct.

Take, again, the old-time dispute as to the "freedom of the will." Here it is quite easy to trace the power of bare words in influencing decisions. "Freedom" has a sound that is as attractive as "necessity" is repulsive. Most people like to pose as an advocate of freedom and as an opponent of compulsion, with the result that the issue is practically decided, for the average man, by the mere words used rather than by the ideas they represent. Here a simple change of terms would do much towards putting the discussion before the

people in its true bearings. Practically, there is a sense in which we all believe in "freewill," and a sense in which all but unscientific thinkers must reject it. It all turns upon the meaning attached to the word "free." If by this is meant the same as when we speak of a free country, or a free man—namely, an absence of arbitrary or external restraint—then we all believe in freewill, and all lovers of liberty do their best to make that freedom as complete as possible. Man's will is thus free to act when his conduct is determined by the natural influence of his appetite or character. It is not free when some external power prevents conduct being so determined. In this sense I believe in freewill; but if by a belief in freewill is meant the belief in the will as an autonomous power, operating in independence of man's education and heredity and environment, then I do not believe in freewill, and fail to see how anyone can who has a scientific knowledge of the subject. If, therefore, it is first of all determined in what sense these particular phrases are used, and if, instead of speaking of freewill, we spoke of "uncaused volitions," a great deal of unnecessary confusion might be avoided.

There would also be an end to the absurd argument that "if man's will is not free (that is, if conduct is determined by pre-existing and existing conditions), praise or blame is absurd." "Either freewill is a fact," says Dr. Martineau,\* "or moral judgment is a delusion. We could never condemn one turn or act did we not believe the agent to have command of another." Well, it entirely depends upon what we believe the function of praise and blame to be. If your only grounds for giving vent to one or the other is because you believe that the man might have acted differently, without there being a corresponding alteration in the sum of the conditions that produced actions, then undoubtedly praise or blame is irrational, and one might as reasonably blame the mass of earth that falls from the top of a cliff for lying where it does. But, in my opinion, while the action we praise or blame necessarily lies in the past, the motive for passing judgment lies almost wholly in the future. An action once done cannot be undone; its only use is to serve as a guide for the future, and, in viewing a man's conduct as the necessary result of the forces of which he is the centre, my approbation or disapprobation becomes one of the forces that may help to decide his actions in the future.

But the field in which one finds by far the largest crop of these "blessed words" is that of religion. Here the old lady who found such unspeakable comfort in "that blessed word, Mesopotamia," is far from solitary. When we hear people glibly talking of the providence of God in the midst of unmerited distress and starvation, the wisdom of God in the face of the many unwise and conceivably improved methods of nature, or the fatherhood of a being who, if he exists and rules, daily commits or permits actions that are a disgrace to the name of parent, it is tolerably clear that we are dealing with people who are hypnotised by the repetition of certain phrases, and who never ask themselves what they mean, or if they mean anything at all.

With what tremendous unction is that shibboleth of weak religionists, "Our common Christianity," rolled out, as though there were anything except the bare name that Christians have in common with each other. All Christians believe, we are often told, in the Bible and Jesus Christ. Good; but how far does the agreement extend? Will the Methodist Church, for example, agree with the views of the Bible entertained by a man like Dean Farrar and those who agree with him? Will Protestants in general agree with the meaning of the Bible as interpreted by the Catholic Church? Will any one body of Christians agree with any other body of Christians when they begin to say what it is the Bible teaches, or that Jesus Christ taught? The moment one applies that kind of test the bubble is broken, and it is found that the only point of agreement is in bearing the same name. Any attempt to define the matter further leads to endless confusion, and "Our common Christianity" becomes a common fight among more or less commonplace individuals over a more or less commonplace subject.

Rather more curious than "Our common Christianity" is the phrase that does such duty at School

\* *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii., p. 41.

Board elections—"Unsectarian Christianity." What is it? Where is it? Who possesses it? How is it possible for a creed which declares that "There is no name under heaven by which men can be saved except that of Christ Jesus," to be anything but sectarian? What is an unsectarian Christian? A *Christian* I know, an *Atheist* I know; but what, in the name of all that is reasonable, is the other? A Christian is one who believes, among other things, in the truth and inspiration of the Bible; an *Atheist* believes neither in its truthfulness as a whole nor in its inspiration from supernatural sources. An unsectarian Christian says, I presume, it may be true or it may be false, but it really doesn't matter. A Christian believes in heaven and hell; an *Atheist* says that he sees no reason to believe in one or the other; and an unsectarian Christian, we must believe, says a belief in either is really of little importance; good conduct here is the main thing to be considered. As though it were a matter of little importance whether a man were being eternally burned in hell or eternally bored in heaven. Just see the position the "unsectarian Christian" is driven to uphold. God Almighty sends down one-third of himself to be crucified, so that man might be saved; he inspired a book that has caused the death of hundreds of thousands of people, and which costs the labor of this country millions of pounds every year to support; and now the unsectarian Christian says it is of small consequence whether you believe it all or not. He believes in a hell, but does not believe anyone will go there. He believes in heaven, but doesn't know where it is, or what it is like; he never met anybody who did, and he is not in a hurry to personally investigate the matter. Why, a tenantless hell converts a mournful tragedy into a screaming farce, and a "God of wrath" into a buffoon. The old lady who complained of the minister for preaching a *cold* religion because he left hell out of his sermon may have been behind the times, but she was mentally sounder than many religious people who pride themselves on being abreast of the age.

And how much genuineness is there in the cry of the "advanced" Christian that a man's speculative opinions are of little value in comparison with his actual behavior? Do we find that Christians, cleric or lay, regard an *Atheist* with the same kindly feelings that they do a believer? Not a bit of it. The people who make this statement are, for the most part, driven to it by sheer pressure of circumstances. It is not an expression springing from character, from an intense conviction of its truth, but an admission wrung from them by the logic of facts. It is the grudging homage that unreason pays to the reason it is not strong enough to strangle.

Space prevents my extending this list of phrases, strong in sound but weak in meaning, further. Columns might be filled showing to what extent, in all directions, speech directs thought rather than expresses it. Of course, we cannot abolish speech, nor can we dispense with its use. We can only be on our guard against its misuse; we can see that every sentence represents ideas, and that our ideas correspond with the facts of existence.

C. COHEN.

## Soldiers and Salvation.

"An' its Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please;  
But Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool, you bet that Tommy sees!"  
—*Barrack Room Ballads.*

GREAT is the solicitude for the salvation of the soul of T. Atkins, private or non-com. His heavenly safety is the subject of hysterical anxiety. His earthly life may be sacrificed at the behest of any Ministry of the time that cares to engage in a great or little war—necessary or otherwise. He may be shot, slashed, speared, killed by fatigue or fever, or rendered incapable by his military misadventures of pursuing any ordinary avocation when he retires from the service. But his soul at any cost must be saved, and every effort is made to that end. Highly popular as he otherwise is, he might, on this score alone, feel extremely proud. Perhaps he is, but he does not show it; at least, not to the extent and in the way that his spiritual patrons seem to desire. Alas, some of them do not hesitate to hint that, in spite of all

their endeavors, he remains, in the bulk, unregenerate and as self-contained and self-sufficient as a camel; they almost say as obstinate as a mule.

Notwithstanding all that may be done for his salvation by Army chaplains, Army Scripture-readers, and showers of tracts from pious spinsters, he is still—to apply in another way a familiar line in the *Barrack Room Ballads*—"a pore benighted heathen, though a first-class fightin' man."

A little time ago a Military Convention was held in Exeter Hall. Many speeches encouraging to subscribers were made. Statistics were given of the soldiers enrolled in Christian organisations. The figures thus proudly presented looked very fine in themselves. Only a disagreeable Freethinker would have had the heart to point out how amusingly insignificant they were by the side of the vast proportion of the Army that they did not include, and who, in spite of all temptations, are likely ever to remain outside.

The Army, of course, is nominally Christian. All the rank and file are Church of England, Roman Catholic, Nonconformist, or what not, by description. It is their proud privilege, at an initial stage, to make their selection of the creed to which they will be allocated; the religious banner under which, in the bulk of cases, they have not the slightest intention of serving. If they have no particular choice even in regard to names, as often happens, they accept the convenient suggestion of "Church of England." Thus they are, by consent, formally labelled, and are afterwards distinguished as by their regimental numbers. What follows? As to the majority, it may be truthfully said that their real, living, practical interest in the religious functions to which they are from time to time summoned is pretty much the same as that of the bulk of civilians. That is, outward deference is accorded, but the "inward spiritual grace"—that saving element which Exeter Hall yearns and subscribes for—is conspicuously absent. It has not even deserted, because it never was there. In what is expected to be its place there is, in numberless instances, either indifference or a feeling which is uncommonly like distaste.

All this is very distressing to the zealous people who take upon themselves the task of whipping into the fold any and every class and condition of men, and especially public servants, who are supposed to be more easily got at and coerced.

Of course, Tommy Atkins may please himself. And apart from church parades, he does. Who can blame him? He may be railed at as ungodly; but that doesn't hurt him. Besides, there may be various reasons why, in his case as in so many others, the seed of the sower falls on stony ground. Suppose that a great deal of the indifference arises from ignorance and the inattention of indolence, may not much of the distaste arise from intelligence and careful investigation? Soldiers in quarters have a fair amount of time which they can devote to studious pursuits, if they are so inclined. Some of them are omnivorous readers. Many of them have mental capabilities of no mean order. May they not, in intervals of leisurely reflection, perceive the glaring incongruity between their calling and the principles of New Testament Christianity? May they not, in reading the Bibles so lavishly bestowed upon them, alight upon teachings of Christ which are diametrically opposed to the taking up of arms, even for the purpose of defence—even in the way of resisting evil?

The Society of Friends, almost alone among Christians, recognise the meaning and obligation of such teachings. Furthermore, they consistently act upon them. It does not follow that they are wise, but they are undoubtedly honest, as are the Peculiar People, and of course they are regarded by other Christians as being, in this matter, slightly insane. It is not to be supposed that Tommy Atkins will take sides with the Quakers; but he may decide, more or less impulsively, that the religion that teaches one thing and does another is little else than humbug.

Perhaps, if this aspect of Christianity does not strike the intelligent and inquiring soldier, there are other features of greater import in the established faith which present a barrier to conformity with the adjurations of the chaplain, scripture reader, or any other of the religious zealots by whom he is assailed. But, whatever the cause, there is the fact, and the handful of God.

fearing warriors who constitute the Soldiers' Christian Association, of which Lord Chelmsford talked so much, cannot, by any possibility, be regarded as a set-off.

One would not willingly say anything disrespectful of the Soldiers' Christian Association. They have nothing in common with Booth's burlesque brigades, with their absurdly bogus titles. They seem to be a manly lot; but they are Christians who, following General Gordon of pious memory, have failed entirely to realise the pervading spirit of the Gospel of Christ. The Sermon on the Mount, the whole tone and tendency of the New Testament, is against them. They do not, when smitten on one cheek, turn the other; if anyone would take their tunics, they do not offer their overcoats also. If anyone attempted to compel them to go one mile, they would not go twain, but do their best to make him speedily cover half-a-dozen. They do not give to every man that asketh of them, for, if they did, there would be precious little left of their pay. They don't love the enemy; on the contrary, it is their business to smash him. Their professional swagger on parade and in the park ill consort with the beatitude, "Blessed are the meek." The "poor in spirit" were praised from the Mount, but they would have a bad time in barracks. They are not specially pleased with the peacemakers, because usually their ambition is for active service with promotion and decorations. They take up the sword, but they are not afraid of perishing by the sword; they hope that the other fellows whom they attack will meet with that fate. St. Paul, carrying out the policy of non-resistance, advised Timothy "to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ." He never contemplated the followers of the meek and lowly one, the Prince of Peace, becoming military combatants for any purpose under the sun. Such a thing was entirely opposed to all that was taught or anticipated.

Can there be anything more shocking for a soldier, Christian or otherwise, than to engage in some of the little expeditions of aggression against native people, upon which, to the everlasting disgrace of this country, we have from time to time embarked? Take this passage from a letter of General Gordon, written by him when in Central Africa, and when for the moment he had a glimmering consciousness of the inconsistency of his own work with the Gospel teachings:—

"We derided these poor blacks for their independence, and now God gave them the victory. I declare, in spite of the expressions you may note in my letters, I truly sympathise with them. They say, 'We do not want your cloth and beads; you go your way, and we will go ours. We do not want to see your chief.' This they have said over and over again. They have said: 'This land is ours, and you shall not have it, neither its bread nor its flocks.' Poor fellows! *You will say I am most inconsistent, and so I am, and so are you.* We are dead against our words when it comes to action. We will at morning prayers say forgive as we forgive, and then hurry over breakfast to carry on the squabble of the day before" (Butler's *Life of Gordon*, p. 112).

Here we see the conflict between principle and practice, and the utter absurdity of soldiers pretending to be Christians or humanitarians. It is the poor heathen who are expected to be Christians, who are required, when we would take their coats, to let us have their cloaks also. Well might Gordon exclaim: "How I hate the country and all the work!"

In view of the absolute irreconcilability of soldiering with Christianity, it might be amusing, if it were not a trifle painful, to read a recently-published work\* in which a well-meaning lady gives an account of her almost life-long labors amongst soldiers. She wished to bring the rank and file to Jesus, oblivious of the fact that, if we may trust New Testament teaching, he would simply regard them, in their military capacity, with shuddering horror and repulsion. The sight of Peter's sword gave him shakes. What would he think of a Gatlin or a Maxim? The lady was a very enthusiastic worker, but it is much to be feared from her own account that she became at times, like others of her class, an intolerable nuisance and a bore. The officers "scoffed" at her on various occasions, she says, but she appears to have managed to win over a few impressionable subalterns,

who might, but for some family accident, have been made curates.

Even the military chaplains were against her. She encountered great opposition from them at camps in different parts of England. Naturally enough too; for was she not poaching on their preserves? The man of God likes plenty of laborers in the field, but not in his particular corner. Tread on his patch, and at once there are ructions. That is why the country parson, as a rule, looks so grimly askance at the minister of the village Ebenezer.

Some army chaplains, it must be admitted, are as great martinets as any of the officers themselves. They make themselves at times, in the words of one from the ranks, "damned unpleasant." Perhaps it is from the subtle influence of association, or the innate desire of certain mortal creatures to lord it over their fellow man. The tone in which some of these army-clerics lecture the rank and file is very dissimilar to the deferential manner in which they mildly rebuke the officers, who, if the truth must be told, very often deserve a great deal more preaching at, from a moral point of view, than many of the men whom they command.

An amusing account is given by Miss Robinson of a military man of God's wrath on finding his vested interests interfered with, and of the way in which he "stalked" into the school-room of his cavalry regiment where she was holding forth, and ordered her off. Having done so, in not very courteous language, he ordered the schoolmaster to follow him, and abruptly left. Later on, the schoolmaster's wife entered—excited and tearful. The chaplain had put her husband under arrest for allowing the use of the room! Whether there are many other army chaplains of a like kidney, one is hardly able to say; but, generally speaking, official clerics are very much in need of some watchful control from without, being apparently unable to supply it themselves from within.

With the spread of Freethought—the principles of which, I am happy to know, have entered into many a barrack-room in this country and abroad—the military section of the community, like the civilian, will no doubt gradually shake off even the semblance of allegiance to these "blind guides," who have nothing to offer in the way of salvation but the dry bones clad in "old clo'" of an effete theology.

FRANCIS NEALE.

## Profane Parables.

### XXV.—MINISTRATION.

"THOU art convicted of heresy," said the Court.

The heretic shrugged his shoulders.

"And for thy many grievous sins thou shalt suffer long confinement in a pestilent dungeon."

The heretic smiled indifferently.

"Yet for thy soul's welfare there shall attend upon thee a most excellent godly man, who hath a reasonable good genius in the piecing together of pious homilies."

"Mercy!" shrieked the heretic.

### XXVI.—AFFINITY.

There was once a tribe of cruel savages who were deaf to the teachings of humanity.

But there came one armed with a creed; and he spoke of a god who designed to torture his creatures eternally, unless they saw the necessity of a bloody sacrifice.

And the savages seemed interested.

### XXVII.—QUALIFICATIONS.

One who had a pretty gift of speech desired to enter a society of anti-infidels.

"I have a goodly store of opprobrious epithets wherewith to flagellate opponents," said he.

"Excellent!" said the committee.

"And I have a budget of contemptuous expressions for scientists; yet, on occasion, I can pick from their writings some passages whose import I can skilfully manipulate, so that the ignorant may exclaim: 'Science is with us!'"

"Good again!" said the committee. "And art thou a converted thief?"

\* *A Life Record.* By Miss Sarah Robinson, the Soldier's Friend. (Nisbet & Co., London.)

"No!" cried the candidate.

Whereat they glared at him indignantly, and warned him off the premises.

#### XXVIII.—REACTION.

"This is a strange people," said Progress. "They seem industrious; they are not naturally unintelligent; they have before them many means of learning; they possess the golden key, but will not use it. And, worst of all, they detest my very name."

"Perhaps so," said Religion; "but, personally, I have received great kindnesses at their hands."

#### XXIX.—IMAGINATION.

"Imagination!" apostrophised the apologist. "How glorious thou art! Thou liftest our souls on high; thy swift wings transport us to the seventh heaven! And these wicked infidels would e'en destroy thee, because they know thee not."

"Yet the greatest poets do not seem conspicuously orthodox," murmured the doubting one.

#### XXX.—CHRISTENDOM.

There is a strange world in which the many are yoked to heavy chariots, and some ride therein; but a few neither ride nor are yoked.

The many labor, some in fields, and some in cities; but they carry the chariots always. They who ride labor not; and the greater number thereof are habited in black, and declaim from books with a loud voice.

And some of the chariots are red, and some green, and some yellow. And the bearer of each hates those whose burdens are of different hue.

But their greatest hate is for the few who neither ride nor carry. And the black-coated of them that ride provoke their bearers to chase the unyoked ones, who yet escape continually, because they do not encumber themselves with chariots.

E. R. W.

### Requiescat.

THE sunlight beats without the curtained wall;  
Within is silence, brooding like a pall.  
He is so still—that is the worst of all

Without, the world is glad and nothing grieves,  
The sparrows twitter on the quiet eaves,  
The breezes chatter to the rustling leaves.

He sleeps unbroken, though the bright day calls;  
He never heeds the strangers in his halls;  
I take his hand in mine—it falls, it falls.

The garden, like a live thing, pants and glows,  
Then nestles with the noontide to repose.  
A drooping lily stoops to kiss a rose.

His parted lips are smiling meaningful,  
The staring eyes gleam—ah!—so cold and dull,  
Beneath the pallid skin I see a skull.

The shadows lengthen into afternoon,  
The garden sighs that day declines so soon,  
The song-birds in the tree-tops sit and croon.

A lover once I had—a lover such  
As dreamers love; he loved me overmuch;  
To-day he sleeps indifferent to my touch.

I stand and gaze, and wonder what it means,  
As one who, on a threshold, pausing, leans  
A little while before he parts the screens.

Without, the stars stream softly into sight;  
Within, the tapers shed a ghostly light.  
He sleeps on; does he know 'tis night, 'tis night?

How many nights he soothed my doubts and fears—  
How many times he kissed away my tears!  
To-night I weep, and wonder if he hears.

Just now a star fell from the middle zone,  
It flashed across the sky alone—alone.  
'Tis gone with him into the vast unknown.

Ah, when shall God the mysteries disclose  
That over Life and Death He wraps and throws?  
Those wan lips smile at me—he knows, he knows.

I stoop and listen—did I hear him call?  
The silence answers me, my salt tears fall.  
He is so still—that is the worst of all.

—*Sydney Bulletin.*

AMBROSE PRATT.

### Acid Drops.

THE Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, in last week's *Methodist Times*, accepts credit for being chiefly responsible for the overthrow of Parnell. "There is no evidence," he says, "to show that either Mr. Gladstone or Sir William Harcourt or Mr. Morley, or any of the prominent leaders of the Liberal party, had the least intention of throwing Parnell overboard." Mr. Hughes voiced the indignation of the Nonconformist Conscience, and Parnell was hounded to his doom. Of this feat Mr. Hughes is duly proud. But what is the result, after all, of this English interference with a purely Irish affair? Where is Home Rule now? What is the condition of the Irish Parliamentary Party? Mr. Gladstone went to his grave without achieving his heart's desire, and Ireland is thrown back into the arms of the Catholic Church, which now directs her politics as well as her religion. Politically speaking, the dead set made at Parnell was a blunder, even a crime, of the first magnitude. And, morally speaking, what good did it do? Parnell was not a low libertine; he loved one woman passionately, and everybody who knows the facts of the case are well aware that she was *not* living with two men at the same time. A false marriage law, allowing divorce for nothing but sheer adultery, was the thing that really slew Parnell; and that false marriage law, which John Milton impeached so eloquently, is upheld by the Nonconformist Conscience, which is the narrowest and ugliest form of virtue that was ever seen on this earth.

Canon Barker, preaching on behalf of the Clergy Sustentation Fund, rather sneered at General Kitchener's £100,000 subscription for the Gordon Memorial College, which is to be purely secular, much to the disgust of the missionaries. Canon Barker thinks the money would have been used to better purpose if distributed amongst the sky-pilots at home; but then the Sirdar doesn't, and that makes all the difference.

The editor of *Advertising* is getting up a list of papers that will pledge themselves to keep out all advertisements of a fraudulent character. He has sent us a circular in the ordinary way, but of course there is no need to trouble about the *Freethinker*. We are not overburdened with advertisements, and what we have are all genuine. Again and again we have refused advertisements that have appeared in "respectable" journals. Let no one who wants to impose upon the public waste his money on announcements in a Freethought paper. He had far better try religious organs, like the *Heavenly Herald* or the *Zion Gazette*, that cater for a credulous and unsuspecting public.

Reader Harris, the Pentecostal Leaguer, believes in the good old-fashioned hell. In *Tongues of Fire* for January he says he does not want any "larger hope." He "does not believe in preaching to people that, after they are dead, they will have another chance. *They have a chance now.*" A beautiful illustration of the Christian law of charity. Mr. Harris has found out who was responsible for the death of Christ on a cross. He says: "His death on a cross was probably arranged by the Devil" as the most debasing that could be conceived. He omits to explain why God allowed the Devil to do what the devil he liked with his only son.

The famous Moody declares that his design will now be to reach church members (presumably to save them over again). He further states that there were three thousand churches in two denominations that reported no accessions of membership last year. This is excellent news, and is most probably true. Evidently business is a bit quiet just now.

Jesus Christ began arguing at the age of twelve, unless he had some dialectical trials at home before his first public appearance. This was pretty early, but Laurence Dennis beats him hollow. This is the name of a negro boy preacher, who has attained to the mature age of five, and comes from Georgia. His sermon at New York—so we read—roused the congregation to a pitch of frenzy. It is said that he discusses religious questions like a veteran clergyman. But that is not exactly surprising. Many veteran clergymen discuss religious questions like children of five.

Local bigots are still moving for the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from the Stratford Free Library. One of them, in the local *Herald*, talks about our "indecent pictures." Well, our pictures were never liable to that accusation; and, as a matter of fact, we have not published any for years. This particular bigot, therefore, is a perfect Rip Van Winkle. "Gladstonian," in the *Herald*, advocates a faint-hearted compromise on this matter; while the *Guardian*, a Conservative paper, has the courage to demand fair play all round.

Rev. Bryan O'Malley, ex-vicar of Flitcham, Norfolk, was found helplessly drunk in the market-place, and fined 5s. and 10s. costs by an unsympathetic magistrate. Commenting on this case, the *Marylebone Advertiser* is staggered by the fact that this reeling man of God, at his ordination, specially received the Holy Ghost. But is not the Holy Ghost a spirit?

And is it surprising that the Rev. Bryan O'Malley swallowed spirit to keep it company? —

The ringers of the Parish Church at Watford are out on strike. They were ringing for the evening service at the Harvest Thanksgiving, when the vicar came and stopped them, and said they were making more noise than the Salvation Army. So now they won't ring at all.

"Behold the Lamb of God" was the text of the Rev. S. Newman's first sermon at Yeovil fifty years ago. Preaching his jubilee sermon there recently, he took the same text, but does not appear to have said whether the Lamb tasted any the better for such long keeping.

Tenders for close upon £20,000 have been received for the erection of the Archiepiscopal Palace in the precincts, Canterbury, as a permanent residence for the Archbishop of Canterbury. A sufficiently pretentious home for the successor of the meek and lowly one, who had no place wherein to lay his head.

A very old topic is being ventilated in one of the Northern papers: Why do not men kneel in church? The *Church Times* says one of the answers is, that no man, or very few, will risk damage to his Sunday hat, which kneeling nearly always necessitates. This enables us to estimate the intrinsic value and sincerity of public worship.

As a sample of the nonsense talked about the Eucharistic Presence, take the following passage from a recent sermon at Hastings by the Rev. Canon Sanderson, D.D.: "It is a very serious thing for one who calls himself a Christian to turn his back upon that Presence. And it is also a very serious thing to eat and drink not discerning—to eat and drink as if it were common food. St. Paul did not hold it to be common food, but food so sacred, so really and truly Christ's body and blood, that they who should receive it humbly, and in faith, would indeed be partakers of the living Christ." Such sentiments are worthy only of cannibals.

Among the observances at Bethlehem in commemoration of the Lord's Baptism is one which is rather singular, and has given rise to much comment. "The pilgrims—men and women, old and young—plunged from every side into the sacred flood, dipping their heads three times, and making the sign of the Cross. Then they came out, and, throwing off their dresses, dried themselves simply and unconsciously in the open crowd. Calm faith seemed to hold possession of them." If the same thing happened in this country, it would probably be a police office instead of "calm faith" that would take possession. The simplicity of the proceedings was witnessed by Dean Stanley, who observed that there was "nothing of levity or indecorum of manner."

It is not often, when an Anglican cleric has gone over to Rome, he exhibits any desire to return. The Rev. Arthur Galton, however, has come back to his first love, and a "service of reconciliation" to welcome his return has been held.

The tower of the church at East Lulworth, in Dorsetshire, is in great danger of becoming a ruin unless speedy help is forthcoming to effect necessary repairs. The vicar is applying for funds instead of resorting to prayer, which surely ought to be efficacious when the safety of a house of God is concerned.

Lord Brassey, speaking at the Ballarat Church Congress as a lay member of the Church, considered that the services were too long and exhausting; he thought too many hymns were sometimes sung, and the best not always chosen, and he pleaded for the omission of the imprecatory psalms.

If superstition is dying out, it dies a very hard death. In a large town not far from London there is a street which is popularly known as Do-as-you-like-street, and the people in it are a constant source of excitement to the landlords. One family had to be ejected, and the irate lady of the household used what is termed "language," in the course of which she cursed the house and all who should dwell in it. It so happened that the man who next took the house was seized with illness almost directly, and died in a few days. Now the people around are convinced that it was in consequence of the curse.

The *Church Review* notes that secessions from the priesthood both in France and Italy continue. It is sorry to observe that in some of the cases loss of all faith is the accompaniment, and in others that mere Protestantism is adopted.

Dr. Talmage's latest invention is the story of an Agnostic's visit to the Holy Land. He says: "I knew of a man who went to Jerusalem out of mere curiosity, and without believing in the Scriptures. He met a clergyman, a friend of mine, on his way in, who said to him, 'What are you doing here in the

Holy Land, an infidel?' 'I have come to show up this humbug of a Holy Land,' he replied, 'and to tell all Christians what they ought to know—that the Bible is an imposition on the world's credulity.' Having made the circuit of the Holy Land, he came out, and again met my clerical friend. 'Well, how did you find it?' asked the clergyman. 'I am going home,' said the Agnostic, 'to advocate the divinity of the Scriptures. I am fully persuaded the Bible is true.'" Dr. Talmage's story is lacking in the most interesting point: What was it the Agnostic saw that effected this wonderful revolution?

Scotch people are said to like long sermons, but there are exceptions. Sir William Leng tells a story of an old Scotch woman who was hobbling out of Kirk one Sunday, when a coachman, who was waiting for his people, asked her, "Is the minister dune his sermon?" "He was dune lang syne," said the old lady, "but he winna stop!"

Mr. W. L. Alden, in one of his recent London Literary Letters to the *New York Times*, has a savage attack on Mr. Frank Harris, who, after carrying on the *Saturday Review* for some time, has sold it to the Earl of Hardwick. Mr. Alden refers to Mr. Harris's "inability to conceal his hatred of Christianity." But was there really any attempt at concealment?

Rev. Gerard Williams, vicar of Longwood, Huddersfield, has been prosecuted by the London and North-western Railway Company for travelling on their line without paying his fare, and with intent to avoid payment. The legal gentleman who defended him put in the curious and not very complimentary plea that, "like most professional men, he had careless and lazy habits," which accounted for his neglect to visit the booking office in the ordinary way. The magistrates were of opinion that the charge could not be sustained; but, as they had "considerable doubt in the matter," it is probable that the Rev. Gerard Williams's careless and lazy habits will find some other way of asserting themselves in future—at least in that particular locality.

The *Yarmouth Mercury* is evidently annoyed at the fact that the local Secularists have "taken a hall in the heart of the town, and intend to give a course of Sunday evening lectures." Our contemporary hastens to assure its readers that "intelligent working men"—with whom its acquaintance is probably very limited—regard Secularism as "a ghastly doctrine of despair." This is a rare old wheeze. Secularists, as a matter of fact, are just a little jollier than their Christian fellow-citizens. They ought to look gloomy, but they don't; they ought to commit suicide, but they continue living. Such is their wicked perversity!

A writer in the *Christian Budget* says that the "dearth of conversions is painfully evident," and he wonders what is the cause. A few Freethought pamphlets might help him to solve the problem.

The Rev. G. H. R. Garcia, minister of the Union Church, Sunderland, is a very remarkable individual for a man of God. If we may believe a religious weekly, he has refused to accept an increase of £100 a year in his salary! He may not think the laborer worthy of his hire.

The Queen was recently very much amused at an old man at Crathie, to whom she was talking about the new church, saying: "Your Majesty, the 'Agnostics' of the Church are very bad." He meant the acoustics, and the Queen replied with a smile: "I hope they are not so in my south isle."

"I have not seen a Bible for sixteen years." So said a navy's wife to a colporteur, according to the *Christian Herald*. He presented her with a copy. At night she was so miserable that she could not sleep, but lay tossing on her pillow till midnight, when she seemed to hear a voice saying to her: "Get up and read your New Testament." She did so, and went to sleep immediately.

Mrs. Beveridge writes to the Divine Healing Meeting at Bethshan Hall, Drayton Park, Highbury: "Many weeks ago I was anointed for loss of sight; to-day will you ask the dear friends to join with me in praising the Lord for the restoration of the same? The devil tempted me sorely, suggesting that, if I delayed going to an oculist, I should soon be stone blind. However, I trusted in the Great Physician, and all came right."

Dr. Guinness Rogers, the well-known Nonconformist, writes a long letter to the *Daily News* objecting to the establishment of a Catholic University in Ireland. He professes to speak on behalf of "great principles." He is opposed to "any sectarian endowment by the State," and regards "sectarian teaching of any kind as a hindrance to the progress of education, and an infraction of the primary rights of citizenship." Of course this sounds very fine and noble, but in substance it is nothing of the kind. Dr. Rogers is juggling with the word "sectarian." He does not object to sectarianism as between

all the varieties of *citizens*, but only to sectarianism as between all the denominations of *Christians*. He is quite satisfied to have Christianity endowed at the expense of all non-Christians, as it is in the public schools of England. What he advocates is not the equality of citizens, but the equality of Christians. He wants his own religion to enjoy *privileges*, but he wants those privileges to be of such a character that no other Christian denomination shall have a larger share than the denomination to which he belongs. That is precisely his position, and there is no great principle involved in it. It is an arrogant pretence, sustained by poor sophistry and hypocritical phrases.

The choir boys of St. Peter's, Northampton, have struck work to express dissatisfaction with the amount of money raised at the annual collection on their behalf. This seems rather a mercenary spirit on the part of those who may hereafter be expected to join the "choir celestial." Perhaps they think they ought to be as well paid as the parson.

As Dr. John Watson will be in America when the Presbyterian Synod meets, in all probability no steps will be taken to revive the heresy hunt. All the same, it would have looked manlier to have stayed and seen it out.

At an inquest on a Spitalfields tailor, the widow said deceased had been "strange" lately. She explained that he used to say his prayers twice a day, but last week he did not say them at all. And so, alas, he died. It does not seem quite clear whether the strangeness consisted in praying or in dropping the custom off. The result, however, should be a warning.

The Bishop of Wakefield calls upon the public in his diocese to pity the condition of his poor clergy. In two parishes the parson's income was less than £50 a year, in two others it was less than £100 a year, in thirteen it was less than £150 a year, and in forty not £200 a year. In short, out of 170 parishes, there were 57 in which the incumbent or vicar had less than £200 a year. What his lordship did not state was the number of parsons who enjoyed big incomes while some of their brother parsons were half destitute. On the whole, we incline to think that any one of the Twelve Apostles, including Judas, would have regarded the average parson's income in the diocese of Wakefield as positively luxurious.

The Bishop of Lichfield looks back with some regret on the past year, which, he says, has been one of trial. A spirit of bitter controversy and of angry recrimination has been abroad. Naturally, the clerics, whose lines have fallen in pleasant places, deprecate the disturbing influences of controversy. They are not used to it, and they don't like it.

The January number of the *Zoophilist*, the excellent organ of the National Anti-Vivisection Society, draws attention to the fact that the authorities of the London Hospital are transferring £2,000 a year from their general funds towards maintaining the Medical College. Our contemporary regards this as an unjustifiable diversion of money from its proper object, and wants to know why the charitable public should be expected to pay for the education of medical students any more than that of budding parsons, lawyers, or civil servants. The real truth, we believe, is that the medical profession is very largely interested in the maintenance of hospitals for professional reasons. It is well known that these over-lauded institutions are training grounds for doctors and medical students, where, by treating the poor for nothing, they learn how to treat the rich for something. We say this without the slightest disrespect to the medical profession, which is just as charitable—no less, and no more—as any other profession. Its primary object is, of course, its own interest; and to deny this is canting nonsense.

According to the *Inquirer*, the discussion has been revived as to the desirability of dropping or retaining the name of "Unitarian." All that we need say is that that faith, or the want of it, would be, by any other name, quite as half-hearted and weak.

The *Manchester Guardian's* special commissioner on education in the Country districts says that the foundation stone of rural Voluntary school management is, "To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters"—betters meaning the squire sometimes, and the parson always. "It does not much matter," he says, "how inefficient the teacher is, or what kind of reports the school receives, if the teacher is sufficiently servile in manner and accommodating in matters unconnected with the school. And, on the other hand, the best possible teacher soon learns that, unless he is prepared to go cap in hand to those whom wealth and social position have given the control of the village school, his tenure of office is a frail one indeed."

Rev. J. W. Robson, rector of Hatley, Hertfordshire, was found in his room with a deep gash in his throat, which had been inflicted with a razor. Talmageans please note.

More Christian harmony! Paris and St. Petersburg are negotiating for the settlement of the question of the Holy Places in Palestine. Conflicts are feared between the Roman Catholics and the Greek Christians, both parties having (a Reuter telegram says) already displayed the deepest animosity and equally fanatical dispositions towards each other.

Tom the Kentish false prophet figures in the new volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He gave himself out as the Messiah, and "exhibited the stigmata on his hands and feet, and professed to work miracles." More than a hundred disciples gathered around him. When a body of police were sent to arrest him, he shot the bearer of the warrant dead. Two companies of soldiers were then despatched to seize him. Advancing in front of his followers, who believed him to be invulnerable, Mad Tom shot Lieutenant Bennett with a pistol; whereupon the soldiers fired a volley, and the prophet and eight of his dupes were slain on the spot. This happened in 1838, yet it is said that there are people in East Kent who still put faith in the pretensions of this madman. Altogether it reads a good deal like a much older story.

Mr. H. M. Stanley, the pious traveller, is quite sure that "God chose" King Leopold to redeem the vast Congo slave-park. The *Daily News*, however, points out that the Congo officials are proved guilty of "barbarous and cruel treatment of the natives."

St. Pancras Guardians complain that they have had to pay no less than £540 since January, 1895, for the privilege of having the Salvation Army Home in Argyle-square, while General Booth's organisation has had all the credit. According to the *Daily News*, complaints come from all parts of the country that "people are attracted to the Salvation Army Home, and have to be temporarily maintained and ultimately removed to their own parishes, not at the cost of the funds contributed to the Salvation Army exchequer by the charitable, but at the charge of the already heavily-burdened ratepayers."

Mr. Plowden, the Marylebone magistrate, does his best to enliven the police-court proceedings. Recently he had three youths before him charged with gambling with cards and coins on the window-sill of a house in Paddington. Prisoners said they really had nothing else to do, and Mr. Plowden remarked: "You don't like Sundays, I suppose. You find it a dull day, I suppose. Well, I am not in the least surprised at that. I sympathise with you so far. Many people find it a dull day. It is a dull day." After that there was nothing more to say, except to tell the prisoners they musn't play cards in the street, and to "Go away, and try and endure the dullness of Sundays." Mr. Plowden didn't even tell them to go and hear Mr. Price Hughes.

"Providence" has been at it again. The Board of Trade reports the loss of sixty-nine British vessels during the last month, besides foreign ships. The lifeboats have done splendid work, but we do not hear of a single life being saved by prayer or any other religious hocus-pocus.

The relic business is extending from Catholic Europe to Catholic America. In the Church of Our Lady, Queen of Angels, New York, they have a piece of bone from the anatomy of St. Anthony of Padua. It is said to cure all sorts of maladies. Evidently it does not cure insanity.

The Rev. J. B. Millar, Congregationalist preacher, has been detected stealing books in a New Haven (U.S.A.) book-store. His coat was made with secret pockets, and five thousand new books were found in his rooms, most of them stolen.

Lord Pirbright, in making a public presentation to the retiring postmaster of Pirbright, referred to the action of the vicar, the Rev. Arthur Krauss, in depriving Lady Pirbright and himself of the use of the Board schools for the purpose of their annual treat to the village children. What a beautiful Christian act on the part of a man of God!

How these Christians love one another! Anti-Ritualists have wrecked St. Clements' Church, Belfast, and the minister had to be rescued by the police.

The body of Ada Wolmer, a domestic servant, was found by a coastguardsman in the water off Bournemouth. She had a prayer-book and a hymn-book in her pockets. Of course there is nothing in that. But what a terrible meaning would be invented if she had a copy of the *Freethinker* in one pocket and one of Ingersoll's lectures in another!

The Rev. William Backhouse Gowan, Vicar of St. John's, Rayton, Salop, who, with his wife, was recently convicted of neglecting and ill-treating two little orphan nieces, and was sentenced to four months' hard labor, has now very properly been deprived of his living by the Bishop of Lichfield.

**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, January 15, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London: 7.30, "Christianity Up to Date: or, the New Free Churches' Catechism."

January 22 and 29, Athenæum Hall, London.

**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. BURRELL.—See "Sugar Plums."

H. THOMPSON.—Thanks for cuttings.

W. P. BALL.—Your weekly batch of cuttings is always welcome and serviceable.

A. E. ELDERKIN.—Glad you think the new type a distinct improvement. As you will see, our Open Letter to Mr. Justice Wills, which you regard as "in every way admirable," has been reprinted in pamphlet form for general circulation. We note your view that "This is a unique opportunity, and we ought to make the most of it."

J. M. (Blackpool).—They are of unequal merit. We will use some of them.

RICHARD RUSSELL.—Shall appear.

ADMIRER.—Thanks for your encouraging lines, which are rather too flattering to be printed in our own columns.

W. COX.—Thanks for copy of the *Liverpool Review*. Sorry to hear you cannot obtain a hall on the old conditions at Liverpool.

J. GRIFFITHS.—See paragraph.

W. R. JOHNSON.—You can obtain Tennyson's poems complete in one volume for 7s. 6d., less 25 per cent. discount. Macmillan is the publisher.

J. ROBERTS.—We hope the matter will be settled amicably.

F. W. A.—Colonel Ingersoll has never held any sort of debate with "Father" Lambert. The pamphlet you refer to merely consists of extracts from Ingersoll and Lambert's replies. As to Ingersoll's being a "dirty little infidel," he is about six feet high and broad in proportion. Nobody in his senses expects Ingersoll to answer such a contemptible blackguard as Lambert.

CHARLES HUGHES.—Thanks for the extract from Mr. Conway's letter. No doubt the second part of our Open Letter will satisfy his intellectual scruples. "The law," as Mr. Conway himself says, "is inconsistent in establishing the Bible as the Word of God and at the same time punishing those who apply its precepts." This is the gist of the whole matter.—Mr. Foote will try to find time for a brief note to the local paper referred to, but he is dreadfully busy. Thanks for all your trouble.

ANDREW MILLAR.—It is not a bad suggestion. No doubt a Free-thought Calendar for hanging against the wall would do much good. It would, however, involve considerable expense.

C. CATTELL.—Received.

E. G. JAMES.—It is certainly of interest as showing what goes on in the country districts.

SCOTUS.—Folding and stitching the *Freethinker* would of course add to the cost of production, and we have to look at every penny. Still, as you write from a trade point of view, we will give your hint our best consideration.

H. SNELL.—Your attitude seems correct enough. Freethinkers must not raise objections, or connive at their being raised, on religious grounds in the sphere of citizenship. We reciprocate your good wishes for the new year.

J. M. HEADLEY.—We wish the Yarmouth Secularists all success in their spirited effort.

YARMOUTH.—Lecture notices must reach us by Tuesday morning. It is no use sending so that we receive them on Wednesday. Please note why your announcement does not appear this week, and be up to date in future.

T. HOPKINS.—Thank you for remembering our birthday, which we don't advertise. We are obliged for the enclosure and your good wishes.

OTTO THOMSON.—Your welcome letter from Sweden arrives as we are going to press. It will be noticed in our next issue.

J. HERRING.—You will see that your suggestion was anticipated. The Open Letter to Mr. Justice Wills is already reprinted in pamphlet form. No doubt it will be widely distributed.

G. GALLERY.—The Stratford bigots are amusing from one point of view, and venomous from another. Some of them are quite astonishing liars; or rather they would be if it were not for the Christian fanatic's well-known proficiency—perhaps we should say natural aptitude—in that direction.

RECEIVED.—Bradford Observer—New York Times—Huddersfield Examiner—Yarmouth Mercury—Two Worlds—Ethical World—Zoophilist—Torch of Reason—Yorkshire Evening Post—Pick-Me-Up—Freidenker—Secular Thought—Sydney Bulletin—Free Society—Freethought Ideal—Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper—Blue Grass Blade—Devon Evening Express—New York Truthseeker—New Century—Progressive Thinker—Dominion Review—Boston Investigator—Der Arme Teufel—Crescent—Daily News—Manchester Guardian.

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

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

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

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

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

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 us to call 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.

**Circulate It.**

THE Board of Directors of the Secular Society (Limited) have asked me to let them reprint my Open Letter to Mr. Justice Wills for general distribution. They think it ought to be widely circulated, and are not ashamed to make its issue their first effort in publication. I have acceded to their request, and cheerfully placed the Letter at their service. Every copy will, of course, serve as an advertisement of the Society, as well as of the *Freethinker*. Ten thousand copies have been struck off in the form of a sixteen-page pamphlet. Two thousand are for sale at the price of one penny through the ordinary trade channels, which can only be reached in this way. Eight thousand are printed on different—that is to say, slightly inferior, but quite decent—paper, and are otherwise distinguished by bearing no price on the front page. These are intended for distribution by Freethinkers themselves. Copies will be supplied at the small charge of two shillings per hundred—a trifle less than a farthing each. It is thought that many Freethinkers will obtain a supply at this cheap rate, and circulate copies amongst their friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. Branches of the N. S. S., or individual Freethinkers who are not able to pay anything, can obtain supplies *gratis* by applying to Miss E. M. Vance, secretary, 376-7 Strand, London, W.C., or to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. The pamphlet is now ready, and the type is kept standing in order that more copies may be printed if necessary. It ought to be possible to put fifty thousand copies into circulation.

G. W. FOOTE.

**Sugar Plums.**

MR. FOOTE will lecture at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, during the rest of January. This evening (January 15) his subject will be "Christianity Up to Date: or, the New Free Churches' Catechism." Freethinkers should try to bring Nonconformists to hear this lecture. Of course there will be full opportunity for discussion.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, passed off very successfully on Monday evening. A large company assembled in the handsome Caledonian Salon at the Holborn Restaurant and "did justice" to the excellent repast which is always to be expected in that establishment. About nine o'clock, after an Overture on the piano by Madame Saunders, Mr. Foote rose to deliver the chairman's address. He referred to the absent, including Mr. Robert Forder, who was too unwell to attend, and Mr. Charles Watts, who was lecturing in America; and also to the dead, with special mention of the late J. M. Wheeler, who had always attended these annual gatherings, and who would be missed by all present. The rest of his speech referred to the religious reaction in Europe, and the opposition it was encountering, particularly in France; to the new Secular Incorporation, which had just reprinted his Open Letter to Mr. Justice Wills for general circulation; and to various other matters of interest to Freethinkers. Mr. Frederick Clabon then sang "The Yeoman's Wedding" excellently. Next came the toast of "The National Secular Society," coupled with the names of C. Cohen and A. B. Moss, who both spoke extremely well.

Mrs. Charles Watts recited with admirable effect "The Ballad of Splendid Silence," and was followed by Miss Jennie Atkinson, who sang Tosti's "Good-Bye." Her lovely voice and capital phrasing naturally produced a clamor for an encore. The toast of "Our Speakers, Writers, and Organisers" was neatly and wittily proposed by Victor Roger, and suitably responded to by William Heaford. Mr. Clabon gave another song, and then came the toast of "Our Freethought Brethren in Other Lands." This was spoken to by Chilperic Edwards, whose quiet humor was much enjoyed, and by Harry Snell, who dwelt upon the international character of our movement. After a rendering of Barwick's comic song, "The Curate," by Mr. W. M. T. Burgess, the company joined in singing "Auld Lang Syne," and then broke up amidst handshakings and mutual congratulations on the happy evening.

Each of the diners was presented with a copy of the Peculiar People pamphlet by way of sample. Subscription-cards were provided as usual, and many were filled in and handed to the honorary treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, who sat like Matthew at the receipt of custom, with a hungry financial look upon his face. We presume that acknowledgments will be made in due course.

*Secular Thought* (Toronto) reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "The Star of Bethlehem" from the *Freethinker*. We see that Mr. Watts is going to pay Toronto a visit next month. He has many old friends there, and we hope he will manage to revive the platform propaganda in the Dominion.

Answering Ingersoll doesn't seem to be good business, as the Rev. Mr. Colcord has found. Ingersoll spoke afterwards at the Harlem Opera House, and every seat in the building was occupied and paid for; in fact, chairs had to be brought in and placed in the orchestra and other vacant spots. The *New York World* says there are only three men in that city who can make a hundred dollars a day and have fun all the time. Two of them are Chauncey Depew and Joseph H. Choate, and the third is Robert G. Ingersoll.

Zola's expenses in connection with the Dreyfus affair amounted to £6,300 at the end of November. This great Freethinker has made a heavy sacrifice in many ways for human justice and the honor of France.

The *Koelnische Zeitung* publishes the following item interesting to Freethinkers:—The Freethought Union of Brussels requests all the adherents of the Freethought movement in that city to participate in the tri-centenary celebration in honor of that exponent of Freethought, Marnix de Aldegonde, who died three hundred years ago. All the anti-clerical parties, from the moderate Liberals to the pronounced Secularists, the Liberal Students' Unions of Belgium, the Vallonian and Flemish Societies, as well as Freemasons of Belgium, will deposit wreaths and palms at the foot of the Marnix monument. The leaders of all these anti-clerical parties will make speeches, and, according to the placards, protest against the reactionary movement of the Government in regard to the freedom of the Constitution.

We have received the annual balance-sheet of the Liverpool and Bootle Secular Sick and Tontine Society, the secretary of which is Mr. J. Griffiths, 52 Wilson-street, Liverpool. It is a very healthy document, showing economical administration, and clear benefit to all concerned. Similar Societies might well be established in connection with all the N. S. S. Branches.

On Sunday last Mr. Chilperic Edwards delivered a lecture upon "Prehistoric Man" before the Westminster Secular Society. Through the kindness of Mr. S. G. Fenton, the antiquarian, of 33 Cranbourne-street, Leicester-square, the lecture was illustrated by a very valuable and interesting collection of Paleolithic and Neolithic stone implements, and several bronze weapons, together with some modern savage stone tools and weapons, to illustrate the use of the prehistoric examples. The lecturer had evidently given much labor and patience in the getting up of the discourse, which was followed with great interest, and delivered in that scholarly style and marked with that fine sense of humor characteristic of the lecturer. At the conclusion there were loud cheers, and many questions were asked. A vote of thanks to the lecturer, and to Mr. Fenton for the above loan of implements and weapons, was carried with acclamation.

Gambetta's memory is still green in France, in spite of the clerical reaction. The fifteenth anniversary of his death was kept at the house where he died at Ville d'Avray. "France was represented," the *Daily News* says, "from Havre to the Pyrenees, and from Nantes to the Vosges and beyond them."

*Apropos* of the new edition of *Statutes Revised*, the *Manchester Guardian* says it is high time that many absurdities were removed from the Statute-book, and instances "Acts like those affecting Sunday observance," which are "absolutely

at variance with the spirit of the times," but are "unfortunately sometimes enforced by eccentric or misguided people."

Yarmouth Secularists have opened the Freethinkers' Hall at the bottom of Broad-row. Meetings are held there on Sunday evenings, commencing at seven o'clock. It is proposed to establish a string band. Anyone willing to assist should communicate with J. M. Headley, 18 North Howard-street.

Dr. Lyman Abbott, Ward Beecher's successor at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, who is retiring from the ministry, said in a recent sermon reported in the *New York Sun*: "I can no longer believe in special providences, unless all are special. He did no more in guiding Moses than in guiding Gladstone." And how much *that* was may be asked of the Conservatives.

*The Book of God* is the title of a new work by Mr. Foote, which is nearly through the press, and will be published next week. It is carefully written, and contains much matter that should be useful to Freethinkers as well as instructive to Christians. The work is additionally interesting by virtue of its determined polemic against Dean Farrar, who is chosen as the representative of the school of Higher Criticism in the Church, which seeks to give the Bible a new lease of life on fresh conditions of tenure. We believe this volume will have a wide circulation. Orders can be placed at once with Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

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### Poetry and Religion.

The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry.....More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.—*Matthew Arnold*.

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### Voltaire's Task.

Voltaire's task, however, was never directly political, but spiritual—to shake the foundations of that religious system which professed to be founded on the revelation of Christ. Was he not right? If we find ourselves walking amidst a generation of cruel and unjust and darkened spirits, we may be assured that it is their beliefs on what they deem highest that have made them so. There is no counting with certainty on the justice of men who are capable of fashioning and worshipping an unjust divinity, nor on their humanity so long as they incorporate inhuman motives in their most sacred dogma, nor on their reasonableness while they rigorously decline to accept reason as a test of truth.—*Right Hon. John Morley, M.P.*

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### Obituary.

It is my painful duty to record the death of James Allman, aged forty-eight, who was buried at Jesmond Cemetery, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on Sunday, January 8. Deceased will be remembered by the older members of the Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S. as a fearless, fluent, and outspoken adherent of Secularism. Having outgrown Roman Catholicism in his early manhood, he never missed an opportunity of vigorously attacking the monstrous superstition of his youth. Though his illness (pleurisy) was only of nine days' duration, he appears to have fully realised that his end was near, and requested to have the Secular Burial Service read over him, which was duly fulfilled by Mr. R. Mitchell reading the beautiful service by Austin Holyoake to a large and attentive number of friends in a most impressive manner. Deceased leaves a widow and family of five to mourn their loss.—J. G. BARTRAM.

On Thursday, December 22, Mr. W. Wayham died at his residence near Finsbury Park, aged seventy-six. He was well known to the frequenters of the Hall of Science twenty years ago as one of the most sturdy and hard-working of the "Old Guard" who fought the good fight under Mr. Bradlaugh. He had been for some years suffering from the complaint which ultimately led to his death. He was buried at Highgate with a Secular Service, spoken by W. J. Ramsey

## Heredity and Progress.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

THE law of heredity in its wider aspects is hardly popular, although observed in all ages. As a scientific theory, it has the misfortune to come in conflict, not with facts, but with what are often more potent—namely, prejudices and dogmas. The *Catholic World*, reviewing Mr. Galton's work on *Hereditary Genius*, declared the doctrine "is at variance with Christian theology, with the freedom of the human will and man's moral responsibility. It excludes all morality and all sin, and recognises only physical good or evil." Without troubling to follow these charges, which have been reiterated *ad nauseam* whenever positive science has ventured on fields over which theology has vainly claimed jurisdiction, let us simply look at the facts.

The truth of the law of heredity cannot be denied. Were it not the primary fact that like produces like, there would be no constancy of species. No one doubts that the hard head of the Negro and the light foot of the Indian are inherited. Inheritance extends not simply to size, complexion, and figure, but even to tricks of expression, handwriting, tastes, disposition, intellect—in short, to all that is summed up in the word "character." Anyone who considers the Jews will see at once that their characters, as much as their noses, are an inheritance. A Scotchman "caught young," as Johnson said, may lose some of the superficial characteristics, but will retain all the national peculiarities of his race; and so will the Irishman. The most noticeable qualifications of the law of heredity are those of sex and age. Various characteristics (as in the human family, teeth, beards, and various diseases) appear not at birth, but at the same age as in parents. Striking instances have been recorded of suicide, insanity, and special diseases, breaking out at the same age as in parents. It is even noticed that in men there are long-lived and short-lived stocks. The famous Turgots, of France, scarcely ever reached over half a century, while centenarians usually spring from a long-lived stock. Mr. Darwin noted that "on this principle of inheritance, at corresponding periods, we can understand how it is that most animals display from the germ to maturity such a marvellous succession of characters." He also considered this tendency of the utmost importance in determining the laws of embryology.

Theodule Ribot, the French writer on heredity, alleges two causes as among the chief in cases where the law does not obviously manifest itself. First, the disproportion of an initial force to the amount of energy it may liberate or direct. Each individual having two parents with the latent qualities of their ancestry, and being subject to new embryological conditions, is, however, slightly diverse from every other individual. As affecting this, the military excitement in which Mme. Buonaparte lived prior to Napoleon's birth has been instanced. The Greeks surrounded expectant mothers with beautiful works of art. The second cause is that characteristics are transmitted, which, though modified, are the same at root. Thus a consumptive father may have a child with rickets or rheumatics. An hysterical mother may give birth to a child afflicted with epilepsy. The children of drunkards are often imbecile or otherwise unhealthy, while those born previously to the parents taking to drink have been healthy.

What Mr. Darwin calls the "prepotency of one sex in the transmission of character" is also to be noted. In crosses, the most thoroughbred animal is usually prepotent in the offspring. Mr. G. B. Starkweather is even of opinion that the sex of human beings may be determined by a study of prepotency, or what he calls "superiority."

The seeming absence of certain elements in one generation, and their reappearance in the next or a later generation, is just what should be expected. A father may transmit certain qualities to his daughter which her sex will prevent being other than latent ones, but she in turn transmits them to a son, who thus inherits from his maternal grandfather. Readers of Darwin know the importance of *atavism*, or the reversion to an earlier type, in determining the stock whence an animal proceeds. Atavism is explained by the latency of traits which are kept in check by other circumstances, but

which, upon a fitting opportunity, again take shape. Scratch a Russian, and you find a Tartar. Under the veneer of our civilisation lies the disposition of an earlier savage life, ready to crop up in sport, Jingoism, or love of adventure. The momentum of ages is not to be stayed by the training of a single life. The man who fights his ancestry is often worsted in the last round, giving in in old age to what he has resisted in his manhood. We are, for instance, all more superstitious than we know. Mme. de Stael spoke for many when she replied to the question, "Do you believe in ghosts?" by saying, "No; but I am afraid of them."

In addition to the tendency to transmit peculiarities to the same sex should be noted the more general, slowly acting, and weaker tendency of transmission to both sexes of qualities, or degrees of qualities, which originally appeared in one sex only. This tendency is shown in connection with the tendency to inherit acquired qualities at earlier and earlier ages, and therefore in a manner independent of adult sex development.

Those who accept the facts of biology will find no difficulty in Mr. Galton's contention that it would be quite practicable to produce a highly-gifted race of men by judicious marriages during several generations. In the case of the Brahmans it has been done, although the adverse forces have been strengthened by the habits of superstition and the lack of education on the female side. Every stock-breeder knows the difficulty of keeping up the high character of any valuable variety. There is a steady tendency to revert to the average ancestral character which has to be guarded against by careful selection. With every race of animals, if unpruned for a single generation, the weaker varieties would survive, and the average quality of the race deteriorate. The usual question asked of the believer in inheritance is, How is it the breed falls off? Why was not Cromwell's son, or Milton's daughter, as superior to their parents as they were to theirs? A consideration of the laws already mentioned will, in part, supply the answer. The case of Cromwell also deserves a word of notice. His military and political genius may be said to have developed with his opportunity. Had Charles been a good king, Cromwell might only have been a self-willed yeoman and a leader of opinion among the Huntingdon gentry. He had come of good descent, and his high qualities appeared to some extent in his daughters.

The difficulty is, however, properly met by Mr. Galton in his latest researches. It lies in the constant tendency to mediocrity of which I have spoken. In experiments on seeds of different size, but of the same species, Mr. Galton noticed that the offspring did *not* resemble their parents in size, but always tended to approach a medium size—to be smaller than the parents if the parents were large, to be larger than the parents if the parents were small. The point of convergence was below the average size. In regard to human height, an experiment furnished the result that where the average height of the two parents either exceeded or fell short of the mean standard height, that of their offspring would be one-third nearer. The explanation, of course, is that the child inherits partly from his parents, partly from his ancestry. The further his genealogy goes back, the more numerous and varied his ancestors become, until their mean stature becomes the same as that of the race. The man who boasts descent from some Norman baron rarely reflects how inconceivably small can be the share of that remote ancestor in forming his own constitution. The father transmits, on an average, one-half of his nature, the grandfather one-fourth, the great grandfather one-eighth, the share decreasing in geometrical ratio with great rapidity. This law of regression, towards the average of parentages, tells heavily against the full transmission of any rare and valuable gift. The more exceptional the gift, the more exceptional is the good fortune of a parent who has a child of equal or greater abilities than himself. If this discourages extravagant hopes in gifted parents, it no less discourages extravagant fears in those a little below the standard.

(To be concluded.)

Beetle—"Even the hairs of your little head are numbered." Freddie (pulling out a hair)—"What number is this?"

### Heavenly Justice.

(Tune: "THE DUSTMAN'S WIFE.")

THERE dwelt a man after God's own heart  
A long way off in some furrin part;  
At ripping up wives and gouging out eyes  
His equal isn't in Paradise.  
He had some wives, but wanted more;  
And, chancing to peep in the yard next door,  
He there discovered, as large as life,  
That lovely dame, the Hi-tite's wife.

*Chorus.*—With his hanky panky toodle doodle dum,  
Ranky swanky toodle doodle day,  
A faithless wife and a godly kite  
Soon cooked the goose of the brave Hi-tite.

This godly king great wars had waged  
Where brave Uriah was then engaged;  
He sent him word to come right home  
(No doubt to be sent to Kingdom Come).  
But Uriah would not return, he said,  
Till all the good king's foes were dead;  
He little knew the hilarious life  
His king enjoyed with his charming wife.

*Chorus.*

But the good king hit on another plan,  
And caused Uriah to lead the van  
Where "Death or Glory" was the cry,  
That he might be smitten so that he die.  
Somehow or other, Good God got riled,  
And took revenge on the helpless child;  
While the godly king, in sacks arrayed,  
Rolled in the ashes and howled and prayed.

*Chorus.*

But Good God, never to mercy prone,  
Tortured, for seven long days, their son:  
The father's howl and the baby's cry  
To him were heavenly melody.  
This God was in full vigor then,  
Upheld by ignorant, credulous men;  
But now his dotage creeps on apace,  
He soon to Reason must yield the race.

*Chorus.*

T. CLARK.

### As Others See Us.

THE *Staffordshire Sentinel*, publishing a series of articles by its "Special Commissioner" on London on Sunday, gives a description of an entertainment and dance by the Camberwell Secular Society. "This society," the writer says, "has lectures every Sunday, but every now and again a dance is given to vary the monotony; only members, however, being admitted on these nights. The proceedings were in full swing; the room was large and lofty, the floor beautifully waxed, inviting one to dance, and round the walls were ranged busts (it is a common custom with the Secularists) of the great leaders of Freethought. From a little platform at the far end the musicians were giving a waltz, and the floor was covered with gliding couples, while many others sat round the room chatting and waiting their turn. All were neatly and most conventionally dressed—not in regulation evening dress, but just in 'Sunday best'—not a Bohemian did I see among them. One would have wished for a little color and lightness of garb, but the idea of these entertainments is that people should come without any extra preparation, just as they come to the usual Sunday lecture; and perhaps this way suits busy Londoners better.

"I was rather expecting to find them people who bore great intellect stamped on their faces, but they looked only ordinary educated, middle-class people. The dignified, grey-haired president was, I found, a member of the Vestry, and a man of considerable energy and importance in South London; and a tall, distinguished-looking man turned out to be 'Chilperic Edwards,' a well-known Assyrian archaeologist. It was rather touching to notice that many of the men there had carried their love of Charles Bradlaugh as far as imitating him closely in the matter of cut of hair and clothes. . . . The Secularists undoubtedly enjoyed themselves. Evidently Freethought does not preclude one from a share in the lighter joys of life. It was interesting to watch the faces, inasmuch as Secularism is not a creed lightly assumed. Those faces, it struck me, were, beyond the ordinary, reflective and thoughtful—the faces of people who read serious books with serious intent, to think out affairs for themselves, and trust to no one for second-hand advice."

It is not God who hath made man, but man who hath made God after his own image; he hath given him his own mind, clothed him with his own propensities, ascribed to him his own judgments. And when in this medley he finds the contradiction of his own principles, affecting hypocritical humility, he imputes weakness to his reason, and names the absurdities of his own mind mysteries of God.—*Volney.*

### Ignorance of the Bible.

PROFESSOR GEORGE A. COE, who teaches philosophy in the North-western University at Evanston, Illinois, was recently moved by curiosity to find out how much the college students knew about the Bible. The result, as he reports it to the *Christian Advocate*, is painful, not to say humiliating. Among one hundred students he distributed papers bearing the following questions:—

1. What is the Pentateuch?
2. What is the higher criticism of the Scriptures?
3. Does the Book of Jude belong to the New Testament or to the Old?
4. Name one of the patriarchs of the Old Testament.
5. Name one of the judges of the Old Testament.
6. Name three of the kings of Israel.
7. Name three prophets.
8. Give one of the beatitudes.
9. Quote a verse from the letter to the Romans.

The mournful result is recorded in the following words and figures: "Ninety-six papers were returned, of which 8 answered all 9 questions correctly; 13 papers answered 8 questions correctly; 11 answered 7; 5 answered 6; 9 answered 5; 12 answered 4; 11 answered 3; 13 answered 2; 11 answered 1; and 3 answered none. The number giving a correct answer to the first question was 60; to the second, 16; to the third, 56; to the fourth, 61; to the fifth, 45; to the sixth, 47; to the seventh, 52; to the eighth, 76; to the ninth, 31. As the number of papers was approximately one hundred, these latter figures may, with substantial accuracy, be taken as percentages. The total number of correct answers was 444, or 46-10 per paper. In other words, of nine simple questions, the average student was able to answer only about one-half."

Professor Coe, in making a study of the errors, found that "the commonest weakness was a strange inability to classify or place personal texts, etc. What many persons imagine they know of the Bible," he says, "turns out to be the merest jumble of names, events, books of the Bible, and texts. Among the judges were named Solomon, Jeremiah, Daniel (doubtless 'a Daniel come to judgment'), and Leviticus; among the prophets, Matthew, Luke, and John. Herod and Ananias appeared as kings of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar figured as both judge and king of Israel. The Pentateuch was confused with the Gospels, and in one case with the 'Seven Gospels.' Among the beatitudes were the following: 'Blessed are the poor in heart, for they shall see God,' 'Blessed are the lawgivers,' and 'Blessed are the hungry, for they shall be fed.' Several writers agreed substantially with one of their number, who defined the Higher Criticism as 'the criticism by scholars who attempt to overthrow certain doctrines as taught in the Scriptures.'" That is not a bad definition, though some of the critics might repudiate it.

When we consider the advantages these students have enjoyed for acquiring a knowledge of the Bible, their ignorance is indeed surprising. Most of them, as Professor Coe says he has no doubt, "were brought up in Christian homes," and had "such instruction as the average Sunday-school and pulpit of our day afford." To these sources of information about the Bible may be added the public schools, where it is generally, though illegally, read at the opening of every session. It will be disappointing to those who have projected the Scriptures into the public schools, in defiance of the dictates of justice, to learn that they have violated the principles and the Constitution of their country to so little purpose.

We should be surprised if, among one hundred young men taken at random from the families of Freethinkers, such unfamiliarity with the Bible could be found.

—*New York "Truthseeker."*

### Caine's Gone Home.

The *Journal of New York* has a dictated article by Thomas H. Caine (known to literature and to Chuck Connors as Hall Caine) and a picture of him taken from his latest photograph. The article is "an analysis of the progress of human affairs since the savior came into the world," and leaves no room for doubt that Mr. Caine is far in advance of Jesus Christ or Francis Schlatter. The picture, however, is distressing. It awakens, by the attitude of the subject, the fear that the author of *The Christian* is not at all well, that he suffers from some organic depression, and should be in the care of the good Lydia E. Pinkham instead of sitting for his photograph and dictating illustrated articles on a winter's day. He tells us in closing that Christ is "more alive at this moment than he has ever been"—a remark which, with the cut of his hair and beard, might lead some to credit him with the belief that he is a revised and improved incarnation of the aforesaid. Caine sailed for home last week, and no one was moved to observe how blessings brighten as they take their flight.—*George Macdonald, in New York "Truthseeker."*

**Book Chat.**

ALL lovers of literature will turn to the current issue of the *Nineteenth Century* to read Swinburne's magnificent Prologue to "The Duchess of Nally." All who have read Swinburne's Essay on Webster will be prepared for panegyric, but hardly for the triumphant eulogy which appears in the "Prologue." Swinburne has given us once more a touch of his quality, and he leaves far behind the poetasters and scribblers who have been boomed into a fictitious notoriety. Here are half-a-dozen lines taken at random :—

Terror, on wings whose flight made night in heaven,  
Pity, with hands whence life took love for leaven,  
Breathed round him music whence his mortal breath  
Drew life that bade forgetfulness and death  
Die ; life that bids his light of fiery fame  
Endure with England's, yea with Shakespeare's name.

\* \* \*

Some South Londoners will be interested to hear that a new edition of the works of Robert Browning, issued by a prominent New York publishing firm, is entitled "The Camberwell edition."

\* \* \*

Madame Roland's famous exclamation about liberty occurs to the reader after perusing *The Dreyfus Case*, by F. C. Conybeare (George Allen ; 3s. 6d.). It is a terrible story, and unworthy of a great country which professes to be animated by the great teachings of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Wholesale lying, fraud, forgery, and even assassination ! It cannot be La Belle France we see to-day. It is France dishevelled, mad, running amuck, her veins afire with cursed bigotry. One thing comes out very clearly in this book. All the clerical journals evinced towards Dreyfus and his defenders a most bloodthirsty ferocity, and not a prelate of what Carlyle calls "the great lying Church" has said one word in favor of justice, or even of mercy or pity. Truly Gambetta was right when he said clericalism was the enemy. This terrible Dreyfus drama shows conclusively how extremely difficult it is for priest-ridden peoples to adapt themselves to liberal institutions. They have always to struggle against the deadweight of the clergy.

\* \* \*

Our readers who have followed our leading articles on the various phases of the Dreyfus Case will be tolerably familiar with the progress of recent affairs in France. Now, however, it will be possible to review the whole case within the compass of a small volume. The value of the book is much enhanced by numerous portraits and facsimiles.

\* \* \*

Writing about the Dreyfus Case reminds us that M. Yves Guyot, formerly a Cabinet Minister, contributes to the January number of the *Nineteenth Century* a comprehensive article under the title "The Dreyfus Drama and its Significance," thoroughly covering the ground indicated in its title.

\* \* \*

Both M. Yves Guyot and Mr. F. C. Conybeare are united in attributing a very large share of the anti-Semitic crusade to the machinations of the Jesuits.

\* \* \*

A German bookseller has catalogued Mr. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* under the head of "Old Testament Literature."

**A Sunday-School Story.**

Over on Capitol Hill there's a Sunday-school where a young man I know is superintendent. He is an earnest, conscientious young fellow, and, disagreeable as it may sound in me to say it, he means well. Sunday before last he rose to give a little talk.

"Dear children," said he, "I am very glad to be with you this morning, and when I look into your happy faces I am sure that all of you rejoice with me in the privilege of gathering together this morning to sing our songs of praise, and to listen to the lessons your dear teacher"—but then you know what he said ; you know what they always say. This particular superintendent said that this beautiful Sabbath was "only a promise of the blissful hereafter, of the happy land to which we all want to go."

"And what is that happy land?" he asked. The small boys on the front seat kicked each other surreptitiously and viciously, but nobody spoke till little Georgie said, with a tone midway between a sniff and a gurgle : "Heaven."

"Ah, that's it ! that's it !" said superintendent. "Little Georgie knew it. It is heaven. And we all want to go there. And now, children, can you tell me what kind of little boys go there?"

George was emboldened by praise. His head was dizzy with success. He rose in his place.

"Dead ones," he bawled.

—*Washington Post.*

**Pills to Purge Orthodoxy.**

BY AMBROSE BIERCE ("DOD GRILE").

"It is to be feared that, to most men, the sky is but a concave mirror, showing nothing behind, and in looking into which they see only their own distorted images, like the reflection of a face in a spoon. Hence it needs not surprise that they are not very devout worshippers ; it is a great wonder they do not openly scoff."

"Piety, like small-pox, comes by infection. Robinson Crusoe, however, caught it alone on his island. It is probable that he had it in his blood."

"Everybody professes to know that it would be difficult to find a needle in a haystack, but very few reflect that this is because haystacks seldom contain needles."

"It was never intended that men should be saints in heaven until they are dead and good for nothing else. On earth they are mostly fools."

"The influence of climate upon civilisation has been more exhaustively treated than studied. Otherwise, we should know how it is that some countries that have so much climate have no civilisation."

"The symbol of charity should be a circle. It usually ends exactly where it begins—at home."

"A four-footed beast walks by lifting one foot at a time, but a four-horse team does not walk by lifting one horse at a time. And yet you cannot readily explain why this is so."

"In calling a man a hog, it is the man who gets angry, but it is the hog who is insulted. Men are always taking up the quarrels of others."

**Farewell the Cross !**

Straightway he raised the Cross high in the air ;  
Its shadow darkened space : into the deep  
He threw it : then his terrible despair  
Fell from him, as a sleep  
Falls from a young man on a summer morn :  
Wondering and glad a lowly way he took  
By pastures, flowers and fruit, and golden corn,  
And by a murmuring brook :  
And while were heard descending from the skies,  
Or out of future times and future lands,  
A bruit low and whispers, shadowy cries  
Of joy and clapping hands.

—*John Davidson.*

**Profane Jokes.**

A CONGREGATION of negroes, says the Macon County (Ga.) *Citizen*, were devoted to their zealous and enterprising "pastor." During one of his revivals, to impress the congregation while telling the story of the Holy Ghost appearing in the form of a dove, he engaged a small colored boy to—at an opportune time in the story—let loose a live dove from a hole in the ceiling just over the rostrum. The device was successful for several nights, and the congregation was very much mystified and impressed, and it succeeded in drawing a large number of people to the church. One night, while the crowd was listening intently to the story, and it was reaching the climax where the "dove" was to appear, they were startled by a whisper which reverberated through the church : "Uncle John, de cat done eat up the Holy Ghost." The congregation smiled, and the smile was increased to a roar of laughter when, in the same whisper, came : "Mus' I let down de cat?"

Lot, from the corner of his eye, detected the wife of his bosom in the act of looking back. "Rubber !" he shouted, and hastened on. Meanwhile, across the plain could be heard the strains of the Sodom Silver Cornet Band playing defiantly : "There'll be a Hot," etc.—*Indianapolis Journal.*

A kind-hearted duchess one day stopped her carriage to give alms to a ragged woman by the roadside. "God bless your ladyship for your kind heart," fervently ejaculated the poor woman ; "I am sure we shall meet in heaven!" This was too much for the high-born dame's nobility. "Oh, goodness gracious !" she said ; "drive on, John!"—*Argonaut.*

"Do you give any thought to the future?" asked the clerical-looking man, solemnly. "Do I?" exclaimed the giddy young thing. "Well, say, you don't happen to know of any real nice, eligible young man, do you?"—*Chicago Post.*

"Do you call this angel-cake, Katherine?" "Yes ; isn't it good?" "Of course, dear ; but I didn't know there were any iron-jawed angels."—*Detroit Free Press.*

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

### LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Christianity Up to Date."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A Concert.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Religion and Man."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bow Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, G. Spiller, "Shakespeare: His Life and Genius."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 11.15, Discussion; 7, F. J. Gould, "The Religion of Charles Darwin."

WEST LONDON SECULAR CLUB (15 Edgware-road): Discussion Class Tuesday at 8. January 19, at 8.15, Mr. Bain, "Millitarianism."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, F. J. Gould, "The Ethical Riches."

WINCHESTER HALL (33 Peckham High-street): January 18, at 8, C. F. Neave, "The Conflict of Science and Religion."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Experience meeting—Messrs. Stuart, Faulkner, Parsons, and Rosenthal.

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Bristol-street Board School): Joseph McCabe—11, "Philosophy Two Thousand Years Ago"; 7, "Authority and Sentiment in Religion."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Providence and Progress."

DERBY BRANCH (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, Adjourned half-yearly meeting and election of officers.

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—G. Faulkner; 6.30, A. G. Nostik, "America: Its Scenery and People." With lantern illustrations.

LEICESTER SECULAR CLUB (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Felix Volkhovsky, "Nicholas II.'s Reign, and what it Means."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Dr. Nicolson, "The Religions of India."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. Percy Ward—11, "Giordano Bruno: Martyr for Freethought"; 3, "The World's Great Religions"; 7, "Man's Reason and God's Revelation."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, M. D. O'Brien, "Capital and Interest."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business Meeting; 7.30, "The New Catechism."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—January 15, Camberwell; 19 and 20, Derby; 22, Sheffield; 24 and 25, Preston; 29, Bradford Labor Church; 31, Huddersfield. February 1, Huddersfield; 5, Glasgow; 7, Carlisle; 8, Wishaw; 9 and 10, Motherwell; 12, Dundee; 26, Liverpool. March 5, Liverpool; 12, Birmingham.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—January 15 and 22, Manchester; 29, Chester.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, S.E.—January 22, Newington Reform Club.

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By the Editor's kind permission, Dr. KEELING will reply, on January 22, to the paper by Mr. COHEN which appeared, under the above heading, in the issues of December 4 and 11.

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