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What Would Jesus Do?

EXTREMES meet, said Coleridge; and it was one of his finest and truest epigrams. Everything ends as it begins. The last stage of senility is second childhood, sans teeth, like the suckling baby. And the same law holds good even in religion. Whenever scepticism is prevalent, those who cannot quite resist it, and yet are unable to accept it completely, turn away from the orthodox faith, with its elaborate dogmas, and seek refuge in some form of spiritualism. Belief in ghosts is the beginning of religion, and belief in ghosts is also its ending. The last is like unto the first. And so it is with Christianity. That faith began with Jesus, and it ends with Jesus. Men give up its doctrines, and much of its so-called history, but they cling pathetically to the notion that Jesus was utterly unique and absolutely perfect. That fallacy is the last to go, and not until it does go are we really free from the Christian superstition.

When we look back we smile at the absurdity of our final thralldom. How ridiculous it was to treat the imaginary Jesus of the New Testament as an actual historic figure! How grotesque it was, supposing him to have been so, to place one human being apart from all the rest of Humanity, as something divinely unapproachable! We learn eventually, without losing our reverence for sages and heroes, that a perfect man never existed; and at last we come to suspect that a perfect man would be a perfect nuisance.

Christianity being now in a state of dissolution—not as an organisation, but as a faith—it is natural that we should hear unlimited chatter about Jesus. Jesus the working-man, Jesus the Socialist, Jesus the dreamer, Jesus the thinker, Jesus the liberator, Jesus the universal brother, Jesus the social reformer, Jesus the spiritualist, and even Jesus the Mahatma—all these various characters, deduced from the record of one and the same person, are presented for our acceptance and admiration. We are not astonished, therefore, although we are considerably amused, at the immense success, from a bookseller's point of view, of the Rev. C. M. Sheldon's "sermon story" called *In His Steps; What Would Jesus Do?* Hundreds of thousands of copies have been sold, if not read; the book is praised by ministers of religion as though it were a fifth Gospel; and the whole world is bidden to look and see at last a true picture of real Christianity. We might almost say that Mr. Sheldon has been inspired, if not exactly by the Holy Ghost, yet by his own amazing genius, to explain Jesus Christ to the twentieth century.

Mr. Sheldon is minister to the Central Congregational Church, Topeka, Kansas; and his "sermon story," as he calls it, was read out chapter by chapter in 1866—whatever that may mean, for the winter, even in Kansas, presumably extends on both sides of the first of January. After reading it out in this way to his congregation, Mr. Sheldon had it printed in book form. "The story," he says in his Preface, "has been warmly and thoughtfully welcomed by Endeavor Societies, Temperance organisations, and Y. M. C. A.'s. It is the earnest prayer of the author," he adds, "that the book may go its way with a great blessing to the Churches for the quickening of Christian discipleship, and the hastening of the Master's kingdom on earth." There is a characteristic touch of Christian humility

in that same "great blessing." When a Christian feels he is a sinner, he likes to feel that he is the chief of sinners. It flatters his pride to be the first, even on the wrong side. Just in the same way, when an ordinary writer hopes his book may do good, a Christian writer hopes his book will be a blessing, and a Christian minister hopes his book will be a *great* blessing. Nothing short of a prodigious beneficence is commensurate with his character and abilities. A smaller result would show that Providence lacked an adequate sense of recognition.

We detect the same moral flavor in Mr. Sheldon's desire to "hasten" Christ's kingdom on earth. No doubt he thinks it very good on his part to assist in quickening the pace of Omnipotence, which is also guided by Omniscience. Shelley said in his fine sonnet to Byron that

The worm beneath the sod
May lift itself in homage to the god.

But he did not suggest that the worm should be ambitious to help the god in his flight through the heavens. We venture to think that if Jesus Christ was God, and therefore is still God, he will achieve his kingdom on earth, or elsewhere, at his own time and pleasure, with or without the humble assistance of Mr. Sheldon and his clerical brethren.

We may also observe, in passing, that Mr. Sheldon's regaling his congregation with Sunday evening instalments of an unpublished novel should supply a capital hint to ministers outside the enterprising city of Topeka. A great many congregations are tired of sermons covering the same old ground, expounding the same old doctrines, and decorated with the same old texts. How their listlessness would vanish, and how they would prick up their ears, if the droning man of God in the pulpit were suddenly to announce, in a natural tone of voice, that he had been writing a story, with moving incidents and some love-making in it, and that he intended to read the first chapter or two instead of a sermon on the following Sunday evening! That was to a certain extent the policy of the first propagandists of Christianity. They went about telling the story of Jesus, and what we have in the four Gospels is only a later dressing up of their narratives. It must be admitted, however, that the four Gospels, as works of art, are immensely superior to recent specimens of pious fiction, even including this masterpiece of Mr. Sheldon.

This "sermon story" is really one of the poorest productions we have ever read, and we have had to wade through a lot of rubbish in our time—of course professionally, and not from any personal desire to sound the depths of orthodox imbecility. As a novel it is, in our judgment, contemptible. Its incidents are all arbitrary, being pre-arranged for the purposes of exposition; and its characterisation is on a level with that of the pious tract or the penny novelette; while its style is monotonously commonplace, the rhythm resembling that of a cart-wheel in a rutted country lane. Not a single arresting sentence, not one happy expression, not a solitary flash of wit, not a touch of true pathos, is to be found in all the three hundred pages of this volume. How a man could write so badly, after long familiarity with the English Bible, simply passes our comprehension. If this is the best Mr. Sheldon can do—and we fear it is—his case is hopeless. All the literary masterpieces in the world would fail to lift him above the level of the average penny-a-liner.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

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Superiority of Secularism.

WE claim for Secularism a superiority over all the current theological faiths, inasmuch as it satisfies a want that no religious system does. That want is the right to hold and profess any opinion, whether it agrees or disagrees with popular theological notions. That Secular philosophy is a necessity is proved by the fact that there are thousands of earnest thinkers who cannot accept any of the religious professions of the day. To such persons Secularism offers a guide to daily conduct that is independent of all alleged supernatural sanctions. Having studied Secular principles for over forty years, and after a careful examination of the nature and history of Christianity, we frankly declare that, in our opinion, if ever the world is to be redeemed from the deplorable condition which two thousand years of Christian misrule have produced, the redemption must come through the practical adoption of secular agencies. If it is asked, What is meant by secular agencies? the answer is: Free inquiry, the exercise of reason unfettered by theology, and the application of, and the reliance upon, the facts of science in daily life.

Now, the great difference between Secularism and Christianity upon these three points is this: The believer in the orthodox religion limits inquiry to the domain of his faith. True, he proclaims, "Prove all things"; but he says you must "hold fast" to that which Jesus is reported to have said was good. On the other hand, the Secularist urges that, after fair and honest investigation, each individual should be permitted to decide the truth, irrespective of Christ's opinion. The Christian accepts reason only so far as it harmonises with his religion; while the Secularist recognises it, when properly cultivated, as the supreme monitor and guide of life. The Christian acknowledges science as the servant of God, but the Secularist regards it as the servant of man, and as the one providence, guided by reason, upon which he relies to regulate the affairs of existence. Thus it will be seen that the two systems—Secularism and Christianity—differ widely upon the three important subjects named. In this practical age there should be no difficulty in deciding which is the superior. The one is based upon facts, the other upon theory.

One of the many superior features of Secularism is, that we can calculate upon the results of the application of its teachings in daily life. Auguste Comte, in his work on *Positive Philosophy*, tells us that human knowledge passes through three stages—the Supernatural, the Metaphysical, and the Positive or Scientific. The supernatural cannot be said to be calculable, for here we find gods and demons who are constantly interfering with the ordinary laws of nature. A propitiation or a prayer may alter the whole course of events, and a sacrifice may frustrate all scientific calculations. God sends rain and withholds it at his pleasure, sends storms, plagues, and famines in the most arbitrary manner, and dispenses blessings according to his own caprice or pleasure. In such a system as this, where everything depends upon the will of a sovereign Deity, to endeavor to reduce events to order, to predict results, or prepare for contingencies, would be simply absurd and presumptuous. The metaphysical view of things gives us no more certain ideas than does the supernatural. To form theories about essences, attributes, qualities, and abstractions, whose limits have never been defined, can never satisfy a mind disciplined in the school of Induction—or, in other words, a mind accustomed to draw conclusions from a series of well-ascertained facts. But Secularism, as we understand it, is the embodiment of the results of inductive reasoning; it is the digest of the conclusions which have been arrived at by cool and accurate thinkers in every age of the world. It commences from, and proceeds upon, facts, and, where facts cease, Secularism is silent. Gods, demons, angels, and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, the essences, attributes, and qualities, the first and final, with intermediate causes, and abstractions of the metaphysician, will always fail to satisfy the minds of men who acknowledge law in all things, order in everything, and caprice or chance in none. Secularism teaches that all things, from the planet we

inhabit to the thoughts we think, are under natural, irresistible, and irreversible laws; and it also teaches that, as we know and study those laws, we may become the prophets of humanity; we may calculate the results, and make life, physical, mental, and moral, into a process.

Free and open discussion is another superior feature of Secularism, inasmuch as it regards it as the best method of ascertaining the truth. Secularism has been defined as the "science of this life," and, like every fact discovered, every theory constructed, every opinion expressed, asks to be made the immediate subject of the strictest examination by the thinkers of the age, who test and dissect it, until its truth or falsity is established; or, failing that, until the intelligent portion of the community is provided with such evidence that the solution may be safely left with them, if the inquiry be prosecuted in a truth-seeking spirit and with an unbiassed judgment. Such is the method offered by Secularists for seeking the truth. Who can imagine but that ultimately it must be attended by the happiest results? There are, however, some well-meaning people in the world who seem to hold a directly opposite opinion, and would stifle discussion of any kind. This disposition is more especially observable when religious topics form the subject of argument. This class of individuals, good and worthy people in their way, have been educated in a certain set of opinions, their fathers and mothers believed in them, and they feel themselves bound to follow their example, and believe what they have been taught. It should, however, be remembered that he who listens to and reads only a certain class of opinions, and never travels out of a certain circumscribed sphere, will most certainly become narrow-minded and intolerant; and it is no recommendation of discussion that it reveals a broad field for argument on every subject, instead of the narrow strip of ground upon which we have been accustomed to exercise our faculties. Thus Secularism teaches us to become more indulgent to the opinions of others when we see that our own particular opinion is not at all times that which can be supported; that other men, with equal reason, and sometimes with greater weight of argument, embrace an opposite view to our own. We no longer look upon such men with scorn, or treat them as fools, but are led to inquire whether they are not right and we wrong; whether their doctrines and opinions are not more worthy of support than our own.

Secularism is science, positive philosophy, practical knowledge, common sense, sound reason, nature's own true teachings and noble inspirations, and should replace a system originated and established in the infancy of nations by ignorant, superstitious, and uninformed, and deeply designing men, whose weak or wicked imaginations peopled the world with fancies, fantasies, and fairies, with witches, ghosts, goblins, evil and malignant spirits, to frighten the ignorant, terrify the weak, and overawe the strong, and to subdue all to their power and dominion, and reign over the bodies, and minds, and souls of the great mass of mankind.

The stock-in-trade "argument" of the orthodox Christian is that, after all, "belief is the safe side"; therefore, it is urged, be no harm in believing, no risk, nothing to lose, but everything to gain. This is an indolent, stupid, stand-still doctrine—opposed to all improvement and progress, and is as shallow as it is lazy; for, if it is good for the Christian, it is also good for the Jew, Mohammedan, Pagan, and Hindoo. When the Christian missionary goes to any of these, they may say: "Your religion is new and strange and different to ours; our forefathers, our ancestors for generations back, have lived and died happy in our belief, and it may be the safe side; there can be no harm in believing, and you may be wrong; therefore we will abide by and adhere to the religion of our forefathers!" What answer can the Christian make but to use the same arguments? Can the Secularist have to offer to the Christian: an appeal to sense, to reason, to the understanding, and to the intellect? Man possesses animal propensities, and upon education, cultivation, and due exercise of all these depend the health of his body and the health and soundness of his mind. A perfect man, if such could exist, would consist of a healthy and sound mind, in a healthy and sound body—the object of Secularism is to produce

such. Is that wrong, is that evil, or wicked? Will God punish people for trying to do that? On the other hand, is it not the greatest of virtues, the grandest, noblest work a human being can undertake?

While Christianity ignores the natural, the secular part of man, and deals only with the spiritual, the Secularist begins at the right end, at the beginning, and lays a good, sound, healthy foundation upon which to build all the personal, social, and cardinal virtues; and nature, science, experience, and history, all attest that this is the right, the true, the only proper, practical, and successful way to produce healthy and virtuous humanity. Christianity has been unsuccessful because it has not made the conditions; it has not formed or produced the circumstances around mankind to make healthy bodies and healthy minds. Christianity is a failure, because it does not recognise the whole nature of man, and make provisions for the education, cultivation, and exercise of all the parts of that nature. Man, for all practical purposes, is the creature of circumstances, and his character is formed for him, and not by him. The age and country in which he is born; the character and condition of his parents, if they are wise or foolish, rich or poor, ignorant or learned, healthy or unhealthy; the education he receives, the occupation he follows, the organisation he inherits from his parents—all these circumstances and conditions, severally and combined, have such irresistible and overwhelming power and influence over his mind and body as, to all intents and purposes, to form his character for good or for bad. Secularism, having discovered and fully recognising this great, important, and valuable truth, seeks to remove all evil and pernicious influences and circumstances, as far as it is in human power, from human society, and to replace them with good, healthful, and virtuous conditions, influences, and circumstances. Is it wrong to do this? is it wicked and ungodly to do this? Will God punish Secularists for doing this noble, wise, and glorious work? Or, on the other hand, if there be a future state of existence, will they not have the best and most solid claim to participate in its happiness and enjoyments? Will men and women be less fitted for futurity by being made good, wise, virtuous, and happy in the present world; by knowing and doing their duty; by fulfilling their destiny in this; by working out their own salvation, duly and truly, not with "fear and trembling," but boldly, manfully, courageously, honestly, and truthfully? To man belongs the great, the grand, the prerogative of reason. He has perceptive and reflective faculties; and, however "human reason" may be decried by Christians and theologians, experience shows that it is our sole, our only guide to real virtue, improvement, and happiness. Is it a sin, is it a vice, is it a crime, to use our reason, to exercise our judgment, to cultivate our intellect? Will God punish the Secularist for doing this?—and this is his only crime against Christianity. Or, on the other hand, may we not confidently say, without any fear or doubt, that a God of goodness and justice will look with particular favor upon, and reward with his divine approbation, all those who have made the best use of the reason, the judgment, and the intellect with which he has endowed them? Honesty and sincerity, virtues which are most highly esteemed amongst all good men in this world, cannot be unacceptable to God.

If we believe in a God at all, we should regard him as superior to ourselves in every virtue; then we cannot for a moment suppose that a good moral God would damn any one for holding any opinion he thought to be either good, true, or moral. If belief be an effect wrought upon the understanding by evidence, and not an effort of the will, man cannot either deserve heaven or hell for any belief he may hold; and any man taking this view of the subject cannot but consider himself, not only as being right, but also safe. We are told sometimes by the theologians that they have a little advantage over us here on this point, because, if there be no future judgment, they are as safe as we are; but that, if there be a judgment, they are much safer. To this we reply, that safety is not the highest consideration. The question is not, What is safe? but What is right? But, further, we retort, in the words of R. D. Owen: "If we are right, our friends on the opposite side are great losers. Is it nothing to lose time and talents, to waste our labor on that which is not bread, and our money

upon that which profiteth not? Is it nothing to feel that the human beings that surround us are children of the devil, heirs of hell, and sons of perdition? Is it nothing to think that perhaps we may look across the great gulf, and see some one we have loved on earth tormented in a fiery lake, and hear him ask us to dip a finger in water, that it may cool his parched tongue? Is it no loss to live in disquiet by day and in fear by night, to pass through seasons of doubt and temptations, and to be conscious that we are but strangers and pilgrims here toiling through a weary valley of cares and sorrows?" Is it no loss to hold back when truth oversteps the line of orthodoxy, and when there ought to be full and free discussion? Is all this no loss? If theology, with all its hypotheses and assumptions, can be trusted, surely Secularism may be trusted when it offers us positive truths, ascertained facts, and present realities.

CHARLES WATTS.

Religion and Morals.

CONDUCT, said Matthew Arnold, constitutes three-fourths of life; and, although we may wonder by what means the precise "three-fourths" is reached, we can agree that it is the bearing of a question on conduct that constitutes its chief value. Yet, while all are agreed as to the importance of conduct, when we get beyond broad questions of murder, or theft, or the like, there exists little agreement; and when we get further down still and seek the grounds of our reprobation of even these actions, the disagreement becomes still more pronounced. Not only is there disagreement in the religious world, but in the non-religious world it is hardly less pronounced; it is fortunate, indeed, that men had not to wait to do right until moral philosophers had settled the grounds of their actions, or the world would have exhibited a curious sight.

Until very recent times, with rare exceptions, religious influences may be said to have had a complete monopoly in ethics. And even to-day there exist large numbers of people who protest, honestly and sincerely enough, that to separate the two means the death of morals. Very largely this fear may be explained as due to the perpetual harping of professional sermons on these lines. The economic factor will show itself here as elsewhere, and one can reckon on the clergy doing all that lies in their power to encourage such feelings as in turn support them. One can easily see that a very heavy blow would be struck at their position if it were once generally realised that the whole sphere of morals was as independent of religion as red hair or snub noses; and, consequently, the constant identification of religion and morals by professional preachers is just a manifestation of that instinct of self-preservation which is as strong with communities as with individuals. But, partly also, the feeling is to be amply accounted for by the association of ideas. When two things have been so long connected as have religion and morals, it is difficult for the ordinary individual to imagine them as being separate. There are never wanting people who predict grave consequences whenever anything new is proposed, as was the case when it was proposed to abolish slavery, to extend the franchise to women, or to substitute arbitration for war. In each case one meets with practically the same criticism; what has been ought to continue; a casual connection is mistaken for a causal one, and people who never take the trouble to analyse their beliefs assent to an arrangement the sole argument on behalf of which is that it exists.

In the earliest stages of civilisation ethics is naturally and inevitably overshadowed by religion. One might say that at the beginning of civilisation ethics as an independent science did not exist, being then swallowed up in religion. The great fact about the life of primitive man—the fact that was always pressing upon him with irresistible force—was the existence of multitudes of supernatural beings whose anger had to be appeased, or their vindictiveness had to be averted. To gain the favor of these beings is the great problem of primitive man; and, as the lives of existing savages show, there is hardly an action that can be performed without reference to their existence. It is only very gradually, as knowledge accumulates and superstition as a result declines,

that ethical precepts disentangle themselves from their religious connection, and assert an independent existence. And not only does ethics establish an independent existence, but, from the position of a subordinate, it assumes that of a superior, and in turn criticises and condemns its old-time mistress. There is nothing more striking or significant of the change that has come over the world than the fact that, whereas in past times all questions of ethics were brought before the bar of religion, nowadays all views of religion seek a certificate of worth at the court of morals. It is pretty certain that a feeling of moral disgust had far more to do with banishing the belief in hell fire from educated society than the fact that its existence had not been proven. The majority of believers neither accept their creed because they have had verifiable proofs of its truthfulness, nor give it up if it is shown that it is not supported by facts. But while people may give a formal assent to a belief that has no intellectual justification, once rouse their moral susceptibilities to the point of recognising its repulsive features, and its days are numbered. Earlier generations of Christians, it is certain, would have stood aghast at the sight of clergymen founding their acceptance or rejection of certain forms of Christianity on the grounds of their morality or immorality. To them it would have been enough that it was "real religion," and, if that differed from people's ideas of right and wrong, so much the worse for their ideas.

Not that the change is even now quite complete. Comparatively, the number of writers on ethics who are strong enough to altogether exclude religion from their works are few; the majority still seek to effect a compromise between the two, even while demonstrating the uselessness, if not the danger, of the association. Yet in this matter there is surely no room for compromise. Morality either is or is not independent, in its essential nature, of religion; there does not seem to me to be any half-course possible; and those who believe that it is should surely emphasize their belief by insisting that a sound code of ethics can be built up only on a foundation of scientific fact, and not upon man's yearnings or beliefs concerning some future state of existence.

Historically the identification of morals with, or even the control of morals by, religion has always been productive of disastrous results. There is not a single period from the earliest times until to-day, or a state of society from the most savage to the most civilised, where religious interference in matters of ethics has not made for evil. Individually it has made for both a narrowing and an exaggeration of character. Not only has it branded as grave crimes offences of a trivial or doubtful nature and passed over in silence evils that might well have called down the severest condemnation, thus distorting and confusing man's sense of right and wrong, but, by the exclusive spirit it has fostered, has always so contracted the range of human sympathy as to act as a constant check on that enlargement of character which is the real guarantee of permanent progress.

And, socially, it has fostered a type of mind that has been far from desirable. Francis Galton has pointed out clearly enough that the characteristic feature of the religiously moral man is emotional instability. He is liable to variations from extreme vice to extreme virtue—that is, if one is warranted in giving the name "virtuous" to a character that can only be restrained from rushing in an opposite direction by a burst of emotional extravagance. One need only study the development of such bodies as the Salvation Army or the different evangelical movements that spring up from time to time, note the extravagance of asceticism one moment, and the reaction in the shape of "backsliders" the next, to find ample justification of Galton's generalisation. On a general scale we see this type of mind expressing itself in frenzied outbursts that are as useless as they are impermanent; shrieking for war with France at the same time that it advocates the cessation of war altogether, or clamoring for legislation against this or that evil without ever trying to determine whether the evil to be removed is a cause of social disease or merely a symptom of its presence; always selling itself to the passion of the moment, drowning all rational advice by the noise of its own hysterical bellowings; and impotent to understand the public mind, and equally incapable of guiding its decisions. And when

one adds to the type of character that religion tends to breed, the absolute misdirection of human energies, has been guilty of in the shape of witch-burning, Jew-baiting, heresy-hunting, and persecution generally, I do not think it can be seriously questioned that whatever good religion may possibly have conferred on the world has been more than counterbalanced by the evil it has certainly inflicted.

That people usually clothe their moral aspirations or beliefs in religious forms need not surprise us. It would be surprising were it otherwise, and the phenomenon admits of an easy explanation. Every society, like every individual, can only exist in virtue of the possession of certain fundamental instincts. These instincts may be expressed in various ways, as the struggle for existence may show itself here as a contest of physical strength, or there as a contest for commercial supremacy, but, however disguised they may be, they are ever present. But superimposed upon these instincts are a number of beliefs, held more or less firmly, with the result that these fundamental social instincts are expressed more often in terms of acquired beliefs than in terms of their own organic character.

Everyone feels the necessity of living, and everyone finds it necessary to follow substantially the same methods of perpetuating their existence. We may wander a little off the main track, but there is a strict limit set to our deviations, and nature inflicts dire penalties for any wandering "out of bounds." We are all fed with the same foods and killed by the same poisons, no matter what our speculative opinions may be. But while, fundamentally, we must all follow the same rules of life, we do not express the reasons for our so doing in an identical manner. It is thus that the ancient Roman clothed his conception of duty in the form of loyalty to the State, the modern Christian in the form of belief in God, and the follower of Kant in the form of submission to some abstract moral law.

The scientific student goes beyond these superficial statements, and, with the evolutionary process present in his mind, points out that the underlying reason for fundamental moral actions is that without them social existence would be altogether impossible. A feeling of obligation towards others is as much a necessity of social existence as respiration is of individual existence. Just as, in describing physiological laws, we are laying down the conditions of individual life, so in formulating moral laws we are indicating the conditions of social life. Whether a man clothe these social instincts in religious, a patriotic, or a scientific form is purely a question of culture; time, place, and education may determine this much, but no education, however much it may pervert, can ever destroy our social or moral instincts, for the reason that they are, in their essence, the generalised statement of those conditions under which human life is possible and profitable. A political revolution does not destroy society, it only changes its form; and a religious revolution, a change of opinion that will lead to people regarding religion as useless and dangerous, cannot destroy morals; it can only change the form of their expression, or create a different estimate of the value of particular qualities; and I, for one, am convinced that such a change can only make for the improvement all round.

Robert Owen and the Christians.

It fell to my lot to lecture on the life of Robert Owen on May 14, his birthday, and, by way of preparation, I examined several volumes of his propagandist journal, the *New Moral World*. I was struck by the very considerable amount of space devoted to theological controversy. In theory and on paper Owen's Socialism simply ignored the various forms of religion which hitherto been entertained. Now and then, in his mild attempts were made to represent Owen's "Rational Religion" as a resurrection of the pure unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ. By that I meant that Socialism retained the altruistic doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount, and Paul's Praise of Charity, and threw all the theology away. But the orthodox people were quick to detect and resent this. When Owen went to Leicester in 1838 his followers

advertised his forthcoming lectures by placards headed "Revival of Practical Christianity," and a Christian gentleman strongly censured Owen for letting his disciples thus impose upon the public. The question turned up in another guise in connection with the Scottish Socialists. When the Edinburgh converts to Owen's views applied for admission as a branch of the "Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists," they cautiously indicated their attitude in this way:—

"We regard the objects for which we seek to be associated with you as strictly of a moral and economical, and not at all of a theological, character, as involving no collision with the different religions of mankind, except in so far as these religions are opposed to the fundamental facts of our system.....In other words, by assuming the name of Rational Religionists, we do not intend to found or to form a religious sect, but only to declare that we consider the public or professed religion of this Society, in so far as it lays claim to any peculiarity, to consist in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the love and practice of goodness in all its forms."

One can see the gingerly and delicate manner in which the Edinburgh Owenites tried to effect peace between a theological system and a program of secular reform. They wanted to make out that, on the ground of social amelioration, all parties and priests could logically unite. And they gave a concrete case. "Many of the applicants," they said, "are Christians from sincere conviction. They see in the principles of the Society nothing but an attempt to reduce to practice the religion of Jesus Christ, which, unfortunately for the world, have hitherto existed in theory only." This was almost another way of suggesting that Jesus of Nazareth was the first Owenite, or that Owen was an early Christian. But, if there was any difficulty (and there was a big one) with regard to Owen's public declarations of unbelief in the orthodox creed, the good Scots got out of it by affirming that they "embraced neither Mr. Owen's religious opinions, nor those of any other man or body of men." And there was one occasion on which Owen himself made an effort to appear more or less neutral. In July, 1839, he issued an address to his "Social Missionaries"—a group which included the now venerable George Jacob Holyoake. In this address he observed: "You will no longer find it advantageous or necessary to contend with the religious prejudices of the old world.....you will best overcome the errors that have been forced into the human mind by mildly and calmly placing self-evident truths before them."

The counsel was not followed, and, in spite of the ingenuity of the Scots, it was impossible to follow it. Owen himself made it impossible. At a meeting held in London, on August 21, 1817, Owen burst all the sluice-gates of conventionalism, and astonished the gentry and City merchants by this declamation: "My friends, I tell you that hitherto you have been prevented from even knowing what happiness really is, solely by means of the errors—gross errors—that have been combined with the fundamental notions of every religion that has hitherto been taught to men, who in consequence have been made the most inconsistent and the most miserable beings in existence. By the errors of these systems, man has been made a weak imbecile animal, a furious bigot and fanatic, or a miserable hypocrite." Nothing could be plainer. Nor could the Scots wriggle out of the dilemma by asserting that they accepted Owen's social system, and not his anti-theological opinions. The two elements were bound up together. Owen said over and over again that his Community System was the embodiment of his Rational Religion; he was the founder of both; he founded both because all previous religions had failed to regenerate the world. Of course, the priests saw the point with no keener insight. When heresy is in question there is everywhere the clergy challenged the Owenites. The stupid man, Brindley, who went up and down the land abusing the reformers, was chiefly aided and abetted by the clergy. The principal attack made upon Owen in the House of Lords was by Bishop Philpotts, of Exeter. On the other side, the editor of the *New Moral World* freely admitted articles which satirized and criticized the current religion. Just to take a random example: I open the journal for February 1, 1840, and find a paper significantly headed "A People without a Religion." It gives an account of a Dutch missionary's conversa-

tions with certain natives of the Arru Islands in Malaysia. The missionary and the Arafuras had a conference on theology, and the missionary endeavored to explain the existence and providence of God. Where, asked one of the natives, did this all-ruling Being live? Everywhere, the Dutchman replied. The Arafura mused awhile and said: "Then this God is certainly in your arrack, for I never feel happier than when I have drunk plenty of it." Such anecdotes are quoted with evident appreciation by the writer in the *New Moral World*, and he emphasizes the fact that those untheological natives live in mutual peace without the stimulus of Heaven or Hell. As I said, this is quite a random example. Continually, one finds the Socialist propagandists running counter to the popular religion on problems of poverty, marriage, free-will, etc. The Bible is not directly attacked, but it is never appealed to as an authority, and its admirers are the butt of constant sarcasm.

I refer to these experiences of the Owenites because they have a bearing upon the policy of social reformers of the present generation. It is not possible to be neutral towards theology. We must either declare for or against it. If we are sceptics, we must in some way or other display our scepticism, or else be in danger of never-ending suspicion and recrimination. The secular view of life cannot be reconciled with the supernatural. A man cannot split his soul in halves. He cannot devote part of his convictions to God, and another part to a scheme of life which excludes God. If a man is a sincere Theist, he cannot make God wait in an ante-room while he and his friends solve social problems. If God is effectively our parent and ruler and friend, he must inspire and direct all our politics, all our education, all our ethics. But if we can dispense with God in the temperance question, or the housing-of-the-poor question, we can dispense with him in all departments of life and thought. In any case, each man who takes part in public reforms ought to make his position clear. He ought to say whether or not he believes in God and depends on God. I recognise that social reformers who happen to be Atheists or Agnostics need not always be making onslaughts on the Bible or theology, and they need not do so often. But, from time to time, in some mode or other, every Rationalist worker for social progress is bound to deny his connection with supernatural religion. He ought to do that as a man of honor. He ought also to do it if he wishes to succeed.

F. J. GOULD.

An "All-Fools' " Act of Parliament.

It is not often a nation is provided with the spectacle of a First of April practical joke played by a Government on a large, influential, and respectable body of its most ardent supporters; yet that is what we beheld on last All-Fools' Day. Our readers will remember that at the end of the last session of Parliament the Government carried through Mr. Perks's measure for the attendance of registrars at marriages celebrated in Nonconformist buildings registered for religious worship. The object of the Bill is to provide persons who shall be in Nonconformist chapels in the same legal position in regard to the duties of registering marriages, and the custody of the marriage register books, as the vicars of Anglican Churches. It requires what it calls an "authorised person" to be appointed by the trustees or governors of Nonconformist registered buildings, and these trustees or governors have to send a certificate containing the name and address of this person to the Registrar-General, and the Superintendent-Registrar of the district in which the building stands.

For some reason, only to be guessed at, the Roman Catholic clergy were dissatisfied with this, and the representative of the Catholic Church, Mr. A. O'Connor, repudiated any parallel between his Church and Nonconformity, and in its name rejected the word "Nonconformist" altogether. And, after declaring that the wrongs of his Church require a new Disabilities Bill, he introduced an amendment providing that "For the purposes of the Act, as applied to Roman Catholic registered buildings, the word 'trustee,' or 'governing body,' shall include the bishop or vicar-general of the diocese." The obvious intention of this is to take the whole matter out of the

hands of the laymen, whose money supports the chapels, out of the hands of the owners of private chapels, and of the monks, friars, nuns, sisters of charity, and other religious bodies whose chapels are also used for public worship, and put the appointment in the hands of the bishop, without whose official signature no "authorised person," or registrar, will be legally appointed. The Government accepted the amendment, and it was carried *nem con.* Whether it then struck it to make it operative on the First of April, or adopted that day for other reasons, the fixing that date put emphasis on the acceptance of this provision.

The "authorised person" is to be appointed by the bishop or the vicar-general "of the diocese." It is strange that no one may be credited with remembering that there are dioceses and dioceses; yet no fact is more open. The question is, What dioceses can be legislated for, or be mentioned, in an Act of Parliament? Undoubtedly it will be claimed that the Roman Catholic bishops of their dioceses will be empowered by the Act; but, unfortunately for the Roman Catholic Church, the law of this country has a very great deal to say on the matter of Roman Catholic dioceses. The last Act of Parliament dealing with the question, the Act of 1871, which repealed the "Ecclesiastical Titles Act" of 1851, most explicitly declares that "no ecclesiastical title or dignity derived from any city, town, place, or territory within this realm can be validly created, nor can any pre-eminence or coercive power be conferred otherwise than under the authority, and by the favor of, Her Majesty, and according to the laws of this realm"; and that nothing in it "shall be deemed in any way to authorise or sanction the conferring of any rank, title, authority, or jurisdiction on, or over, any subject of this realm by any person or persons in or out of this realm other than the Sovereign thereof." This should be sufficient to settle the question, and to prove that neither Roman Catholic bishops, nor their vicars-general, can act under this innocent little clause. But English law is made to be disputed, and no one will dream that the plain language of this Act will be accepted by those who have such great interests to reap from the cleft in the English law to be started by the wedge of this modest little section. Here is an Act which repeals an Act; the whole matter is, therefore, ended in the popular estimation, notwithstanding its Delphic character.

But, again, it is unfortunate for the Roman Church of to-day, in England, that her existence here is declared illegal, her titles treasonable, and her dioceses fictions, by a long chain of Acts which are most emphatically not repealed. By the Act of August 18, 1846, 9 & 10 Vic., c. 59, it is declared illegal to bring into the country, or put in execution, any kind of document, either printed or written, from the Pope or See of Rome, and that, except for the penalties, the law shall continue the same. It, with this exception, reenacts a law of the thirteenth year of Queen Elizabeth, which says "the bringing of any bull, writing, or instrument, written or printed, containing any thing, matter, or cause whatever, or shall publish, or by any ways, or means, put in use any such document, then every such Act shall be deemed and adjudged to be high treason. The same was enacted in Acts from the Act of Provision passed by Edward III., when, by the battle of Cressy, he had destroyed the power of the French King, which the Popes had held suspended as a sword of Damocles over this country—on to those with which Henry VIII. and Edward VI. finally broke from the See of Rome.

With all these laws in existence, the only bishop who can be empowered by an Act of Parliament, and the only diocese which can be recognised in one, is the diocese and the bishop of the Established Church; for, without having obtained bulls, briefs, rescripts, letters, apostolical, or some writings or instruments, printed or written, as the Act puts it, from the Pope or See of Rome, Roman Catholic bishops would have no authority in their Church, or be even in existence as bishops; therefore, from the First of April—from last All Fools' Day—the bishops of the Protestant Established Church will be *ex-officio* trustees and governors of the Roman Catholic chapels in their dioceses, and no authorised person's appointment will be valid without their signature to the certificates sent to the Registrar-General.

This is the monstrous joke, the humorous appointment of the First of April for the commencement of the Act has given the world. But it is extremely doubtful if this is by any means the only April fooling in the Act. The word "lawful" in the marriage vow has been omitted for Roman Catholics at their suggestion. Marriages with deceased wives' sisters, of uncles and nieces, of other near relatives, and left-handed marriages with servants, are permitted by dispensation in the Roman Church, and recognised by its priests. No sane man will suppose the omission of the word "lawful" will make them legal; but it will serve, by allowing the persons who contract them to go through the ordinary ceremony, to tranquillise them and create the impression that they are legally married.

The only way this error can be rectified is to repeal the clause altogether, for it is impossible to give power to men whose existence as officials has been declared illegal, null and void, and even treasonable, by a dozen Acts of Parliament. Most emphatically the word "lawful" should be restored to the marriage vow; and the nation will be spared the spectacle of practical jokes, calculated to produce unimaginable consequences.

It will be well for Nonconformist sects to examine the Act to see no All Fools' joke has been played on them, and that, instead of being emancipated from an indignity, they have put the first link of the State bonds on their limbs. The trustees of chapels under this Act have to appoint a State official, and another State ruler. The Registrar-General will have the power and duty to examine the structure of the chapels, and to forbid marriages in them at his discretion; moreover, scales of charges are fixed by Parliament for the performance of religious observances, and for certain uses of property of the chapel.

The Jews and Quakers have also an exemption from being provided with the printed instructions which have to be given by the Registrar to the parties of a marriage in other religious bodies—a very equivocal privilege, and one most fit to come into operation on the First of April. They are excluded from the Act altogether, but how far that is wise must be left for them to determine. Perhaps, as the Act stands, it is wise.

GEORGE PORTER.

Acid Drops.

"DAMN him at a venture," said Charles Lamb to an old lady who pestered him with fulsome praises of her favorite minister. What the great humorist said under provocation sums up the general policy of clericals in regard to what they dislike and want to have suppressed. Some time ago Father Dooley, at West Ham, denounced the *Freethinker* with great virulence, and afterwards confessed that he had not seen it. Later the Bishop of Wakefield denounced Mr. Piner's novel play without knowing any more about it than he had learned from the newspapers. Now we have Cardinal Logue denouncing Mr. Yeats's play merely on the strength of what is said about it in a hostile pamphlet by Mr. O'Donnell. What a striking similarity there is in the mental and moral features of these men of God.

Mrs. Frederick Ryan contributes an excellent letter to the *Irish Daily Independent* on this subject. "Let us," he says, "get out of this stifling atmosphere of restriction and insincere bigotry. Let us claim for Mr. Yeats—if he will not claim it for himself—his full right, in common with every other man's, to the free expression of his thought, even if fifty newspaper theologians denounced him, or a hundred 'Catholic divines' howled their anathemas."

The *Daily Nation* wants to know what are the "high words" of Mr. Yeats's play. "Will it teach us," asks the *Nation*, "love and trust God, to reverence God's Mother, to set store on religion, to practise any Christian virtue?" Such is our cynicism amongst Irish Catholics! What on earth has the play to do with God, or with that still greater personage, God's Mother? Who wants pulpits on the stage or sermons over where?

The Battersea Vestry has resolved to boycott the *Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* on account of their Sunday issues. We expected to see both papers stopped in consequence, but they came out as usual on the next Lord's Day.

The deputation that waited on the Home Secretary to his assistance in putting down Sunday newspapers in London

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Mr. John Burns and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. Bad causes make us acquainted with strange companions, John.

The deputation suggested that local bye-laws might be passed and sanctioned prohibiting the sale of papers after ten a.m. on Sundays. What ideas of liberty these people possess! John Burns, at any rate, ought to know better. Thousands of hard-worked people go to rest very tired on Saturday night, and take advantage of Sunday morning to linger longer than usual in bed. Why should they get up to oblige these bigots, or else go without their Sunday paper altogether?

The fact is that no fresh legislation is necessary, even from the point of view of the bigots themselves. The sale of Sunday papers is already illegal under the famous Act of Charles II. Here and there attempts have been made to enforce it against newsboys and newsvendors, but freedom and common sense have always triumphed in the end.

Sir Matthew White Ridley told the deputation that he sympathised with them, but he held out no hope of legislation in favor of their object. One of his remarks was perfectly foolish. He said that there was "no public demand for such newspapers." If that were true, "such newspapers" would not be published; moreover, the anxiety of the deputation would be quite ridiculous. The clericals know there is a demand for such newspapers. That is why they are so enraged.

Mr. Hughes has been displaying his usual accuracy. Speaking at a meeting of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, he made a statement about the *Telegraph* which led to a prompt and stern letter from that journal's solicitors. Of course Mr. Hughes climbed down immediately. His "informants" had made "a groundless statement." Yes, and they did the same thing with regard to the Atheist Shoemaker, only there were no solicitors, representing a wealthy client, to make the reverend gentleman climb down on that occasion. He had to be pulled down.

A pious gentleman called William Simpson writes a long letter to the *Consent Chronicle*, in which he tries to show that Mr. Holyoake fully vindicated the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's story of the Atheist Shoemaker. This pious gentleman, however, studiously conceals the fact that, after Mr. Holyoake's so-called investigation, Mr. Foote discovered the alleged Atheist Shoemaker's family at Northampton, and was able on their authority to deny nine-tenths of Mr. Hughes's narrative, including the whole fable of the Shoemaker's important conversion—which, of course, was the only feature of the story. Since then Mr. Hughes has withdrawn the book from circulation. But as his friends are now endeavoring to bolster up its accuracy, it may soon become Mr. Foote's duty to print a new edition of the exposure, of which considerably more than a hundred thousand copies were circulated some years ago.

"Go it with all your might; do your very best; remember it is for the glory of God." Thus, according to the *Commericia World*, wrote an assistant superintendent to a newly-appointed agent of the Salvation Army Life Assurance Society. Comment would only spoil it.

The great Spurgeon's brother, recently deceased, has left nearly £40,000 behind him. We suppose he is now doing his level best to cap the feat of the camel who crept through the needle's eye.

How they love one another! "To-day," says a writer in *Head and Heart*, "we find the Christian Churches in the South rejecting any person or persons with African blood in their veins, no matter how little."

The Rev. Arthur Symonds, of St. Thomas's Rectory, Stockport, is honorary secretary to the Churchman's Liberation League. It seems to be the idea of some clergymen that the Church ought to be disestablished. Yes, but it should also be disendowed. What these gentlemen want is all the funds, and perfect freedom to expend them. Wouldn't they like to get it?

Princess Christian represented the Queen at the Religious Tract Society's Centenary, which was celebrated at Exeter Hall. If we were inclined to be spiteful, we should wish that the Queen and Princess Christian might have to read the Society's publications.

"Providence" was off duty, and St. John's Church, Ballinasloe, got burnt down. The damage is £30,000. Will the bill be settled by the responsible party?

The Rev. Ernest W. M. Rundell, rector of Wakerley, Stamford, has been found by the Consistory Court guilty of improper conduct. The reverend gentleman's defence was that he was trying to reclaim a person of the opposite sex.

The Rev. W. H. Bath, of Charney, near Wantage, Berks, committed suicide by cutting his throat. There is no moral, though there would have been had a Secular lecturer wielded the razor in that fashion.

"May God bless one and all" was the last prayer of Charles Curry for his family before committing suicide at 29 Thornton-hill, Wimbledon. Not an Atheist, this, Mr. Talmage.

Warrants have been issued for the arrest of some Christian Scientists in New York, in consequence of the deaths of certain of their patients, who refused medical treatment. A great deal is heard about Christian Science from orthodox platforms, but reducing it to practice is becoming almost a hanging matter, and that too in Christian countries.

The Rev. Dr. Linklater, preaching at St. Michael's, Highgate, made a powerful appeal on behalf of the Bishop of London's fund. He begged the congregation to give according to their wealth, and appealed to them not to put "miserable sixpences" in the collection-box. One member of the congregation was a little boy, who had a penny to put in for himself and sixpence for his mother, who was unable to attend. Naturally he dropped his penny into the box, and took the "miserable sixpence" home again to his mother.

Sudden Death in a Secular Hall—no, no, we beg pardon, in a Baptist chapel. On Sunday morning the Rev. Henry Lewis dropped dead in the Baptist chapel at Chelmsford. After the body was removed the congregation held a thanksgiving service. Stop, stop! We are getting frightfully mixed over this affair. We mean a prayer meeting.

Sarah Grand, the novelist, as we mentioned some time ago, has become a sort of Theosophist. It doesn't matter very much, but many unimportant things get printed. We hear that the lady's new story will bear the title of *Petticoats*. Perhaps she will follow it up with another entitled *Trousers*.

"Byways of Belief" are being worked by the *Daily News* for "Home Reading" on Saturdays. The reporter's last excursion was amongst the Peculiar People. "They are all very simple, but they are good and sincere, and they act up to their religion at all costs." That seems to be the general view he takes of this little community. We presume we must take it that the generality of Christians are neither "simple" nor "good and sincere."

We were not aware that it is possible to libel a whole community. Morally it is possible, of course, but we did not know it was so legally. Bishop Tugwell, however, is being prosecuted by the Europeans at Lagos for declaring that seventy-five per cent. of the deaths among Europeans on the West Coast of Africa are due to drunkenness. The Bishop has been committed for trial and admitted to bail. It may be unfortunate for him that he cannot subpoena the dead as witnesses.

"Carlyle Secundus" writes as follows in *Daylight* (Norwich):—"From what I can gather there is quite a fever just now for getting new reading matter into the Free Library. In addition to the Secularists, the Socialists, and the Anti-Vivisectionists, the Roman Catholics are anxious to have some of their journals more widely read. This has set up the backs of the Nonconformists, who, from what I can gather, would just as soon see Freethought literature in the Free Library as Roman Catholic. In fact, in certain quarters it is broadly stated by members of the Committee that the Roman Catholic journals shall not be admitted unless the same privilege is given to the Freethinkers. There is likely to be a lively meeting when next the Free Library Committee are called together. I shall have to keep my eye on these gentlemen for a few weeks."

The great little John Kensit has a whole page advertisement in the *Rock*. It is headed "The Kensit Crusade: Earnest Appeal for £10,000 Annually." Honest John wants that sum to send forth a hundred young men, selected by himself, as Wickliffe Preachers against the High Church. "At first sight," he allows, "this may seem a large sum," but it looks a mere trifle when gazed at all round. "We leave the matter in the Lord's hands," he says; but he doesn't mean that too literally, for he states that three gentlemen and two ladies have promised £100 each providing ninety-five others will do the same. Honest John has been asking for that £10,000 for a long while, and, judging by this *Rock* advertisement, he hasn't made much real progress.

In Kensal New Town last Sunday afternoon the Roman Catholics saw fit to turn the district into a church for their amusement, and hold a perambulating service for a couple of hours—a proceeding which is unlawful, and renders the seven or eight clergymen who took part in it liable to a fine of a hundred pounds each.

If it is necessary for Romanists to turn their churches out into the street and exhibit their idols, so to speak, gratis, let

them by all means ; it is only the same procedure as that of the Salvation Army ; but let them break the law at their own risk, or agitate for liberty, and wait.

The procession showed some significant indications. It was poor, frowsy, and in wretched taste. The idols were absurd, and one utterly comic. The priests wore soiled linen, and the incense pot before the idol of Jesus was filthy dirty. There was altogether an absence of the reality one sees in Continental Catholicism ; some of the acolytes were not far from giggling, some of the virgins were nearer seventy than seventeen. Some of the officiants wore the violet cassocks of prelates, and the little boys had huge white badges with a spot in the centre, like shooting targets, pinned to their surplices ; which were decidedly more humorous than impressive.

The people bore the hustling of the police and watched the procession quietly, but absolutely without sympathy, and with just that amount of awakening interest which a very little would turn to violent opposition. Were a Kensitite fanatic to stir up a "No Popery" excitement, there would be outrages and martyrdoms, which the utterly inadequate handful of Irish policemen on duty would be powerless to prevent.

Mr. Joseph Collinson, on behalf of the Humane Diet Committee of the Humanitarian League, sends us a copy of a circular protest against the cruelty of the Jewish system of slaughtering animals. That system would not be permitted in ordinary slaughter-houses, but it is tolerated in deference to the "religious susceptibilities" of the chosen people, who are supposed to eat and drink according to the express instructions of Jehovah.

Mr. Oswald Simon, the *Chronicle* says, has addressed a letter to Sir John Kennaway, protesting against the expenditure of £38,000 in converting twenty-eight more or less mythical Jews to a doubtful Christianity. It is well known that the Jews who do allow themselves to be converted are always obscure and generally needy. Probably this explains the expensiveness of their conversion.

The Rev. Thomas Waugh, secretary of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, had the honesty to recant his statement that working-class Secularists were the worst ill-users of their offspring. A more infamous falsehood was never uttered ; and it is ridiculous as well as infamous, for Secularists are, if anything, rather prone to be over-indulgent to children. However, as we said, Mr. Waugh took his words back, so we need not labor the matter. What we wish to say is, that this reverend gentleman has just been preaching at Watford and girding at unbelievers. Mr. Waugh told the women not to listen when Christ was ridiculed, as "Christ had been their greatest champion and only emancipator and friend." This sort of thing is easily uttered, but is not so easily substantiated. We invite Mr. Waugh to indicate what sayings attributed to Jesus constitute him the "greatest champion" of women, or their "emancipator," or even their "friend." Gush is cheap enough ; let us have texts. Give us the passages, Mr. Waugh, or confess that you cannot—not like a Christian, but like a man.

"Don't marry a young woman because she is pious. Get one with good blood and common sense." So says Bishop Fowler, of America. And we believe him this time. He knows 'em.

The household of faith was never remarkable for its unanimity. According to Dr. Washington Gladden, who writes in the *Free Church Chronicle*, there are no less than 143 distinct Christian denominations in the United States. There are twelve kinds of Presbyterians, thirteen varieties of Baptists, sixteen stripes of Lutherans, and seventeen sorts of Methodists. Query—Is there a Christian amongst the lot ?

A simple-minded curate once said that if the Bible had stated that Jonah swallowed the whale, instead of the whale swallowing Jonah, he would have believed it. A still greater power of faith is manifested by the editor of the *Iowa State Register*. This gentleman is angry with the more knowing men of God, who see what's what, and are giving up the infallibility of the Bible. "We believe," he says, "that God could create a whale to swallow the earth if necessary." No doubt that whale would swallow the earth, if God made it to do so ; but we fancy it would feel a lump in its throat as it closed over the editor of the *Iowa State Register*.

When you think of it, though, there is something fascinating in that whale created to swallow the world. Imagination carries the joke forward. That whale must have an ocean to swim in, and there must be a world big enough to hold that ocean. Then there must be another whale big enough to swallow that world, and another ocean for that whale to swim in, and another world big enough to

hold it. And then another whale— Good God ! Stop ! stop ! There are madmen enough already.

Jesus Christ talking Lowland Scotch is certainly a curiosity. The New Testament has been translated into that lingo by the Rev. W. W. Smith, and here is a sample of it, taken from the Parable of the Sower in the thirteenth of Matthew :—

- "3. And He spak mony things till them in parables ; and quo' He : Tak tent ; the sawer gaed oot to saw.
- "4. And in his sawin' a neifu' was miscuisten on the fit road, and eaten up wi' the birdies.
- "5. Some fell on the stanerie bits, whaur the yird was jimp ; and it braidit bonnie, for the mool was thin.
- "6. And whan the sun raise heigh, it brist'l up ; and, for that it had nae rute, it dwined awa'."

We like to hear of a thorough-going Christian, and Evangelist William F. Miller, of the Salvation Army, Williamsburg (U.S.A.), seems to answer the description. He has been committed to gaol for failing to provide a bond of over two hundred dollars as a guarantee that he would pay his wife four dollars a week for her support. This persecuted saint told the magistrate that the Lord had always provided for him, and that he expected the Lord to do the same for his family.

"Mr. Stead and the Czar" was a headline in some of Tuesday's papers. This is a come down. It used to be Mr. Stead and God Almighty.

Mr. Stead was allowed to complain to the Czar of the Russian press censorship, and the Lord of all the Russias laughed good-humoredly at Mr. Stead's own *War Against War* being put under the ban. It was all very pleasant, of course, but Mr. Stead's protest will affect the Russian press censorship as much as the proverbial flea disturbs the equanimity of the elephant. The fact is, the Czar himself is only a link in the iron chain of Russian despotism.

One of our lecturers happened to be at a social function the other evening, and, as sometimes happens to be the case, he found himself conversing with two charming ladies. Said one of them to him : "Are you really a Secularist ?" "Of course, I am," he replied, with a deprecatory frown at not being taken seriously. "Well, I am surprised to find you, an educated man, say so." Then, after a slight pause, the fair inquirer added : "I say, you must really tell me what Secularism is !"

When a pious Catholic pays ten shillings for a small phial of "holy" water, he pays one halfpenny for the phial, and nine shillings and elevenpence halfpenny for the knowledge of successful imposition. Knowledge is wealth.

The number of fragments of the crown of thorns worn by Our Savior, shown in Catholic churches abroad, make one suspect that it was originally about the size of Kennington Oval.

The majority of church-goers are women. Would the case be reversed if ladies did the preaching ?

Canon Wilberforce, at the great St. James's Hall demonstration against Vivisection, said that "for his part he would rather pass into a Nirvana with some of the dogs he had known than into a narrow, selfish heaven with some so-called religionists he had met." This seems to show that the reverend gentleman is progressing. No doubt he will some day extend to "infidels" the consideration he now shows to dogs. Once upon a time he classed "infidels" with drunkards and debauchees.

Hundreds of people were injured during the anti-Jewish riots at Nicolaieff. Fifteen Jews were killed, including the wife of a Hebrew tobacconist, who was beaten to death in her own house. Of course the shops and stores of the Jews were looted. That is always a feature of these outbursts.

Tse Ethics of Christianity.

There is no counting with certainty on the justice of men who are capable of fashioning and worshipping an unjust divinity, nor on their humanity so long as they incorporate inhuman motives in their most sacred dogma, nor on their reasonableness while they rigorously decline to accept reason as a test of truth.—*Right Hon. John Morley, M.P.*

Even pugilists can quote Scripture with advantage. Did not Jesus say : "It his eye ! Be not afraid."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

May 21, N.S.S. Conference, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

H. PERCY WARD.—Much obliged. Pray continue.

W. B. THOMPSON.—Pleased to hear that the Chatham Branch will be represented by a delegate at the Conference. It is good to see the local press taking such notice of your proceedings. Thanks for your good wishes.

MR. GEORGE ANDERSON writes that he is receiving responses to his appeal on behalf of Mr. Charles Watts, and that he will ask us to publish the list of donors in our next issue.

G. BRADY sends us 5s. for the Miss Emma Bradlaugh Fund, which he is glad to see is "being fairly well supported."

W. COX.—Always pleased to hear from you, though we don't publish weekly reports of meetings. Of course we are always ready to give a "Sugar Plum" to anything a little exceptional.

R. P. EDWARDS appeals to Freethinkers to support the Secular platform on Hampstead Heath. Christian Evidence opposition is organised and reckless there. A fight was forced last Sunday, and several Freethinkers were hurt.

T. WILMOT.—See paragraph.

H. R. SPARKES hopes the local Freethinkers will support the Secular open-air platform at Stratford-grove on Sunday evenings at 7 o'clock. He complains that the Christian Evidence people wait until the Secular meeting opens, and then pitch their platform as near as possible, for a very obvious purpose.

W. S. CLOGG.—Too late for this week. In our next.

A. E. ELDERKIN, Watford, wishes to hear from friends who are willing to co-operate in forming a local Secular Society.

R. TURNBULL.—Received.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Mr. Watts will write you. Thanks for copy of the Huddersfield Branch's balance-sheet. It is healthy, if not gigantic. We hope local conditions will grow more favorable.

W. W. STRICKLAND.—Thanks for the cuttings, some of which may be utilised in an early number.

H. RICHARDSON, 40 Great Eastern-road, Stratford, E., will be happy to distribute in West Ham any Freethought papers, pamphlets, or books that may be sent to him for the purpose.

A. J. MARRIOTT, in reference to "G. S.'s" letter, states that he resigned from the Fabian Society about five years ago.

A. MILLAR.—It is quite beyond our powers to reconcile the utterances of those two men of God. God himself couldn't do it.

R. CARROLL sends £2 to the Secretary (Miss Vance) for the funds of the Secular Society, Limited, the same being a balance of the funds of the Ulster Branch of the N.S.S.

MISS EMMA BRADLAUGH FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—R. Carroll, 5s.; Mrs. Mann, 2s. 6d.; T. Wombwell, 1s.; The Carlisle and District Secular Society, 12s. 6d.

W. W. (Newcastle).—We shall print your interesting letter, without your name and address, in next week's *Freethinker*. It encourages the propagandists of our cause to learn how their orthodoxy are affected, and how they are the means of setting orthodox persons thinking in a Secular direction. Of course we will not publish your letter if you desire us not to, but danger will be avoided by concealing your identity.

A. JACKSON.—You will find what you want in Mr. Foote's *Book of God*, which clearly states the positions of the Higher Criticism.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Torch of Reason—Secular Thought—El Libre Penamiento—Hackney Gazette—Crescent—Brann's Iconoclast—Independent Pulpit—New York Truthseeker—People's News—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker—Two Worlds—Man Times—Ethical World—Freethought Magazine—Isle of Grass Blade—Awakener of India.

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

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

THE National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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.

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.

THERE was an excellent audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Czar's Love Feast" was much applauded. Mr. Thurlow acted as chairman. This evening (May 21) the Athenæum Hall will be closed on account of the Birmingham Conference and the holidays, but it will reopen on the following Sunday (May 28), when Mr. Foote will lecture on "Robespierre and his Religion."

The Birmingham friends have well advertised the public meeting this evening (May 21) at the Town Hall in connection with the National Secular Society's Annual Conference. Handbills and big posters are informing the Birmingham people of the treat in store for them. The doors open at 5.45, and at 6 an Organ Recital will begin, Mr. C. W. Perkins, the city organist, being the performer. Solos will be rendered by Mr. J. Matthews (basso), and Mr. A. Scrimshire will give one of his famous Shakespearean Readings. At 7 the chair will be taken by Mr. G. W. Foote, who will be supported by Messrs. C. Watts, C. Cohen, R. Forder, H. Percy Ward, and other speakers.

As announced in last week's *Freethinker*, an excursion to Stratford-on-Avon has been organised for Whit-Monday. Full particulars will be given at the Conference. Those who want to make sure of a ticket should apply at once to Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street.

Delegates, upon their arrival in Birmingham, are requested to proceed to the Victoria Hotel, John Bright-street, which is close to the North-Western and Midland Railway Station, where they will find the reception committee in readiness to procure hotel accommodation for those who have not previously made arrangements.

The last number to hand of our ever-welcome exchange, the New York *Truthseeker*—namely, the issue dated May 6—contains some clever "Observations" by George Macdonald. Our contemporary does us the honor of reproducing a column and a-half on Omar Khayyam from the *Freethinker*. We note that Lucy N. Colman draws attention to the way in which she and others raised money for Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*, the paper being paid for and its editor presented with a purse of thirty thousand dollars to keep it going. She suggests that something of the kind ought to be done for the *Truthseeker*, which is warring against mental slavery as the *Liberator* warred against negro slavery.

Colonel Ingersoll lectured at Carlinville, Illinois, on "The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child," and the manager of the Opera House took the liberty of walking off—or rather running off—with the proceeds. He was evidently waiting for a big "gate" before levanting—which proves Colonel Ingersoll's great popularity. We hope, however, that this kind of proof will not occur again. Once is sufficient as a demonstration.

The *Free Sunday Advocate* for May, the organ of the National Sunday League, contains a sympathetic reference to the death of our late-lamented colleague, Mr. Edward Truelove. After referring to his hard work on behalf of the National Sunday League, the notice concludes: "He was a man whom many, although not sharing all his opinions and views, respected as being thoroughly sincere and earnest in all he advocated, and against whom motives of self-interest could never be imputed, because he sacrificed both time and money for any cause which he believed to be deserving of such support as he could give."

The May issue of the *Bookseller* also contains an obituary notice of Mr. Truelove, in which he is referred to as this "well-known democratic publisher."

Colonel Ingersoll speaks out against the lynching of negroes by American whites. We take the following from the *New York Journal*:—"What do I think of the lynchings in Georgia? I suppose these outrages—these frightful crimes—make the same impression on my mind that they do on the minds of all civilized people. I know of no words strong enough, bitter enough, to express my indignation and horror. These horrors were perpetrated in the name of justice. The savages who did these things belong to the superior race. They are citizens of the Great Republic. And yet it does not seem possible that such fiends are human beings. They are a disgrace to our century and the human race. Let me say that what I have said is flattery compared with what I feel. When I think of the other lynching—of the poor man mutilated and hanged without the slightest evidence, of the negro who said that these murders would be avenged, and who was brutally murdered for the utterance of a natural feeling—I am utterly at loss for words. Are the white people insane? Has mercy fled to beasts? Has the United States no power to

protect a citizen? A nation that cannot or will not protect its citizens in time of peace has no right to ask its citizens to protect it in time of war."

"Half a hundred pages of brilliant and stimulating writing." Such is *Reynolds's* description of Ingersoll's new lecture on *The Devil*. Freethinkers ought to circulate this pamphlet amongst their orthodox friends.

Somehow or other we have overlooked the *Literary Guide* for May. It has a capital list of contents. There are articles by Charles Watts, F. J. Gould, and others, and the usual supply of up-to-date paragraphs.

The Manchester Branch has been doing good work this season. Forty-eight special lectures have been given in its hall, in addition to local efforts. Mr. Cohen had two good and appreciative audiences on Sunday morning and evening. In the afternoon he gave an open-air address in Alexandra Park. Despite a heavy shower of rain, the meeting was a great success, and had the effect of bringing new people to the hall in the evening. We are pleased to add that the Branch has enrolled several fresh members since Christmas.

Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* pamphlet seems to have suggested "Bible and Beef," which Mr. H. S. Salt uses in connection with the anti-vegetarians who appeal to Holy Writ. "Bible and Beef" is the heading of Mr. Salt's eighteenth chapter in the *Vegetarian* on "The Logic of Vegetarianism."

Mr. A. B. Moss stands for re-election on the Camberwell Vestry. He is on the Progressive list of five candidates, and will probably be returned. But it is well to make his return a certainty. The bigots are opposing him in all sorts of ways, and the Secularists should give him special support for that reason.

The *Chatham News* gives an excellent report of a lecture on Sunday Newspapers delivered in the Secular Hall by Mr. W. B. Thompson. Mr. Thompson plainly censures the attitude of Mr. John Burns.

The fifth anniversary of the Chatham Secular Sunday School was held on May 14. In spite of the wretched weather, the hall was crowded, and the rendering of an Operatic Cantata, the "Queen of the Seasons," was thoroughly enjoyed. Special thanks are due to Mr. J. Hill, the musical conductor, and to Mrs. W. B. Thompson, who made the pretty and effective dresses.

The Camberwell Branch is trying to form a Cricket, Football, and Athletic Club. Those wishing to join it should communicate with the secretary at the Secular Hall, New Church-road, or with Mr. C. Hopkins, 27 Gairloch-road, Camberwell, S.E.

Mr. T. Wilmot, the Camberwell Branch secretary, reports that good meetings are being held in Brockwell Park. The police, who are behaving with impartiality, have advised the chairman to drop asking for opposition, in consequence of the rowdiness that has ensued. The Secularists have been allotted a fixed position during the season, and the Christian Evidence people have to keep fifty yards away. But this spoils their little game of disorder, and they did not think it worth while to put in an appearance on Sunday.

Atheism and the French Revolution.

The first political demonstration of Atheism was attended by some of the excesses, the folly, the extravagances that stained the growth of Christianity. On the whole, it is a very mild story compared with the atrocities of the Jewish records or the crimes of Catholicism. The worse charge against the party of Chaumette is that they were intolerant, and the charge is deplorably true; but this charge cannot lie in the mouth of persecuting Churches.—*Right Hon. John Morley, M.P.*

One very stormy night a doctor was called in to give his opinion on the prospects of recovery of a little girl who had met with an accident. "Madam," said he to the mother, after his examination, "your daughter will not live over the night." The woman, as may be expected, was greatly affected; but her rejoinder was, to say the least, unexpected. "Oh, doctor," said she, solemnly, "what a fearful night for fleecing through the clouds."

Mrs. Billus—"Y-yes, John is at home; but I hardly think he's in a suitable frame of mind to see you." The Rev. Dr. Fourthly (making a pastoral call)—"He is in no serious trouble, I hope?" Mrs. Billus—"Why, no; but he took one of the furnace registers apart a little while ago to fix it, and he's trying to put it together again."—*Chicago Tribune.*

A Revised Book of Genesis.

CHAPTER I.

1. In the beginning Jove created the earth, and the inhabitants thereof.
2. And great was the misrule and anarchy that prevailed. And darkness brooded upon it, and the spirit of selfishness moved upon its surface.
3. And the earth was filled with the favored and the unfavored of Jove.
4. The former were called the Rich, and the latter the Poor.
5. Jove blessed the Rich, and said unto them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the Poor, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."
6. And Jove said unto the Poor: "Behold, I have placed thee under the dominion of the Rich. Therefore, be not so rash as to aspire after the rights and privileges enjoyed by the Rich."
7. And Jove saw everything that he made, and, behold, it was very good.

CHAPTER II.

1. The earth was without light. And Jove said, let the earth be enlightened by Knowledge, and there sprung up one or two men with torches to dispel the darkness.
2. And behold! along with this Knowledge there came light.
3. For it was very good.
4. But, behold, the light dazzled the sight of the rich and powerful. And they tried to extinguish this light. But it was too powerful to be extinguished.
5. The Poor also aspired to become equal to the Rich.
6. Their eyes were opened, and they became clamorous.
7. And Jove hastened to the earth.
8. And he saw the condition of the inhabitants, the gulf between Rich and Poor.
9. And he marvelled exceedingly that the Rich ever died, and that the Poor ever lived.
10. And seeing what he had done, he determined to destroy the whole earth.
11. For he was afraid of the contempt of his creatures.

MIMNERMUS.

Executive Meetings of N.S.S.

LIST OF ATTENDANCES FROM MAY, 1898, TO APRIL, 1899.
(Number of meetings summoned, 11).

President:—G. W. Foote, attended 11.

Vice-Presidents:—C. Watts, attended 5; E. Bater, 11; C. Cohen, 7; R. Forder, 4; T. Gorniot, 5; S. Hartmann, 5; *V. Roger, 3; F. Schaller, 7; H. J. Stace,—; †G. J. Warren, 3; A. Brown, 3; W. Heaford, 11; A. B. Moss, 7; E. W. Quay, 5.

Branch Delegates:—Bethnal Green (C. Quinton), attended 7; East London (M. Loafer), 10; Camberwell (T. Wilmot), 6; Newcastle (J. Neate), 10; West London (B. Munton), 8; N. W. London (†H. Brown), 7; Battersea (§R. P. Edwards), 10; Finsbury (W. Leat), 10.

* Attends Vestry meetings same evening.
† Elected in November.
‡ Elected in October.
§ Elected in March.

Changed Aspects of Unchanged Truths.

A Holy Land tourist stood before the Sea of Galilee. "Could you row me over the course that Christ walked to rejoin his disciples?" he inquired of a boatman standing by. The answer was in the affirmative. "What would be your charge?" The boatman asked a modest total equivalent of fifteen shillings in English money. An inspiration flashed across our tourist. "Ah," exclaimed he, "now I can understand why Christ walked."

How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

A Characteristic of Piety.

VERACITY, to put it mildly, was never a Christian virtue. From the inception of Christianity, mendacity has always been its faithful ally. Lying for the glory of God or creed has been indefatigably practised by the disciples of "the Truth which is in Christ," which evidently, if experience speaks for aught, is a widely different thing from the usual acceptation of the word. And it is against that dreadful nightmare of infidelity that their powers in this direction have been most severely taxed, the amount of ingenuity exercised in the manufacture of pious legends being enormous and difficult to over-estimate. In short, the song of the Churches has been, as Huxley has it: "Beloved brethren, in order that we may be spotlessly moral, before all things let us lie." But there can be no doubt that the annual output of manufactured tit-bits, palatable to the godly, is on the decrease. We have at the present day the old fabulous stock-in-trade, now and again revived by our clerical friends. It is not so long since, it is true, that the "watch" chestnut was given a new lease of life. But the fact remains that the halcyon days of Christian invention are over, and that a more critical spirit has sprung up comparatively recently, which does not encourage the floating or resurrecting of "yarns." But for those who live in the present, it may be difficult to realise to what an extent the faculty of invention was exercised amongst our pious forebears.

Whilst rummaging some old papers the other day, I had the fortune, or otherwise, to come across several copies of a Methodist organ of about fifty years ago, entitled *The Christian Miscellany*. Then the Methodists were godlier than they are now, and consequently less veracious. I turned over the pages without interest for a while, noticing in passing the persistency of the attacks on "Popery," and the reality of the Methodists' belief in a material hell. No doubt they considered "Popery" a slaughtered outright, but Roman Catholicism to-day, compared with Methodism, is on the ascending side of the see-saw; and, as for hell, the venerable old dogma is in the throes. It is enough to make our ancestors writhe in their graves. Then there were the nice little stories, such as would delight the heart of Mark Twain. Here you saw the originals of his bad little boys who go fishing on a Sunday and get drowned with mathematical precision. But when the region of unbelief was touched upon I found I had struck a new vein of humor. I became engrossed.

In "Pages for the Children" (heaven help them!) we have their spiritual needs refreshed by dramatic relations of "The Christian's and Unbeliever's Death-bed." The Christian to be conveyed heavenward is a young girl. The climax, if a little played out, is, notwithstanding, sublime. "Kiss me, mother, before I die," says she, and then expires. Then the writer recounts: "The Chariot of Israel had arrived, the saint was prepared, and she was singing the Song of Moses and the Lamb." This cannot be considered as attractive enough to at all impress the juvenile mind. Doubtless the Chariot of Israel is a subtle touch, suggesting "gee-gees" to any infant of average precocity; but most children, we surmise, would not relish the prospect of making their celestial *début* in the manner mentioned. Perhaps "Mary had a little Lamb" would be preferred by most to the solo specified, touching a more responsive chord. But, at any rate, the attempt may be pronounced decidedly feeble. Yet we cannot blame the author, poor man, for all the theologians yet have not been able to dish up a decent heaven. Mr. Foote wrote some time ago: "Religion is a mixture of brimstone and treacle, and the brimstone is the active ingredient. Heaven is generally merely 'the other place.'" Our scribe must certainly, he makes a tremendous effort to compound for it in his "brimstone" innings. We are told: "As the clergyman entered the room, the face of the infidel assumed a most savage aspect." He was evidently in the humor for testifying to the consolations of religion, for he yells: "The curse of an offended God is upon me! Hell opens its mouth to receive me! Devils are waiting to torture me! O horror! horror!" Then the inspired writer (he must have been inspired!) recounts that he winds up with the following grand final touch

of the poetic: "Hark! Did you hear that peal? The infernal spirits are mustering all the artillery of hell to give me a salute to the regions of Damnation." Then he fixes his eyes on all present with a "ghastly stare," utters an "awful groan," and, as they have it in the Play Books, (*dies*). This is prime and of the first water, and can be safely estimated to make very good Christians out of any little darlings privileged to read the same.

Then the "infidel" turns up in a gale at sea. This was only to be expected. Finishing his enemies off by water seems to have been an unamiable weakness of the Deity ever since his actions were chronicled. Why, such a partiality for water is mysterious, and clearly borders on the eccentric. But no doubt this will be satisfactorily explained hereafter. Let us read: "When the sea was peaceful, the infidel was loud and clamorous in proclaiming his infidelity"; but "when the storm came on he was on his knees crying for mercy. His voice could be heard above the elements begging the Lord to forgive his blasphemies till a heavy sea swept over the deck, and carried him and his books to the bottom." What a high degree of piety must have been necessary to have penned the above! Still, we will do well to remember that Christianity is not a religion of fear. Oh dear no!

Of course the names of those terrifiers of the godly, such as Voltaire and Paine, turn up from time to time to serve as bogies to scare the children, old and young, and give them unsweet dreams. There is naturally a complete copy of Voltaire's recantation, written and signed by himself; but, curiously enough, in another place there is the story of the priest who approached him in his last moments, and asked him if he believed in the Divinity of Christ. The dying man turns wearily round, and says, "Let me die in peace," and immediately expires. Of course, to the honest worldling, one story must go by the board. Voltaire would never have been asked such a question had he recanted. But then the honest worldling has not the eyes of Faith. Had he these remarkable optics, the contradictions would dwell in unity. This is one of the many benefits to be derived from spiritual religion.

It is the old story of "too many cooks." There is an anecdote of a Highland who, having purchased a kilt, and finding it a trifle too long, notified in the presence of his wife and three daughters that he required the length reducing. Unfortunately, his orders were obeyed by each of them, working separately, with disastrous results. In this case the fact was that Voltaire was dead. On that all were agreed. For him to die in a rational manner would never do. On that all were agreed. But on the best way to finish him off, so as to serve Christian ends, opinions were divided. The consequence is that we have a diversity of accounts, which render negative criticism superfluous by effectively cancelling one another out, in the manner of those little sums which were given us in our school days.

There is a side-splitter on the same subject which is hard to beat. A gentleman in London required a nurse for a dying friend. He called upon one, and her first query was: "Is your friend a Christian?" "Yes; but why do you ask that?" "Sir," replied she, "I was the nurse who attended Voltaire in his last illness, and, for all the wealth of Europe, I would not see another infidel die."

Regarding Thomas Paine, however, there is a production that shows genius, and nothing short of genius. A gentleman had just made Mr. Paine's acquaintance, and at once mentioned to him the *Age of Reason*. Mr. Paine astonished him by saying, after taking a long breath: "Well, sir, I am sorry that work ever went to press. I wrote that work more for my own amusement, to see what I could do, than from any design of benefitting mankind." "I would give worlds," said he, with great emphasis, "had I them at my command—had the *Age of Reason* never been published. No, sir, I regret the publication of that work exceedingly. It can never do the world any good, and its light, sarcastic style will doubtless lead thousands to esteem lightly the only book of correct morals that ever blessed the world. I advise you, sir, not to read that book." This defies comment. If any sinner be sceptical, I would remind him, firstly, that scepticism is a very bad thing, and, secondly, that

the story is more than sufficiently authenticated. The article is signed "Anon," and the "gentleman" is a Mr. K. He who wanteth more than this lacketh sweet reasonableness.

The foregoing are a few samples of orthodox mendacity. It makes one reflect what a great pity it is that the Deity is rather careless at times in managing his Branch-shop, "Terra." Had he been otherwise, he would hardly have brought these gifted writers on to the scene so prematurely. They should have been reserved for the present day, when there exists an appetite for fiction which can hardly be satiated. And for writing works of fiction I think our pious forebears were admirably qualified. They combined the imagination of a Haggard with the realism and dramatic effect of a Zola and a Collins. As leading novelists, they would have created a *furor*; they would have been honored and revered, and their names, household words, destined for immortality. Whereas, alack, they have gone down to the dust

"Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

It is enough to make one weep; but, accustomed to such aggravating anomalies, we have become hardened, and the briny tear refuseth to fall.

RUSTICUS.

The Great Lying Church.

You have been told by Macaulay and others that the Church in the Dark Ages was the preserver of learning, the patron of science, and the friend of freedom. The preserver of learning in the Dark Ages! It was the Church that made those ages dark. The preserver of learning! Yes; as the worm-eaten oak-chest preserves a manuscript. No more thanks to them than to the rats for not devouring its pages. It was the Republics of Italy and the Saracens of Spain that preserved learning, and it was the Church that trod out the light of those Italian Republics. The patron of science! What? When they burned Savonarola and Giordano Bruno, imprisoned Galileo, persecuted Columbus, and mutilated Abelard. The friend of freedom! What? When they crushed the Republics of the South, pressed the Netherlands like the vintage in a wine-kelter, girdled Switzerland with a belt of fire and steel, banded the crowned tyrants of Europe against the Reformers of Germany, and launched Claverhouse against the Covenant of Scotland. The friend of freedom! When they hedged kings with a divinity! Their superstitions alone upheld the rotten fabric of oppression. Their superstitions alone turned the indignant freeman into a willing slave, and made men bow to the hell they created here, by a hope of the heaven they could not insure hereafter.—*Ernest Jones.*

Why Voltaire Fought Christianity.

Men spoke to Voltaire of the mild beams of Christian charity, and where they pointed he saw only the yellow glare of the stake; they talked of the gentle solace of Christian faith, and he heard only the shrieks of the thousands and tens of thousands whom faithful Christian persecutors had racked, strangled, gibbeted, burnt, broken on the wheel. Through the stream of innocent blood which Christians, for the honor of their belief, had spilt in every quarter of the known world, the blood of Jews, Moors, Indians, and all the vast holocausts of heretical sects, and people in eastern and western Europe, he saw only dismal tracts of intellectual darkness, and heard only the humming of the doctors, as they served forth to congregations of poor men hungering for spiritual sustenance the draft of theological superstition.—*Rt. Hon. John Morley, M.P.*

Robespierre.

Robespierre had the typic sacerdotal temperament, its sense of personal importance, its thin unction, its private leanings to the stake and the cord; and he had one of those deplorable natures that seem as if they had never in their lives known the careless joys of a springtime. By and by, from mere priest he developed into the deadlier carnivora, the Inquisitor.—*Rt. Hon. John Morley, M.P.*

An Epitaph's Commentary on the Design Argument.

Born, lived three weeks, and done for;
Often wonder what I was begun for.

Too True!

Christianity is not a religion; it is a nightmare.—*Heine.*

A Hymn.

REJOICE! that ancient foe is dead
Who, seated on a cloud,
The while he made his "footstool" red
With gore, laughed long and loud.
That heavenly vampire, soaked in blood
Of those who would not bow
The knee to him, and call him "good,"
Has made *his* exit now.

And Thou, whose power all creatures own,
Though Thou dost hush the breath
And turn the throbbing heart to stone,
We fear *Thee* not, O Death!
If Life Thou bring it, why dread Thy call?
If naught—lies hard the sod?
One thing we know, the best of all—
There is no "Bible God."

Rejoice! the shadows swiftly glide
Back from the light of day;
The myth man erstwhile glorified
He gladly puts away.
Rejoice! and see the death of Fear
Inspired by "God above."
The place to make a heaven is *Here*;
Its Gods—Truth, Justice, Love.

J. YOUNG.

Book Chat.

MR. MURRAY announces a biographical sketch of "Henry Hart Milman, D.D." This is the lamented gentleman who was hired in the interests of orthodoxy to explain away the ironical passages in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It was a most absurd position even for a D.D., for Gibbon was admittedly our greatest historian. Milman's edition of Gibbon's great work is now entirely superseded by the new edition edited by Professor Bury, in which Gibbon is allowed to "sap a solemn creed with solemn sneer," without impertinent interruption on every page from a clergyman.

One of the most important publications of the past month is the posthumous work of the late J. F. Nisbet, entitled *The Human Machine: An Inquiry into the Diversity of Human Faculty in its Bearing upon Social Life, Religion, Education and Politics* (Grant Richards), the proofs of which he corrected immediately before his death. The book purports to show that the ordinary man is as much the creature of his organization as the man of genius, and that he lives his life upon the same fatalistic conditions.

A literary curiosity at the coming Paris Exhibition will be a "Jokai Pavilion," in which the Hungarian novelist intends to exhibit a copy of every edition of his works that has appeared in any language. As Jokai has written more than three hundred books, and some of them have been translated into every European language, the mere task of collecting them appears formidable. Jokai will excite the jealousy of that other eminent author, the Holy Ghost, if he goes on in this way.

We have received volume xi. of *The University Magazine and Free Review*. It is a handsome volume of 400 pages, well bound, and excellently printed on toned paper. The contents are unusually interesting. Dr. Havelock Ellis writes very ably on "Sœur Jeanne des Anges," a victim of religious hallucination. Mr. F. H. Perry-Coste discourses on "The Ethics of Suicide," and Mr. Joseph McCabe attempts an answer to the question, "Is Philosophy Progressive?" A timely article is that on "Professor Seth's Attack on Nietzsche," by Mr. Thomas Common, who is an authority on the subject. Literature is not neglected, as readers of Mrs. Edith Ellis's charming story, "Seaweed: A Cornish Idyll," and a well-written article on "Three Anarchists of American Literature: William, Emerson, and Thoreau," will readily admit. A very powerful article on "Modesty, True and False," is from the pen of Mr. Allen Laidlaw. "Darwin on Trial at the Old Bailey," a burlesque, will raise many a smile. Dr. de Villiers writes on "Psychological Experiments," and numerous contributions from well-known writers make up the latest volume of the leading Rationalistic magazine.

Those who recognise Nietzsche's writings as a new revolution in philosophy will be pleased to hear that Mr. Fisher Cummings has undertaken to publish the English translation of the German philosopher's works. Volumes i. and ii. are now ready. Dr. Tille will be responsible for the translation. This will be the second attempt to bring Nietzsche's works before an English audience.

Our readers will be pleased to hear that Mr. Berman

Hamilton's Rationalistic novel, *The Light: A Romance*, has reached a second edition. Mr. Hamilton writes boldly in these days of compromise. His book must have cost him years of work, and displays an intimate knowledge of subjects which are not generally known. He is very enthusiastic, and has thought deeply. The following quotation will give the reader a fair idea of Mr. Hamilton's method of inculcating his views:—

"Ah! but you must know that the Israelites were God's chosen people, for whom he worked his wonders against the heathen....."

"Pardon me. It was the "chosen people," as every other tribe has called itself in its time—the Jews themselves, in fact—who wrote the Old Testament, did they not?"

"Yes."

"Then it is the Jews themselves who said that they were chosen by God; is it not so?"

"Yes, but Moses and the prophets were inspired by God."

"Oh, indeed! And how do you know that?"

"They themselves said so."

"Then you believe a man when he says he is inspired by God. If I myself were to say so, would you believe me?"

"I do not know you. Moses and the prophets have been believed in for ages."

"Oh! You mean that the continued assertion of the Jews that Moses and the prophets were inspired justifies you in believing that they were inspired? Continued assertion, then, works a miracle; or, to put it vulgarly, just supposing they were not inspired, a lie becomes truth, if believed in for long enough time. But one more question. How do you know that the books attributed to Moses were written by Moses at all?"

"Well, for one thing, our Lord quotes from Moses in the Old Testament."

"But only as a classic; as you might quote Shakespeare, or any of your English national authors."

".....But if you quote a thing, you generally believe it to be true."

"My dear Sir, if I quote Baron Munchausen, or the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, it does not prove that these stories were written by their supposed authors, or that they are true."

* * *

This is strong meat for the average subscriber to the circulating libraries; but it serves a most useful purpose.

Messrs. Constable and Co. are issuing a sixpenny edition of George Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. Prodigious! Fancy the great public finding out General Meredith at last! But will they?

Correspondence.

SOCIALISM AND SACERDOTALISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have not been a member of the Fabian Society for several years. I should never have joined it had I known to what extent it was under clerical influence. I have no doubt I have spoken with too generous frequency at its meetings of late, as my views are by no means popular among its leading spirits. No Roman Catholic or High Churchman can join any Socialist movement, except with a view to obtaining undue and improper influence. To this fact Mr. Hyndman and the S.D.F. have tardily awakened.

Neither myself nor any other Secularist has attacked the Socialists for keeping to their own, and ignoring Secularist, propaganda; what we complain of is that for doing the same by our own ideas we have been attacked with outrageous virulence. G. S. is probably unaware of this fact, but every Secularist who is active in our cause will bear me out.

I consider the Fabians have done very good work, but I challenge their right to the title of Social Democrats, and that they are not Democrats in the old sense. How far Hubert Bland, in his Imperialistic ideas, represents the Fabians as a body I know not, but they appear to endorse all his notions by their applause, and what with such ideas which are narrowly national, while Socialism is international, I am quite at a loss to understand how Fabians can hold out the hand of friendship to Continental Socialists; or, as I said before, adopt the title of Social Democrats, which, in its very essence, must be the antithesis to priestcraft.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

P.S.—As an instance of the evil effects of clerical influence in the Fabian Society, urgency was refused for a motion to express sympathy with Zola in his gallant struggle for justice in the Dreyfus case. "Twere better the Fabian Society were forgotten, when dead, than that history should record this to its discredit."

Rough work, Iconoclasm; but the only way to get at Truth.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

Profane Jokes.

A CATHOLIC labourer, coming along a slippery pavement, slightly inebriated, lost his balance, and—sat down. Down the street came the priest. "Ah, Pat," said he, thinking the opportunity good for driving home a moral, "sinners stand on slippery ground." "So I see," said Pat; "and begorra, it was more than I could do."

"The first thing to arrange," said the newly-arrived missionary, "is an interior situation." "Certainly," said the cannibal chief, smacking his lips.

"Have you ever heard Ingersoll on 'Moses'?" inquired one man of another. "No," was the response; "but I would give twenty dollars to hear Moses on Ingersoll."

A little girl, when asked by her teacher, "What does the Bible say about lies?" answered: "Lies are an abomination to the Lord, but—but a very present help in time of trouble."

Benny, the four-year-old member of the family, had been trained to believe in the deep-water form of baptism. This is believed to be the reason why he was trying to plunge the household cat into a bucket of water. The animal resisted. It howled, and scratched, and clawed, and used violent language. Finally, Benny, with his hands covered with scratches and with tears in his eyes, gave it up. "Darn you!" he said. "Go an' be a Methodist' if you want to!"—*Chicago Tribune.*

"Johnny, are your people going to take you with them on that trip across the ocean?" "Yes'm." "Aren't you afraid?" "Nome. Ain't afraid of nothin'. I've been vaccinated an' baptised."—*Chicago Tribune.*

A gentleman getting into a crowded tramcar was unable to obtain a seat. Looking round, and observing an old woman of considerable dimensions taking up more room than he thought necessary, he remarked: "Well, this is a regular Noah's Ark. We have specimens of the elephant here, I see." "Yes," replied the old wife, "and there was donkeys in the Ark as well, Mister."

What Voltaire Saw.

"This is no longer a time for jesting," wrote Voltaire; "witty things do not go well with massacres. What? These Busirises in wigs destroy, in the midst of horrible tortures, children of sixteen! And that in face of the verdict of ten upright and humane judges! And the victim suffers it! People talk about it for a moment, and the next they are hastening to the comic opera; and barbarity, become the more insolent for our silence, will to-morrow cut throats juridically at pleasure. Here Calas broken on the wheel; there Sirven condemned to be hung; further off a gag thrust into the mouth of a lieutenant-general; a fortnight after that five youths condemned to the flames for extravagances that deserved nothing worse than Saint Lazare. Is this the country of philosophy and pleasure? It is the country rather of the Saint Bartholomew Massacre."—*Voltaire, Œuvres, LXVII., p. 359; Corr.*

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THIS Society has been incorporated for the purpose of legalising the receipt, holding, and expenditure of funds for the promotion of Secularism. Its objects, as set forth in the Memorandum of Association, comprise every essential for which Secularists are striving. The governing idea of all of them is expressed in this primary clause:—"To promote, in such ways as may from time to time be determined, the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action."

The Society has powers to purchase, lease, rent, or build halls or other premises; to employ lecturers, writers, organisers, or other servants; to publish books, pamphlets, or periodicals; to assist other associated persons or individuals who are specially promoting any of its objects; to co-operate with any kindred Society in any part of the world; and to do any other lawful thing in furtherance of all or any of its said objects. To this end it is empowered to "have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society."

Intending members must be proposed and seconded in writing, and admitted by the Board of Directors, which consists of twelve members elected at the Annual Members' Meeting. Each member admitted pays an entrance fee of 10s., and after the first year of his (or her) membership a subscription of 5s. annually.

Persons of means who approve the Society's objects are invited to insert a clause on its behalf in their wills. This may be done without the slightest fear of misadventure. It would be well, although not necessary, to apprise the Board of Directors of such a clause having been inserted; or the communication could be made (in confidence) to the Chairman.

Without waiting for the realisation of such bequests, the Board of Directors appeal to members and sympathisers for donations, in order to push on the Society's work.

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.

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

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 7, J. M. Robertson, "The Rational Treatment of Criminals."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15, E. Pack, "What we Owe to the Bible"; 6.30, E. Pack, "The Soldiers of Christ."

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, E. Pack, "Christ and Seneca."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, W. Ramsey.

FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

HAMMERSMITH (The Grove): 7.15, F. A. Davies.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH (Jack Straw's Castle): 3.15, S. E. Easton.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): Lectures every week evening at 8. Sunday, at 11.30, F. A. Davies.

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, Stanley Jones.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Where will You Spend Eternity?"

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A. B. Moss; 7, R. P. Edwards. May 24, at 8, C. Cohen.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, E. Pack.

STRATFORD (The Grove): A. B. Moss, "A New Bible."

THE TRIANGLE (Salmon Lane, Limehouse): 11.30, R. P. Edwards. May 23, at 8, C. Cohen.

S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): 11.15, Mr. Potter. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, J. Clarke.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, A. B. Moss.

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Whence Came Christianity, and how was it Transmitted to Us?"

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Town Hall): N.S.S. Conference. Meeting at 7 in the Town Hall. May 22, Excursion to Stratford-on-Avon.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7.30, A. E. Elderkin, "Tricks of Modern Theology: An Examination of the New Free Church Catechism."

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, Mr. Paul, "Auld Nick."

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Annual Business Meeting; 6.30, Social Meeting.

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row): 7, Violin Selections by Professors Elliot and Ray; 7.15, A. H. Smith, "What Freethinkers have Done."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Closed for Summer Season.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—May 21, Birmingham Conference.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—May 21, m., Mile End; e., Victoria Park; e., Stratford. 28, a., Hampstead Heath. June 4, m., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith; 18, a. and e., Brockwell Park; 25, m., Battersea.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—May 21, Birmingham. June 25, Northampton.

R. P. EDWARDS, 52 Bramley-road, Notting-hill.—May 21, m., Limehouse; e., Mile End; 28, m., Clerkenwell; e., Edmonton.

E. PACK, 10 Henstridge-place, Ordnance-road, St. John's Wood.—May 21, m., Station-road, Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park; e., Peckham Rye; 28, m., Battersea Park; a., Regent's Park.

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[Mr. Holyoake, presuming that he is nearing the end of his life, desires it to be known that he prefers to be judged in the future, if anyone hereafter should take the trouble to estimate the character of his opinions by his work, "The Origin and Nature of Secularism," and by his earlier volume, "The Trial of Theism."]

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