

THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Dying Like a Dog.

"DOETH God care for oxen?" asks Paul, and the question does him great discredit. Why should not God care for oxen? Why should he not care for all his creatures?—It may not be true that the beetle crushed beneath our feet feels a corporal pang as great as when a giant dies. Nevertheless it feels in its degree, according to its position in the scale of existence. Consideration to what we call the lower animals should not depend upon their intellectual powers. It was well remarked by Bentham that the question is, not do they think, but do they feel? If they are susceptible to pain, they are morally within the scope of our regard. And if we are under an obligation to consider them, how much more so is God, who called them into being, and who should not only be wiser than the wisest man, but better than the best.

This exclamation of Paul's puts Christianity, in this respect, on a lower level than the higher Judaism. Even the Mosaic Law forbids the muzzling of the ox that treads out the corn. It is also said in the Old Testament that the good man is merciful unto his beast. Christianity has ever been remarkable in its disregard of the rights of animals. In fact, it allows them none. God gave Adam dominion over them, and that lordship has descended to his posterity. No ill-treatment of them is a sin, although it may be regrettable. Now and then a Catholic saint, like St. Francis, overflowing with an invincible sweetness of nature, recognises the brotherhood of the winged and four-footed creation; but the Catholic Church has never recognised it officially; on the contrary, it still teaches the opposite doctrine. They have no souls. Only man has a soul. And it must be admitted that sometimes he has only enough, as Ben Jonson said, to save his body the expense of salt.

It is strange how the Bible insults dogs. Certainly they have objectionable features. Their habits are liable to be offensive when they have not been properly trained especially of savages. They are devoid of sexual modesty. But then again there are many millions of men and women, and some whole tribes and even nations, that are not overburdened with this virtue. When all is said against him that can be said, however, the great fact remains that the dog has been an invaluable friend to mankind. It is difficult to see how men could have passed from the nomadic into the pastoral state without the dog's assistance. The shepherd still knows his worth. Moreover, it must be allowed that the dog is generally brave, and nearly always faithful. He sticks to his master in all weathers and in all fortunes. He will not forsake a tramp for a millionaire. He usually resents the lifting of a man's hand against a woman, and he puts up with endless worries and indignities from children, because he knows their helplessness, and feels they do not mean him any harm.

A few weeks ago, in the city of Hertford, if we recollect aright, half a streetful of people kept snugly indoors while a brutal ruffian was slowly murdering a poor woman outside. They heard his blows and oaths, they heard her pleas and groans, but they did nothing. They left the matter to the police, who were naturally engaged elsewhere. Had there been a dog in the street, it is ten to one that he would have interested himself in the affair. Very likely he would have flown at the ruffian. Anyhow he would have uttered a vehement protest, which might have brought some backing.

No. 932.

The human is higher than the canine, but sometimes the dog is the nobler animal of the two. Yet the Christians have always used the dog's name to express their deepest sense of contempt. How common it is to hear them say to an Atheist that he "dies like a dog," when a dog has often died sublimely, fighting against desperate odds, and pouring out his heart's blood for his master, or his master's children, or even his master's property. What could be more touching than the story of the dog whose master succumbed in the snow? When they were found, the man had still some living warmth about his heart. But the dog was frozen dead. He had shielded his master with his own body. He had died inch by inch to save the one he loved.

Byron had a favorite Newfoundland dog, whose memory he has enshrined in famous verses. "Boatswain," the poet wrote to his friend Hodgson, "is dead!—he expired in a state of madness, after suffering much, yet retaining all the gentleness of his nature to the last; never attempting to do the least injury to anyone near him." Boatswain was buried in the garden of Newstead, and his virtues were celebrated in an inscription on his monument. Then came the verses, from which we extract the following:—

But the poor dog, in life the firmest friend
The first to welcome, foremost to defend,
Whose honest heart is still his master's own,
Who labors, fights, lives, breathes for him alone,
Unhonor'd falls, unnoticed all his worth,
Denied in heaven the soul he held on earth:
While man, vain insect! hopes to be forgiven,
And claims himself a sole exclusive heaven.

This is the finest part of Byron's poem on Boatswain. The rest is marred by the poet's extravagant and affected misanthropy.

A hundred years before Byron, another great satirist—not the greatest, but the most finished—had put in a good word for the dog. Pope's splendid *Essay on Man*, whatever the admirers of "true poetry" may say against it, is full of good sense and philosophy, and marked by astonishingly fine versification. And although this has nothing to do with our immediate subject, we cannot resist the temptation of saying, by the way, that Ruskin has done justice to Pope in his beautiful *Lectures on Art*. Ruskin brackets Pope and Virgil as "two great masters of the absolute art of language." "They are," he says, "the two most accomplished Artists, merely as such, whom I know in literature." He notices Pope's "serene and just benevolence," which placed him, in theology, two centuries in advance of his time, and "enabled him to sum the law of noble life in two lines which, so far as I know, are the most complete, the most concise, and the most lofty expression of moral temper existing in English words." This is grand praise, but, if we may corroborate Ruskin without impertinence, it is richly deserved. Here are the two lines in question:—

Never elated, while one man's oppress'd;
Never dejected, while another's bless'd.

Think over these lines, dear reader, and the more you reflect upon them the more they will fill you with admiration. If they do not, there is something wrong with you, and you had better consult a doctor.

But let us get back to the dog, and quote the lines of Pope already referred to:—

Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
His soul, proud Science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
Yet simple Nature to his hope has giv'n,
Behind the cloud-topp'd hill, an humbler heav'n;
Some safer world in depth of woods embrac'd

Some happier island in the watery waste,
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.
To Be, contents his natural desire,
He asks no Angel's wings, no Seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.

Call this poetry or not, according to the catholicity or limitations of your taste—it is certainly magnificent writing; and nothing could be more masterly than the way in which the most terrible satire is flung, without producing the least chaos, into the midst of that pastoral scene.

The poor Indian—not the Hindu, mark, good reader—the “savage” of North America, not the “barbarian” of India—believed his faithful dog would bear him company in the happy hunting-grounds of Paradise. With his dog he might be happy, particularly as he escaped the Christians who enslaved him on earth, tormented him like devils, and drove him to the death-in-life of their gold mines. Talking to him about dying like a dog would have invited the retort, that he would sooner die like a dog than live like a Christian.

Pope is said to have been a Catholic, but he was really a Freethinker. In the *Essay on Man* he versified the philosophy of the sceptical Bolingbroke. Everyone knows that Byron was a Freethinker. Let us now take another Freethinker—the late Matthew Arnold. He also wrote beautiful verses on a dead dog. *Geist's Grave* is one of the later poems which showed that he had not altogether lost his singing voice while drudging as Inspector of Schools, and writing volumes of controversial prose. “Dear little friend” he calls the dead Geist, and praises his “loving heart” and “patient soul.” After remarking that Nature, with all her infinite resources, never quite repeats the past, nor reproduces a personality, Arnold continues:—

Stern law of every mortal lot!
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where.

But thou, when struck thine hour to go,
On us who stood despondent by,
A meek last glance of love didst throw,
And humbly lay thee down to die.

Well for all of us will it be, when the end comes, if we only die like that dog; with a last glance of love on dear ones around us, and a serene submission to the fiat of Nature. We like that word “humbly.” It is foolish to resist the inevitable, like a kicking, spluttering child in the grasp of a giant. Death should always bring resignation. This, indeed, is all that religionists mean when they talk of bowing to the will of God. There is a world of wisdom in the old proverb that “What can't be cured must be endured”; or, in the great language of Shakespeare:—

But let determin'd things to destiny
Hold unbewail'd their way.

We may even go beyond that. For death comes to all, and will come, in spite of our unwelcome. Often at last it comes as a deliverer; and then we may cry with brave Walt Whitman, “Come, lovely and soothing Death!”

Men die and dogs die, and a living dog is better than a dead man. Let the Christian cease his foolish talk about the Atheist's dying like a dog. When *his* time comes he will have to die in just the same fashion. Meanwhile he might ponder the words of one of his own “sacred” writers:—

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath.....All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”

Ah, if the clergy only wrote like that! We should read them oftener. But let us not omit this “sacred” writer's conclusion:—

“Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works: for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?”

There, good Christian—you who whimper about dying like a dog—you are answered out of your own

Book. And don't reply that the Atheist, like the Devil, can cite Scripture for his purpose. Why should he not? He accepts a good thing wherever he finds it.

G. W. FOOTE.

Jubilant Hypocrisy.

CONCURRENTLY with the issue of last week's *Freethinker* came the news that the *Daily Telegraph* had followed the example of the *Daily Mail*, and had suspended the issue of its Sunday edition. The force of religious organisation had been such that even a wealthy concern like the first-named journal had been obliged to yield to the attacks made upon its latest venture. Upon the merits of a seven-days' newspaper I do not wish to dwell now, any more than in my previous article. I am far more concerned with the light the movement throws on religious methods, the evidence of the strength of religious organisations, and the lessons to be learned therefrom, which, in my opinion, are so important that, at the risk of wearying my readers, I venture to again dwell upon the subject.

Intoxicated with the success of their agitation, the religious journals are now throwing off all disguise, and what began, professedly, as a purely social protest is now assuming the appearance of a thoroughly Sabbatarian movement. Of course, to Freethinkers, of a sane type, it was that all along; wherever the clergy throw themselves wholly into any movement one may feel tolerably certain that it is a professional interest that animates them, and the professed fear of seven days' labor per week was only a tactical device, flimsy enough too, of putting the real fear that the sacred character of Sunday was being destroyed. At any rate, the Churches have felt their strength, and it is within the bounds of probability that, having once discovered their power, union among them for a definite purpose may occur more frequently in the future than has been the case in the past.

The *Christian World*, which is, as usual, more restrained in its utterance than the majority of the religious papers, contents itself with the opinion that the struggle has shown that the Churches are “the ultimate guardians of the nation's inner life”; but the remainder of the religious weeklies are loudly advocating more tactics of the same kind for the purpose of de-secularising the “Sabbath.” The *Methodist Times*, while thanking God for the “rout of Paganism,” says: “The struggle against the introduction of the seven-day journalism has been a defensive warfare. By the completeness of our triumph God calls us now to throw off defensive tactics and advance into the enemy's country..... Surely with so amazing a proof of our power through God as this defeat of Sunday journalism before us.....we shall carry defeat into the serried ranks of the enemy until they are made his footstool.” And so we may expect the divinely-selected Hugh Price Hughes to lead a combined attack into the “serried ranks of the enemy,” close all museums, libraries, art galleries, and concerts on Sunday, and bring back a seventeenth-century “day of rest.”

The Rev. W. Houghton, of Upper Norwood, finding that it has been decided to hold Sunday concerts in the Crystal Palace, urged his congregation, “especially those who were season-ticket holders,” to bring their influence to bear on the Palace authorities, and in so doing they “should be encouraged to attack this latest encroachment upon the Sabbath by the success which had attended their warfare against seven-day newspapers.” I had selected nearly a score of utterances similar to those already given, all urging the adoption of energetic measures, on the same lines as were adopted in the case of the *Mail* and *Telegraph*, for the restriction of Sunday amusements, but will content myself with a final one from the *Church Times* of May 26. Here we have a frank declaration that “We must see to it that religion, stirred to self-defence by a movement on the part of the world, is not content with resisting the attack successfully, but uses its position as a basis for recovering territory lost to the enemy ‘while men slept.’ If the excitement raised by seven-day journalism is only to end with the suppression of *Sunday issues*, we shall be no better off than we were before.”

This, at all events, is plain enough, and admits that the real motive of the religious world, in protesting against Sunday editions, was Sabbatarianism pure and simple. And so, emboldened by success, the *Church Times* obligingly sketches some of the things necessary to be done in order to recover the "territory lost to the enemy." The habit of "making long and short journeys by train, cab, and 'bus, quite unnecessarily," comes first on the list. Social functions, which "have much increased, to the detriment of servants and the ruin of Sunday quiet," is also to be strongly reprehended. Another grievous form of Sunday labor is in the "travelling carried on by the companies of theatrical performers who move from town to town on Sundays." And after a preliminary warning that the "profession" cannot prosper without the divine blessing, and in case professionals are not influenced by a desire to obtain the "Divine blessing," playgoers in the provinces are advised never to attend a performance on Fridays, and thus, by making the day unremunerative, force the profession to adopt it as their time of travel. Finally, "the spiritual mischief of Sunday trading," is dwelt upon, and this is to be remedied, presumably, by pretty much the same methods that have been found so efficacious with the Sunday papers. In short, "let us organise ourselves and kill, by economic pressure, all antagonistic views" is the general lesson breathed by the religious press at present; and it will be surprising if, having once tasted of power, some fresh move in prohibitive Sunday regulations is not attempted in the immediate future.

Naturally, a great deal of rubbish has been written and spoken concerning the "moral revolt against seven-day journalism," the evidence furnished by the agitation of "the living power of the Christian faith," etc., etc. To a sensible observer, however, the "moral revolt" is sheer humbug, and the "living power of the Christian faith" scarcely less so. What we have been witnessing is a lesson in social psychology and the power of organisation. The plain fact is that, given a plausible pretext, with organisations such as the Christian Churches to utilise it, and enthusiasm may be stirred up for or against anything. By this means boycotting becomes more than a fine art; it becomes the fashion. Thousands of people, who would never have been stirred up to a "moral revolt" by their faith in Christianity, were drawn into protesting against Sunday papers by sheer force of example and the fear of being thought lukewarm in their attachment to Christianity. There really needs little more than this to explain the matter; and examples of the same kind, although differing in degree, may be found over and over again in history.

Apart from this, the matter is simply one of organisation. As a faith, Christianity is lower to-day than ever it was before. In ordinary life its teachings are openly ignored or derided; educated society largely repudiates its special precepts; even a large number of its professional advocates publicly declare the folly of accepting a large part of what previous generations regarded as the essence of their faith. But, as an organisation, Christianity is probably stronger to-day than it has been for many centuries. It receives about four millions sterling per year for the maintenance of schools that serve as breeding grounds for the various sects; the different Dissenting bodies are more than tolerated by the State, they are openly patronised and supported, and we are just witnessing the raising of colossal sums of money for the further propaganda of Christianity. All of this, while doing but very little to perpetuate Christianity as a sincere reasoned conviction, does a great deal to strengthen it as an organisation, and, therefore, to perpetuate a profession of belief in the Christian religion.

What, then, is the lesson for Freethinkers of all shades of opinion to take seriously to heart? Why, just this. The more perfected the organisation of the Churches, the more certain it is that, at some time, an attempt will be made to curtail the liberties we now possess. I have already given quotations from the religious press which make it highly probable that a combined attempt may be made to curtail the present already scanty opportunities for rational enjoyment on the Sunday, and a fresh measure of success would certainly prepare the way for more drastic measures against anti-Christian forces. In Liverpool, too, the School Board has, in gross violation of the principle of

religious equality, and in defiance of the spirit of the Act of 1870, introduced the new Free Church Catechism into the Board schools, so that the children there are now taught at the public expense doctrines that are in many respects as definite and as dogmatic as the Athanasian Creed itself.

There is only one method of successfully meeting this threatened reaction, and that is by adequate organisation on our own part. It is hopeless to expect an unorganised and poorly-equipped body of independent skirmishers to adequately cope with a well-drilled and wealthy religious army. Dependence on truth is a good thing, but to expect that truth will make its way against error that is sanctified by custom and buttressed by self-interest without some help on our part is little short of idiotic. More than once in the history of the last 700 years the Churches have been successful in extinguishing for a considerable time the truth of civilisation. It has flamed up again, true, but only after considerable toil and suffering; and even now its light is feeblest in countries where religious organisations are most powerful. It may be that to-day it is impossible to so completely suppress a movement even for a time, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility or probability that a combined effort on the part of religious bodies might result in some very serious obstacles being placed in the road of Freethought development.

The remedy is very largely in the hands of Freethinkers themselves. If each one did his duty, there is enough of them, and there is money enough among them, to make our movement tenfold as effective as it is at present, without unduly distressing a single one. The work is now heavy for those who are engaged in it, for the simple reason that so many stand idly by. The Conference on Whit-Sunday passed a resolution in favor of establishing a Twentieth Century Fund, as one method of meeting the increased income and improved organisation of the Churches. Let this receive anything like adequate support from those who can support it, and the next few years may mark an epoch in the history of Secularism. If the present agitation has but the effect of awakening Freethinkers to the necessity of combined action on their part, the present gain of the clergy may prove their ultimate loss; and whatever makes for the loss of prestige or power by the "Black Army" cannot but further the development of civilisation.

C. COHEN.

Bible Biography.

(Continued from page 339.)

THE next Bible hero whose biography is interesting, as showing the character of God's special friends, is Abraham, who in the morning of his life was taken from the "other side of the flood" (Joshua xxiv. 3). He was the progenitor of the Jewish race, and to him was given by his Deity a long catalogue of promises of conquests. The Lord said unto Abraham: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis xii. 2, 3). Here it will be seen that Abraham was undoubtedly a favorite with God, and by him was he guided in his principal actions throughout his life; hence, we read that "Abraham obeyed my voice [the Lord's], and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis xxvi. 5). Let us see, when he did all this, how far he observed the principles of truth, virtue, and honor. If the "Divine" influence be as potent for good as it is represented to be, it is only reasonable to suppose that those who are its recipients should excel in the higher qualities of humanity; but the facts revealed in the biography of the Bible show the very opposite. For instance, the career of Abraham, whom we are assured "obtained the promise" (Hebrews vi. 15), was cruel, deceitful, and dishonorable. The story given of his life in Genesis, chapters xvi. to xxv., presents a record of such discreditable deeds that no one who had any regard for moral conduct would attempt to emulate them at the present day.

It appears that Abraham went down into Egypt, taking his wife with him. She is mentioned as being

"a fair woman to look upon." Her husband, fearing that some of the Egyptians might fall in love with her, and that in order to achieve their purpose his life might be sacrificed, directed Sarah to pass herself off as his sister. The Bible says: "And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee" (Genesis xii. 11, 12, and 13). Here we see that deceit and cowardice take the place of truth and duty. We know not to what extent Sarah would have been exposed to insults had she not been taken by Pharaoh into his house. Abraham must have been destitute of all shame and natural feeling if he did not blush and quail under the manly and noble rebuke which he received from the Egyptian monarch when that potentate discovered the deception that had been practised upon him. Now, two questions here arise, which must influence us in judging of the conduct of Abraham in disowning his wife. First, was there sufficient reason to believe that Sarah would be captured? Secondly, supposing such to have been the case, did Abraham, in passing her off as his sister, lessen the chances of her capture? To both questions we answer in the negative. Apart from the immorality of deception, had Abraham said to the Egyptians, "She is my wife, and as such I intend to protect her," doubtless she would not have been subject to any annoyance in Egypt. Subsequent events show how groundless Abraham's suspicion was, for as soon as Pharaoh discovered his captive was a wife he immediately allowed her to depart with her husband. History tells us that in Egypt married women were safe from all attacks of violence. Chambers assures us that the social position of women in Egypt was very high; and Tytler, in his *Elements of Ancient History*, has the following passage on page 15: "Female chastity [in Egypt] was most rigidly protected, and personal security so guarded by the laws that whoever saw another attacked and neglected to render him assistance was liable to be punished as an assassin." But the fact of trying to practise the deception of disowning his wife increased rather than diminished her chance of capture. A sister was less secure than a wife.

Strange to say, shortly after this event exactly the same thing occurred with Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech. The latter had positively taken Sarah for his wife; but a warning, in a dream, from the Lord prevented the dishonor that Abraham had exposed his wife to. Sarah was returned to her husband, and he received another just rebuke for his unmanly conduct. By the way, it is somewhat curious that Abraham should have been so fond of travelling all over the East when his wife's beauty and his own mendacity led him into so much trouble wherever he went. Women, in the time of Abraham, must have had a marvellous power of retaining their beauty. Sarah was over ninety years of age, yet it would seem that she was "the observed of all observers." Many of the fair sex in the present age would be glad to understand by what magic power youthful charms could be made so enduring. What can be said in justification of a man who would risk his wife's honor by telling what was practically a falsehood, when, by stating the truth, his wife's safety and his own integrity would have been ensured? Yet we are told he is in heaven (Luke xvi. 23-27), although it is said in the New Testament that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation xxi. 8).

Abraham's domestic conduct was cruel in the extreme. Perhaps there is one circumstance in his favor, and that is, that God prompted him in his heartless deeds. According to the account, Sarah had a maidservant, or slave, named Hagar, by whom Abraham had a son. After Sarah, in her old age, became a mother, she was exceedingly jealous of Hagar's boy. Her jealousy was so great that she ordered Abraham to turn the child and his mother out into the desert. Abraham demurred at first; but God, taking, as is usual, the winning side, told Abraham to do as Sarah bade him, and thus gave a most direct sanction to this cruel and inhuman act.

The poor mother and child were accordingly sent by Abraham to wander in the desert. The whole of this Biblical episode is a sad specimen of immorality. In the first place, Abraham was prompted to matrimonial infidelity at the special request of his wife, and was then urged by her to supplement the act by cruelty and desertion. It presents such an example of domestic wrong and conjugal faithlessness that, if Secularists followed it, their principles would be condemned as being impotent to restrain vicious passions. It should, however, be remembered that, if the New Testament be true, the story of Abraham's two sons is an allegory (Galatians iv. 22-24). What moral lesson can be learnt from the biography of this Bible patriarch? His mean conduct to his wife and his brutal treatment of his mistress should represent his character, in the estimation of all lovers of justice and honor, as most despicable. Such conduct may be Bible morality, but, according to Secular philosophy, it is the very reverse of what is right and commendable. God's friends were peculiar specimens of humanity, and yet of "such is the kingdom of heaven."

The biography of Isaac can be passed over with the remark that he was a veritable "chip of the old block." He also had a wife who "was fair to look upon," whom he denied, saying she was his sister, "lest," said he, "the men of the place should kill me" (Genesis xxvi. 7). Lying and dishonor were evident characteristics of this God-favored family.

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, was beloved by God, and a greater rascal probably never lived. We ask the reader to go through the following incidents of his life, and then, we think, the term "rascal" will be found to be not too severe when applied to the son of Isaac:— Obtaining his brother's birthright through dishonest means (Genesis xxv. 33); meanly getting Esau's blessing (Genesis xxvii. 35); his conduct with Rachel and Leah (Genesis xxix.); his licentiousness (Genesis xxx. and his dishonest bargain with Laban (Genesis xxx. 41, 42). Despite all these disgraceful actions upon the part of Jacob, God was his friend (Genesis xxxi. 21), and he is one of the heavenly trinity with whom good Christians are to associate through all eternity (Matthew viii. 11).

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be continued.)

Faith That Surely Wanes.

BY COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL.

THE Governor of New Hampshire, undoubtedly a good and sincere man, issued a Fast Day Proclamation to the people of his State, in which I find the following paragraph:—

"The decline of the Christian religion, particularly in our rural communities, is a marked feature of the times, and steps should be taken to remedy it. No matter what our belief may be in religious matters, every good citizen knows that when the restraining influences of religion are withdrawn from a community its decay, moral, mental, and financial, is swift and sure. To me this is one of the strongest evidences of the fundamental truth of Christianity. I suggest that, as far as possible, on Fast Day union meetings be held, made up of all shades of belief, including all who are interested in the welfare of our State, and that in your prayers and other devotions, and in your mutual councils, you remember and consider the problem of the condition of religion in the rural communities. There are towns where no church bell sends forth its solemn call from January to January. There are villages where children go to manhood unchristened. There are communities where the dead are laid away without the benison of the name of the Christ, and where marriages are solemnised only by justices of the peace. This is a matter worthy of your thoughtful consideration, citizens of New Hampshire. It does not augur well for the future. You can afford to devote one day in the year to your fellow men, to wear and thought and prayer for your children and your children's children."

These words of the Governor have caused surprise, discussion, and anger. Many ministers have denied that Christianity is declining, and have attacked the Governor with the malice of meekness and the savagery of humility. The question is: Is Christianity declining?

In order to answer this question we must state what Christianity is.

Christians tell us that there are certain fundamental truths that must be beliefs.

We must believe in God, the creator and governor of the universe; in Jesus Christ, his only begotten son; in the Holy Ghost; in the atonement made by Christ; in salvation by faith; in the second birth; in heaven for believers, in hell for deniers and doubters, and in the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments. They must also believe in a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God, in Special Providence, and in addition to all this they must practise a few ceremonies. This, I believe, is a fair skeleton of Christianity. Of course I cannot give an exact definition. Christians do not and never have agreed among themselves. They have been disputing and fighting for many centuries, and to-day they are as far apart as ever.

A few years ago Christians believed in the "fundamental truths." They had no doubts. They knew that God existed; that he made the world. They knew when he commenced to work at the earth and stars, and when he finished. They knew that he, like a potter, mixed and molded clay into the shape of a man, and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life. They knew that he took from this man a rib and framed the first woman.

It must be admitted that sensible Christians have outgrown this belief. Jehovah, the gardener, the potter, the tailor, has been dethroned. The story of creation is believed only by the provincial, the stupid, the truly orthodox. People who have read Darwin and Haeckel, and had sense enough to understand these great men, laugh at the legends of the Jews.

A few years ago most Christians believed that Christ was the son of God, and not only the son of God, but God himself.

This belief is slowly fading from the minds of Christians, from the minds of those who have minds.

Many Christians now say that Christ was simply a man—a perfect man. Others say that he was divine, but not actually God—a union of God and man. Some say that, while Christ was not God, he was as nearly like God as it is possible for man to be.

The old belief that he was actually God—that he sacrificed himself unto himself; that he deserted himself; that he bore the burden of his own wrath; that he made it possible to save a few of his children by shedding his own blood; that he could not forgive the sins of men until they murdered him—this frightful belief is slowly dying day by day. Most ministers are ashamed to preach these cruel and idiotic absurdities. The Christ of our time is not the Christ of the New Testament—not the Christ of the Middle Ages; nor of Luther, Wesley, or the Puritan fathers.

The Christ who was God—who was his own son and his own father—who was born of a virgin, cast out devils, rose from the dead and ascended bodily to heaven—is not the Christ of to-day.

The Holy Ghost has never been accurately defined or described. He has always been a winged influence—a divine aroma; a disembodied essence; a spiritual climate; an enthusiastic flame; a something sensitive and unforgiving; the real Father of Jesus Christ.

A few years ago the clergy had a great deal to say about the Holy Ghost, but now the average minister, while he alludes to this shadowy deity, to round out a prayer, seems to have but little confidence in him. This deity is, and always has been, extremely vague. He has been represented in the form of a dove; but this form is not associated with much intelligence.

Formerly it was believed that all men were by nature wicked, and that it would be perfectly just for God to damn the entire human race. In fact, it was thought that God, feeling that he had to damn all his children, invented a scheme by which some could be saved and at the same time justice could be satisfied. God knew that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin. For many centuries he was satisfied with the blood of oxen, lambs, and doves. But the sins continued to increase. A greater sacrifice was necessary. So God concluded to make the greatest possible sacrifice chosen people. This was the atonement—the scheme of salvation—a scheme that satisfied justice and partially defeated the devil.

No intelligent Christians believe in this atonement. It is utterly unphilosophic. The idea that man made salvation possible by murdering God is infinitely absurd. This makes salvation the blossom of a crime—the blessed fruit of murder. According to this, the joys of heaven are born of the agonies of innocence. If the Jews had been civilised—if they had believed in freedom of conscience, and had listened kindly and calmly to the teachings of Christ, the whole world, including Christ's mother, would have gone to hell.

Our fathers had two absurdities. They balanced each other. They said that God could justly damn his children for the sin of Adam, and that he could justly save his children on account of the sufferings and virtues of Christ—i.e., on account of his own sufferings and virtues.

This view of the atonement has mostly been abandoned. It is now preached, not that Christ bought souls with his blood, but that he has ennobled souls by his example. The supernatural part of the atonement has, by the more intelligent, been thrown away. So the idea of imputed sin—of vicarious vice—has been by many abandoned.

Salvation by faith is growing weak. People are beginning to see that character is more important than belief; that virtue is above all creeds. Civilised people no longer believe in a God who will damn an honest, generous man. They see that it is not honest to offer a reward for belief. The promise of reward is not evidence. It is an attempt to bribe.

If God wishes his children to believe, he should furnish evidence. He should not endeavor to make promises and threats take the place of facts. To offer a reward for credulity is dishonest and immoral—infamous.

To say that good people, who never hear of Christ, ought to be damned for not believing on him is a mixture of idiocy and savagery.

People are beginning to perceive that happiness is a result, not a reward; that happiness must be earned; that it is not alms. It is also becoming apparent that sins cannot be forgiven; that no power can step between actions and consequences; that men must "reap what they sow"; that a man who has lived a cruel life cannot, by repenting between the last dose of medicine and the last breath, be washed in the blood of the Lamb and become an angel—an angel entitled to an eternity of joy.

All this is absurd, but you may say that it is not cruel. But to say that a man, who has lived a useful life, who has made a happy home, who has lifted the fallen, succored the oppressed, and battled to uphold the right—to say that such a man, because he failed to believe without evidence, will suffer eternal pain, is to say that God is an infinite wild beast.

Salvation for credulity means damnation for investigation.

At one time the "second birth" was regarded as a divine mystery—as a miracle—a something done by a supernatural power; probably by the Holy Ghost. Now ministers are explaining this mystery. A change of heart is a change of ideals. About this there is nothing miraculous.

This happens to most men and women—happens many times in the life of one man. If this happens without excitement, as the result of thought, it is called reformation. If it occurs in a revival, if it is the result of fright, it is called the "second birth."

A few years ago Christians believed in the inspiration of the Bible. They had no doubts. The Bible was the standard. If some geologist found a fact inconsistent with the Scriptures, he was silenced with a text. If some doubter called attention to a contradiction in the Bible, he was denounced as an ungodly and blaspheming wretch. Christians then knew that the universe was only about six thousand years old, and any man who denied this was an enemy of Christ and a friend of the Devil.

All this has changed. The Bible is no longer the standard. Science has dethroned the inspired volume. Even theologians are taking facts into consideration. Only ignorant bigots now believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible.

The intelligent ministers know that the holy scriptures are filled with mistakes, contradictions, and interpola-

tions. They no longer believe in the flood, in Babel, in Lot's wife, or in the fire and brimstone storm. They are not sure about the burning bush, the plagues of Egypt, the division of the Red Sea, or the miracles in the wilderness. All these wonders are growing foolish. They belong to the Mother Goose of the past, and many clergymen are ashamed to say that they believe them. So the lengthening of the day in order that General Joshua might have more time to kill, the journey of Elijah to heaven, the voyage of Jonah in the fish, and many other wonders of a like kind, have become so transparently false that even a theologian refuses to believe.

The same is true of many of the miracles of the New Testament. No sensible man now believes that Christ cast devils and unclean spirits out of the bodies of men and women. A few years ago all Christians believed all these devil miracles with all the mind they had. A few years ago only Infidels denied these miracles, but now the theologians who are studying the "Higher Criticism" are reaching the conclusions of Voltaire and Paine. They have just discovered that the objections made to the Bible by the Deists are supported by the facts.

At the same time these "Higher Critics," while they admit that the Bible is not true, still insist that it is inspired.

The other evening I attended Forepaugh and Sells' circus at Madison Square Garden and saw a magnificent panorama of performances. While looking at a man riding a couple of horses I thought of the "Higher Critics." They accept Darwin and cling to Genesis. They admit that Genesis is false in fact, and then assert that in a higher sense it is absolutely true.

A lie bursts into blossom and has the perfume of truth. These critics declare that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and then establish the truth of the declaration by showing that it is filled with contradictions, absurdities, and false prophecies.

The horses they ride sometimes get so far apart that it seems to me that walking would be easier on the legs.

So I saw at the circus the "Snake Man." I saw him tie himself into all kinds of knots; saw him make a necktie of his legs; saw him throw back his head and force it between his knees; saw him twist and turn as though his bones were made of rubber, and as I watched him I thought of the mental doublings and contortions of the preachers who have answered me.

Let Christians say what they will, the Bible is no longer the actual word of God; it is no longer perfect; it is no longer quite true.

—*Truthseeker* (New York.)

(To be concluded.)

Merely Players.

CHRISTIANITY is really the most powerless thing on earth. The millions who profess to be followers of Christ are, practically, wholly unaffected by his teaching. In every Christian country, side by side with the professed religion, will be found a code of legislation which violates every precept of Christianity, and resembles only the *lex talionis* of the old Roman Law.

The effect of this divergence is seen when a few obscure individuals are cast into prison for attempting to take Christianity seriously, as with the Peculiar People in England and the Stundists in Russia. So far as the prelates of the different Christian Churches are concerned, the profession of Christian ethics is neither more nor less than a perpetual farce. Whether they be Anglican bishops, Catholic cardinals, or priests of the Greek Church, the fact is the same. The professed followers of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth enjoy princely salaries. The Nonconformist leaders get what they can, and eke out a precarious existence on the salaries of Cabinet ministers. Not one amongst them is better in this matter than another. Some wit has said that "singing psalms never yet prevented a grocer from sanding his sugar." This joke expresses in a happy form what may be said in all

seriousness of the impotency of Christism to affect ethical conduct. Who can deny that, if the commands of Christianity had penetrated in the least degree beneath the surface of human life, to make weapons of destruction would be viewed as a frightful crime? Yet the armies of the Christian nations number twenty-three millions of men, who merely await the summons to murder. The grand total expended on armaments by these professed followers of "The Prince of Peace" now reaches the enormous sum of two hundred millions of pounds annually.

Think of it! Whole nations in the grip of military service, from the Spree to the Elbe, from the Seine to the Neva. And the nations are so sublimely hypocritical that they ask blessings on their regimental standards from the Lord, and sing *Te Deum* to celebrate their victories. Christianity is not only a failure, it is a shibboleth—a husk—a purple robe covering a skeleton. Mohammed has a direct influence over his professed disciples; Buddha still colors and controls human life; but where, in all Christendom, is the Christian?

The Sermon on the Mount has been sub-edited by the priests of the Most High in the interests of their banking accounts. Christianity is a formula. Was it ever anything more? Even in the ages of faith it was no better. The disciples themselves were but a sorry lot. Judas, it will be remembered, was too virtuous for anything. Peter, that rocky cornerstone of Christianity, told lies; but why continue the Newgate Calendar of the Saints? Even Christ himself was never a Christian. People who annoyed him were "vipers," "whitewashed sepulchres," and so on, just as if he had been a mere cabman. Now he is sitting on his own right hand. He does not forgive his own enemies, but roasts or refrigerates them; or, maybe, adopts Dean Farrar's suggestion, and merely gives them an eternity of unpleasantness. Our blessed Savior's ideas concerning private property were, to say the least, very peculiar, as in the case of the Gadarene swine. As a boy, he did not always honor his parents. But hold! enough! Like Betsy Prig, when speaking of the mythical Mrs. Harris, we "don't believe there ain't no sich person" as a Christian!

MIMNERMUS.

Acid Drops.

SOME anonymous idiot chuckles over a mistake we made last week. We said it seemed likely that the *Sunday Telegraph* would outlast the Sabbatarian storm. Since then, however, the paper in question has been discontinued; and the anonymous idiot fancies that we have now lost the last shred of our reputation for sagacity. Well, we could only judge from public indications, which warranted our conclusion. We did not know, and could not know, what was going on in the *Telegraph* office, behind the scenes. Any idiot can be wise after the event, like the anonymous one who favors us with his letter, and the Post Office with a penny towards its revenue.

Well, the *Telegraph* has given way, and the Sabbatarians have triumphed—that is to say, they *think* they have. But what has happened? Two *new* Sunday papers, for which there was no special demand, have disappeared. All the *old* Sunday papers remain, because they *do* supply a demand, and therefore the Sabbatarians cannot injure them.

We now witness a most hypocritical and amusing scramble. The *Telegraph* and the *Mail* announce special Saturday editions, and the dear old *Daily News* cuts in with a similar project. All these Saturday editions will of course be largely sold on Sunday mornings. They will therefore cause just as much Sunday labor as the Sunday editions did. But they will not be dated on Sunday. And this is the shadowy triumph upon which the Sabbatarians are congratulating themselves! Is it not clear that they are fools or hypocrites? Perhaps they are both.

Sunday sacred concerts at the Crystal Palace are to be opposed. The local Churches are organising a vigorous protest against this encroachment upon their privileges. People who want sacred music on Sunday should go to the gospel-shops, where that form of entertainment is already provided. And as they get a sermon thrown in, what more do they want?

One man of God, the Rev. W. Houghton, of the Congregational Church, Upper Norwood, begs his congregation to put pressure upon the Crystal Palace authorities; and surely this is the least they can do to support their minister's business.

"The effect of Sunday newspapers in America," the *Sunday School Chronicle* says, "has been a serious obstacle to the work of Christianity." Precisely so. We have said all along that this is the real motive of the late agitation.

England is a Christian country. It boasts of its religion, and it deluges the world with Bibles. It is also a very loyal country, and has lately been celebrating with great enthusiasm the eightieth anniversary of the birth of its Queen, who is praised above all as a Christian lady. But we have just received a singular commentary on all these vaunts from the Humanitarian League. It is a twelve-paged tract on "The Royal Buckhounds," giving an account of their "sport" for the 1898-9 season. These dogs are kept to chase deer, and the deer are kept to be chased by the dogs. Of course it is pretended that the deer are wild animals, whereas everybody knows that they are practically domestic. This tract gives interesting details of the sufferings of these poor hunted creatures; and it would be better on the part of the clergy to denounce such flagrant inhumanity than to cry out against the sin of Sunday newspapers or innocent forms of Sunday recreation.

We cheerfully record the fact that the Rev. J. Stratton is honorary secretary of the Sports Department of the Humanitarian League. His efforts in this cause are creditable to his manhood. We are also glad to see that a few ministers of religion have sent letters of sympathy to the League on this matter. But these are exceptions. The great body of the clericals are apathetic on this as on so many other questions of common humanity.

After the celebrations in honor of Her Majesty's birthday some of the papers bore the announcement in bold headlines, "The Queen Touched." Well, really now! Although we are Republicans, we should have hesitated to express ourselves in this blunt fashion.

The Church of Scotland carries on expensive missions among the Jews, of whom it succeeded in converting—perhaps we should say baptising—six during the past year. This slight return upon so much effort and outlay suggests an article in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, in which it is pointed out that Christians are approaching the Jews far more rapidly than Jews are approaching the Christians. Dogma after dogma is being thrown away by the Churches, and "we are approximating our beliefs to the ethical theism of the Jews." There is a lot of truth in this.

A quarter of a million people have been slowly tortured to death in Russia. Five million more of the Holy Czar's subjects are in danger of perishing. Yet the men of God talk as smoothly as ever about Providence. They still tell us that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness presides over the affairs of this world, and quote the old texts, "He doeth all things well," and "His tender mercies are over all his works."

Two freaks of "Providence" were reported a few days ago in the newspapers. One lady gave birth to a child with two heads, and another lady presented her husband with five children at once. Some of the theologians ought to explain how such phenomena are reconcilable with the infinite wisdom and goodness of God.

There might have been a compensation in the case of the two-headed baby, which would have made a very profitable exhibit at Barnum and Bailey's; but, unfortunately, both the baby and its mother have died.

"Justice marches," said Zola as he left France. Yes, and it has marched with a vengeance. This is what M. Blowitz, the *Times* correspondent, writes about the fate of the military conspirators in the Dreyfus case: "Henry cut his throat. Lemerrier-Picard has been done to death; Du Paty de Clam has been hunted from the army; Guénée is as good as dead; Paulin de Saint Morel is no longer seen in the sunlight; Gonse, who insulted Picquart in his prison, is lying low; Boisdeffre is no longer anything but a bit of military debris; Pellieux, the great orator who terrified the Zola jury, is in obscurity; Mercier, the unwitting instrument of these dark hatreds—Mercier, who expected to mount to the capitol, has as his excuse his intellectual deficiencies and his astonishing ambition, which blinded him to the criminality of his act. Billot, who affirmed on his honor that Dreyfus had been legally and justly condemned, and Chanoine, who stabbed his colleagues in the back, and Roget, the General chosen by the Grébelins, the counsel for the others, and the subalterns, Ravary, and Tavernier, and Colonel Maurel, who presided over the court-martial and took and gave cognisance of the secret documents, the twenty-seven officers who came to bear witness that Dreyfus sought to learn what he could, and the

incommensurable Cavaignac, that gingerbread Robespierre, and all the others as well whom the blast of justice has swept away, scattering their *débris* all along the route chosen as its highway by truth."

Peckham Roman Catholics held their annual outdoor demonstration on Sunday afternoon. Of course they were not interfered with by the Freethinkers. Their fellow Christians called Protestants, however, did the utmost they could to cause a riot. A band of them marched in front of the Catholic procession, and the police had all their work to prevent a serious breach of the peace. There was a free fight at one point, and a Catholic was felled to the ground by a terrific blow on the head from a broken flagstaff. The police blew their whistles for reinforcements, and eventually the rival Christians were separated. Some arrests were made on the spot, and others were expected to follow. How they love one another!

Anti-Ritualistic riots broke out at Belfast on Sunday, and the police had to disperse the mob amidst a heavy fusillade of stones. Had the mob been allowed a free swing, there would have been several Christians less in Belfast.

A correspondent in South Africa sends us a cutting from the *Methodist Churchman* of January 5, 1899, in which it is alleged that John Stuart Mill died a Christian. This allegation is made on the authority of Principal Moule, of Ridley Hall; who, in turn, relies upon the authority of some nameless English physician who is said to have attended Mill during his last illness at Avignon. All this, of course, is sheer invention. The facts about Mill's decease are given in Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds*—a little work which Freethinkers should always keep by them. Dr. Gurney attended the dying philosopher, and what he had to say appeared in the *Daily News* of May 12, 1873. He states that Mill learnt the fatal nature of his illness "with calmness and resignation." Not a word is said about his dying a Christian. The Protestant pastor of Avignon, M. Rey, gratuitously delivered a prayer at the interment; but this got him into trouble, on account of Mill's known scepticism, and Professor Bain (Mill's biographer) says that he "had to write an exculpation in the local newspaper." It was spread abroad that Mill received the last consolations of religion, but M. Rey admitted that there was no clergyman at Mill's bedside—*Il n'y avait point de pasteur près du lit de M. Mill.*

Some interesting figures were recently given in these columns with reference to the growth of the medical profession. The clerical profession, on the other hand, seems to be on the decline. The 1871 census gives the number of clergymen as 20,694, which is one for every 1,097 persons. In 1881, 21,663 clergymen works out at only one for every 1,199 persons. It is since 1891, however, that the number of clergymen has shown the most serious decrease. It is officially returned for 1898 at 23,458, a decrease of 774 on the 1891 returns, and which shows one only to every 1,324 persons, taking the present population at 31,055,355, as fixed by the most reliable estimates. The Church of England Year Book states that the number of men ordained has fallen from 745 in 1891 to 638 in 1898.—*Westminster Gazette.*

Ward Beecher was succeeded at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, by Dr. Lyman Abbott, who in turn is now succeeded by Dr. Hillis. This gentleman is a godsend to the local booksellers. He generally preaches on well-known characters in well-known novels, and there is a great run upon the works of fiction he selects. We presume the sale of the Bible suffers in consequence.

Dr. Hillis's brother preachers are alarmed at this policy. "I feel very strongly on this matter," says Dr. Cuyler. He says that ministers should preach from the Bible, and that "there is no message of salvation in a novel." That may be strictly true. Novels can hardly tell you the way to heaven. Still, they often contain better moral teaching than most sermons; and the preacher who can rival George Eliot, Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, Hawthorne, Meredith, and Hardy, as ethical stimulators, is not yet born.

Ministers of religion are taking to novel writing themselves, and they ought to be good at it up to a point, for they are supposed to have studied the Bible, which is a highly romantic composition. Are not "millions" of copies being sold of the Rev. Mr. Sheldon's magnificent stories? Is not "Ian Maclaren" a Presbyterian minister? And was not Mr. Barrie a servant of the Lord until he found it more profitable to write novels for the British public?

Rev. F. B. Meyer, speaking at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, prophesied that "we were about to pass through one of the greatest struggles which had ever been through infidelity, and Romanism, and Atheism." Behind both Ritualism and Atheism, he said, there was "a living Spirit of Evil." How amusing! It is always thus with these pietists. Which is God's side? My side. Which is the Devil's side? Your side. Short, sweet—and impudent.

The German Baptists have held a remarkable Conference at Roanoke, in Virginia, and passed sundry strong resolutions to promote their spiritual welfare. First of all, instrumental music should not be taught in the families of this brotherhood. Satan lurks inside the fiddle and the banjo, and sneaks under the keyboard of the piano. Secondly, the brotherhood should swear off fancy neckties, and remember that such things are to be worn for comfort, not for appearance. Thirdly, tobacco growers are to be excluded from representation. Next year we expect to hear that the German Baptists are to eschew mustard with their beef, butter with their bread-and-cheese, and sugar in their tea. There is no reason why they should stop until everything pleasant is strictly forbidden.

There was a curious casualty reported in Lloyd's Shipping List recently, as follows: "Portmadoc.—The Twelve Apostles went ashore at Hell's Mouth and became a total wreck." An irreverent newspaper man wants to know "What were they doing there?"

Clara Phœbe McCullum, alias Jones, has been before the Chatham magistrates on a charge of extorting £40 from Eliza Harriet Owen, a poor widow, aged seventy. It is alleged that the blackmailing extended over a period of four years, and that the prisoner terrified her victim through a pretended compact with Satan. In other words, the old lady paid all that money, at various times, to be saved from Old Nick. But is not that the very same game which all the respectable sky-pilots are playing? Do they not take millions every year to save us from the Devil? It appears to us that Clara Phœbe McCullum, alias Jones, sinned in the most reputable company. Her real crime seems to have been that she was an unlicensed practitioner.

Lynching has found a friend in the Rev. Mr. Hasskan, of Chambersburg (Pennsylvania), who argues that the negro is not a man at all, but is really Darwin's missing link. The reverend gentleman contends—and we cannot contradict him—that the negro entered the ark, but not as a human being, and it is therefore no use attempting to convert him to Christianity. All this is very fine in its way, but it does not convince us that Christians have the right to kill negroes without so much as a trial to see whether they are guilty.

Poor negroes! What malignant nonsense the whites have talked and written about them! It used to be declared that they are all descended from the (perhaps black) grandson who was cursed by drunken old Noah, and are consequently doomed to perpetual slavery. But as the white man who owned the slave ran the argument, it was open to considerable suspicion. Another theory was that, before Adam ate apples and understood his sexual nature, Eve had an intrigue with the Devil, who instructed her in the Art of Love; and her offspring by Old Nick were the progenitors of all the black people. The negroes, however, believe that the Devil is probably white; otherwise they could not account for his lies and wickedness. Besides, it is easier to frighten their children with a white Devil than with a black one.

All couples who go to a Protestant church or to a Registry Office to get married will go to hell. At least the Rev. Augustine Graham, Roman Catholic priest, of Nottingham, says so. Probably the explanation is that this gentleman is employed at a rival marrying establishment, and all he means is, "Deal with me or be damned."

Parson Rundell, of Wakerley, Northamptonshire, has been turned out of the Church of England for "immorality." It is only recently that the Church has grown so particular.

President Hugh Price Hughes let that honest, simple-minded Christian, Thomas George Senior, go to prison for four months without raising a protest. That unfortunate member of the Peculiar People obeyed Jesus Christ, and trusted to prayer, instead of calling in a doctor to his sick child. Mr. Hughes has been cheerful and happy while that poor fellow was doing four months' hard labor like a common felon. Yet this man of God is asking the world to believe that prayer is answered. God has told people to give him money. On one occasion it was £10 which came in the nick of time; on another occasion it was £100. He also tells of a girl's prayers which converted her father, who was an avowed infidel, but no relation, we presume, to the famous (and fabulous) Atheist shoemaker. Mr. Hughes may deceive the credulous, but people of common sense will want to know why this fervent believer in prayer allows a fellow believer to rot in gaol, simply for the crime of believing. Mr. Hughes may be a very clever man, but he is evidently a hypocrite.

Sleeping in church has been the subject of discussion at Bournemouth. The Mayor, who took part in it, said that a man who slept in church ought to have a book thrown at him, or two books if one were insufficient. But is not this a dangerous remedy? Would it not be better to provide the preacher with a long-range peashooter?

Rev. T. Evans said that all ministers should be provided with cameras, so that they could take snapshots of sleeping members of their congregation, and present them with copies. We suspect, however, that some hardened sleepers would cheerfully take a few dozen copies at the same price.

Religious mania is responsible for many things, some comic and some tragic. Sometimes it makes the sufferer commit suicide or murder; at other times it makes him indulge in the greatest absurdities. At Llanelly, for instance, a young haulier, named James Morgan, under the influence of this malady, escaped from bed in his shirt and ran madly through the public streets. He is now in the County Asylum at Carmarthen.

A correspondent informs us that he recently came across a Salvation Army contingent at Southport. They were shouting, drumming, and begging lustily. Behind them, acting as a screen from the sun and wind, was a large sign put up by the local authorities, bearing in big letters the inscription "Saddle Asses."

Walter Leslie, a converted actor, who now works in the soul-saving line at Ramsgate, brought an action against Frederick France for threatening to do him bodily harm. The magistrates dismissed the case, and their decision was received with applause. The cross-examination of the plaintiff tended to show that he resembled some distinguished Bible characters in his *penchant* for the ladies. Jealous husbands seem to be his bane. But the righteous were always persecuted.

According to *Tit-Bits*, clergymen are paid to puff plays of a semi-religious order. Sometimes they receive handsome cheques in acknowledgment of their services. It is alleged that American theatrical managers often keep a clergyman of their own, whom they send on in advance to advertise the play in social and religious circles.

Rev. Alfred Thomson, the Wolverhampton Congregational minister referred to in our last issue, has been interviewed by a local newspaper. In the course of his remarks to the press, he called the Book of Joshua "the Biblical Chamber of Horrors." He said that he believed in the divinity of the Bible, just as he believed in the divinity of everything else, in fact, he did not believe in any special inspiration. He denounced his clerical brethren for the "abominable hypocrisy" of their language on taking a better situation. They speak of it as "a call," when it is nearly always a matter of business. Mr. Thomson is evidently more in the Church than of it.

"Clearing one's vision," the Bishop of Ripon says, "is the first thing that ought to be done in the preparation of a sermon." Might not this put an end to sermons altogether?

Under the heading of "The Battle of the Press" the *Daily News* has reviewed the *Life of Richard Carlile*, by his daughter, which was noticed a few weeks ago in our own columns. On the whole, the review is laudatory. More justice than might be expected is shown towards Carlile, and even to "Isis." One or two rather curious observations, however, call for a word of criticism. Our contemporary refers to Mr. Holyoake's trial and imprisonment in 1842 as though this were positively the last case of the kind in England. There have been more than half-a-dozen trials for blasphemy since, and in 1883 the editor of the *Freethinker* suffered a longer and much worse imprisonment than Mr. Holyoake. Nor is it quite true that Mr. Holyoake was "tried on a vague charge of Atheism." Nobody ever was tried for Atheism. Biggles have never been ingenuous enough for that. Mr. Holyoake was tried on a charge of blasphemy under the common law; and the pretence was kept up then, as it always has been, that he was punished, not for his opinions, but for wounding the feelings of Christians.

Our contemporary also states that "Carlile was no Atheist." He was as much an Atheist as Charles Bradlaugh was. He renounced the notion that the active power in the universe was "intelligent or designing." "There is no such God in existence," he declared, "as any man has preached; nor any kind of God." He excluded from his *Republican* the words "God, soul, and spirit, as words without prototypes. Only thirteen days before he died he wrote: "Idolatry will not parley; superstition will not treat or covenant. They must be uprooted for public and individual safety."

True Wisdom.

But apt the mind or fancy is to rove
Uncheck'd, and of her roving is no end;
Till warned, or by experience taught, she learn
That, not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure and subtle; but, to know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom.

—John Milton.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, June 4, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road: 7-30, Dreyfus Vindicated and Zola Avenged."

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.

W. J. COCKSON (South Africa).—See "Acid Drops" for our reply. G. W. B.—It is a very old joke, though you have only just heard of it. Thanks all the same.

A. B. MOSS.—We need no assurance that you will always be ready to work earnestly for Freethought.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your welcome batches of cuttings; also for your article, which will appear in our next, having arrived too late for this week's issue.

MISS EMMA BRADLAUGH FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—C. Conway Monk, 5s.; J. Oram, 1s.; J. W. Gott, 2s. 6d.; Miss Goyne, 2s.; C. Handley, 2s. 6d.; Dr. Nickols, 10s. 6d.; A Friend (per B. E. M.), 2s.

E. S. H.—Mr. Forder might find you a customer for the Paine volume. The others are not of much value. With regard to the Jews, it is nonsense to say that they are objectionable because they are idle. This is a Christian calumny. The Jews have done good work where they have been allowed the opportunity. That they engage, commercially, rather in distribution than in production, is chiefly due to the fact that Christians, for ever so many centuries, forbade them by law to follow any occupation but money-lending and trading.

G. CRUDDAS.—Mr. Foote fully intends to visit the Tyneside again as soon as possible. Probably it will not be before the autumn. He will try to spend a week or ten days in the district, and will be happy to lecture every evening. Your own Branch will certainly not be overlooked.

T. LANGFORD.—Cuttings are always welcome.

R. CHAPMAN.—Short report inserted as you request.

S. HOLMAN.—See "Sugar Plums." Keep pegging away. As the song says, you never know your luck.

J. PARTRIDGE.—The report of the excursion to Stratford-on-Avon, which was to have reached us from another hand, has not arrived. We state this in order that you and others may not be surprised at its non-insertion.

H. JACOBIN.—Tolstoi's work on the Four Gospels is not valuable as "an authority." It contains some good things by the way, but it is amusing to watch the great Russian novelist constructing a new Jesus Christ of his own pattern.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Thanks for the cuttings. The resolution you refer to will be duly pressed forward. We are obliged to you for your good wishes.

J. L. L.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

G. V. HUNT.—Your poem opens well, but the quality of the first verse is not maintained throughout.

T. DESBAR.—Your letter in favor of Secular Sunday schools is hardly necessary. The Conference was overwhelmingly in favor of them. The difficulty is to carry them on while Freethinkers are relatively few and widely scattered, as they are in our great cities.

J. D. L.—We do not see how we can investigate the matter. Were all the facts before us, however, we should be happy to castigate the reverend bigot.

M. JONES.—A little out of our line.

W. J. COLLINS.—Shakespeare probably read Montaigne in Florio's translation. There is a modern edition of that work, edited by the late Professor Henry Morley, and published by Routledge and Kegan Paul. Dent's edition, in pocket form, is handsome and convenient, but much more expensive. Montaigne was certainly a very great writer. Few have been so wise and sane. And he was the first of the moderns who questioned whether men should burn each other for a difference of opinion.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 25 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 25 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, 25 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.

SUNDAY last was the first fine "Lord's Day" for a good while. Nevertheless a capital audience gathered at the Athenæum Hall to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Robespierre and His Religion." Mr. Thurlow occupied the chair. This evening (June 4) Mr. Foote lectures again from the same platform. His subject will be "Dreyfus Vindicated and Zola Avenged." In view of the present position of affairs of France this lecture should draw a large audience.

Mr. Charles Watts is improving steadily, but slowly. He will not be able to fulfil any lecturing engagements until September. By that time we hope he will be full of health and strength for a good winter's work. He discovered the other day that he is one year younger than he thought he was, and that is a "find" in the right direction; for, as the proverbial Irishman would say, he has a year longer to live; or, to put it in another Hibernian way, it will take him another six months to be as old as he was six months ago.

Mr. A. B. Moss has been re-elected on the Camberwell Vestry by 665 votes—263 above the highest Moderate. Mr. Moss had to work hard for this result, in opposition to much bigotry, and we heartily congratulate him on his success.

Mr. Gerald Massey entered his seventy-second year on Monday. Freethought students will remember him as the author of some remarkable, if rather ponderous, works on comparative mythology, in which the dogmas and so-called history of the Christian religion are criticised in a spirit of the most thoroughgoing rationalism. Mr. Massey has a small pension to cheer his old age. Lord Palmerston granted him £70 a year in 1863, "as a lyric poet sprung from the people," and this was increased to £100 in 1887. Many of our readers will be glad to hear that Mr. Massey enjoys good health. He resides at Norwood.

The Co-operators have resolved to erect a suitable memorial to Robert Owen, who is regarded as the real founder of their movement. Robert Owen was a Freethinker, like most men in advance of their time. Many of the clergy patronise Co-operation now—when it has succeeded.

The *Consell Guardian* has not been quite fair over the Atheist Shoemaker correspondence. On the other hand, however, we are pleased to see in its columns an article by "Heresy" setting forth the independence of morality, and its development side by side with the steady decline of supernaturalism.

The *Yarmouth Independent* prints a long report of a lecture on "The Work of a Few Great Freethinkers," by Mr. A. H. Smith, in the local Freethinkers' Hall. It was a very interesting and informing discourse, and the report makes it accessible to a wider public.

The *Pollokshaws News* prints a dialect letter from "Sooth-Side Cairter" on the Bible and Teetotalism, which will be an eye-opener to the godly. Bible texts of a decidedly non-teetotal character are quoted, and commented upon sarcastically.

The *Weekly Scotsman* prints letters from laymen on the "Poverty of Scottish Ministers." One writer says he is "disgusted at ministers." Robert Grierson pitches into them right and left, and declares that the only proper reform would be to "withdraw from them all salary whatsoever." Stands Scotland where it did?

Senor Castelar, the great Republican orator of Spain, whose death his countrymen are mourning, was a determined enemy of priestcraft. "Like Gambetta," the *Daily News* says, "he found that Clericalism was the enemy. It was against the Spanish priests and the mighty influence of Rome in his native land in their hostility to progress and to free government that he waged his most tremendous warfare." Castelar was a consummate orator, but he was a failure as a man of action. Even in his opposition to priestcraft he did not go far enough. He did not see, as Gambetta did, that the root of the mischief lay in the dogmas of Christianity.

Mr. Heaford had a good audience in Victoria Park on Sunday, and his lecture was much appreciated. A copy of the *Freethinker* was sold to a church organist who is a Secularist, and another to a parson who said he used to enjoy it years ago and would try it again.

A little band of Freethinkers, few but fit, are trying to uphold the flag at Porth, South Wales. Last Sunday they met and heard an interesting scientific discourse by a young member. To-day (June 4), at 6 p.m., they meet again at 100 Primrose-street, Tonypandy.

The open-air lectures in Finsbury Park being in danger of dropping, in consequence of the want of local organisation, Mr. Foote has authorised Miss Vance to arrange for their continuance on behalf of the N.S.S. for the present. Miss Vance will be at the Park in charge of the platform this afternoon (June 4) at 3.30, and a lecture will be delivered by Mr. Easton. Freethinkers in the neighborhood should rally round the platform on this occasion.

John Milton : Poet and Cyclist.

A GREAT LITERARY DISCOVERY BY THE IMPIOUS BOOKWORM.

A SHORT time ago a short paragraph appeared in the pages of one of the cycling papers referring to the use of the word "coasting," and asking for light on the same. Apparently, this was beyond the depth of the usual readers, for no response was made to the invitation by them, and the ideas contained in this present article were too strong meat to be accepted by the orthodox editor, opening, as it did, with the suggestion that *Paradise Lost* is a poem based on a reported case of slump in celestial stock, or else a big coasting expedition, which evidently concluded with a general smash-up, for quite early we read of some one being

Hurl'd headlong, flaming from the ethereal sky
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire.

Any rider who has done an extra swift run down an ugly hill, and has waked up from a long spell of unconsciousness with his cigarette jammed down his throat, his head through his front wheel, his new Renold chain tangled round his ankles, and his pocket on fire from rubbed vestas, will fully appreciate these allusions to penal fire, chains, hideous ruin, etc. The particular passage as to "coasting" is the following:—

.....he then survey'd
Hell and the gulf between, and Satan there
Coasting the wall of Heaven—on this side, night;
In the dun air sublime, and ready now
To stoop with wearied wings and willing feet
On the bare outside of this world, that seem'd
Firm land imbosom'd, without a firmament,
Uncertain which, in ocean or in air.

This passage is surely the most magnificent idea of a coast ever conceived by mortal man, and proves to completeness that John Milton, although blind when writing, must have been a most enthusiastic and daring cyclist, and is one more proof of the right of cyclists and cycling to the world's attention.

Milton is believed by many to have great claims on the world's consideration for having written such works as *Arcopagitica*, *Eikonoklastes*, *A Defence of the People of England*, and others; but these claims all pale before the marvellous conception of a single coast of 6,000 miles, one quarter round the globe, say from Pole to Equator, with a final launch off into space. There are many other passages to support the contention that Milton himself was a cyclist, and to again prove there is nothing new under the sun. For instance, dealing with the 1899 boom of free pedals or free wheels, God, defending his conduct, says:—

.....for so
I form'd them free, and free they must remain
Till they enthrall themselves. I else must change
Their nature.

Clearly, also, there was a "battle of the gears," for the poet says:—

Above them all
The golden sun, in splendor likest Heaven,
Allur'd his eye; thither his course he bends
Through the calm firmament; but up or down,
By center or eccentric, hard to tell,

This clearly means his new gear was not yet patented and so was closely covered by a gear-case too soon the cycling journalist giving the thing away too soon. Who now can tell what that gear was? Bound to be Lloyd's Cross Roller, Acatene, or perhaps—another thought—it may have been a piracy of my own million-multifold, manipulative motor-mover! But that cannot be; that, at least, is a new and original motion to yet astonish the cycling world. That suffered from punctures is very certain, from the passage:—

and to each inward part,
With gentle penetration, though unseen,
Shoots invisible.

As proof that Milton was a careful rider, we have the following very proper expression of contempt for the mere scorcher, who tears along without any regard to the beauties of the way:—

Mammon led them on;
Mammon, the least-erected spirit that fell
From Heaven, for e'en in Heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heaven's pavement.

In another short passage we have another reference to the gear question, coasting, and lighting-up:—

Took leave, and toward the coast of earth beneath,
Down from the ecliptick, sped with hop'd success,
Throws his steep flight in many an aery wheel,
Nor staid till on Niphates' top he lights.

It would almost seem that he was dodging a hole because his lamp was not alight at proper time.

To the orthodox, it must always be a shock to have all their old idols made fun of; but there is, nevertheless, something to be said in favor of the *reductio ad absurdum* method of treating any sort of fetish.

With many, Milton's *Paradise Lost* is only one step below the Holy Book itself as an object of reverence and worship; and yet, after making great concessions to account of some striking passages and beautiful imagery, what an awful lot of pettifogging incompetents does Milton make out God and his staff to be. A long and critical, albeit irreverent, examination of this poem almost leads one to think that Milton really meant his poem to be a satire upon the Omnipotent's impotence.

Take, by way of proof, Book iv. Here we have a very detailed account of Eden, and the various devices set around to keep the Devil out, with a specially smart angel, Gabriel, as gatekeeper. All which precautions the Devil sets at naught at a bound. While Adam and Eve are sleeping, Gabriel calls for a cycling Gymkhana:

The Cherubim,
Forth issuing at the accustom'd hour, stood arm'd
To their night watches in warlike parade;
When Gabriel to his next in power thus spake:
Uzziel, half these draw off, and coast the south
With strictest watch; these others wheel the north—
Our circuit meets full west.

Then follow some marvellous evolutions which would make the fortune of any showman, but all which the Devil is inside the ring tickling Eve's ear.

Many other proofs of our general contention are given, but probably the above will be enough to convince cyclists, when next packing up for a tour, to include a copy of Milton in the "Hold-all," and recognise again "How great wits jump."

Eve.

Dame Eve understood of the whole demonstration this—that the fruit was forbidden; and because it was forbidden she ate it. But no sooner had she eaten of the tempting apple than she lost her innocence, her naive guilelessness, and discovered that she was far too scantily dressed for a person of her quality, the mother of so many future kings and emperors, and she asked for a dress—truly, only a dress of fig-leaves, because at that time there were as yet no silks and emperors, and she asked for a dress—truly, only a dress of silk fabrics in existence, and because there were in Paradise no dressmakers or milliners—oh, Paradise! Strange thought is of a new dress.—Heine.

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

Tommaso Campanella.

CAMPANELLA was a countryman of Telesio, being born at Stilo, in Calabria, in the year 1568. Like Bruno, he displayed a wonderful precocity of genius. At thirteen he was able to write verses with great facility, and at fourteen he took the Dominican habit, thus enrolling himself a member of that great ecclesiastical organisation to which Bruno also belonged. He assiduously studied theological subjects, his first ambition being to equal the fame of Albert and the great Thomas Aquinas. In the convent of San Giorgio his youthful mind was deeply exercised upon the great themes of theology and philosophy, until at length he discovered the sterility of the ancient method of philosophising. The fame of Telesio was then noised abroad, and Campanella, being attracted thereby, obtained and read the old philosopher's treatise, *On the Nature of Things*. He was captivated by the bold spirit which animated the teachings of Telesio, and was induced thereby to leave the barren tracks of baseless speculation for the plainer but more fruitful paths of inductive research. With all a proselyte's ardor, he engaged in a defence of Telesio against the attempted refutation by Antoninus Marta.

In our recent sketch of Bruno we depicted the groveling submission of the human mind to the authority of Aristotle, a subserviency partly due to the ancient prestige of the Stagyrite, and partly to his having been for centuries backed by the almost omnipotent power of the Church. It was natural in such circumstances that Campanella's uncompromising hostility to Aristotle should raise a violent ferment, and bring upon him censure and persecution. His monastic brethren were least of all inclined to tolerance, and their hatred was still further increased by his decisive contradiction of many long-cherished beliefs. Supported, however, by wealthy patrons, he continued, in face of all opposition, to persevere in his attempt to reform philosophy; but at length neither the power of his own genius nor the patronage of friends could further protect him from insult and persecution, and he was obliged to flee. For about ten years he wandered through Italy, visiting Venice, Florence, Padua, and Bologna. At last he saw Sarpi, and at Florence the great Galileo. To protect himself, he wrote a defence of the See of Rome; but in 1599 he was arrested and thrown into prison, as the leader of an alleged conspiracy against the King of Spain and the Neapolitan Government. The wildest charges were preferred against him, as that he was about to announce himself as the Messiah, and to get himself crowned King of Calabria; and he was accused of the authorship of books he had never written. Notwithstanding the intercession of the Pope, Paul. IV., and of his nuncio, Campanella was kept in prison twenty-seven years, during the greater part of which time he was denied the privilege of reading and writing. Seven times he was put to the torture, but his indomitable spirit would not bend, and no incriminatory words could be wrung from his lips. As soon as granted he composed a work on the *Spanish Monarchy*, and another on *Real Philosophy*, both of which were sent into Germany to be published. In 1626 he was liberated in consequence of the express command of Pope Urban VIII. to Philip IV. of Spain. His flagrant heresies, however, made his residence in Italy unsafe. At Rome his preaching of the new philosophy caused intense excitement; his adversaries stirred up the mob against him, and he was obliged to escape in disguise to France, being assisted in his flight by the French Ambassador, the Count de Noailles.

At Paris he was favorably received by Cardinal Richelieu, the founder of the French Academy, a disreputable and powerful genius, whom his enemies openly accused of Atheism. The Cardinal procured from Louis XIII. a pension for the exiled philosopher, which enabled him to live comfortably at the Dominican Monastery, in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris, until his death in 1639. His last years were spent in the midst of a learned society, and before he expired he paid a brief visit to Holland, where he met the celebrated Descartes.

Most of Campanella's works were written in prison,

and it was while suffering incarceration that he bravely dared to champion the cause of Galileo, who was persecuted by the savage Inquisition, and compelled to recant his daring heresies about the position and movement of the earth. Numerous works proceeded from his fertile pen, amongst which the following, all written in Latin, may be cited: *A Precursor to the Restoration of Philosophy, On the Rejection of Paganism, On Astrology, Rational Philosophy, The City of the Sun, Universal Philosophy, On the Right Method of Studying, and Atheism Subdued*. *The City of the Sun* is a social romance, after the style of Plato's *Republic*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and More's *Utopia*, in which community of women figures among other crudities. *The Atheism Subdued* ought, says a judicious critic, to have been entitled *Atheism Triumphant*, as the author puts far stronger arguments into the mouth of the Atheist than into that of the Theist. Heretical opinions were in that persecuting age often thus concealed under an orthodox mask; while professing to be faithful Christians, philosophers would often adduce, and ineffectively answer, powerful arguments against the faith. However much we may deplore such weakness, we have no right to censure it, unless we are perfectly confident that we ourselves could have braved the anger and malice of the whole world.

Like many other minds of the age, Campanella was a strange compound of sense and absurdity. In his astrological writings he confesses to a belief in the cure of disease by the words of an old woman, and he appears to have believed that, like Socrates, when any danger threatened, he was warned by a demon, between sleeping and waking. Yet, in other respects, he evinces great boldness and soberness of thought. Most of his philosophy was borrowed from his master, Telesio; he accepted the Telesian theory of matter, and of the perpetual action thereon of heat and cold, the two great active agents. But he was not a slavish follower of his master; on the contrary, he often controverted many of his notions. All animal operations are, he thought, produced by one universal spirit, which acts in all sensoriums. All things in nature have a passive sense of feeling, and withal a consciousness of impressions, and a perception of the objects by which they are produced. The universal soul thus pervades all nature; our earth, like the planets in Bruno's philosophy, being sentient. His psychological notions were more plausible. Sense, the foundation of all knowledge, is the only trustworthy guide in philosophy, and this faculty he divides into present perception, and inference from things perceived to things not perceived. A simple classification of mental powers, and highly scientific for the age in which it appeared. Campanella, like Bruno, Telesio, and Vanini, is chiefly remarkable on account of the spirit of his philosophy, rather than for its positive value. Like them, he stands forth conspicuously as a champion of the cause of mental freedom against dogmatic authority, and his memory should be honored as that of one who dared and suffered much persecution for Truth's sake.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Charles Watts Fund.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

WILL you kindly insert the accompanying first list of subscriptions in response to my appeal for Mr. Charles Watts? GEORGE ANDERSON.

- A. J. Hooper, 1s.; Charles Bemrose, 5s.; M. Christopher, 10s.; David R. Bow, 2s.; H. Sumner, 5s.; James C. Banks, 5s.; James Moffatt, 5s.; "Anonymous," £3; R. Goodwin, 10s.; John Robinson, 1s.; John Waller, 5s.; M. A. M. (no address), 5s.; Richard Carroll, 5s.; A. Rushton, £1; John Hockin, 1s.; B. Coleman (no address), 5s.; F. J. Thurlow, 5s.; Dr. R. T. Nichols, Ilford, 10s. 6d.; Mr. Wombwell, 5s.

Obituary.

WE have to record the death of Mr. Robert Simpson, of South Shields, proprietor of the *Free Press*, a journal which has always been friendly, or at least fair, to the Secular movement in the district. Mr. Simpson was universally respected. His funeral was largely attended, amongst those present being Mr. S. M. Peacock, president of the South Shields N.S.S. Branch.

Book Chat.

THE newspapers are rivalling one another in their fulsome adulation of the Disarmament Scheme of the Despot of All the Russias, which is frequently called "The Czar's Millennium." It is curious to note how the very ideas which were considered certain evidence of insanity in Freethinkers, from the days of Voltaire to Bradlaugh, are now considered as certain proofs of the divine wisdom of the Muscovite Solomon.

* * *

Readers of the *Freethinker* are reminded that Mr. Foote's pamphlet, *The Shadow of the Sword*, deals with this question at considerable length. It would be a useful publication to press on the attention of the outside public at the present moment, as being evidence of the attitude of a Freethinker on a live question.

* * *

We expect Mr. G. L. Mackenzie's long-deferred volume, *Brimstone Ballads*, will be ready in July next. Mr. Mackenzie deserves well at the hands of all Freethinkers. He has devoted talents of a very high order to Rationalism for a number of years, without any recognition beyond the satisfaction of having done his best for the cause he loves. Had Mr. Mackenzie used his gifts in the interests of either of the two political parties, he would now be one of the most popular writers in England.

* * *

In this collection of verse Mr. Mackenzie ranges from grave to grave, and his versatility is apparent at a glance. With a wealth of opulent epigram and an inexhaustible fund of humor, he attacks the popular superstition in every page. Every Freethinker should possess a copy. He or she will never regret the outlay.

* * *

Messrs. G. Routledge and Co. have published a cheap edition of George Henry Lewes's *History of Philosophy* at the modest price of two shillings.

* * *

The *Literary Guide* for June opens with an admirable article by Mr. J. M. Robertson on the late Professor Büchner. The monthly "Chat" is with Mr. Joseph McCabe, and is very interesting. Mr. McCabe thinks there should be greater concentration amongst Rationalists. "We must," he says, "accentuate our agreements, and make less of our differences. I am sure that the supreme desideratum in non-ecclesiastical circles to-day is that of united action on a democratic basis." Admirable sentiments, but doubtful wisdom! Mr. McCabe will find that united action on a democratic basis is infinitely more difficult than it is on the basis of authority which exists in the Catholic Church. We should be sorry, however, to damp any ardor he may have for undertaking the task.

* * *

The Czar's friend, Mr. W. T. Stead, introduced us to a very absurd spirit, called "Julia," some time since. Mr. Julian Ralph, an American journalist, has apparently found the rest of the spiritist family. His new book, *An Angel in a Web*, is full of disembodied spirits, so much so that our head ached in attempting to discriminate between the quick and the dead. Mr. Ralph's characters seem more talkative after death than before.

Christ Died on the Cross.

These Men Live on It.

THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY receives annually, £15,000; Archbishop of York, £10,000; Bishop of London, £10,000; Bishop of Durham, £7,000; Bishop of Winchester, £6,500; Bishop of Bangor, £4,200; Bishop of Bath and Wells, £5,000; Bishop of Carlisle, £4,500; Bishop of Chester, £4,200; Bishop of Chichester, £4,200; Bishop of Ely, £5,500; Bishop of Exeter, £4,200; Bishop of Gloucester, £5,000; Bishop of Hereford, £4,200; Bishop of Lichfield, £4,200; Bishop of Lincoln, £4,500; Bishop of Liverpool, £4,200; Bishop of Llandaff, £4,200; Bishop of Manchester, £4,200; Bishop of Newcastle, £3,500; Bishop of Norwich, £4,500; Bishop of Oxford, £5,000; Bishop of Peterborough, £4,500; Bishop of Ripon, £4,200; Bishop of Rochester, £3,800; Bishop of St. Albans, £3,200; Bishop of St. Asaph, £4,200; Bishop of St. Davids, £4,500; Bishop of Salisbury, £5,000; Bishop of Sodor and Man, £1,800; Bishop of Southwell, £3,500; Bishop of Wakefield, £3,000; Bishop of Worcester, £5,000.

The above-mentioned followers of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth, who had nowhere to lay his head, are addressed as "My Lords," and the majority of them have seats in the House of Peers. "Blessed be ye poor."

Christian creatures never will seriously and sufficiently spend money, except to find out the shortest ways of killing each other.—*John Ruskin.*

Christian Economics.

A PARSON said to Smith, his friend,
Who wasted his life in drinking;
"My friend, consider how 'twill end;
I wish I could set you thinking!"
"Save up your cash, and leave the drink!
Your clothing is all in tatters!"
Said Smith: "Of these I never think;
Like Christ, I contemn these matters!"
"But look ahead! What will you do?
You're laying up future sorrow!"
Said Smith: "I follow Christ, not you,
And 'take no thought for the morrow!"
The parson went his way, perplexed
By thoughts that came willy-nilly;
Distressed to think that any text
Should be so absurdly silly!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Correspondence.

SECULARISM AND RELIGIOUS PHRASES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue for May 28 Mr. Clogg avails himself of your courtesy to criticise a letter of mine which, by your favor, appeared in the *Freethinker* of April 23.

My letter was merely an expression of the opinion that the impressiveness of Secularist funeral services is greatly marred by the use therein of, to Secularists, a lot of meaningless words—when they mean anything—utterly misleading words which, though in place in a sermon, should have no place in a Secularist burial discourse.

My remarks concerning Mr. Gould's report of a burial discourse delivered at Leicester on April 1, and reported by that gentleman himself in the *Freethinker* of the 6th of that month, seem to have upset Mr. Clogg's equilibrium, for he asks me if I would "presume to take Colonel Ingersoll's task" as I did Mr. Gould, in my animadversion upon the above-mentioned report.

Now, Sir, assuming I were allowed to do so, and that the circumstances were exactly similar, I answer yes. And I am fully convinced that neither of those highly-cultured and liberal-minded gentlemen would see anything like presumption in my doing so, but merely the expression of an honestly held view of a serious and important matter.

Affirming the meaninglessness of sacerdotal terms to Secularists in their mutual intercourse with each other, and with their fellow lay citizens still in the Church, is in no sense an ignoring of the fact that, to some fifty thousand *practical soul-savers*, and millions of good people who follow their guidance, and also to the Freethought lecturers whose task is to oppose the former and to free the latter, these priestly terms are brimming over with a most profound interest—an interest which organised Secularism is ever striving to minimise. No; those sacerdotalisms are out of place neither in the pulpit nor on the Freethought platform, but only amongst Secularists, who have grown out of their use—or, at least, have the credit for having done so.

There being, generally speaking, a goodly proportion of Christians present at most Secularist funerals, the more intelligent of whom are eagerly following the speaker, to see what important particulars his oration differs from the ordinary funeral service of Christians, and who will be too glad to clutch at any straw that comes within their reach that is in any way suggestive of our dependence upon the formularies of religion, I deem it the bounden duty of such speakers to give the religiously-inclined no such straw to grasp at. This is a duty that I never discard when it comes to my lot to officiate at such sorrowful functions. So much am I impressed with the importance of this principle that in my reading of Mr. Austin Holyoake's sublimely beautiful service, I invariably substitute "extinct" for "departed," "conviction" for "conscience," and "the conjectured" for "the unknown," my reason for so doing being based upon the great and obvious truth that ever-advancing science is on our side, which, whilst it gives us no right to dogmatise in such grave matters, has an ever-increasing tendency to obliterate all reasons or excuses for pandering in the least degree to the prejudices of the uninformed therein. Briefly stated, my position in this connection simply amounts to my taking possession of, and a holding of, the ground that has been so bravely won for us by such standard-bearers of the ranks of progress as the above writer. As I had the honor of knowing Mr. Austin Holyoake personally, I don't think I shall be assuming too much when I express the opinion that, were he now living, he would have given a most kind hearing to any suggestion as to the desirability of the above revised use of his imposing address; for, as I knew him to be in all things a true embodiment of the kindly, considerate and highly-polished gentleman.

I notice, Sir, that your correspondent insinuates that, in

complaining about Mr. Gould's too frequent use of priestly terms, I was bound to furnish him with their equivalents in the common tongue. To which I answer, that for me to have done so in Mr. Gould's case would have been but little short of an unwarrantable impertinence. That gentleman's scholastic attainments are too well known, and far too highly appreciated by the Secular party, and by no individual member thereof more than by myself, for me to ever dream of acting the role of instructor to him. I merely accepted his taking notice of my criticism as an acknowledgment that, having said his say on the subject, he was quite willing that others should say theirs. Now, Sir, by your kind permission having said my say, and ditto of my very good friend and fellow-worker, Mr. Clogg, as far as it concerns me, I purpose allowing this matter to rest.

T. J. THURLOW.

SECULARISTS AND RELIGIOUS EXPRESSIONS.
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—Mr. Thurlow's criticism of Mr. F. J. Gould's model Secular Burial Service so aptly expressed my thoughts that I expectedly awaited Mr. Gould's reply thereto. I was disappointed, but this week I find W. S. Clogg attempts to supply the omission. In doing so he appears to me to quite forget the issue. I presume that neither Mr. Thurlow nor any other Secularist would wish to drop the words complained of out of our dictionaries, even were such a course possible, which it is not; what he does wish is that these words, when used by Secularists, shall not involve a double meaning at the risk of the misunderstanding of the speaker. A reading of Mr. Thurlow's service will easily illustrate what I mean, for, as Mr. Clogg puts it, we have sufficient vocal symbols, all inexorably connected with the superstition we wish to uproot, as to set up a modern revivalist of the Thomas Waugh type. It is difficult to find a justification for this use of them, as "the language of educated people would supply far more appropriate means of expression" of all Mr. Gould's sentiments. W. S. Clogg is very much at sea in some of the words he names—e.g., "conscience," "faith," "righteousness," "missionary," etc., are all words of every-day use, without any necessary connection with "religion." Turning to all the others, "soul," "grace," "spirit," "god," "divine," etc., all of them are so religious in their flavor that it is scarcely wise for a Secularist to use them as Mr. Gould does, as he is here to lay himself open to the charge of paucity of expression from the religionist, and want of candor from fellow Secularists.

We have no souls to save, no gods to glorify, no religion to defend. We hold nothing sacred from criticism, nothing holy from investigation. Nothing has "grace" enough to be "sanctified" from the criticism of reason, and while we have "faith" enough in the "righteousness" of our cause, so long as we carry it on in the "spirit" of truth, and with a clear conscience, we hold that the use of the word "religion" to denominate our ethical system is contrary to the fearlessness of our attack. Such use of "religion" and its allied symbols favors too much of parleying with the enemy; therefore, rather than be misunderstood, we frankly confess our Atheism and irreligion. For thousands of years these words have been uttered by the lips of the world's greatest monsters, sullied and rendered "sacred" by its "grace" some of the vilest of our race, until now it is next to impossible to dissociate them from their world-wide significance. In the name of honesty and straightforwardness, I say: Let us leave them to the priest and his votaries, and turn for substitute to the cleaner, sweeter, and far more appropriate expressions with which our mother English teems.

WILLIE DYSON.

THE GREATEST NOVELS.
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—A few weeks ago you reprinted from the New York *Truthseeker* what appeared to be portions of an interview with Colonel Ingersoll on "The Progress of the Century." In it he is made to declare that he considers the three greatest novels to be Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*, Hugo's *Les Misérables*, and Ouida's *Ariadne*; the first-mentioned being spoken of as "the supreme work of fiction," and the author (or is it authoress?) of *Ariadne* as "the greatest living writer of fiction." Without expressing an opinion myself, I venture to ask you to be so good as to say, through the columns of the *Freethinker*, which three (or half-dozen) novels you consider to be the greatest. I do not ask you to give reasons for your choice, although they, I am sure, would be very welcome to many of your readers, who, like myself, know from experience that they can place confidence in your literary pronouncements. I recognise that this is not a matter upon which an editor and a public man will care to express a hasty opinion; and, if you have not time or the inclination to deal with it now, perhaps you will do so on an early date?

JOSEPH SEDDON, Junr.

[We are not able to comply with this correspondent's request at the moment, but we have no objection to doing so as soon as we can find time. It is useless to give opinions without reasons.—EDITOR.]

Matter and Thought.

THAT "blind, unconscious matter could not think" was held as a victorious argument, in spite of the assumption implied in the epithets (for the aphorism amounts to this—blind matter cannot see, unconscious matter cannot be conscious). To anyone who looks steadily at the question, however, it may be shown that, as a matter of fact, the nervous tissue, and that only, being sensitive, the biological proposition simply is: "Sensitive matter can be sensitive." To claim for this nervous tissue any superadded entity called Thought is to desert the plain path of observation for capricious conjecture. As well call Strength an immaterial principle superadded to muscular tissue. The muscular action and the nervous action are two special phenomena belonging to special tissues. Science can tell you no more. If your mind is dissatisfied therewith, and demands more recondite explanation, invent one to please yourself, and then invent one for heat, for attraction, for every phenomenon you conceive; the field is open; imagination has wide-sweeping wings; but do not palm off your imagination as science!—*George Henry Leves, "Comte's Philosophy," p. 201.*

Virtue and Hell.

It is the blackest sign of putrescence in a national religion, when men speak as if it were the only safeguard of conduct; and assume that, but for the fear of being burned, or for the hope of being rewarded, everybody would pass their lives in lying, stealing, and murdering. I think quite one of the notablest historical events of this century (perhaps the very notablest) was the council of clergymen, horror-struck at the idea of any diminution in our dread of hell, at which the last of English clergymen whom one would have expected to see in such a function, rose as the devil's advocate; to tell us how impossible it was we could get on without him.—*John Ruskin, "Ethics of the Dust," p. 142.*

A Prophecy.

Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death:
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks, in the surge of eternity.

—Shelley.

The raging war of interests in human society is only a feeble picture of the unceasing and terrible war of existence which reigns throughout the whole of the living world. The beautiful dream of God's goodness and wisdom in nature, to which as children we listened so devoutly, no longer finds credit now—at least among educated people who think. It has disappeared before our deeper acquaintance with the mutual relations of organisms, the advancement of oecology and sociology, and our knowledge of parasite life and pathology.—*Ernst Haeckel.*

The Mahdi claimed to be god-sent; Joseph Smith declared himself charged with a special revelation; so did Mahomet; so did Jesus. How, in each case, is it to be determined whether the prophet is sane and truthful? Is it to be decided by the numbers who accepted or rejected the prophet? And if yes, at what date or within what limits does the numerical strength become material? There are more Mormons now than there were Christians within a like period. Mahomedanism in some countries would poll an overwhelming majority. Buddhism counts to-day far more heads than can be claimed for Christianity.—*Charles Bradlaugh.*

God created man in his image, and man makes haste to return the compliment.—*Heine.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Dreyfus Vindicated and Zola Avenged."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, B. Hyatt, Recitals, Humorous and Dramatic.
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton.
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Religion of Women."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, Congress of Union of Ethical Societies.
WEST LONDON BRANCH (15 Edgware-road): June 5, at 9, Important business.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, E. Pack.
BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): C. Cohen—3.15, "Christianity"; 6.30, "Secularism."
CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. Cohen, "Unbelief."
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, S. E. Easton.
FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and Slavery."
FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): "The Atonement."
HAMMERSMITH (The Grove): 7.15, A lecture.
HAMPSTEAD HEATH (Jack Straw's Castle): 3, R. P. Edwards.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): Lectures every week evening at 8. Sunday, at 11.30, A. B. Moss.
KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, S. Jones; 7, W. J. Ramsey. June 7, at 8, C. Cohen.
STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, Mr. Heaford, "Christian Hopes and Fears."
THE TRIANGLE (Salmon Lane, Limehouse): 11.30, W. Heaford. June 6, at 8, R. P. Edwards.
S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): 11.15, Mr. Storrar. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. Newland.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, W. F. Davies, "Christianity and Slavery."
WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "Triumph of Rationalism."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, Miss L. A. Goyne, "Some Modern Customs and their Ancient Origins."
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, J. McCabe, "The Scientific Impeachment of Religion."
DERBY BRANCH (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, Business Meeting.
GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Pic-nic to Eaglesham.
GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row): 7, Violin Selections by Professors Elliot and Ray; 7.15, J. W. de Caux, J.P., "Christian Wiseacres."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "A Criticism of Sheldon's *In His Steps*."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Ross, "Roman Catholicism."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Closed for Summer Season.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Musical and other Recitals, etc. Members and friends please attend to hear particulars as to excursion on the 11th.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—June 4, m., Station-road, Camberwell; a. and e., Brockwell Park. 7, Mile End. 11, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton. 14, Mile End. 18 and 25, Newcastle-on-Tyne. 27, Mile End.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—June 4, m., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith. 18, a. and e., Brockwell Park. 25, m., Battersea.

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

R. P. EDWARDS, 52 Bramley-road, Notting-hill.—June 4, m., Pimlico; a., Hampstead; e., Kilburn. 11, m., Battersea; a. and e., Peckham. 18, m., Ridley-road; a., Victoria Park; e., Mile End. 25, m., Camberwell. July 2, m., Hyde Park; a., Hampstead; e., Hammersmith. 9, m., Ridley-road; a. and e., Peckham. 16, m., Station-road; a. and e., Brockwell Park. 23, m., Battersea; e., Stratford. 30, m., Limehouse; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton.

E. PACK, 10 Henstridge-place, Ordnance-road, St. John's Wood.—June 4, m., Battersea Park; a. and e., Peckham Rye. 11, m., Hyde Park; a., Hampstead Heath; e., Kilburn. 18, m., Mile End; e., Edmonton. 25, m., Pimlico Pier; a., Brockwell Park; e., Peckham Rye.

A. E. ELDERKIN, Watford.—June 18, Chatham.

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