

# Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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## The "Freethinker" Poll.

My readers are aware that the borough of West Ham, by order of the Town Council, is to be polled on a threefold question: (1) whether the *Freethinker* shall continue to be placed on the table in the reading-room of the Free Library; (2) whether it shall not be placed on the table, but kept in reserve, and only handed over to applicants; (3) whether it shall be excluded altogether. It will be remembered that the Town Council itself has twice resolved, by a large majority, that the *Freethinker* shall be treated like other publications. A few members of the Council are Secularists. A good many more belong to the Labor party, and they are determined to have fair-play and justice all round. Moreover, they have a shrewd suspicion that the agitation against the *Freethinker* is largely intended as a measure of political and social reaction; just as religious bigotry was made a cover for such reaction in the attempt that was made to exclude Charles Bradlaugh from the House of Commons.

The Town Council delegated the carrying out of its resolution to the Free Libraries' Committee, and that body has fixed Saturday, March 11, as the date of the poll. I have not yet learnt the details of how it is to be taken, but I daresay I shall be able to publish them next week. Perhaps I may say here, in passing, that I am a little handicapped by having arranged to spend a few days at the seaside, in the interest of my health, which was getting somewhat affected by the heavy strain I have undergone during the last nine months. I was not exactly ill, but I was very weary; my elasticity was impaired, and work was an effort rather than a pleasure. Fortunately, the change and fresh air, and the sight and savor of the sea, which I love so passionately, are rapidly restoring my bodily and mental tone, and I feel I shall be able to give a good account of myself when I go down to West Ham.

Miss Vance is throwing herself energetically into this business. She has visited West Ham several times, and taken counsel and made arrangements with the local friends. Some difficulty has been experienced in obtaining a hall for a public meeting. The bigots are very active and very bitter, and have brought the most sinister influence to bear upon the lessees and proprietors of public buildings. We have, however, secured the Stratford Town Hall for Wednesday evening, March 8. Councillor Terrett will take the chair, and Councillors Thorne, Godbold, Fulcher, and others, will speak. Of course, I shall address the meeting myself. We have paid for the hire of the hall, and I have made myself responsible for adequate and even generous advertising. It will be a free and open public meeting, with no piety at the end in the shape of a collection. Still, I hope the local friends will see that the bigots don't spoil it. I need not be more precise; they will know what I mean.

The resolution to be proposed at this meeting is, of course, not of a Freethought character. It is one that even a Christian, who is honest and fair-minded, might cheerfully support. It is simply a protest against religious intolerance, and a call upon the people of West Ham to show justice to every form of opinion. That the *Freethinker* is mentioned in it is only an incident of the struggle.

This public meeting will not be sufficient in itself, for two or three thousand people are only a fraction of the inhabitants of that vast and populous district. I have written a careful manifesto, setting forth the facts of the case and the real principle at issue. Twenty thousand copies of it are printing, and will be ready for distribution in a day or two (I am writing on Tuesday). The local friends do not see how they can arrange for a house-to-house delivery, although it is eminently desirable. To send them through the post, in sealed envelopes, would involve a heavier expenditure than I am able to face at present. But all that can shall be done, up to the limit of my means.

I hear that the enemy, whose name is legion, is already active in this direction. Heaven and earth, and the other place too, are being moved to overwhelm my paper. Miss Vance informs me that the Christian Evidence fellows are circulating a scurrilous leaflet. She does not state its precise character, but we all know the acrid abuse and reckless personalities in which these fellows habitually indulge, and they would hardly be restrained by any scruples on such a fine occasion as this. A correspondent tells me that he attended a meeting on Sunday, and heard an address from a Rev. Mr. Mackay—who is perhaps the minister of the meek and lowly Jesus who has figured in the correspondence on the *Freethinker* in the West Ham journals. This person declared that the word morality had no meaning to me, that I had committed all the crimes in the calendar, that I had deserted my wife and was now living with another woman. I showed this letter to my wife, who said she would like to see that same Rev. Mr. Mackay, just for a few minutes. My correspondent asks me whether I would debate with this man of God. I answer, No. One doesn't debate with scoundrels. I would rather give him a thrashing. To prosecute him would only be to rally his charitable co-religionists to his support. Besides, he might crawl out of it, swear he never said anything of the kind, and bring twenty other Christians to swear to the same falsehood.

In conclusion, for the present, I thank the friends who have so promptly sent me pecuniary assistance. What I have received and acknowledged will not nearly suffice to meet the absolutely inevitable expenses of my side in this battle. I therefore ask for further help, and have no doubt it will be forthcoming. It is not exclusively my battle that I am fighting. The blows aimed at me, and at the *Freethinker*, are really intended to damage the Freethought party. I am not so egotistical as to believe otherwise; and I say that all Freethinkers, whether they know it or not, are involved in this struggle.

G. W. FOOTE.

## The Goodness of Man.

HUMAN nature has for centuries been libelled and grossly misrepresented. The wickedness of man has been so much preached about in the various Churches that it seldom occurs to the orthodox Christian to question its truth. There was the ancient cynic who hardly ever had a good word to offer to humanity, who was displeased with all the world, and who was not on good terms with himself too frequently. Then there is the disappointed philanthropist who, failing in his Utopian schemes, is ever more prone to accuse the selfishness and wickedness of mankind than to mistrust his own infallibility. He believes himself a martyr when, to unclouded eyes, he appears only as a blunderer. We have the priest also, who is ever traducing human nature. The belief that man is by nature bad is necessary to the success of the priest's profession, for his avowed mission is to save mankind, which he can never do unless it be first shown that the human race is lost. It must be admitted that man is bad before he can be made good.

Unfortunately, the priest has not been so successful at his business as could be wished. Like his master, he has done but little for the promotion of human goodness. Christ, we are told, came to take away the sins of the world; but he did nothing of the kind, for the world is still crowded with sinners. He entirely failed to accomplish his alleged object, and, in consequence, an army of clergymen had to be organised to endeavor to make up for his shortcomings. The failure of Christ was a windfall for the Church. Had he succeeded in ridding the world of sin, the priests of all denominations would have had to seek other employment, which no doubt would have been an advantage to society in general. It is worthy of note that, according to their own account, the clergy have done no better than Christ, for they urge now, after nearly two thousand years' labor, that the bad in man predominates over the good, that by nature he is so corrupt that they can do but little with him. It is evident, therefore, that either the workmen are not proficient in their business, or that the materials with which they work are defective. Perhaps the truth is that both—the workmen and the materials—are not up to the required standard. Still, that is no justification for condemning man as being naturally bad.

While many men are unquestionably viciously disposed, there are many others who are virtuously inclined. The priest may point to history for a record of the evil passions of men, he may refer to the reports of our law courts, and to the existence of our numerous prisons, erected to punish man for his misdeeds. There is, however, another side to the picture. We have every day noble and convincing proofs of the goodness of human nature. Even in large cities, where so much vice abounds, virtue and benevolence are to be found in a marvellous degree. What are our asylums and our various charitable institutions but so many means to alleviate the sufferings, to soothe the pain, and thereby to better the condition of mankind. By what are these institutions sustained? By the goodness of human nature, which would be impossible were we, as priests assert, inherently wicked. Who can witness the distress often visible in our streets without feeling those pangs of the human heart which forcibly remind us that there is something good in humanity, that had we the power we would institute an order of things in which poverty, and all the misery arising therefrom, should be unknown? How many persons are daily engaged in visiting the sick, in feeding the hungry, and in clothing the naked, administering deeds of mercy, combined with words of love.

Further, what pleasure, what intrinsic happiness, it is to a man to know that he has done a good deed, and promoted the happiness of others. Such joy certainly does not arise from the wickedness of his nature. Is that man bad who is striving for political progress; who has the sagacity to see where the imperfections of our constitution are, and the ability to remove them; who disdains to swim with the tide of fortune and worldly ease regardless of his fellow man, but who incurs persecution, anxiety, and pecuniary loss in order to remove abuses, and to make his country secure and great, in the possession of a happy and well-cared-for people? Is wickedness shown in female loveliness when it fore-

goes the pleasures of cultivated society and the ease of luxury to enter some abode of misery, often in a dirty, unhealthy alley, to relieve the sufferings of a distressed sister, and, by kind words and generous deeds, to induce her to retrieve in the future the vice and follies of the past?

Even in the lowest haunts of vice, among those who have been trained without reference to morality or virtue, whose lives have been one long uninterrupted course of vice—even among such persons we find no proof that human nature is as bad as theologians allege. The respect uniformly shown to those who visit them, with a view to reclaim them, testifies that their nature is not wholly bad, but that reformation is possible, and that virtue is looked upon by the most fallen as superior to vice. In fact, they are ever ready to accept the advice of Shakespeare—"to assume a virtue if you have it not." Why do they do this? Simply because, in spite of their bad training and evil surroundings, the goodness of their nature prompts them in the right direction. Let anyone who believes that man is by his nature bad reduce the theory to practice. Let him select for our admiration some tyrant of the past—one who has suppressed freedom of speech, who has recognised none of the rights of men, whose only aim was personal power and individual aggrandisement, and we should see how few admirers such a man would get. Let him, on the contrary, select a Wilberforce, a Clarkson, a Howard, a Shakespeare, a Milton, or a Burns, then he would find a spontaneous, almost universal, response of admiration for those who exhibited that goodness of human nature which is inherent in us all. Man loves truth and goodness, hence he is ever striving for them. It is owing to the love of truth, and to the goodness of human nature, that the nineteenth century is so much better than the twelfth. It was the love of truth that actuated Luther to do battle with Roman Catholicism, and to break the fetters which bound men's minds, rendering civilisation difficult and human happiness impossible, and which inaugurated an era that Luther himself could not foresee, but for which mankind are now grateful.

In modern times the humanitarian spirit is manifesting itself in every direction. In the desire to treat prisoners with proper kindness, to temper justice with mercy, in the condemnation of cruelty in all its phases, in treating the lower animals in a humane manner, and in the anxiety shown to provide for the comforts of the poor—in all these instances we see the impulse of the goodness of man's nature. It is true that Jeremiah exclaimed, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; but this gloomy estimate of man was the result of the depressing conditions in which the prophet was placed. He was an ardent patriot of his ruined country, the disappointed philanthropist of his age, and the earnest exhorter of a degenerate people. It was therefore but natural that his experience, as well as his impatience, should cause him to regard man as he did. Solomon is another instance furnished by the Bible where the better part of our nature is overcome through yielding to the lowest passions of a misspent life. Here we have a man portrayed who by choice passed his career in vice among the vicious, and in selfishness among the selfish, giving us at its close, as the fruits of wise experience and careful observation, the dregs of bitterness which flow from a misspent existence. Such a man once occupied the throne of Israel. He was born with a great intellect, the heir to a mighty kingdom. His life was spent in ostentatious public extravagance, and in the private licentiousness of an oriental harem. He left to his son a tottering throne, to posterity the melancholy doctrine that in human existence "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." This is just as fair as if one who had spent his life among thieves and their companions should tell us, as the result, that there is neither honesty in man nor chastity in woman. Still, with all his imperfections, there was some good even in Solomon's nature; for, however he lived, he left in his parting testament many fruitful lessons of wisdom. No man ever told us better or more truly of the weariness and misery which attend a life devoted solely and selfishly to the pursuit of pleasure.

That bad characters have existed and marred the

goodness of life the Bible and general experience amply testify; but this fact, painful as it is, does not prove that we are naturally vicious. Man is frequently what he is as the result of circumstances which affected him both prior to his birth and during the formation of his character. It is my firm conviction that if a child is born of parents who are physically and morally healthy, if it is taught from the morning of its life, by precept and example, the great principles of truth, love, kindness, and honor, in after years such a character will excel in goodness. At least, this is the teaching of Secularism, and all would do well to put it into practice as much as possible.

CHARLES WATTS.

### Reconstructing Christianity.

The present ritualistic agitation has been productive of a not unexpected or unnatural result in the Christian camp. While one class of believers has been doing its utmost to revive interest in the old formulas and ceremonies, in defiance of the modern mind, another class is as strongly urging that, if Christianity is to live, it can only be rescued from the dry rot of senseless ceremonial by overhauling the creeds and revising them in the light of nineteenth-century knowledge and requirements.

In its way, this anxiety to revise the Christian creeds is far from an unpleasant sight. It is a tacit admission that Christianity is altogether unfitted for the times in which we live. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and when we find prominent Christian preachers engaged in the ridiculous task of bringing God Almighty up to date, and impressing upon their followers views of the Bible, the world, and man, which they were awhile ago denouncing as Atheistic impieties, we may fairly regard their position as the grudging admiration paid to demonstrated truth by convicted error. And we may further assume that, when Christians have come during the last twenty-five years, it is only a question of time for them to surrender their remaining beliefs. We in the Secular party are only anticipating history by a few years. Where we are to-day the advanced religionists will be to-morrow; and where the advanced religionists are to-morrow the mass of the people will be the day after.

But, although it is always a pleasing sight to see men's ideas broadening, no matter the pressure needed to bring that about, yet it must not be overlooked that, much as Christians of the type of Dr. Clifford or Dr. Horton, or papers like the *Christian World*, may vapor about bringing Christianity into line with modern thought, they neither do so, nor do they really aim at doing so. The most daring of them do little more than whisper the milder portion of doctrines that have been commonplaces in the Freethought world for over a century, and then only because outside pressure compels them to do so. Just as it took the Roman Catholic Church until 1822 to formally recognise the earth's motion round the sun, so with other religious bodies as it is thought possible, by methods of suppression or misrepresentation, to make the old forms serve. The Protestant Churches pass through the process of change more quickly than the Roman Church because they are more dependent upon public opinion. The Protestants are the opportunists of the religious world, and, like all opportunists, are ready to embrace any teaching when its rejection threatens the loss of position or profit. It is thus that the advanced thought of the Christian world is always the old thought of the Freethought world. Doctrines that are commonplaces to every student of Freethought literature are now being presented, in an attenuated form, by opportunist preachers with an air of profound speculation, and as though the courage of Bruno or a Bradlaugh were needed for their utterance. Nor is it possible to regard these attempts at reconstructing Christianity as being, in the main, honest. The only honest way to interpret any creed or book is to find out what their authors meant their readers to understand, and, having settled the meaning, to either adopt it or throw it overboard altogether. But this is

the last thing any of these people dream of doing. Not one of the Church of England clergy who have been charged with breaking their ordination vows have ever looked at the question in this light. All they have asked themselves is: "Can I, by any subtlety of language, interpret the articles and constitution of the Church in such a manner as to cover my actions?" And those outside the Church act on precisely the same principle. In all the attempts that have been made by men like Dean Farrar or Mr. Gladstone to harmonise religion and science, the question of whether the Biblical writers, who were so obviously steeped in miracle and supernaturalism, could honestly be regarded as teachers of evolution has never been faced. Their sole concern has been to prove that the reading is sufficiently vague to admit of a particular interpretation, and an indefiniteness of statement has been made the sole grounds upon which to ascribe a definiteness of belief. It is thus that days have been made to mean periods of time answering to geologic epochs, a flood that covered "all the high hills under heaven" a partial inundation; and when one notes the manner in which these and kindred statements have been "harmonised" with science, it is impossible not to believe that, had "Little Jack Horner" been found within the covers of the Bible, the same gentleman would have been as ready to demonstrate that Jack symbolised the human soul, retiring into solitude to meditate on the mysteries of its own existence, and extracting plums of wisdom as the result of its self-examination, as they have been to fix any interpretation on the Bible story that would go down with a credulous public.

There is one other point always worth bearing in mind. Why is it necessary to so reconstitute the Christian creed that it shall harmonise with modern thought? If we already know what is accurate in science or sociology, why waste time in getting exactly the same things served up again in the shape of religious formulas? The only solid reason for retaining a religion, or for revising a religion, is that it teaches something that science does not teach, or that the supernatural is necessary for the right conduct of life. But in revising religious beliefs with the avowed intention of making them square with scientific knowledge the supernatural is obviously discarded, while the only function left to religion is that of repeating, or of crying ditto to, all that science affirms to be true; and if this is so, then there is really no reason why religion should exist at all. To justify its existence Christianity should lead, not follow; control the councils of scientific men, not simply record their decisions; point out the road to further developments of thought, instead of simply echoing truths that we already know; and even then only recognising their existences when they have become the stalest of commonplaces to all students of advanced thought.

Nor can it be urged that a revision of Christian doctrines is necessary, lest we should lose whatever good ethical teaching they contain. No one whose opinion is worth quoting, even in the Christian world, would argue that the moral precepts hitherto associated with Christianity are in any sense its peculiar property. Whatever value these possess is derived from their purely human origin and applicability, and, therefore, any disturbing of their supernatural covering would leave them just where they were. So that ultimately we come to this conclusion: the only reason why it is necessary to reconstitute Christianity is that the interests of a special order, the clergy, may be maintained. They are the only ones who are vitally interested in people "re-interpreting" the Christian faith in terms of modern science. The laymen who agitate to the same end are, when honest, simply pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for the benefit of their "spiritual" advisers.

"It is in the interests of all Christian bodies," said a leading religious journal in a recent issue, "that we urge a reconstruction of our religious creeds and formularies. Let us be quite clear that, if we fail to impart more enlightened views of the Christian faith to those who look to us for spiritual guidance, others will carry out the work we have left undone, and with deplorable results. It is only by adapting our faith to some of the requirements of modern criticism that we can save the rising generation from the clutches of secular speakers, or from rejecting all religion, natural and revealed."

There in a nutshell is the whole reason for the revision of Christianity. It is not that there is any desire to get at the truth on these matters. Not a bit of it. The only desire is to prevent the rising generation falling into the "clutches of secular speakers," and, as it is tolerably certain that the people of the next generation will grow up in a more scientific atmosphere than has been the case with the present one, it will be safer for the information to come through the churches than through avowedly non-Christian channels. "Gentlemen," says the advanced (?) preacher, in effect, "science is abroad, criticism is active. We have tried to crush the enemy, and it has failed; we have tried ignoring the enemy, and that has failed likewise. Let us, then, take the bull by the horns, pose as impartial and scientific inquirers after truth, and announce from our pulpits just as little of the advanced thought of the day as will serve to stop awkward developments, and prevent us losing our hold on the people altogether." It is a simple case of dishing the Whigs. It is the game that Conservatism has always played: resist a reform as long as you can, and when it can no longer be resisted see that it is brought about with as little injury to yourself as is possible.

And the best of it, or the worst of it, is that all these efforts of the Churches are in vain. At most their tactics can only postpone the day of their downfall; they cannot give them immortality. For the penalty that the Churches pay for their life is that of being always in the rear of the best thought and the highest life of a nation. For a time people may be deceived, but year by year a larger number awaken to the hollowness of their pretences and the uselessness of their existence. Founded as it is on the past, and seeking as it must to perpetuate its customs, Christianity only advances when it has to choose between that and dissolution. And by the time that it is decided to adapt the ancient faith "to some of the requirements of modern criticism," the age has swept on, leaving it still behind.

And so it must always be. The best creed that man may frame becomes antiquated in the light of later knowledge, retrogressive in the face of new needs. It is by a mixed process of selection, modification, and rejection that civilisation advances; by outgrowing the wisdom of his predecessors, exposing their errors, and expanding their truths, that man rises to a fuller and more complete life. It is thus that all compromises, all "adaptations," are for a time only; and one may as well seek to bridle the earth in its orbit, or chain the wind in its sweep, as seek to prevent the destruction of existing supernaturalism by grudging concessions to a movement that has successfully resisted all attempts at suppression.

C. COHEN.

## Sermons.

It was officially announced a few days ago in Russia that in future the clergy will be permitted to preach to their congregations. The latter will probably receive the news with mixed feelings. Hitherto they have enjoyed an immunity from pulpit oratory. The voice of the preacher has not been heard in the public worship of the orthodox subjects of the Czar. The congregations have lived without it for a long time past. They were probably prepared to suffer the deprivation still longer. It does not seem likely that the change originated with them. If it has, they must be of a different stamp to numbers of their fellow-creatures in the United Kingdom.

Here, in this happy Christian land, there are many congregations who would be anything but displeased with the freedom the Russian Churches are about to resign. They would even snap at it if they had the chance, despite all the dreadful consequences that would be sure to be predicted. They might not, it is true, indulge in loud jubilation over the change. Doubtless their satisfaction would be expressed in the calm and decorous fashion for which, as a nation, we are conventionally famed. There would even be conventional regrets. Such is our hypocrisy. But think of the deep, suffusing, inward, hidden joy.

Human nature, and particularly that which we find in Churches, is pretty much the same the wide world over. We are fain to believe that members of the Russian

Churches are not so very dissimilar in their tastes to multitudes of ordinary English Christians.

Would it savor of irreverence or unjust suspicion if we were to timidly suggest that the initiative in this matter has been taken by the priests?

As mouthpieces of the Deity they have probably chafed more or less secretly for a long time past under the hitherto existing restriction. They have rebelled against the indignity which has limited their public utterances to mere stereotyped, ceremonial liturgies. Perhaps they have heard of Dean Farrar, or of the deceased Spurgeon, or of the Yankee Boanerges, De Witt Talmage, or—no, we do not, cannot suppose that they have ever heard of Hugh Price Hughes.

Anyway, it is not too much to believe that they have been bursting to hold forth like the priests of the Christian Churches of this country and elsewhere. They have longed, we may be sure, with a terrible longing, to pose in the pulpit—that exalted rostrum surrounded by an atmosphere of sanctity and authority, and an absolute security from dissent. The desired concession has been granted; but, alas for their hopes, it is accompanied by conditions that take all the gilt from the ginger-bread. It is ordered that the priests who are disposed to avail themselves of the new license must first submit a written copy of their sermons to their religious superiors, or to the press censors!

This severe supervision of the pulpit may be dictated more by political than theological motives. But, whatever the cause, the priests are hardly the persons entitled to complain. In the ordinary way they would occupy in the pulpit, like our own English clerics, a position of practical irresponsibility and unassailability. All that would be required of them would be an abstention from preaching anything contrary to the doctrines of their Church. That, strange as it may seem, is a difficult task to many of our own clergy. Possibly it would be otherwise in Russia. They would be at liberty, of course, to make railing and unjust accusations, as English preachers do, against exponents of other views—against Freethinkers and heretics, or any one who happened to fall under their sovereign displeasure. Yet no man might say them nay.

And here we arrive at the distinctive characteristic of these pulpit orators, and one which has a most important bearing on the point under consideration. The right of these preachers to free speech would be indisputable if it were not for one little fact—namely, that free speech is exactly the thing that they would be most disposed to refuse to others.

Take the clerics of our own country. They ascend every Sunday their Coward's Castle, yclept the pulpit, where by law they are preserved from immediate criticism, correction, or opposition. Rise at the end of a sermon in church and interrogate the preacher in your mildest, blandest, most insinuating tones. You are liable to be immediately marched off in custody and prosecuted for "brawling." The *lese Majesty* of the church-pulpit is not less perilous than that of the Emperor William. Clerics who fence themselves round with these spikes may not talk of free speech, or lay claim to its rights and privileges. They place themselves on a different platform altogether, and cannot with reason complain if they are dealt with accordingly.

It is not simply in their own conventicles that they stifle discussion and would punish opponents. They go outside, and, with matchless impudence, try to gag their critics even in the free and open air. They avoid discussion in their own churches and chapels, and would stop it by mean and underhanded tricks in the places of assembly that other people have hired and paid for, and where they haven't the slightest right to interfere.

How can we—lovers of free speech and fair play, as we always hope to be—sympathise with these Russian clerics? How can we join them in any objection to the decree that they must write out their sermons and submit them to their religious superiors or to the press censors before delivery? So far from commiserating with them in their misfortune, most Freethinkers will probably be inclined to rejoice at the official regulation. If preachers will not tolerate criticism at the end of their discourses, it is just as well that they should have some sort of censorship before they begin to preach.

In secular affairs it is usually a recognised privilege of a meeting to be able to move an amendment or offer

comments more or less favorable on what has been presented. That is the invariable rule at Freethought meetings and lectures. In this, if the clergy are to be believed, there must be a display of exceptional courage. If we are so easily refuted and put to shame, as they pretend, does it not look as if we were rushing to certain death by such invitations made in the interests of free speech and open discussion? The clergy dare not do likewise, notwithstanding all their vaporings and valiant undertakings to defend the faith once delivered to the saints.

When we come to money matters—and that is where Christians are always to be nailed down as unblushing hypocrites and the real "infidels" to their faith—what do we find? A Christian shareholder goes to an "ordinary general meeting" of the company in which he has invested his money. He has had his printed report, and he listens to the speech of the chairman of the directorate. Suppose the chairman, without inviting comment, proceeded to put the vote of adoption. What would the Christian shareholder do? He would rise up in a moment on his hindlegs to protest against any such unwarrantable procedure. Whether he had any fault to find or not with the report or speech, he would be angry with the attempt to stifle discussion. On Sunday, however, he lets the parson or the pastor go on, pays no particular attention to what he says, supposes it is all right, and either goes to sleep or leisurely thinks about a variety of things—perhaps how he can best outwit in the ensuing week some other Christian who is trying to outwit him.

Thus it is much to be feared that many brilliant—or what were intended to be brilliant—pulpit discourses lose all their point, and fall upon very dull ears. Do they deserve anything better? Very rarely indeed. One would not willingly disparage the efforts of any body of men who, by their training and avocation, may be presumed to be the possessors of intellectual attainments and persuasive powers. Why do they so egregiously fail? Because their preachments are based upon a transparently hollow mockery, and because they lack the skill even to infuse a semblance of life into the rotting corpse of theology which they drag with them into their pulpits.

Many of these discourses would be discreditable to the intelligence of a school girl; they are so full of ignorance of the world and the ways of the world, and, from an ethical point of view, are so childishly weak and ineffective. When they happen to be controversial, one is amazed at their illogicality. Why should men waste their own time and other people's on such unpardonable drivel? The best specimens are poor. The most popular preachers are successful only in sentiment, and seem never to aim at more than "arriving by loose rhetoric at the most confident conclusions"—to use a phrase of Mrs. Humphry Ward's.

Still the modern pulpiteer entertains, like a certain chaplain described by Sir Walter Scott, "rather more than a reasonable idea of the respect due to him." We are, therefore, almost impelled to wish, in the interest of the church and chapel-going flocks, that English preachers might be brought under some such regulation as that which will rule the men of God in Russia. If they had to submit their sermons carefully written out to their "religious superiors," some amusing consequences would ensue. Suppose that dreadful old bear, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, had to go through them, or any portion of them! There would be many congregations who would have to go home sermonless to dinner and supper. And, likely enough, they wouldn't complain.

FRANCIS NEALE.

### Truth About the Bible.

ABOLISH all the Churches that exist for the purpose of preaching up the Bible as a divine revelation; destroy all the clerical corporations that live and operate upon this basis; take away, at least, the public revenues and special privileges they enjoy; deprive them of the patronage of the legislature and the government; remove their Holy Scriptures from the public schools, where they are retained in defiance of the principles of civil and religious liberty; let little children no longer be suborned in favor

of the supernatural claims of this book before they are able to judge for themselves; let the Bible take its own chance with the rest of the world's literature; and then, and not till then, can its natural supremacy be established. But the clergy know that such an experiment would be absolutely fatal to their pretensions. They dare not accept a fair field and no favor. They know in their heart of hearts that they are serving a lie. Their dishonesty is apparent at every turn. Dr. Farrar calls upon England to "cling to her open Bible." Well, the Peculiar People do so. They read the open Bible, they follow its teaching as closely as possible, they obey the commandments of Jesus Christ. And what is the result? They are cast into prison like felons. One of them is suffering that pain and indignity at the present moment. A good husband, a good father, a good neighbor, a good citizen, he has committed the crime of practically believing what Dr. Farrar and the rest of the clergy facetiously preach—namely, that the Bible is the Book of God, and the divine rule of faith and conduct. For this crime he is imprisoned under the verdict of a Christian jury and the sentence of a Christian judge; and not a single Christian minister raises his voice against this infamous spectacle. Christianity is now only an organised hypocrisy. It subsists upon an inherited fund of power, wealth, and reputation. Even the clergy have no vital belief in the inspiration of the Bible. It is merely the charter under which they trade. It is a source of oracular texts for their ambiguous sermons. It is lauded and adored, and neglected and defied. To bring it into disbelief and contempt by argument and ridicule is a misdemeanor; to bring it into disbelief and contempt by acting upon it is a felony. The only safe course is that adopted by the clergy, who neither believe it nor disbelieve it, but use it as it serves their occasions; and as long as it answers their ends it will remain the Book of God.

Let us not be misunderstood. We are far from desiring to engage in a crusade against the Bible as a collection of ancient literature. We are neither called upon nor disposed to deny its real merits, however they are exaggerated in religious circles. It undoubtedly contains some fine poetry, occasional pathos, and more frequent sublimity. Its style has nearly always the charm of simplicity. All this may be allowed without playing into the hands of the supernaturalists. Further than this we need not go. In our opinion, it is absurd to place the Bible at the top of human compositions. More than sixty writers are alleged to have contributed to its production, but the whole mass of them do not rival the magnificent and fecund genius of Shakespeare. Above all, they have no wit or humor, in which Shakespeare abounds; and wit and humor belong to the higher development of intellect and emotion. No, the Bible is not the unapproachable masterpiece which it is declared to be by its fanatical devotees. But whatever its intrinsic merits may prove to be, in the light of long and free appreciation, the Bible cannot be accepted as a revelation from God without wilful self-delusion on the part of educated men and women. If God had a message for his children, he would at least make it clear; but this revelation needs another revelation to explain it, and creeds and commentaries are the symbols of its obscurity. God's message would tell us what we could not otherwise learn, but there is no such information in the Bible. God would apprise us of what he especially desired us to remember, and would not mix it confusedly with a tremendous mass of alien matter. God would not puzzle us; he would enlighten us. He would make his communication so clear that a wayfaring man, though a fool, could understand it; whereas, if the Bible be his communication, no wayfaring man, unless he is a fool, pretends to understand it. God would not clog his message with myths, legends, mysteries, absurdities, falsehoods, and filth; and leave us to extricate it with endless labor and perpetual uncertainty. The so-called Higher Criticism is therefore as absurd as the old Orthodoxy in calling the Bible a work of inspiration. Its exponents affirm that God has left us to our own knowledge and reason in regard to every other subject but religion and morality. They are Evolutionists in part. But the principle of Evolution must be applied over the whole field. Everything is natural, and happens under the universal law of causation. There are no miracles, and there never were any

except in ignorant imaginations. But the death of miracles is the death of inspiration. The triumph of science involves the ruin of every supernatural system. Revelation is necessarily miraculous, and when the belief in miracles expires the death-knell rings for every Book of God. We are then left to the discipline of culture. And what is culture? It is steeping our minds in the wisest and loveliest thoughts of all the ages. And each of us may thus make his own Bible for himself—a true Bible of Humanity.

—From "The Book of God," by G. W. FOOTE.

### Acid Drops.

PRESIDENT LOUBET'S term of office opens well. His message to the Parliament puts the Army in its proper place, as the arm, and not the head, of the nation. Moreover, the attack has already begun upon the conspirators against the Republic. These gentlemen, who have for some time been accustomed to have pretty much their own way, are naturally aghast at being made to act on the defensive. All that is now wanted is the decision of the Court of Cassation on the Dreyfus case. President Loubet will see that its decision is respected. Altogether, the prospect is far more cheerful since the death of President Faure, who was an obstacle to the triumph of truth and justice in France.

The prophets of evil were mistaken. President Faure's funeral passed off without the slightest unpleasantness. President Loubet was not assassinated, the judges of the Court of Cassation were not mobbed, and the Paris multitude did not shout for any of the gentlemen outside France who want to see the throne re-established—for themselves. Nothing particular happened, except that the Poet-Deputy Déroulède and a few others made fools of themselves. After all, it is well that they did so; for the more fantastic is their imbecility, the more surely and swiftly will honest and sensible Frenchmen see through the pretensions of the reactionary League of Patriots.

Aguinaldo, the Philippine leader, is reported to be something of a Freethinker. At any rate, he is a mortal hater of priests. It is said that he was severely beaten when a lad for refusing to reverence an image of Jesus Christ.

Reference is made in the *Methodist Times* to "the standard of public life set up by Mr. Gladstone and maintained by Lord Rosebery." Some of us, however, recollect how this same religious journal, when Lord Rosebery was Premier, bullied him almost incessantly for keeping racehorses.

What changes take place in this astonishing century! A Zulu chief has planked down his guinea for the first instalment of the Printing-house-square edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Rev. Dr. Clifford, the well-known Congregationalist, has coolly included Darwin in a volume of addresses on "Typical Christian Leaders." Now we find a Sydney correspondent of the *Christian World* writing that the Funafuti scientific boring expedition has demonstrated the truth of Darwin's theory of the formation of coral reefs; and as a certain missionary ship has somehow "assisted" this expedition, our contemporary's correspondent blandly remarks that this is a "pleasant instance of co-operation between aggressive Christianity on the one side, and on the other science, so often regarded as in opposition, while in reality it is one beam from," &c., &c. Verily the Christians are the great requisitionists. They oppose everything at first, and exploit everything afterwards—when they find they cannot stop it.

The Pope has just entered on the twenty-first year of his pontificate. At the same time the Vatican has been lit up with electricity. What a contrast in that gigantic building! Science called in to give the highest light for ecclesiastics who live in the intellectual darkness of the Middle Ages!

Lord Hugh Cecil doesn't want to see the Bishops removed from the House of Lords; on the contrary, he would like to see more of them there. He suggests that representative Nonconformists should be made life peers to keep the Anglican prelates company in the gilded chamber. This suggestion has inspired one of Mr. Gould's brilliant comic pictures in the *Westminster Gazette*. "Who on earth is this?" ask the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London as Bishop Hugh Price Hughes walks in, representing the Wesleyan Methodists.

Reviewing Mr. Thomas Hardy's *Wessex Poems*, the *Christian World* says that, with all his great gifts, he "lacks that inward sense of peace and victory" which is supposed to be the possession of every true Christian. But this is only saying

that Mr. Hardy sees far more than does the average Sunday-school teacher, or even the average religious journalist.

Emperor William begins his congratulatory message to the owners of the *Bulgaria* by thanking God for saving the ship. This is rather rough on the captain, the officers, and the crew, who fought so hard and long against the deadliest peril, and brought their ship into harbor at last. Emperor William, however, doesn't quite mean all he says—and he says a good deal. Anyhow, after thanking God, he praises the gallant German sailors, and bestows an order upon the captain. It would appear, therefore, that God did not save the *Bulgaria* by himself, but did it in partnership with a number of other persons; which is rather lowering to his almighty dignity.

The following is from the *Birmingham Young Men's Christian Association Record*: "It may be interesting to those who have recently hinted at the possibility of the Y. M. C. A. rebuilding the churches of young men to know that our own Sunday evening service is usually attended by about ten or fifteen of our men, out of a membership of 800, the rest being strangers."

*Truth's* poetic muse has been inspired by the statement that "a band of young lay Churchmen has resolved to make it a part of their observance of Lent to pray daily for the conversion of Sir William Harcourt to the one true Catholic and Apostolic faith." This example, *Truth* urges, might be followed in other directions. For instance:—

Imagine what a change 't would cause  
Were all to act on this decision:  
Meetings for prayer and not debate  
Might then precede each night's "division";  
Whilst in both lobbies rival groups  
Would in impassioned language call for  
More faith for Campbell-Bannerman,  
Less "philosophic doubt" for Balfour.

"We recollect," the *Daily News* says, "that when a measure for regulating the employment of young children in theatres was before the Lords, the Bishops, with the honorable exception of Archbishop Benson, stayed away, and showed no interest in the question." But why be surprised at this? What are Bishops in the House of Lords for but simply to look after ecclesiastical interests?

Mr. G. B. Grinnell, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, pays a striking tribute to the Red Indian's truthfulness. He once asked a red man to tell him a sacred story. The unsophisticated one started by offering up an elaborate prayer to the Spiritual Powers, begging them to help him to talk straight and make him tell the truth. Christian divines might take a leaf out of that poor "savage's" book.

"The missionary," says Mr. Cunningham Graham, in his book about Morocco, "for all his preaching would never mark a sheep, had he but gospel truths alone to draw upon. What brings the savage to the fold is interest, guns, cotton cloth, rum, tea, sugar, coffee, and a thousand things for which a commentator might search the Scriptures through from end to end and not find mentioned." With the Arab, he says, Christian and cheat are synonymous terms.

A Bishop in the House of Lords shortened his speech in consequence of an anecdote told by Lord Durham, who said that he saw a drunken man trying to tell the time by the clock of St. Paul's Cathedral, which just then struck the hour and slowly tolled out twelve, whereupon the drunken man looked hard at the clock and said: "Damn you, why couldn't you have said all that at once?"

"Providence simply musn't take him now." This is how the *New York Journal* wrote while Rudyard Kipling was lying dangerously ill. Those who don't believe in God's existence, and say so, are called blasphemous; those who believe there is a God, and give him the straight tip what to do, are presumably quite respectable.

The *Review of Reviews* is amusing reading. Mr. Stead works the Peace Crusade for all it is worth; indeed, he calls it a "spiritual revival," and has got up a "liturgy" for it. On the other hand, he goes it hot and strong on imperial expansion, which means a bigger army and navy, at least for England. He also urges the United States to follow this country's imperialism, and that means a far bigger army and navy for the Republic. It is charitable to suppose that Mr. Stead is a bit cracked, though one cannot help seeing that there is a deal of method in his madness.

The *Christian World* speaks highly of Girard College, Philadelphia, which has celebrated its fiftieth anniversary; but our contemporary forgets to mention—or does it know—that Stephen Girard, who founded and endowed that splendid institution, was a Freethinker. He thought to keep it secular by forbidding any minister of religion from entering it on any

pretext whatsoever. The Christians, however, have dodged his will by having religion taught in the college by laymen.

A pious correspondent of an equally pious contemporary points out that, in the recent debates at Westminster on the Church crisis, "the Word of God was not once mentioned as the rule of faith." The Prayer Book seemed to be the only authority to which appeal was made. This correspondent must be very much behind the times, or he would know that nowadays the Bible, like the Devil, is tacitly dropped in all the higher religious circles.

Bishop Molo has appointed as *cure* at Bissone, in the Canton Ticino, a priest who has fled from Italy to avoid sentence for various misdeeds. The parishioners at present refuse to receive this somewhat besmirched saint. They will have to take him to their bosoms in the end. He has been orthodox throughout.

The *Katolik*, in reporting the outrage and murder of a boy at an institute under the management of the Christian Brothers, says: "Scarcely a half-year passes without some atrocity of this kind occurring here and there." It expresses astonishment that the education of the young in France and Belgium is so largely entrusted to such hands.

A sad tale is told about the Salvation Army in the *Christian Volunteer*, the organ of former Salvationists. It speaks of the "cursed régime of the Salvation Army, its diabolical character, and the white slaves in bondage to the system." The "wrecked lives" and "undermined spirituality" of many officers and soldiers are traced to the "tyranny" of those in high places.

A church for sale, the Lord apparently having no further use for it. Here is the advertisement in a Liverpool paper: "On sale, St. John's Church, Liverpool, comprising four bells, clock in steeple, pews, timber, slates, flags, stone, bricks, doors, windows, copper plates, lead, heating apparatus, safe, forms, table, gas fixtures, tiles, etc. Apply H. Hindley, Leigh, Lancs."

A Roman Catholic priest is being tried in Russian Poland on a charge of having, in his fanatical zeal, scourged and maltreated some of his female parishioners as a punishment for their errors. The women, it is alleged, were taken down into the vaults of the church, where, apart from the flogging they received, their superstitious fears were practised upon by means of bogus apparitions representing death and the devil.

Sabbath-breakers, beware! It appears that you have less chance than murderers. Her Majesty, as we know, may pardon murderers. But we are told that, by an Act passed in the reign of George III., she is debarred from extending Royal clemency to Sabbath-breakers.

"If this bastard Popery goes on much longer, I say most solemnly the sooner the Church is disestablished the better." The Vicar of Holy Trinity, Tunbridge Wells, who gives utterance to this desperate determination to face the worst, does not, it will be perceived, say anything about disendowment. State control is irksome, but Ritualists and Protestant Churchmen agree in ignoring any question about the State "loaves and fishes."

It was stated recently that £50 a year was paid to dust the books in the library of the Houses of Parliament. How much would have to be expended if the State undertook the dusting of all the copies of Holy Writ which are lying about unheeded and unopened in the households of this Christian land?

At the time when the influence of the Church in Scotland was all-powerful, the purchase of Bibles was not left to the zeal or discretion of the people; but by an Act of Parliament every household worth £25 annual rent, and every yeoman or burgess having stock valued at £500, was compelled to procure a Bible and a Psalm-book, under a penalty of £10.

The Vicar of Halstead, in Essex, has met with a well-merited rebuff. He has been urging the Board of Guardians to appoint a salaried Church of England chaplain at the Workhouse. He probably had a suitable personal friend in his mind at the time. But the Guardians, who seem to have some "saving common-sense" in their compositions, have set their faces against the proposal. They think there is already a sufficient amount of voluntary religious teaching in the House.

Probably most people will agree that the salary of a chaplain would be much better spent in providing a few extra creature comforts for the poor wrecks who find their way into these Bastilles of the poor. Why should a man be paid £2 or £3 a week out of the rates to preach "Blessed are the poor" in a place where such a sermon must necessarily be a mockery and a sham?

A very cool advertisement is addressed by a City clerk to

benevolent Stock Exchange gentlemen who have made thousands out of the rise in South African shares. He simply asks them to buy him an annuity of £200 because he is "tired." In return "Buyer will have Advertiser's prayers for the rest of his life, so that the investment will be a good one." Will it, indeed! The tired advertiser has more confidence in the result of his prayers than anybody else is likely to entertain. Besides, if he is so very "tired," he may become too tired to pray, and what about the return for the investment then?

With the appropriate heading of "Keep us in our proper station," the *Morning Leader* mentions that it was the custom of the lately-deceased Rev. William Evans, of Cwmdanddwr, Radnorshire, to leave the church first at the conclusion of divine service. This was a fine piece of humility as far as he was concerned. The congregation, however, afterwards left in the following order: first the gentry and landowners, then the farmers and tenants, lastly the laborers and workpeople. Will the same order be preserved in the entrance to heaven?

When Bishop Colton, of Calcutta, visited Bombay on a "visitation," the occasion was marked by the delivery of a charge in the Cathedral which did not err on the side of brevity. Later in the day the Bishop was taken to the schools, and, addressing a sharp-looking lad, he said: "My boy, can you tell me what a Bishop's visitation is?" "Please, sir, yes," said the boy. "What is it?" "Please, sir, an affliction sent of God."

At the very moderate rent of 7s. 6d. per night the Northwich "Christians" have obtained the use of the public plunge baths for the purpose of baptism on the total immersion principle. Facilities for securing eternal salvation ought to be considered cheap at three half-crowns a night.

It is suggested that the rising of the Filipinos against Spain was largely owing to an affront offered to their leader in his youth. When an image of Christ was exhibited in Silony, the young Aquinaldo refused to do reverence, and was chastised. This turned indifference into violent hatred, and he set himself to deliver his countrymen from sacerdotal tyranny.

A comfortable, sleek, old-fashioned parish clerk sat on a gravestone. "What do you think of the Church crisis?" asked the friendly passer-by. "Eh?" "The Church crisis?" repeated the passer-by. "Oh, nothin' much; I used to be t' parish clerk. Then the new pa'son ca'd me a sextant; then he went, an' another coom as ca'd me a virgin; and t' last un ca's me a sacrilege."

The *Sunday Companion* oracularly observes that, if God had not appointed Sunday as a day of rest, man would have had to appoint one for himself. Well, he has already supplemented the religious arrangement by providing a Thursday or Saturday half-holiday. So it is possible he would have been equal to providing himself with a day of rest apart from any supposed theological sanctions. The main point at the present time, however, is its rational use—and there theology blocks the way.

Mr. Diggle's name has been excluded from the Council of the New Church Society for Young Men, because, it is suggested, he took advantage of the Clerical Disabilities Relief Act. It is pointed out that the list of "self-unfrocked" includes such names as A. H. D. Acland, James Anthony Froude, John Richard Green, Sir H. D. Ingilby, J. C. Macdona, Sir W. T. Marriott, Lord Francis Godolphin Osborne, J. E. Thorold Rogers, Leslie Stephen, and Edward Walford.

Bigamy is the charge against a revivalist named Lowell, who some years ago achieved considerable notoriety in Bath and elsewhere in consequence of certain religious services he held. The police say they can show that his first wife, who he said was dead, was visited by him in the very street from which they were married, as recently as two years ago.

A Protestant journal, commenting on the religious sense of the age of faith, observes that we have lost many things belonging to those ages, amongst them "the power of producing, or even of conceiving, such a Church phenomenon, say, as Pope John XXIII., official head and high priest of Christendom, accused of incest, rape, adultery, sodomy, murder, and simony."

This is the way in which children at Brighton are indoctrinated with Roman Catholic ideas in some of the State-aided Voluntary schools. Their education, which is partly paid for by the Protestants of the country, includes attendance at mass.

Here is a description of the way they are instructed by Ritualists to adore the "elements" in the Communion Service:—When the bell rings, as the priest says, "This is my body," children bow their heads and say by themselves, "Hail! most sacred flesh of Jesus." When the bell rings

again, and the priest says, "This is my blood," children bow their heads and say, "Hail! most sacred blood of Jesus."

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has been denouncing the practice of "inflicting intolerably long orations upon God." Of course, this does not apply to his own performances; only to those of his rivals. However, Deity all through seems to be very patient and long suffering—or very deaf. If he can stand it, there are a lot of his mundane creatures who cannot and will not.

The *Literary Year Book*, referring to the Polychrome Bible, says: "Here is a piece of work being done which will ultimately revolutionize much of the Old Testament.....The world has suddenly awakened to the idea that the Bible is an intensely complicated historic document, which no plain person can pretend to understand."

A fine observation to make about a Divine revelation!

Three gentlemen, whose appearance and talk betrayed them as limbs of the law, were discussing in a Chancery Lane restaurant the reference to Ahab in Sir William Harcourt's last letter. "Who was Ahab?" one asked. "Wasn't he a man who had a vineyard, or a nice building plot, or something that David wanted badly?" hazarded another. The three agreed that he very likely was.

A rather formidable announcement appeared on the doors of the metropolitan churches at the opening of Lent. It prescribed that Churchmen should go without meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, and give up sugar, milk, butter, cake, beer, spirits, or tobacco.

Says the *Church Gazette*: "This sounds as if it aspired to a mediævally ascetic state of bliss. However, on further examination it will be found not so formidable after all, even to the most ordinary mortal. To begin with, 'meat' is not a *sine quâ non* to a very neat and appetising meal, with soup and fish, etc., and, say, a pint of Chablis." Then as concerns the rest, there is great virtue in an "or."

Most people will regret the death of the Right Rev. John Williams, D.D., senior Bishop of the American Episcopal Church, if only for one witty and pointed reply with which he is credited. A bishop from the West asked him what he reckoned as the best work he had done in Connecticut. He replied: "The best work I did for the Church there was to keep a number of men out of the ministry."

Many Roman Catholic priests in Paris have lost, we learn, all faith in their religion, and have left the church. A not inconsiderable number, we are told, have taken to cab-driving.

The Filipinos are disillusioned. They thought that talismanic wafers would safeguard them against wounds, and American bullets have taught them differently.

A ghost has come to grief at Denver, in Colorado. A citizen, who boasted that he had never been frightened in his life, was passing along a lonely road beside a cemetery, when a ghost perched on a tomb lifted an arm from its shroud, and at the same time uttered a sepulchral groan. The citizen whipped out his revolver and fired, and the ghost then groaned in a more natural manner. It had to be taken home and put to bed, and treated by a doctor. It was really another citizen, appropriately called Faust, who had practised that trick upon his neighbor and got the worst of the deal. Other ghosts should take warning.

"One thing befalleth them; as the one drowneth so drowneth the other; yea, a missionary hath no pre-eminence above a swearing sailor." Thus wrote Solomon, or somebody—or something like it—in the book of Ecclesiastes. And the truth of it was recently exemplified off Yarmouth. A big wave rushed over the North Sea Mission Ship, *St. Andrew the Fisherman*, and washed off Edward Metcalfe. Evidently "Providence" didn't recognise its own vessel.

Mr. Wilson Barrett will be pleased to hear that Miss Ada Ward, the "converted actress," has been specially severe in her discourses on Christians who have gone to see the *Sign of the Cross*. She considers that, in this connection, the Devil got in the thin edge of the wedge.

Of what value is a legal oath when a jury will not believe it, even though it be taken by a clergyman? A Gloucestershire rector has been sued by a working mason for £15 as damages for a broken rib sustained by reason of the rector's violence in a dispute about a small bill for repairs to the church. The rector swore that he never touched the man. But the broken rib was regarded as better evidence of what happened than the rector's sworn denial. The jury decided accordingly.

The Lord seems just now to be exhibiting but little concern

for his tabernacles. The historic church of St. John, Southend-on-Sea, through the over-heating of a flue, had a narrow escape of being destroyed by fire. The Lord, however, did not allow this particular "sacred edifice" to be burned down. He circumvented the over-heated flue by causing one of his creatures to raise an alarm.

The synagogue in Brisbane, Queensland, has had to be repaired owing to the ravages of the white ants. It was closed on a recent Sabbath on this account. Rather curious that these small creatures should be able to interfere with divine worship. It might almost be thought that Providence was not aware of what was going on, being probably busy at the time elsewhere.

Magistrate Joseph Pool, of Manhattan borough, has banished the Bible from his court. He said to his clerk the other day: "Take that Bible away from here. I'm not going to use the Bible any more. There is no law compelling its use, and hereafter I shall have all witnesses sworn by raising the right hand. The Bible is nothing but a breeder of disease when used in this way. All sorts of filthy and diseased persons kiss it, and it is dangerous to have it about."

In a sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday evening, the Rev. A. Whitworth, of All Saints', Margaret-street, said he could not condemn gambling when founded on scientific or technical knowledge. An evening paper properly describes it as "a singular Lenten counsel."

"A Bible that Led to Suicide" was the newspaper heading to the report of Alice Crow's untimely death. She committed suicide on the railway at Shortlands. In her box was found a Bible which she had purchased from a book-cannasser, but on which she had paid only an instalment of one-and-sixpence. It was suggested at the inquest that, being unable to pay the additional money, she had taken articles belonging to her mistress.

Very properly the Coroner said it was monstrous for canvassers to press young girls to purchase books and other articles, whether Bibles or not, and that it was certainly not a Christian act.

The ridiculous claim of the Pope to be represented at the Powers' Peace Conference is placing the Dutch Government in a painful dilemma. As host it has to issue the invitations. If they invite the Pope, Italy will decline an invitation. If they do not invite him, they will be regarded by the Vatican as assuming an attitude of active hostility towards the Pope.

Holland wishes to shift the responsibility on to the shoulders of Russia, and regard itself simply as the agent of Russia in the matter; but Russia persists in regarding Holland as acting on its own initiative. If the Pope really cared for peace, he would not incur the danger of wrecking the Conference by such an untimely assertion of an impossible claim.

At all Ember seasons in the Salisbury diocese a paper with prayers suitable to the time is circulated. The first item on the latest paper is that "the Archbishops and Bishops may be given wisdom to deal rightly with the questions in dispute." To the ordinary mind it would have seemed a readier method for Deity to have prevented in the first instance the "present troubles" in the Church than to enter upon the almost impossible task of endowing the Archbishops and Bishops with wisdom. But God's ways are not our ways, and sometimes it is well that they are not.

### Laconic.

A Sunday-school teacher was talking to her class of the necessity of a divine friend both in life and death. Finally she said:—

"Charlie, if you were about to die, what would you want most of anything?"

And Charlie replied, with practical wisdom:—

"A doctor."

He was recently matched, however, by another small boy.

"Johnny," asked his teacher, "what must we do before our sins can be forgiven?"

"Sin," replied Johnny.

### He Sighed for Rest.

While she was getting ready to go to church she had been saying things to him because he would not go, and she had been saying them with considerable emphasis and rapidity. He sighed and put down his paper. "My dear," he said, "is this a day of rest?" "Of course it is," she replied. "Then why not?" he asked pathetically.—*Chicago Post*.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 5, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London: 7-30, "Good Lord Deliver Us."

### 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.

SOME correspondence and other matter stands over in consequence of the Editor's absence from London.

**"FREETHINKER" DEFENCE FUND (WEST HAM).**—We have received:—Anti-Bigot, £2 10s.; Alexander Brown, 5s.; Edward Brooks, 5s.; A. Rushton, 5s.; C. Heaton, 2s. 6d.; Bella and W. Scott, 1s.; T. Ollerenshaw, 2s.; H. Seal, £1; Samoth, 5s.; Joseph Close, 2s.; T. L. Norman, 2s. 6d.; R. Jacob, 5s.; R. Dowling, 5s.; E. Gwinnell, 5s.; C. J. Peacock, £1; A. Firth, 2s.; F. Smallman, £1; A Glasgow Friend, £2; J. W. Irving, 5s.; John Waller, 2s. 6d.; T. H. Seymour, £1; F. J. Voisey, 10s.; J. H. R., 1s.; J. P., 1s.; W. A. Newcomb, 2s.; J. Garven, 1s.; W. Mumby, 10s.; W. H. Verney and F. Sims, 3s.; J. Carr, 1s.; W. Townend, 1s.; J. Phillips, 1s.; G. Foster, 1s.; R. Bell, 1s.; W. Shipley, 1s.; West End Doctor, 5s.; W. C. Middleton, £1. *Per Miss Vance*:—Collected at Mr. Foote's lecture, Athenæum, £2 15s. 1d.; J. S. E., 5s.; J. Mawson, 2s. 6d.; T. Holstead, 2s. 6d.; J. F. Hampson, 2s. 6d.; E. Slade, 1s.; J. Oram, 2s. 6d.; A. W. Marks, 10s.; Mrs. B. E. Marks, 10s.

**ALEXANDER BROWN** (Torquay) approves of our "manly and upright position" in regard to the West Ham scandal and sends a subscription. "I hope," he adds, "that all your friends will do their best to help you, as the success of your paper on this occasion is of the greatest importance to the Freethought cause."

**EDWARD BROOKS.**—Thanks. See acknowledgment elsewhere. Sorry to hear of your long illness.

**C. HEATON.**—Glad to have your best wishes for our success at West Ham. See list of acknowledgments.

**BELLA and WILLIAM SCOTT.**—We hardly like taking even a small subscription from a laborer and his wife, but we will not be so uncivil as to return it. Those who can better spare the money—and they are fairly numerous—should respond to our appeal.

**T. OLLERENSHAW** (Huddersfield), sending subscription for the West Ham fight, says:—"All true Freethinkers who desire to see the paper and the N. S. prosper ought to respond heartily to your appeal. Now is the time to see what stuff they are made of. Some hold back because (they say) there is nothing to fight for. They may do so no longer. Their opportunity has arrived."

**H. SEAL** sends subscription for "your West Ham crusade," and hopes we shall be successful.

**G. W. BLYTHE.**—You are mistaken. There is nothing about "Materialism" in the Principles and Objects of the National Secular Society.

**F. J. VOISEY.**—You may quite depend on our fighting "tooth and nail." We are never astonished at Christian bigotry. It is always ready to be worked upon by fanatics and charlatans.

**R. JACOB.**—As you take a great interest in the West Ham affair, being an old inhabitant of the borough, we will see that you get a notice of the public meeting, as requested.

**J. JONES.**—We have handed your order to Mr. Forder, our publisher. Please send direct to him in future.

**E. GWINNELL.**—Yes, a fine advertisement if properly utilised. Thanks.

**C. J. PEACOCK.**—We hope we have your second initial right. Accept our thanks.

**HAROLD ELLIOTT.**—Pleased to hear you have just finished reading the *Book of God* and consider it "immense." The reference to Beethoven and Wagner as Freethinkers is quite accurate. Being out of town, the editor cannot give you detailed evidence this week; but you will find enough if you can refer, meanwhile, to the late J. M. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. You can send us the essay you mention.

**F. SMALLMAN.**—We hope the result of the agitation will be gratifying, however the poll goes. It will have to be followed up by an organised Freethought propaganda in that big, populous district.

**C. HUGHES.**—(1) Glad to hear you hope Mr. McCabe will be a frequent contributor to the *Freethinker*. He has resigned his post at Leicester with the intention of devoting himself to writing and lecturing. (2) Thanks for a sight of the reverend gentleman's letters, which are sufficiently amusing. (3) We will give the facts about the lady in our next. It is curious that the West Ham bigots should be talking so much about one who died a couple of generations before the Secular movement was started.

**T. L. NORMAN.**—Thanks. Certainly the polling of the borough will be a grand advertisement for the *Freethinker*, but it will not do much *real* good if the burgesses are induced to believe lies about this journal. It is absolutely necessary that they should be afforded an opportunity of knowing the truth.

**HARRY ORAM.**—You are likely mistaken. Mr. Partridge, the secretary of the Birmingham Branch, is not the person you have in mind. He has been connected with that Branch, as a hard worker, for any number of years, and is as good as gold.

**W. A. NEWCOMB.**—Very sorry to hear of your illness, and hope you will soon recover.

**W. TOWNEND.**—Pleased to hear from so old a Freethinker and subscriber to this journal.

**J. GARVEN.**—The *Bible Handbook* will be reprinted. It has not been on sale lately. But a few copies have just turned up, and you might get one by applying to Mr. Forder at once.

**W. MUMBY** thinks it is almost too much to hope for a victory at West Ham, but the agitation may induce a few people to read the *Freethinker*, and "if they find it half as interesting and instructive as I do, they will take it regularly."

**COSMOPOLITAN.**—Will you kindly say in *what* spirit this journal could be conducted so as to please Catholics and Protestants?

**RUSTICUS.**—Articles have frequently appeared in this journal, notably by Mr. Watts, on Secular morality as distinguished from Christian. Perhaps the present juncture is, as you suggest, timely for something from our own pen. We will see. Anyhow, you owe us no apology for writing. We always like to see our readers interested.

**W. SHIPLEY** writes: "Fancy a man talking about *purity* with the Bible in his hand."

**J. L. CARTWRIGHT.**—We had no reporter at the West Ham Council meeting. We used the report in the *Herald*, as we stated plainly enough even for you to understand. We give publicity to your statement that you were not one of the speakers who addressed the Council against the *Freethinker*. You had better send a correction to the *Herald* also. It is nearer home.

**T. H. SEYMOUR**, subscribing to the West Ham Fund, heartily wishes us success. He will see that we are doing our best to win it.

**RECEIVED.**—Freethought Magazine—Y. M. C. A. Record—The Stratford Express—Commercial Intelligence—Ethical World—The Literary Guide—Two Worlds—Glasgow Herald—Torch of Reason—Sun—Sydney Bulletin—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker—West Ham Herald—Bradford Truthseeker—Secular Thought—Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper—Free Society—Awakener of India.

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

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.

**FRIENDS** who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

**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.

**SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.**—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

### Sugar Plums.

**MR. FOOTE** lectured at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening to a capital audience, Mr. Harry Brown occupying the chair, and Mr. W. Heaford being in the meeting. Miss Vance and other friends took up a good collection for the West Ham fight. This evening (March 5) Mr. Foote lectures in the same hall again. His subject will be "Good Lord Deliver Us." This exclamation is well known to those who are acquainted with the Prayer Book. It occurs frequently in the Litany.

A correspondent of the *Daily News* is very hopeful of the future of the French Republic. "We must mix," he says, "with all sorts and conditions of people in the provinces to realise the force of Republican conviction, the immense, deep-seated power of the schoolmaster. For the village pedagogue is no uninstructed braggart; above all things he is absolutely independent of the priest, and in his person opposes a most formidable obstacle to sacerdotalism." This correspondent is certain that the Ferry Laws, which preserve France from clerical rule, will not be revoked. "The Jesuit college," he adds, "may number its pupils by the thousand, but it is by millions that the village school enrolls its youthful Republicans. Immense, therefore, is the weight of the schoolmaster—weight ever lent to the cause of free institutions and liberty of conscience."

The *New York Herald* says that "Ingersoll has been telling the truth" and "doing a good work in demolishing the monstrous superstition and ignorant creed before which Christians bowed half a century ago." But it doesn't do to praise Ingersoll too much, so the *Herald* qualifies its eulogy by remarking that "Twenty-five years ago he was one hundred years ahead of the Church; to-day the advance guard for the new religion is fifty years ahead of Ingersoll." Is it though? What is this "new religion," after all, but another attempt to pour the new wine of science into the old bottles of theology? Ingersoll can afford to smile, for he knows what will happen.

Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, is a man of great courage, though of very moderate discretion, and we are extremely sorry to see that he has again fallen into the hands of the enemy, who have treated him to a strong dose of Christian charity. A jury has found him guilty of "sending an obscene publication through the United States mails," and Judge Thompson has sentenced him to two years in a penitentiary. Editor Moore is not humbled, however; when asked if he had anything to say before sentence was passed, he replied: "I glory in what I have done." The irony of it all is that Editor Moore, who is a fierce opponent of Free Love, suffers, as far as we can make out, for an article on that very subject.

What unmitigated ruffians these Christians are when they get a Freethinker in their clutches! Everybody in Kansas knows perfectly well that this savage sentence on Editor Moore is meant to punish him for being an outspoken Freethinker. The Jewish priests hated Jesus Christ because he was affecting their business, and they charged him with "blasphemy"; but that wouldn't do at any price before a Roman tribunal, so they veered round and charged him with sedition. Anything to get rid of him. And the same pious game has been played upon Editor Moore.

A bust of Voltaire, life size, in statuary marble, the pedestal bearing a scroll with emblems in relief, inscribed "Houdon F., 1781, au Marquis de Villette," was sold last week at Christie's for £480, after keen competition.

Max O'Rell, in the *North American Review*, is rather fantastical in calling Renan the "greatest thinker and scholar of his time," but quite right in saying that "he was a great, gentle, lofty spirit, who thought like a man, felt like a woman, sometimes acted like a child, and always wrote like an angel."

### Recipe for Making a Roman Catholic.

TAKE a young child (the younger the better)  
 When he's quick to believe in all species of flummery;  
 Accustom him, ere you have taught him a letter,  
 To bogey-ideas with concomitant mummery.

Drag him to church, and with incense and mystery  
 Drug him, and drive him to crass imbecility;  
 Make him worship the saints and act up to their history  
 Till it's certain he'll never be blessed with virility.

His reasoning faculties duly eliminate,  
 And rear him on faith till all else he refuses;  
 In the matter of books you must wisely discriminate,  
 Permitting alone what the clergyman chooses.

Cow him with threats of a hell incandescent,  
 Where imps ply with energy pitchforks and pokers  
 To harry the damned ones with torture incessant  
 Who've been cursed by the wearers of cassocks and chokers.

Insist on Confession to "fathers" salacious  
 (Deft teachers of physiologic precocity);  
 Make him swallow their falsehoods, however mendacious,  
 And whack him, if he should demur, with ferocity.

He must slaver the priest with disgusting servility  
 (Being taught that his God is the slave of the priest-  
 hood);  
 Make him cringe to their lash with degrading humility,  
 Like any well-whipped pusillanimous beast would.

He must hate friend and kindred with deadly intensity  
 Who reject mediæval belief and morality.  
 You should carefully foster the slightest propensity  
 To murder or maim those who cling to reality.

Teach that Dissenters are sure of damnation;  
 That now, and at all seasons (just as in past days),  
 Heretic-burning is certain salvation,  
 And murder less dreadful than feasting on fast days.

By carefully noting these easy instructions,  
 And wisely and faithfully making the best of 'em,  
 You'll evolve that sublimest of Christian productions—  
 A "good" Roman Catholic, just like the rest of 'em.  
 EX-RITUALIST.

He—"I wish our minister would practise some sort of self-mortification during Lent." She—"What would you suggest?" He—"Well, he might make his sermons half an hour shorter than usual."

The Pug—"Say, but dat new feller don't do a thing but put 'em to sleep quick." The Mug—"No wonder! He wuz a preacher before he took to prize-fightin'."

### The Sojourning in Egypt.

If there be one Biblical fact in the early history of the Jewish nation which is mentioned or referred to in the Old Testament books more often than, perhaps, any other, it is that of the alleged deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. Besides being related in detail in the book of Exodus, reference is made to the story in Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, the later Psalms, the second Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Amos. It is also mentioned, as an undoubted historical fact, in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Hebrews. Yet, if anyone will take the trouble to carefully examine the story, he will find it, from beginning to end, a mass of contradictions, absurdities, and manifest impossibilities, which all point to one and the same conclusion—its purely fictitious character.

To demonstrate the truth of this not very surprising fact, I take, in the first place, the Biblical statements respecting the duration of the alleged bondage in Egypt.

The writer of Genesis xv. represents "the Lord" as saying to his servant Abraham:—

"Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (xv. 13).

There can scarcely be the shadow of a doubt as to the meaning of this passage. The Israelites were to be sojourners in Egypt for some unstated time, and they were to "serve" the Egyptians and to suffer affliction for four hundred years. Could there be any uncertainty as to the meaning, it is removed by the inspired author of the "Acts," who quotes the passage in substantially the same words (vii. 6). Further, it is to be noticed that "the Lord," when predicting this bondage to Abraham, prefaced his communication with the solemn and emphatic words, "Know of a surety," by which he evidently pledged his sacred word as to the accuracy of the statement.

We turn next to Exodus xii., a chapter in which the departure of the Israelites from Egypt is recorded. And here we find the writer remarkably precise as to the exact duration of the residence of God's chosen people in that country. He says:—

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even on the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt" (xii. 40, 41).

The foregoing passage, read with the prediction in Genesis, places the matter we are considering beyond all doubt. From the two statements (which are in complete harmony) we learn that the Israelites were sojourners in Egypt for exactly 430 years—not a day more nor less—and that they had been bond-servants for all but 30 years of that time. This is the plain and only meaning which the two passages convey.

And now we come to what appears a most astonishing fact. Though, as we have seen, it is stated as plainly as words can express that "the sojourning" in Egypt was 430 years, and that the period of forced servitude was 400 years, not a single Bible commentator now accepts either statement; both are explained away. There is, of course, a reason for this double shuffle. That reason is simple: from certain other portions of the sacred narrative it is found that the period of the alleged sojourning in Egypt could not have been anything like the time stated. This will be seen from the following genealogical tables:—

Levi	Levi	Reuben
Kohath	Kohath	Pallu
Amram	Izhar	Eliab
Moses	Korah	Dathan

From Genesis xli. 9 and 11 we find that the first two in each family (Levi and his son Kohath, and Reuben and his son Pallu) were amongst those who went down with Jacob into Egypt; also, from Numbers xvi. we learn that Korah and Dathan were amongst those who left Egypt with Moses; hence only one in each line of descent—Amram, Izhar, and Eliab—was born and

buried in Egypt. In the first line the ages at death are given—viz., Levi, 137; Kohath, 133; and Amram, 137 (Exodus vi. 16-20); but these render us no assistance in calculating the length of the sojourning in Egypt. The data we require are: the age of Kohath at the going down into Egypt, the age of Kohath at the birth of Amram, the age of Amram at the birth of Moses, and the age of Moses at the exodus. Only the last of these is given—viz., it is stated that Moses was eighty years old when the Israelites left Egypt (Exodus vii. 7). None of the other data being recorded, all we can do is to take some probable approximate figures. Assuming, then, that Kohath was only ten years old when he entered Egypt, and that he was fifty when his son Amram was born, and assuming that Amram had also reached the age of fifty when his son Moses was born, the duration of the residence in Egypt would be only 170 years (40+50+80). This is allowing a longer period for the stay in Egypt than is at all probable; for it is more likely that Kohath and Amram would marry at the age of thirty or forty than at fifty. As a matter of Bible history, none of the twelve sons of Jacob had reached the last-named age at the going down into Egypt, yet every one of them is stated to have been the father of one or more sons at that time.

We see, then, that one of the most clear, precise, and categorical statements in scripture—that the Israelites had sojourned in Egypt for a period of exactly 430 years—is proved from the Bible itself to be contrary to fact. We see, also, why Bible commentators endeavor to give the passage another interpretation. These Reconcilers tell us that the 430 years are to be reckoned from the coming of Abraham into Canaan—a computation which reduces the time in Egypt to 215 years—and they quote the Samaritan and the Septuagint in support of their interpretation. The passage in the latter translation reads: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt *and in the land of Canaan*," was 430 years. But the words italicised, there can be little doubt, are either a gloss—that is, a comment originally written in the margin of a manuscript, which, at a later day, was incorporated by a transcriber in the text of new MSS.—or they are a deliberate interpolation. The latter appears the more probable; for, in the first place, the words in italics in the Septuagint formed part of the text of that version as early as the time of Josephus and the Apostle Paul, who both refer to the passage; and, secondly, the fact that they are in the Samaritan text seems to point to their insertion as a reconciliation of a well-known contradiction. In either case the words mentioned are manifestly an addition to the original text. Such was evidently the opinion of our English Revisers, who, with the Samaritan and the Septuagint before them, and being perfectly aware of the "difficulty," altered the somewhat ambiguous words of the Authorised Version—"the sojourning of the children of Israel, *who dwell in Egypt*"—into words whose meaning cannot possibly be mistaken—"the sojourning of the children of Israel, *which they sojourned in Egypt*."

But that the interpretation of our Christian commentators is untenable, as well as a manifest perversion of the plainest language, can easily be shown. The passage in Exodus states that "the sojourning of the children of Israel" was 430 years. Now, Abraham was not "the children of Israel"; neither was Jacob "the children of Israel." Only the sons of Jacob and their descendants could be so designated. Neither, again, can the land of Canaan, in which these patriarchs are said to have lived, be taken to mean Egypt.

Further, only one country is referred to as the place of sojourning—"thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs.....and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge.....And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again" (Gen. xv. 14, 16). The land of Canaan is thus clearly excluded.

Furthermore, the Israelites were to leave Egypt "in the fourth generation," and, according to the Bible statements, there were many of that generation who went out with Moses at the exodus. Moses himself, as well as Korah and Dathan, had sons who accompanied them, these being of the third generation born in Egypt; but since Kohath and Pallu passed nearly the whole of their lives in that country, the sons of Moses, Korah,

and Dathan may be said to be of the fourth generation.

If, then, the sojourning is to be taken as commencing with the coming of Abraham into Canaan, the four generations would be represented by Isaac, Jacob, Levi, and Kohath. But, as we have seen, Kohath was one of those who are stated to have accompanied Jacob to Egypt. The misrepresentation of our Bible reconcilers is thus placed beyond question.

Looking next at the prediction in Genesis—"Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs.....and they shall afflict them four hundred years"—we find that in this case, as in every other, "the Lord" only knew what it pleased his servant, the writer, to put in his mouth, and that the impressive introductory words, "Know of a surety," add no weight to the prediction ascribed to him.

Assuming, however, the sojourning in Egypt to be a fact, we find from certain passages in the sacred narrative that Joseph was thirty-nine years old when Jacob and his family came to live in Egypt, and that he lived to the age of a hundred and ten (Gen. xli. 46, 53; xlv. 6; l. 22). The Israelites had, therefore, perfect freedom for 71 years; for it was not until after the death of this patriarch that their servitude and "affliction" commenced. Hence, the duration of the alleged oppression could not have been more than a century at the outside, if so long, and "the Lord," in predicting a period of affliction extending over 400 years, was very wide of the mark indeed. ABRACADABRA.

### Sambo's Prayer.

Yo' say it ain't no good to pray?  
It's coz yo' doan pray right.  
Jes' pray de way yo' oughter pray,  
An' pray wiv all yo' might.  
Doan ask de Lawd to guv yer things,  
But ask him to he'p yo',  
He'p yo', yo'self, to git de things,  
An' he will pull yo' froo.  
Jes' ask in humbleness of spi't,  
An' yo'll git w'at yo' ask to git.

I prayed myse'f fo' free long weeks  
Wiv mos' tremendous viggah:  
"Lawd, sen' a chick'n, oh, good Lawd!  
To dis mos' hungry niggah.  
Oh, sen' a chick'n, Lawd, be quick!"  
But de good Lawd didn' quick'n,  
An' though I wrestled long in pray'r  
I nevah see no chick'n.  
I didn't pray right, I wasted bref,  
An' so I almos' starved to def.

"Oh, sen' a chick'n, Lawd, to me,"  
I prayed wiv tears an' plead'n';  
"On, sen' a chick'n, Lawd, an' heah  
Thy servant's interced'n'.  
But w'en no chick'n come, I prayed,  
My heart wiv sorer strick'n:  
"Sen' me, oh, sen' dis niggah, Lawd,  
Oh, sen' him to a chick'n."  
Yo' say it ain't no good to pray?  
Wa-al—we had chick'n-pie nex' day.

—Judge.

SAM WALTER FOSS.

To be wise we must first learn to be happy, that we may attach ever smaller importance to what happiness may be in itself. We should be happy as long as possible, and our happiness should last as long as is possible; for those who can finally issue forth from self by the portal of happiness know infinitely wider freedom than those who pass through the gate of sadness.....Moreover, there is in happiness a humility deeper and nobler, purer and wider, than sorrow can ever procure. There is a certain humility that ranks with parasitic virtues, such as sterile self-sacrifice, arbitrary chastity, blind submission, fanatic renouncement, penitence, false shame, and many others, which have from time immemorial turned aside from their course the waters of human morality, and forced them into a stagnant pool, around which our memory still lingers.....there exists another humility that extends to all things, that is lofty and strong, that has fed on all that is best in our brain and our heart and our soul..... We must be happy, not for happiness' sake, but so that we may learn to see distinctly that which vain expectation of happiness would for ever hide from our gaze.—Maeterlinck's "Wisdom and Destiny."

## Dr. Keeling's Rejoinder.

It appears to me useless to prolong the controversy between Mr. Cohen and myself, unless before a court of experts. If this could be assembled, I should be only too glad to leave my case in their hands; probably my critic would submit his with equal confidence. In the meantime, assertion and denial from either side contribute little towards a satisfactory issue, seeing that neither disputant is entitled to speak with authority. Several of the points which have been raised are unsuitable for newspaper discussion, and I am not surprised at the hint about brevity from the Editor a fortnight ago. The reply from Mr. Cohen in the *Freethinker* for February 19 is just as open to attack as his previous articles. A careful reading of it has disclosed no new point, and to go over the ground again would be wearisome and profitless.

It is clear that Mr. Cohen's view of Theism differs greatly from mine. With much respect, I submit that he has scarcely yet grasped the conception of Theism held by many of the best scientists and thinkers of the day, nor does he appear to me to realise how greatly the physical Materialism of former days has been modified by modern biology. Had he done so, I scarcely think he would have compared, *in any sense whatever*, the profound knowledge relative to living and non-living matter of Professor Beale, with such as "the man in the street" may be supposed to have. To my personal knowledge, Dr. Beale has been occupied in laborious and successful investigation for the last forty-five years, and any conclusion he has arrived at is received with the utmost respect by men of science.

Contrary to Mr. Cohen, I contend that science is perpetually engaged in inquiring into the *causes* of phenomena, as well as into any relations which phenomena may have amongst themselves. Science insists on physical causes for physical phenomena, and will have her atoms, molecules, and ether, her matter and force, idealists notwithstanding. If anyone doubt this, let him ask the first chemist or physicist he meets. For modern use, the word "phenomenon" has been dug out of that very bed of metaphysics which it is the passing fashion to depreciate. It is very old, and was first used by the Greeks 2,500 years ago; it simply means *appearance*. If we are to be satisfied with appearances only, if we come to the conclusion that there is no reality behind them, the whole domain of positive knowledge (including the knowledge of our personal existence) is threatened, as has been shown over and over again. All, then, is appearance only; nothing is real; we shrink to shades in a world of shadows. I cannot understand how so staunch a Materialist as Mr. Cohen can be a mere phenomenalist. It seems to me to be far harder than for a scientist to be also a Theist. But I see the frown of the Editor, and must not enlarge. Any reader who cares to look into the subject further will find it fully treated in chap. iii. of *Quæro*.

Mr. Cohen sets me another conundrum in the shape of "wetness," as a quality of water. But water may be solid, and perfectly dry; or invisible and scarcely wet at all, in the shape of super-heated steam. I think he must have a bet on to catch me tripping, for he knows, just as well as I do, that wetness and dryness, sweetness and coldness, softness, smoothness, hardness, color, shape, taste, etc., are qualities which do not exist for any individual until certain phenomena relative to each of them have been operated on by a perceiving and concept-forming nerve-area. Try giving an idea of sounds to a child born deaf, or of colors to one born blind, or try a sightless child on the position, shape, and size of external objects, without letting him use his sense of touch. The point is most clearly seen in the sense of vision, but for all the senses the rationale is the same (see the diagrams in my third chapter). Of course, when the concept is once acquired, nerve-energy is not wasted in forming it afresh every day of our lives; it is relegated to memory and association; but every child has to go through the long process of forming and storing its own conceptions of what we carelessly call "qualities." Careful mothers probably very soon get the idea of "wetness" into an infant's mind.

Another very tempting opening is offered by the remarks of my critic on the office and limitations of

man's "consciousness." But I must refrain, and content myself with a short conclusion.

I have heard my friend Mr. Cohen describe man as "a religious animal." Such, I believe, he has always and everywhere been, is at present, always will be, and much to his advantage. From the Secularist's point of view this is rank heresy; yet the experience and observation of a long life, much of it passed among sceptics, has convinced me that it is true. Mr. Cohen is an ardent and highly talented advocate of Secularism, and so long as he thinks this the best way of doing good he is bound to pursue it. My life's work consists in helping the sick and injured—also a way of doing good. It matters little what theory a man holds so long as the practical rule of his life is—be good and do good. Whether the rule came first from Confucius, Gotama, or Christus, or whether, long before their time, it was gradually formulated by social necessity, is really of little consequence. It is the best outcome we have as yet from man's imperfect but improving nature, and all good fellows can help it on and exemplify it, no matter what their creed, nor though they have none. But I think man's religion will help him; here, and the world over. The tiger is not yet out of him; he is a fighting, as well as a religious, animal; as brutal in his sports, his battles, his race for money and power, as he often has been in his religion. The much-vaunted sociology of our day is simply the latest phase of an amelioration which, in despite of halt and stoppage, has been slowly advancing ever since man appeared on the planet. According to many, religion has been, and ever will be, a powerful factor in promoting human improvement; the attempt to eliminate it is, in my humble opinion, as vain an enterprise as would be the effort to extirpate conscience. Much has been said and written to prove how injurious religion is; it is surely not necessary to say how ample is the record on the other side. We have only to open our eyes and look about us. Permit me to give a small illustration. In the city of Sheffield there are just now two fresh benevolent schemes on foot, both of which are taxing my time and energy to an extent which has left, to my regret, only a remnant for Mr. Cohen. One of these schemes is for a much-needed hospital extension, and £20,000 is required to carry it out. Within three weeks £7,000 has been promised to me alone, every penny of it from professing Christians, and I have not the slightest doubt that 90 per cent. of the whole will be given by men and women whose life and conduct is largely influenced by religion. People engaged in benevolent work, entirely apart from church and chapel building, know well where to apply for help and sympathy. To my thinking, it will be a bad day for sociology when its present Christian element is eliminated.

That is partly why I advocate Theism, to my mind the best and purest form of religion; that is also partly why, as I imagine (if the Editor will pardon a lingering and perhaps absurd notion), that room has been granted for its incongruous appearance in the pages of a Journal devoted to other objects. I can only thank him once more, and most heartily, for his courtesy and impartiality. There can be nothing but gain from the freest and fullest "freethinking" on every subject which concerns man: as I believe, a day will come when much that is now in conflict will be harmonised, and when we shall wonder how it was that we disputed so long and vigorously. Mr. Cohen and I part, as we began, friends. It is a treat to meet so capable and courteous an antagonist. Some day, possibly, the Editor will permit us again to cross swords, and then perhaps it will be clearly demonstrated that ethics, morality, religion, justice, and mercy, are a mere development of nebular gas.

JAMES HURD KEELING.

[Any reader wishing to see *Quæro* can obtain it as per advertisement.]

### How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.

Book Chat.

NOVELS with a purpose are usually very unsatisfactory, and *A Window in Paris*, by Marianne Farningham, is no exception to this rule. The author has an intense horror of militarism, and, like so many worthy people, she invites the popular superstition to bolster up her case. So far as the technical parts of this novel are concerned, the author deserves credit. She skilfully weaves the whole of her material into a presentable tapestry, with the thread of romantic love running through it. But the author evidently intends that her story should do more than merely amuse and interest the reader, and she hysterically hails the "War against War" of Mr. Stead's friend, the Czar, as a new gospel.

We do not doubt her sincerity, nor question that she is actuated by excellent motives; but she fairly takes the reader's breath away by her attempt to evolve history from her inner consciousness. Notwithstanding her prefatory announcement that the descriptions of the battles are absolutely true, her accounts are so crammed with errors that one fears that Baron Munchausen must have supplied her with some of this "absolute truth." It is a real pity that she should allow these silly mistakes to disfigure what would otherwise have been a most readable and interesting story. Such publications as this do far more harm than good, and justify some of the criticism which is directed against reformers. If Miss Farningham had exercised sufficient care, she might have helped the Peace Crusade considerably, instead of bringing ridicule upon a movement which has always commanded the allegiance of Rationalists.

Messrs. George Newnes (Limited) will shortly issue an edition of Mr. Gladstone's *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* at the low price of sixpence. This republication of a silly volume will make Mr. Foote's rejoinder, *The Grand Old Book: A Reply to the Grand Old Man*, once more topical.

Mr. Bertram Dobell proves himself a life-long enthusiast on behalf of James Thomson. He has just published a new and cheaper edition at three-and-sixpence of *The City of Dreadful Night, and Other Poems*. There has long been a demand for an edition of Thomson's masterpiece at a modest price, and this very pretty little volume will satisfactorily supply a real want. It contains a representative selection from Thomson's poetry, and includes much of his best work. The beautiful love story of "Weddah and Om-el-Bonain," the two charming idylls "Sunday up the River" and "Sunday at Hampstead," "The Naked Goddess," "In the Room," and many of his finest lyrics, are amongst the contents of his volume. Mr. Bertram Dobell himself writes the introduction. He has modestly forborne the characteristic temptation of the average editor, to draw out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his subject; and his prefatory remarks are short, compendious, yet interesting.

Edward Fitzgerald will soon become a popular poet. Messrs. Macmillan will shortly include his version of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in the world-renowned "Golden Treasury Series."

It is funny to recall that, until recently, Omar's reputation in the West depended mainly upon his revision of the Persian Calendar. The unexpected has happened, and nowadays the mathematician has been eclipsed by the poet. The encyclopaedias of fifty years ago used to devote columns to Omar's mathematical works, and dismiss in a line or two his poetical efforts. Few people have seen Omar's algebraical masterpieces. An edition, however, was published at Paris in 1851.

Messrs. Macmillan and Co. publish this week a sixpenny edition of Tennyson's poetry. The volume, which is nicely printed on good paper, contains the early poems and "In Memoriam." It will be followed very shortly by a second volume, also at sixpence, which will include the later poems and "Maud." This will bring Tennyson's verse within everybody's reach, and should prove widely acceptable.

The *Literary Guide* for March maintains the reputation of this Rationalist monthly. It contains some capital articles and the usual supply of well-written paragraphs. Mr. Flowerdew's "The Need of a Religion" is perhaps the most noticeable item. Mr. Gould's "Let Us Not Pray" is in his happiest vein.

At a thanksgiving meeting some years ago an old fogey, having warmed to a certain pitch, gave vent to the following words: "Thou hast been very bountiful this year unto us, our granaries are full, and our barns right to the top; but our Mary says that you've played the witch with the potatoes."

Correspondence.

A MATTER OF SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In Mr. Cohen's article in the *Freethinker* for February 19, page 115, there is a scientific blunder of so serious a kind that it ought not to be allowed to pass unnoticed. Mr. Cohen writes: "The appearance and behavior of a chemical compound is essentially due to the combination of the factors, not to their qualities added together; just as wetness, which is not a property of either oxygen or hydrogen, is a property of the combination of the two." This is quite a mistake. Wetness is a quality of many fluids, and all, or nearly all, the elements are capable of existing as fluids. Not only can both oxygen and hydrogen exist in the fluid state, but they are then wet bodies. True, in the synthesis of water the electric spark is for convenience passed through the mixture of oxygen and hydrogen in the gaseous state; but it is not true that the wetness of the resulting water is due to its combination, but to the accident that water is a fluid at the temperature of the air. Raise the temperature of the water, and it becomes a gas, though the combination remains the same; lower the temperature of the gas, and it becomes a solid. Mr. Cohen then goes on to point out that mind is due to, or the product of, an "amalgamation." This is truly funny. One feels a wish to comfort the writer, if he would not think it ill-natured, with the assurance that all our heads are not made of pewter. And to the excellent *Freethinker* I would proffer a word of kindly advice—let it look to its science.

W. W. STRICKLAND, B.A., Trin. Col., Cam.

Profane Jokes.

NEAR Abertillery there lived until lately a well-to-do farmer, a strange old character. Places of worship being then scarce, religious services were held in private houses, and often they met in the commodious kitchen of the old farmhouse. After one of his sermons the minister asked old J. what he thought of it. "Well, indeed, Mr. L.," he replied quickly, "you preached devilish good, I thought." Some time after he said to the minister: "Mr. L., I want you to baptise our Mary." "But," queried Mr. L., "does she believe—" "Believe!" he interrupted; "why, the d— fool is silly enough to believe anything."

The following took place in a chapel near Caerphilly. It was a meeting of members only, and John —, who had been a wild cove up to his conversion a month before, was being catechised by one of the deacons, previous to being initiated a full member. "Well, John, you confess to being a sinner?" "Yes," John replied meekly, "I am." "You'll admit, John, that you are a great sinner?" "Yes, I know it," rather shamefacedly. "Well, now then, John, can you say that you are the greatest sinner in the meeting?" John straightened up, glanced around the audience, and, shaking his head doubtfully, said: "I don't know; there are some old cards here."

In the wilds of the Brecknockshire mountains there lived an old couple who earned their livelihood by making besoms, which the old woman would take around the country for miles to sell. Being informed, by chatting with the old woman, that her husband was laid up for some time, the parish clergyman and a doctor determined to visit their lonely cot. Having chatted awhile with them, they were astonished to find how ignorant the old couple were, and, after a remark by the cleric about the great darkness they were in, the old man, misunderstanding, said: "Yes, it is very dark here, for every time a pane breaks in the window our Peggy will stuff rags in it, until, indeed, we can't see much unless the door is open." Questioned as to whether he had heard of Jesus Christ the Savior, he replied: "Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ"; but, failing to remember any person of that name, he continued: "Well, no, I can't say I have; but there, ask our Peggy; I dare say she do know him, because she do travel so much."

Friendly Relations.

The Rev. Dr. Meredith, a well-known Brooklyn clergyman, tries to cultivate friendly relations with the younger members of his flock. In a recent talk to his Sunday-school he urged the children to speak to him whenever they met.

The next day a dirty-faced urchin, having a generally disreputable appearance, accosted him in the street with "How do, Doc?"

The clergyman stopped, and cordially inquired: "And who are you, sir?"

"I'm one of your little lambs," replied the boy, affably. "Fine day."

And, tilting his hat to the back of his head, he swaggered off, leaving the worthy divine speechless with amazement.—*Philadelphia Post.*

## 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, "Good Lord Deliver Us."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Grand Display of Animated Photographs and Talkograph."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 16 New Church-road): Every Saturday, at 7.30, Debating Class and Social Club. 7, Entertainment and Dance.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bow Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Mrs. A. Thurston, "Chivalry."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 10.45, Discussion on "Our Criminals and their Punishment," opened by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner; 7, Mrs. Gilliland Husband, "Life and Death."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, Stanton Coit, "The Personality of Jesus Christ."

WEST LONDON SECULAR CLUB (15 Edgware-road): A Parliament every Tuesday at 8: Mr. Claremont, "The Evidence of Physiology." March 8, at 9, Meeting of West London Branch—important business.

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Arms, Page-street): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What Christians Believe."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Messrs. Heaford, Edwards, Pack, and Ramsey.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, C. Davis.

### COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Stanley Jones, "Religious Systems of the World."

DERBY BRANCH (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, W. H. Fletcher, "Apathy."

FAILSWORTH: F. Morgan, Dramatic recital. March 8, C. Cohen, "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?"

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): J. M. Robertson—11.30, "The Evolution of the God Idea"; 2.30, "Imperialism v. Social Reform"; 6.30, "The Truth About the Reformation."

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row). Thursdays, at 8.30, Elocution Class. 7, J. W. de Caux, J.P., "Some Prophecies Concerning Christ."

LEICESTER SECULAR CLUB (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Anniversary of the Opening of the Hall.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): C. Cohen—3, "Christianity and Medical Science"; 7, "Christianity and the Jews."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, E. Evans, "Meat and Milk: How they may Produce Disease"—with lantern illustrations.

PORTH, SOUTH WALES (112 Birch Grove, Porth): 2.30, Free-thought organisation.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, "Life and Events in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth"—with lantern illustrations.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, A Reading.

WIGAN (Dog and Partridge Hotel): 6.30, Mr. Tong.

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—March 5, Liverpool; 8, Failsworth; 12, Liverpool; 18, 19, and 20, Stanley; 26, Sheffield.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—March 5, Chester; 12, Chester; 26, Birmingham. April 16, Glasgow.

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## Materialism versus Theism.

Mr. Cohen and Dr. Keeling.

The book "QUÆRO," which has given rise to the recent discussion in the *Freethinker* between the above gentlemen, can be obtained, until the end of March, by written application, containing sixpence for postage (the only charge), to the Manager, Messrs. Taylor and Francis, Red Lion-court, Fleet-street, London, E.C.

The time has been prolonged because, owing to the book having run out of print, there has been some delay in supplying copies.

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