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Nature and God.

Through Nature to God. By JOHN FISKE. (London: Macmillan & Co.)

SIXTEEN years ago, when I was enjoying free board and lodging in Her Majesty's Holloway Hotel, as a reward for bringing the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt, I was for the first three months of my "stretch"—which, being interpreted, meaneth one year—allowed to read no book but the Bible. I found it a very monotonous literary diet, and was heartily glad when I was permitted access to other volumes. The prison library, however, consisted of such goody-goody rubbish—carefully selected by the chaplain—that to call it a library at all was the grossest flattery. Fortunately, there were special circumstances which induced the Commissioners to grant me the unheard-of privilege of having books sent in to me from outside. Amongst these welcome immigrants was Professor John Fiske's *Cosmic Philosophy*, a laborious work in two bulky volumes. I remember that I read it with interest, but the only salient feature of it in my memory is its demonstration of the enormous part which the prolonged infancy of human beings has played in the development of civilisation. Since then I have read some smaller works by Mr. Fiske in which he struck me as displaying reactionary tendencies. I have now another little volume of his sent to me by a friend, with a wish that I would criticise it in the *Freethinker*, and this I proceed to do at what I hope will not be regarded at too considerable length.

Mr. Fiske's volume is not dedicated, but "consecrated," to the "beloved and revered memory" of the late Professor Huxley. Perhaps it is fortunate for the friendship thus celebrated that the great fighting work in this Theistic garden, and what a ruin it might look when he had done with it. Mr. Fiske does not pretend that Huxley would have agreed with him. He "far too honest for that." He admits that there was "a discernible difference" between them "in mental attitude," and that the second part of this volume was "intended as a reply" to Huxley's famous Romanes lecture. But surely the mental difference between them was more than merely discernible. Huxley accepted neither Theism nor the doctrine of Immortality, while Mr. Fiske is a passionate advocate of both. And the ardor of his devotion leads him to do great injustice to the champions of the opposite side. Comte is sneered at for suggesting that the earth's axis should have been tipped at a different angle, and is likened to King Alphonso of Castile, who regretted that he had not been present at the creation and given the Creator some good advice—"a wonder that Mr. Fiske does not sling a shaft of scorn at his countryman, Colonel Ingersoll, who has also pointed out "flaws in the constitution of things," and suggested that it would be an improvement if health were made catching, instead of disease. Haeckel, the greatest biologist since Darwin, is rebuked for believing that death ends all, and told that his opinion was "never reached through a scientific study of evolution"—which sounds very much like an impertinence. Later on it is remarked that Haeckel "takes his opinion on such matters ready-made from Ludwig Büchner"—which is an ineptitude from every point of view. Büchner himself is declared to be "simply an echo of the eighteenth-century atheist, La Mettrie"—which is as impolite as it is

untrue. Lalande, the astronomer, is censured for saying that he had swept the entire heavens with his telescope and found no God there. Mr. Fiske asserts that this betrays "crass ignorance" of the very nature of the problem to be solved. He forgets that Lalande spoke in a witty, telling way, using concrete instead of abstract language. It is absurd to suppose that he really expected to see God with a telescope. What he meant was that astronomy afforded no proof of God's existence. The "colossal silliness"—to use Mr. Fiske's own expression—does not belong to the astronomer. Nor is it precisely assignable to the eminent physiologist Moleschott, who is coupled with Lalande. Mr. Fiske does not speak exactly in this way of D'Alembert, Diderot, Helvétius, Condorcet, and Buffon. He gets rid of them, however, by alleging that "the roots of their atheism were emotional rather than philosophical," forgetting that they would probably have retorted the compliment upon him if he had passed it in their presence. These men were really not filled with a "generous but rash and superficial impatience." The superficiality rather lies with their critic, who imagines that religion can exist for the multitude without eventuating in something like Catholicism, of which the Church of England, for instance, is a drab-colored imitation. The great French atheists of the eighteenth century saw clearly that what is called Natural Religion will never do for the masses. With them it must be Revealed Religion or nothing. God and Immortality are only the starting-points of the great ecclesiastical procession. But they *are* the starting-points, and they involve all that follows. Men like Diderot and D'Holbach perceived that it was necessary to wage war against the two initial superstitions, which, however harmless in themselves, invariably developed under the fostering hand of priestcraft into gigantic and ruinous systems of credulity. They laid their axes, so to speak, at the root of the tree, instead of merely lopping away some of its most offensive branches. Whether their policy was opportune or not is perhaps a debatable question; but to call their treatment of religion "extremely shallow" is something worse than an absurdity.

The way in which Mr. Fiske speaks of so many great French atheists tempts me to discount his fervid panegyric on Voltaire, who built a church at Ferney and placed upon it the inscription "Deo erexit Voltaire," which Mr. Fiske rather loosely renders as "Voltaire built it for God," whereas he built it *to* God and *for* the parishioners. It was Voltaire who originated the statement, which is sometimes attributed to Robespierre, who repeated it in one of his Deistic speeches to the Convention, that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent him. Mr. Fiske is able to appreciate a Theist like Voltaire, although unable to appreciate an Atheist like Diderot, who was not so great a literary figure as Voltaire, but a more profound and fecund thinker. The following passage will show Mr. Fiske's admiration for the Patriarch of Ferney:—

"One may sit down at the table where was written the most perfect prose, perhaps, that ever flowed from pen, and look about the little room with its evidences of plain living and high thinking, until one seems to recall the eccentric figure of the vanished Master, with his flashes of shrewd wisdom and caustic wit, his insatiable thirst for knowledge, his consuming hatred of bigotry and oppression, his merciless contempt for shams, his boundless enthusiasm of humanity."

This is well said. It is excellent eulogy—sympathetic, discriminating, and pointed. One's only regret is that

Mr. Fiske's appreciation is paralysed when he reaches the frontier of Theism.

We have not quite done with fault-finding. There are a few other small matters we must refer to before dealing with Mr. Fiske's position as a Theist. He resorts to the old theological trick of printing certain words—for instance, the Everlasting Reality of Religion—with capitals; just, as Huxley said, a bearskin hat is put upon a Grenadier's head to make him look more formidable than he is by nature. On the other hand, he prints "atheism" and "atheist" without capitals, to lessen their significance. He copies some of the professional jargon of religious apologists, such as "When one reverently assumes," as though an assumption were any the better for being in the interest of Theism, or as though reverence should be a preliminary, instead of a result, of investigation. He talks of the "cosmic process" as "aiming" at certain ends, as though that were not the very point in debate. He speaks of "the flickering lamp of reason" as so inferior to the steady guide of instinct, as though an essential opposition existed between them, or as though man had any real light but reason to guide him. He declares that "all has been done in strict accordance with law," as though this unfortunate catchword "law" were anything but a cause of endless confusion in such inquiries. Now and then, indeed, he is sane and candid enough to admit that some religious opinion of his, as it relates to "matters beyond experience," cannot of course be "called scientific"; or that some argument, to which he attaches great importance, does not "pretend to meet the requirements of scientific demonstration." Were he always thus sane and candid, he would probably see that there is no "scientific" force at all in his Theistic argument. It "probably never occurred to anybody," he says, "to prove the existence of God until it was doubted." And does not this imply that Theists are always arguing in favor of presuppositions?

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

Frivolous Christianity.

In our younger days there was a well-recognised distinction between what was termed "a man of the world" and "a professed Christian." The worldly man was regarded as being vain and frivolous, concerning himself simply with "trifles light as air," and caring only for things of the present time. The Christian, on the other hand, was looked upon as one who obeyed St. Paul's injunction to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 11-15). He appeared a melancholy specimen of humanity, with an exceedingly long and solemn face, and with a pronounced hatred of all levity. His countenance looked as sour as a crab-apple, and he was never tired of repeating, "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards." We can readily understand the aspect things in general presented to such a mind. Grave or comical as his appearance may have seemed to one not of the faith, there is no doubt that his gloomy religion influenced him to an unfortunate degree. As Goldsmith describes someone: "All his thoughts had rest in heaven."

We are not referring here to those who wear religion as a cloak in order to better play the hypocrite, but rather to that class of believers who, by "the foolishness of preaching," think they have obtained what they designate as "convictions." Such enthusiasts are deeply concerned about their souls, and in securing for themselves a place at the "right hand of God." The very sincerity of these believers causes them to think more of heaven than of earth. The consequence is that the secular welfare of the people has been persistently neglected by the supposed followers of Christ. The *Church Gazette*, dated June 10, has a leading article upon the coming Church Congress, in which the Christian editor says: "There is no doubt that sociological and economic questions have been either scandalously neglected by our Church, as a whole, or else dealt with, or rather dabbled with, in the self-satisfied but superficial and amateurishly bland style which has become only too familiar. And that this has been the treatment they have received is very easy to account for. The clerics who have sought for a panacea of

social evils in platitudes or texts have in general done so because they were clerics ignorant of the facts, and without practical knowledge of the world; and clerics too, who have thought it beneath them to study the only branches of knowledge which can fit them for forming any opinion on such matters, let alone proposing solutions. Persons who decline to study Ricardo, Mill, or Marx have no right to pronounce infallibly about depression, strikes, or profit-sharing. It is just as though a set of ordinarily intelligent citizens were convened to decide, say, what steps were possible to extirpate the evil of cancer." It seems that the above remark applies to what is called the National Church; but it is equally true of all other Churches. Our present deplorable social conditions furnish an unanswerable proof of the inability of the Christian bodies to successfully grapple with the evils of society.

It is not difficult for an impartial observer to recognize why this Christian failure at mundane reform is so apparent. The Churches are split up among themselves, one section indulging in fanatical nonsense, and another in frivolous disputes that are a disgrace to an age termed "civilised." One want pertains to the whole of the Christian sects, and that is of acting up to what is professed. Except in a few insane instances, no one attempts to follow Christ or to obey his teachings. To a very large extent the enthusiastic devotion to the faith of former times has been supplanted by an open avowal of a frivolous belief. The present aspect of Christianity is the very reverse of what it was in its early history. This was acknowledged by Lord Rosbery, who, in his recent speech at Epsom, said: "I confess I have been sometimes led to imagine what would happen if the great Apostle of the Church were to return to earth and see the position of the Church at this moment. He would see that in the course of a long development of centuries the faith that he preached in poverty, in prisons, in stripes, in persecution, to an unbelieving world has assumed very different shapes and proportions at this time. He would see the splendour of ritual, he would see great structures, the most beautiful in the world, formed to commemorate that faith of which he saw the foundation laid under circumstances so different." Theodore Parker was not far wrong when he wrote: "We live in the midst of religious machinery. Many mechanics at piety, often only apprentices slow to learn, are turning the various ecclesiastical mills, and the creak of the motion is thought to be the voice of God." This means that Christianity is, for all practical purposes, a hollow sham.

Keeping these facts in mind, let us glance at what is now going on in the various Churches throughout the country. It seems almost incredible in these days of Board schools, free libraries, and numerous other educational institutions, that such follies and absurdities which are now termed "religion," should pass current. The fact is we are face to face in the Churches with practices of the most effeminate and childish character. A great body of the clergy may be fittingly described as men-milliners. Besides, we have men devoting their time in considering if it is right to burn candles in daytime; or whether the right of procession, carrying incense, having surpliced choirs, and practising confession are necessary parts of a religious service. Recently a large congregation attended the unveiling of a painted Savior on an oak pedestal, which was solemnly "dedicated to Almighty God." Probably the antics and antics of certain Christians at the present time afford amusement to fashionable ladies and dandies, in the shape of men, who wait upon them. It shows a humiliating phase of superstition and religious folly. It would be very interesting to see Jesus and his fishermen try to mix to-day with one of the fashionable congregations who call themselves Christians. The Carpenter's Son and all his original disciples would find themselves severely boycotted by the very people who live and thrive through the delusion based upon "Christ and him crucified." This must, indeed, be a melancholy reflection to the thoughtful mind, if combined with the notion that Christianity is a serious and important matter. How could it be otherwise with a sincere believer when he witnesses the frivolous and ritual pastimes which dominate the profession of the religion of the Cross?

There is not only a waste of time caused by these

General exhibitions, but there is a neglect of studies which might be of use to society in aiding its members in the discharge of their intellectual and social duties. Emerson long since remarked: "What is called religion eliminates and demoralises.....Let us not be pestered by assertion and half-truth, with emotion and snuffle. The religion which is to guide and fulfil the present and coming ages, whatever else it be, must be intellectual. The scientific must have a faith which is science." There is a good reason for repeating Emerson's words now, for the Churches the worshippers who resort to "assertion and snuffle" are on the increase, and the number of scientific minds who demand something different from the frivolous Christianity by which we are surrounded rapidly extending.

The clergy are mistaken if they think that the decay of their religion and the extension of scepticism can be arrested by the modification of creeds or by a changed church discipline. The true method of reforming modern life is to educate the senses, improve the understanding, and form accurate views of existence and its manifold demands. The truth is that Christianity to-day wears a mask under which the true character and sentiments of its professors are hidden. Be it our duty to tear off this mask and allow the world to see what a "snare and delusion" the Christian religion really is.

CHARLES WATTS.

Naturalism and Ethics.

(Concluded from page 387.)

In the light of the doctrine of evolution, the long and wordy contest that has been waged between "Egoists" and "Altruists," between the advocates of "self-interest" and the advocates of "self-sacrifice," is seen to be very largely a waste of time and a splutter of words. If it is easy to show that all men are not consciously animated by the desire to benefit self, that many do undergo suffering in the attempt to benefit others, it is equally easy to demonstrate that so long as human nature is what it is, conduct, no matter what its social value may be, is really an expression of individual character, and that even the morality of self-sacrifice is self-regarding in the sense of affording more satisfaction to the agent than an opposite course of action. It being clear, then, that the position of each party, while expressing some truth, is nevertheless not free from error, it becomes probable that here, as elsewhere, the whole truth lies between these two extreme views, which are to be reconciled by a closer and more careful study of ethical evolution. Let us see how this reconciliation is to be effected.

Both individually and historically it is plain that what are called self-regarding feelings are first in order of development. The lower races show much less concern for the feelings or existence of others than the higher races, and, with individuals, one can see the purely selfish feelings strongest in childhood, and undergoing a gradual transformation with the advance towards maturity. In the case of the child we can see these feelings expanding until they embrace the family, friends, town, country, and, with the arrival of maturity, gradually assuming something of a cosmopolitan character. And in the case of historic development we can trace a parallel growth of the tribal feelings into interests that embrace the State, the race, and finally the whole of humanity, irrespective of political, religious, or racial peculiarities. Substantially the same process of mental development is gone through in both cases, and this development is brought about, not so much by the destruction of the feeling of self-interest as by the gradual extension of the sphere of individual interests to an ever-growing circle of objects. For an analysis of the causes that determine conduct shows that the difference between the "selfishness" of the child or of the savage, and the "unselfishness" of the matured civilised adult, is not a difference of kind, but of degree only. No absolutely new faculty is created; there is simply a development or transformation of the primary feelings under the pressure of social growth. In practice, at least, it is inconceivable that human interests could ever have been confined to individuals alone. Some regard for others there must

always have been, even though only of a temporary or extremely limited character. In the first instance, this concern for others may not have extended beyond the limits of the family; but it is a mere matter of historical study to trace these feelings, extending to the tribe, thence to the nation, and, finally, to all human kind, irrespective of all artificial distinction.*

But the important thing to observe is that in all this growth there is no change in the nature of the animating principle of conduct; there is simply a widening of its contents, an elaboration of its meaning. Ethical development does not proceed by the annihilation, but by the extension, of the sphere of self-interest, until it is practically co-extensive with the well-being of the entire race. Nor is this growth in mind and morals at all unlike the growth manifested in purely physical development. In biology we are all familiar with the fact that maintenance of life is only another name for the existence of certain harmonious relations between an organism and its surroundings. Yet it is not always realised that this principle is as true of the moral self as it is of the physical structure; nor is the truth always grasped that in social evolution the existence of other human beings becomes of increasing importance in the environment of each individual. And the longer society endures, the more powerful does this portion of one's surroundings become. For not only do I have to adapt myself to the society now living, not only do scientific inventions bring me into even closer relationship with other human societies existing in various parts of the world, but the mere continuance of civilisation imposes a growing *human* environment in the shape of literature, customs, institutions, etc., handed on from generation to generation, all of which play a very important part in the determination of my conduct; while the growing division of labor makes each more and more dependent upon others for daily necessities or comforts.

It is by these means that the environment of each becomes increasingly social in its character; and from the fact that the desires of each can only be realised through the agency of others, our feelings gradually assume a more pronounced "altruistic" form. Thus, unconsciously by pressure of social growth, and consciously by reflection, man is taught that a life of solitude is joyless, uncertain, and threatens finally to become unendurable. As one writer pithily puts it:—

"Not only, on the one hand, does it concern the interests of the general welfare that every individual should take care of himself outwardly and inwardly; maintain his health; cultivate his faculties and powers; sustain his position, honor, and worth; and, so his own welfare being secured, diffuse around him happiness and comfort; but also, on the other hand, it concerns the personal, well-understood interests of the individual himself that he should promote the aims of others, contribute to their happiness, serve their interests, and even make sacrifices for them. Just as one foregoes a momentary pleasure in order to gain a lasting and greater enjoyment, so the individual willingly sacrifices his personal welfare and comfort for the sake of society in order to share in the welfare of this society; he buries his individual well-being in order that he may see it rise in richer and fuller abundance in the welfare and happiness of the whole community."†

Of course, as I have already said, these motives are not always consciously present with the individual, although careful analysis reveals their presence. No one imagines that before performing social actions each one sits down and makes an elaborate calculation as to the benefits that will accrue to him from the transaction; and all that has been written as to the necessity of establishing a "Utilitarian Calculus" is simply beside the point. In this matter, as in many others, social evolution counts for much; and generations of social struggle have, by weeding out individuals or tribes whose inclinations were of an opposite kind, resulted in bringing about some sort of an agreement between individual desires and the general welfare. The simple operation of natural selection would make it pretty certain that, in the long run, only those whose interests embraced some concern for others should survive; and one need no more expect people to be conscious of the causes inducing them to act in a socially regarding manner than we should expect

* I have worked this point out at greater length in my *Outline of Evolutionary Ethics*.
 † Ziegler, *Social Ethics*, pp. 59, 60.

them to be aware of the precise causes that have made their physical structure what it is. But, in discussing the nature of morals, one is bound to go beyond the *expressed* reason for action, which is more often wrong than right, and search out the true causes of the existence of human instincts; and when that is done I imagine it will be found that the performance of actions that are free from self-regarding interests will be found to be as chimerical as the existence of gravitation apart from matter, or of truth apart from any relation between thought and things. To completely destroy the feeling of self-interest is an utter impossibility. It is present with all men, with the man whose interest is contracted to the limits of his own circle of acquaintances, or with the one whose interest expands until it includes the well-being of all humanity. But while it is not possible to destroy the feeling of self-interest, it is possible to educate it, and by educating it force home upon all the truth that each is serving himself best who likewise serves all with whom civilisation brings him into contact. Indeed, I do not know what the aim of a science of ethics is if it is not to labor along these lines—to first of all school our desires so that only the nobler ones shall endure, and, next, indicate the best method of their permanent gratification.

In what has gone before I have tried to make plain, probably at the risk of wearying many, a few simple considerations that may serve as the foundation of a scientific system of ethics. These are, first, that all rules of ethics are on exactly the same level—although much more complex in character—as the generalisations of physical science. Just as the “laws” of astronomy or biology reduce to order the apparently chaotic phenomena of their respective departments, so ethical “laws” seek to reduce to an intelligible order the conditions of individual and social improvement. Each generalisation must be based upon knowable data, and each is bound to find both a justification and a corrective in an increased knowledge of the universe at large. There can, therefore, be no ultimate antithesis between individual reason and the highest form of conduct, although there may exist an apparent conflict, chiefly owing to the circumstance that we are unable to trace the remote effects of conduct on self and society. But this is obviously due to our present lack of knowledge, and the chief aim of a science of ethics must be to remove this condition of ignorance. Nor, finally, can there be any ultimate or permanent antagonism between the true interests of self and the interests of society in general. That such an opposition does exist in the minds of many is true, but it is at least worthy of note that the clearest and most profound thinkers have always found in social activity the best field for the development of their own nature and the satisfaction of their noblest instincts. Here, again, we may confidently hope that an increased and more accurate knowledge of the causes that determine human welfare, operating on the inherited character of the individual, may do much to diminish this feeling.

If man exists as an individual, he also exists as a member of a structure composed of like individuals, and his relations to these are such that it is impossible for him to ignore, in practice at least, their existence. His whole nature has been moulded in accordance with the reactions of self on society and society on self; with the result that concern for others is as much a part of his nature as concern for self; and there is no valid reason why stress should be laid upon one set of feelings rather than the other. Indeed, as I have tried to show, all ethical development has consisted in emphasizing the harmony of the two. Throughout the entire process there has been neither creation nor annihilation, but simply a continuous development of existing feelings, brought about, on the one hand, by the unconscious pressure of the struggle for existence, and on the other by conscious reflection on the conditions of advancement. Further, this process has necessarily taken the form of the expansion of the sphere of self-interest—from the individual to the family, from the family to the State, from the State to the race. It is only by consciously consolidating these two aspects of human activity that ethical development can be secured, not by erecting them into mutually destructive agencies,

C. COHEN.

Pious Policemen.

THOUGH the police have been unable to discover various malefactors, who may at this moment be walking in our midst, it is interesting to know that a section of the force have “found Jesus.” There need be no surprise at this success on the part of “active and intelligent” officers. Jesus is easily found by those who seek him. His whereabouts are well known to the men of God, and through them to the police. The Magi were led to him by a star; policemen are personally conducted to him, not by their choice familiars vulgarly called “marks,” but by highly respectable missionaries.

Perhaps it is a case of the “blind leading the blind.” Anyhow, the reward that is out is great. When a policeman has shaken off his mortal coil, and the wick has ceased to trouble him, he may exchange his check regulation helmet for a golden crown. And, in addition to the golden crown, he may be provided with a golden harp. Then, indeed, should he sing “Hallelujah,” “Holy, Holy, Holy,” and look back with serene miseration on his terrestrial lot, which, like many things in this vale of tears, may not have been a happy one.

What a source of holy joy must have been that anniversary of the Christian Police Association, a full report of which now appears in the policeman's journal, *On and Off Duty!* Member after member of the force has been “testified” to Christ. And, of course, police money *must* be true—at least, in the judgment of some obstinate old asses who act as London stipendiary magistrates. Truly wonderful were the experiences of conversion and salvation which were gravely related, and which, no doubt, would have been readily sworn to if required. Whoever knew a policeman hesitate to “kiss the book” to anything which he had got jotted down in that precious pocket-book of his, second only in scrupulous accuracy to Holy Writ?

The Lord has, indeed, been working wonders in the force, and the curious thing is that very few people seem to have known it, which may be due to the fact that they have judged by outward and visible signs instead of looking for the inward and spiritual grace. A delegate's testimony was to the effect that, going across a field at night, he had a terrible conflict with Satan in the form of another police officer with whom he was walking. It was only a theological argument, but the Christian policeman says: “I tackled him like a lion. We had a regular good turn,” and Satan was vanquished before they had got to the end of the beat.

A delegate from Bath asked for prayers “on behalf of one who is out-and-out for the Devil, that he may be made out-and-out for Christ.” Another, who was converted at Harrogate, testified to God's help in a case of sickness. During last winter he went down on his knees and prayed to the Lord for one who was ill. The Lord saved the patient, though the doctors had got him up. All through the Conference the value of prayer was insisted upon, and is emphasized in the contribution to the before-mentioned journal.

The Christian policeman's motto is “Watch and pray.” Very well, and why doesn't he pray—merely now and then for someone who is sick, but for some other tangible and temporal blessings? Why, for instance, does he not pray for clues?

One of the special missionaries, who seems to spend his time travelling about the country on what he calls a “consecrated cycle,” tells a curious story. He says that, “waiting upon the Lord in the early part of the Conference day, and asking for a word of promise, a message came in Mark xvi. 22, ‘He appeared in another form unto them.’ This, we believe, was literally fulfilled to many hungry souls during the Conference. We were much struck with the fact that dear Miss [name] had received the same verse from God and passed it on when speaking about the Seaside Home. Praise be to Him for the unity of the Spirit!”

If these things happen upon invitation, may we not ask again: “Why do not the Christian police pray for clues?” Here is open to them a royal road to advancement and promotion. The fortunate officer to whom such a clue is divinely vouchsafed need not disclose its source. “From information received” would answer just as well. The fear, however, is that even the pious men who at conferences testify to Christ have

quite sufficient faith to put their professed belief in divine intervention and assistance to a practical test. Alas! evil-doers often escape, and important measures are to be traced to the workings of mundane intelligence and observation quite outside the force.

It is a noteworthy fact that professedly Christian policemen, whether they are specially active and intelligent or not, make great progress in the force. The rapidity is largely in proportion to the industry with which they air their piety; at least, that is the suggestion sometimes made. One story, related at a Police Mission in Dublin, seems at first sight to point in another direction. A young officer was called aside by a sergeant, who thus addressed him: "I have something to say to you; you can never be a policeman and a Christian. You may give up all idea of that." The young man replied: "If that be the case, the force and I must part company." Yet he remained in the force, and, needless to say, before long was made a district sergeant. Who shall say now that there is no virtue in the ordinary mind it might seem that a policeman's duty was tolerably well defined, and that the main object was to induce him to perform it. According to the Chairman of the Conference, police officers have something very much more important to do. They must look for that great event—the return of the Lord Christ. With that object, they must have their minds girded about and their lights burning—which requirement looks like an allusion to "bull's-eye" for the double night duty of waiting for the coming of Christ, which seems ever to be postponed, and the watching for the more probable approach of William Sykes laden with spoil, the Christian policemen periodically supplied with texts, which they are to read and ponder over on their lonely patrols. As the provision suggests the exercise of some degree of vigilance on the part of those who have taken the charge.

The missionaries might, it is true, extend their thoughtfulness to supplying a little more useful knowledge and a little less Gospel to members of the force. But, as that would hardly suit the subscribers to the funds, the Association may remain unadvanced. The Christian Police Association will no doubt pursue its own course, in so far as its exertions are directed to the support of the Police Orphanage, will probably do good work—indeed, those sinners, the publicans, are doing with their Orphanages and Homes.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Coins and Medals.

A recent number of the *Freethinker* a contributor, in sounding "The Praise of Books," thinks fit to hurl con- tempt at "the hoarder of strange, rust-eaten coins." a deliverance is typical of the popular ignorance of the subject—an ignorance shared by those who should be better. The majority care only for the current coin of the realm, and do not stop to study the peculiarities of the superscription upon that. The numismatist upon all old coins as worthless because they cannot be spent in beer, and the other class has an exaggerated value of every bit of old metal, because of sensational paragraphs in the newspapers of sales where certain pieces have fetched £50 or £100 or so.

It is all very well to sound the praise of books; but, after all, what are books? Words, words, words! The numismatist soars above words, and is brought face to face with things. The portrait, the figures, the emblems, the legends upon a coin, are all full of meaning as are also its weight and its style of art.

The bibliophile who hankers after manuscripts has upon his shelves many copies of the same mass-book in various sizes and handwritings, ornamented with gaudy, natural pictures. If his weakness is *incunabula*, he gazes longingly on a Mazarin Bible, and will barter all his worldly wealth for a leaf printed by Caxton. Not that he has the slightest idea of reading either; for the bibliophile gazes upon his treasures, and never

dreams of perusing them. If the matter of them were worth reading, it would not be easy to do so. The designers of the early printed types always endeavored to get as many hooks and points to the letter as it could be made to hold; and the object of the early printer seems to have been to get as much ink on the page as possible: all these faults being carefully exaggerated in modern æsthetic imitations. Some of the Kelmscott volumes look at first sight like black pages having white lines running about them in intricate patterns. A friend of mine wrote some essays in very flowery language, and desired to enshrine his thoughts in Caxton type. The essays were printed on rough paper with ragged edges, and sent round to his acquaintances, not one of whom has yet succeeded in discovering what the essays were about. The crabbed Gothic is rendered still more difficult by the views which the early printers held about spelling; it was a point of honor with them never to spell the same word twice alike upon the same page. The bibliophile knows how many millimetres the margins of a book should measure, how many leaves, and the exact arrangement of the title-page, when there is one. Beyond this, his interest ceases; and the most valued works are those which nobody read when they were first printed, and which nobody would dream of reading at any other time. If one worthless treatise is an "uncut copy," innocent of the plough of the book-binder, it is rejoiced over more than ninety and nine standard works that no bookbinder can ever spoil. "First Editions" are the desired game of the book-lover, although, as a general rule, first editions are only remarkable for their misprints. The boasted productions of the Elzevirs are admittedly crammed full of the most shameful errors, yet none are more sought after; and if the book-collector should become the possessor of a "Wicked Bible," in which the "not" is omitted from the Seventh Commandment, he is in the seventh heaven of delight.

And, after all, collections of books cover a very small field of time. No book in Europe is as old as the Christian era. It is only recently that fragments of an earlier period have been recovered from the sands of Egypt. Coins take us back to the sixth or seventh centuries B.C.; and specimens have been preserved in as fine condition as when they were first minted. As witnesses for history, coins stand in the very first rank; and not merely do they tell us of places and peoples we know of, they are often the sole memorials of empires whose language, religion, literature, and name have otherwise passed away. Their distribution tells us the direction and extent of the old trade routes—the British and Gaulish imitations of the gold staters of Philip of Macedon tell us more than the popular fables about the Phœnicians (!) coming to Cornwall for tin. The weight of coins is often our only evidence of ancient systems of metrology. In fact, there is no branch of human knowledge that coins do not illustrate. In Greek coins, for example, we can trace the rise and fall of Hellenic art, the highest development ever attained by human genius. And in this study they are of unique value; for a coin is an original work of art, and its date can be determined within very narrow limits. Sculptures, bronzes, vases, and gems may be as beautiful, but their dates are mere matters of conjecture, which can only be decided by comparison with the dated examples of numismatic art. Coins have preserved to us the lineaments of sovereigns from Alexander the Great downwards; and a study of them would remove many popular misconceptions. Thus it seems generally assumed that the ancient Greeks were a very handsome race of people. To judge by their kings the reverse was the case. Queen Cleopatra has a wide posthumous reputation for beauty. The coins show that she was an extremely ugly woman; and the portraits of Marc Antony exhibit the battered visage of an aged prize-fighter. To the numismatist Cæsar, Nero, Hadrian, are not mere names. Their faces look on his from countless pieces of stamped metal; and it is the same with many other characters of history. Portraiture, in fact, was one of the strong points of the Roman medallists, and we have countless specimens of these portraits, thanks to the fact that the Romans had no pockets in their clothes, and were therefore continually dropping their money about.

As far as Christianity is concerned, numismatics are

of little importance. Even Constantine remained a heathen as far as his coins were concerned; and the money of his sons contains little more than the *Chi Rho* monogram. Those who fancy that the new religion brought any blessing to the Roman world should contemplate the favorite motto upon the coins of Constans and his successors—*Felix tempora reparatio* ("The happy times restored!"). What happy times? Evidently not the happy times of Christianity, for that was an innovation. The "happy times" to be restored could only have been the times of Paganism.

The kings and heroes of the Old Testament did not know the use of money. The Chronicler reckons David's wealth in *darics* (1 Chronicles xxix. 7), because he was not a numismatist, and was not aware that coinage was not invented until three centuries after David's death, and that *darics* were not coined until 520 B.C. The Semitic nations did not strike coins of their own until about 500 B.C.; first in Cyprus, and afterwards in the commercial cities on the shores of the Mediterranean, such as Tyre and Tarsus. We have no authentic Jewish coins until the time of John Hyrcanus, 135 B.C., and then only miserable little spangles of copper, typifying the sordid poverty of the country. The Book of Maccabees, indeed, says that Simon Maccabeus received permission to strike money; but there is no evidence that he ever did so. There are, indeed, Jewish pieces bearing the name of Simon; but, as they are invariably struck upon coins of Vespasian, Hadrian, and other Roman emperors, it is clear that they were minted by the pseudo-Messiah, Simon Bar-Cochebas, and not by the Maccabees. The well-known silver shekels and half-shekels which are sometimes attributed to Simon Maccabees, in defiance of every law of numismatic science, were really struck at Jerusalem during the siege by Titus; and only religious theories stand in the way of this fact being generally accepted. Authentic Jewish coins being so insignificant, and having been issued for such a trifling period of time, the invention of medallists has been stimulated, and coins of Adam, Abraham, David, Moses, and other celebrities, have been produced in fair quantities; but as they all bear inscriptions in modern square Hebrew characters, and are clearly the work of people totally unacquainted with the characteristics of ancient medallistic art, they have never imposed upon any numismatist. CHILPERIC.

(To be concluded.)

The Secular Society's First Legacy.

THE late Mr. Edward Lawson, of Aberdeen, whose death we were unaware of until news arrived from his executor, had been for some time a generous subscriber to our movement. He was particularly interested in the Secular Society, Limited, which he was one of the first to join. He considered it an invaluable piece of constructive work, and complimented its designer on having successfully accomplished such a difficult task. This was not mere verbiage on the deceased gentleman's part, for by his will dated July 11, 1898, less than two months after the Society's registration, he has bequeathed it a contingent legacy, realisable on the death of certain other persons. The legacy is not exactly large; at the same time, it is probably as large as Mr. Lawson could make it; and in any case it is a practical testimony of his goodwill towards Secularism. It may amount to £100 or so. But the point most worthy of note is that this is the first legacy accruing to the Secular Society, Limited, whose secretary has been apprised of it in the ordinary way by the executor's official representatives. Henceforth there should be no doubt whatever as to the perfect efficiency of this legal instrument. Secularists who make wills, and have anything whatever to spare at their deaths, should not fail to insert a clause in favor of the Secular Society, Limited. No matter if it be but small. Legacies can be made larger than subscriptions, and in the course of time they should be a considerable source of revenue to the Society. It should be borne in mind that, although registered under the Companies' Acts, the Society is in character a Trust; for the Memorandum defines the objects for which its funds must be used, and the Articles prevent the members from deriving any dividend, interest, bonus, or other profit. The legal security and the moral safeguard are thus complete.

G. W. FOOTE.

Ignorance and superstition are twin sisters.—*Charles Bradlaugh.*

Acid Drops.

PRESIDENT KRUGER resembles the late Mr. Gladstone in one thing; he always has the Lord on his side. He tells his people that God has protected them hitherto, and assures them that God will continue to safeguard them against all their enemies. This is very consoling; but it would be an interesting experiment if the divine guardian of the Transvaal were to break in President Kruger's ear that it is better to bend than to break. It is often found at the finish that the help of Providence is not as valuable as was expected.

General Joubert has caught the infection of President Kruger's piety. He tells the Boers to "leave their hands in the hands of the Lord." We hope it is not as bad as that.

Dr. Benjamin Trueblood, the Secretary of the American Peace Society, declares that the Czar's Rescript is the grandest document that was ever written except the Old Testament. Indeed! What price Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the rest of the prophets? And what price the Ten Commandments that were "written with the finger of God"? Does the Czar of Russia actually beat God Almighty as author?

This American gentleman laughs at the idea of the Czar's Rescript being a deep-laid plot. "The plot," he says, "was formed in heaven for the benefit of the world." Well now, if a plot was laid in heaven—and a good many plots have since to emanate from that quarter—we are entitled to ask whether the Lord did not convene the Conference himself? That would have given it superlative authority, and no one would have tried to upset it, not even the German Emperor.

Emperor William is opposed to arbitration. He reasons the grace of God, and must always be right. It would therefore be absurd on his part to act as though he might be wrong. William and God are one team, and the Emperor cannot arbitrate any more than the Almighty. See?

The Word of God is copyright, and must not be printed without the consent of the proprietors. A man may go to hell without it, but that's his look-out. He must consult with the boss of the establishment. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge paid £20,000 for the Revised Version, and have just asserted their proprietary rights in the Court of Chancery. What an opportunity is offered for a Christian millionaire—for such persons exist in London of "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich." Let them buy up the copyright of God's Word and make it their open property, so that the revised Handbook to Heaven may be published at the lowest possible figure.

The Harmsworth firm, which climbed down so manfully over the *Sunday Mail*, publishes a number of periodicals, some of them being of a very pious character. Even the *Boys' Friend* has a turn for piety, which we find in keeping with its general tone. The copy of the publication lying before us—curiously it bears no date—is a highly refined production. It is wretchedly printed on the poorest paper, and the illustrations are of a similar quality. Here is a dog-and-wolf fight, there one man is threatened with another with an uplifted chair, and further on a man is preparing to make play with his revolver. This stuff is apparently thought to be very edifying; indeed, there is a notice to the effect that parents should write to the editor "if they see anything objectionable in the paper."

One paragraph of this precious journal is headed "Freethinkers." The editor says that R. C. Walton, of Chichester, has endeavored to draw him into a discussion on the subject of boys attending Freethinkers' clubs. His reply is somewhat emphatic. "I do not," he says, "believe in such an experience is of such an absolutely primitive and unevolved kind, being submitted to the influences of grown-up persons, who hold the view that there is no Deity." He does not say that "a Freethinker is not a respectable person." What he holds is this—that "The fear of a hereafter is one of the healthiest stimulants to honest action." Now this is a grovelling view of human nature, and the facts are all against it. Children cannot be made honest by fear; it only makes them cunning and hypocritical.

A special feature of the *Boys' Friend's* piety is the offering of a prize of £500 to the boy who guesses—"forecasts" the word used—the number of births of boys and girls during the ten weeks ending April 22 and June 17 respectively. As they have only sixpence to spare, boys are invited to buy a shot at this prize. They are asked to spend all the money they can on copies of their *Friend* and fill in coupons for the prize itself, anybody with a knowledge of figures and probabilities can easily see how safe it is in the hands of present holders. The odds are tremendous against the guesser being absolutely right in both categories and in both periods.

It appears to us, therefore, that Messrs. Harmsworth and the *Boys' Friend* editor—but principally the former—should have a little stronger belief in future punishment, if that is to be a first-rate stimulus to honesty.

Dr. Guinness Rogers has delivered a Merchants' Lecture on "An Agnostic World," in which he lamented that so much of present-day literature was without recognition of God. "Society," he said, "was to its very core Agnostic. It was not fashionable to say there was no God, but it was fashionable to act as though there were no God"—whatever that means. Science itself had "fancied it could do without God." It ought to be very sad, but the sadness vanishes when it is recollected that Dr. Rogers is one of God's commission agents, with an evident interest in maintaining the business.

Dr. Rogers contrasted Christian England with heathen New Guinea. Had he contrasted Christian England with Christian Abyssinia, he might have opened the eyes of his audience to the real causes of civilisation.

"Providence" has been active in America. New Richmond (Wisconsin) has been annihilated by a tornado. All the crops in the district are destroyed. Trees were snapped like straw. Hundreds of people were killed, many of them roasted to death in burning houses.

More "Providence" in British East Africa. Hundreds of women and children are dying of starvation in the neighborhood of Mombasa. Drought has nearly killed the crops, and swarms of locusts are completing the devastation.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes preached the anniversary sermon of his West-Central Mission. His subject was "Christ's Need of Ideal Men"—something like the preacher; and in the course of his sermon he uttered the following which the *Christian World* says "must have thrilled the congregation": "Think of my dreadful position, brethren, at this moment. The risen, personal Lord is on this platform, invisible, inaudible, imperceptible to the worldly and the frivolous, but, as truly as I stand before you, I am pervaded by a consciousness of a Divine presence, and my Lord Jesus Christ, in whose presence I stand, wishes to speak to you, and, mark it, he is dumb! He cannot speak for himself. He condescends to use my tongue; and, oh, dreadful and yet glorious fact—the Lord help me!—Jesus Christ now, here, before this great crowd, is entirely at the mercy of my tongue. He is like the silent prisoner at the bar when he is being tried for his life before judge and jury."

Poor Jesus Christ! According to the story of his life and death, he suffered many things at the hands of Pontius Pilate, the Scribes and Pharisees, his executioners, and the mob. But this is the most unkindest cut of all. Fancy falling so low in misfortune as to be "entirely at the mercy" of Mr. Price Hughes! God help him!

It is strange to find Jesus Christ dumb. In the Gospels he is always talking, and, according to the fourth Gospel, the whole world would not be large enough to hold verbatim reports of his speeches. One of the "prophecies" about him was that he should be dumb like a sheep before the shearers. We are to conclude that Mr. Hughes is one of the shearers? Anyhow he gets a good deal of fleece.

We make the following extract from a *Daily News* review of D. G. Hogarth's new book on *Authority and Archaeology*:—"The Old Testament teaches a variety of ethical and theological truths respecting human nature which no research can invalidate, and its narratives are profoundly true in a symbolic sense. But the cause of true religion and sound learning is badly served, as Canon Driver hints, by those who cling to the fallacies which the evidence of the monuments has exposed. The cosmogony of Genesis is now known to have been adapted from that of the Babylonians. The Sabbath is also of Babylonian origin. The story of the flood comes from a Babylonian epic. Biblical chronology is irreconcilable not less with Egyptian and Babylonian monuments than with scientific research. With regard to the chronology of the books of the Old Testament, the evidence of archaeology, so far as it goes, confirms the conclusion of modern criticism. A large part of the Old Testament, and especially of Genesis, is analogous, says Canon Driver, to allegory and parable. The theological value of it does not consist in its outward form, which is unscientific and unhistorical; but in the moral and spiritual truths of which the early beliefs and legends are the expression."

It is very interesting to find these frank admissions in the great organ of political Nonconformity. All the story upon which Milton based his *Paradise Lost* was borrowed from Babylon, and not revealed by God. How long will it take the *Daily News* to admit that the story upon which Milton based his *Paradise Regained* is equally an oriental legend?

Fetter-lane Congregational Chapel is being pulled down. It was erected in 1732 on the site of the earlier first chapel

built in 1661, of which the once famous Thomas Goodwin was pastor. This was the man of God who prophesied that Cromwell would recover from his fatal illness. He was mistaken on that point, as he was on many others.

Cardinal Vaughan is quite jubilant over the divisions in the Church of England. He likens the Establishment to Noah's Ark, with its vast variety of species. Above all, he advises the Catholics to pray without ceasing—which must be an arduous performance. If they do so, he prophesies that England will return to the Roman Catholic faith. Well now, we don't think that prophecy is going to be realised. Cardinal Vaughan is invited to tell us the name of any country that ever broke from Rome and returned to it. Sections and classes may go back, but nations never.

The Pope has manufactured eleven new cardinals, four patriarchs, and twenty-seven bishops. His Holiness is as well as can be expected after this great effort.

Religious riots have broken out in two districts of the Madras Presidency, and have spread over an area of 100 square miles. The Maravars and the Shanars are the opposing tribes or castes, and the former have burnt several villages.

The following significant statements appear in the *Illustrated Missionary News*: "There are eight hundred million men and women to whom the name of Jesus is yet unknown; thirty-five million of whom pass every year into Christless graves. These hopeless souls would belt this world no less than forty times if they stood with outstretched hands side by side. In China you might travel for weeks without meeting a soul who has heard the name of Jesus. Stanley, the African explorer, tells us that when he made his journey of nine hundred and ninety-nine days across Africa, in that long journey of seven thousand miles he never saw the face of a 'Christian, nor of a man who had had the opportunity of becoming one.'"

How is it possible to reconcile with these statements the assertion that Christianity is a heaven-sent religion? Is it possible that a Divine message should be so limited in regard to the people whom it reaches—that so many should live and die in absolute ignorance of its existence?

According to a missionary from South America, there are in Argentina five million people who do not know that there is such a book as the Bible. A fine "revelation from God" that fails to reach so large a multitude.

A Cornish vicar, in order to assist in raising the necessary funds for a new organ, spends his spare time in making walking-sticks, which he offers for sale. He is probably much more usefully employed thus than when conducting the service or occupying the pulpit.

Royalty has many enviable privileges. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, attending the reopening of Sherborne Church, near Lynn, intimated to Dean Lefroy that he had only time to listen to a sermon of ten minutes' duration. In a true spirit of flunkeyism, the Dean obsequiously complied, and even managed to finish his sermon in six minutes. Would it be too much for congregations to hope that this might be regarded as setting a fashion?

Mr. Samuel F. Langham, the Horselydown Coroner, is not as wise as he might be. The other day he had a witness before him named Edward Dyer, a boy only nine years of age; and just as the oath was being administered it occurred to him to ask the lad whether they taught him the Bible at school. The lad replied that he had never heard of the Bible, whereupon the Coroner remarked: "I am afraid this lad's evidence cannot be taken, as his education appears sadly at fault." Then the foreman of the jury intervened, and asked the lad: "Have you never heard of God, who punishes boys who tell stories?" The youthful witness made no reply, but looked inquiringly at the Coroner, as though awaiting information about that wonderful personage. Instead of obtaining this information, however, he was dismissed as plainly incompetent.

It is quite pitiable to see a public officer, like Coroner Langham, fancying that a boy cannot tell what he has seen and heard simply because he is not a theologian. What on earth has knowledge of the Bible to do with the accuracy of one's memory? Is it even a fact that such knowledge has any bearing upon a person's veracity? Is not "kissing the book" often the preliminary to the most desperate hard swearing? Every man of common sense is perfectly aware that liars are liars, whether they kiss one book, or twenty, or none at all; and that when a man clinches a statement with an oath he is generally romancing.

Edward Dyer was treated as an incompetent witness, but his conduct was sensible enough. He was the first to discover the body of a man who had hung himself, and, with excellent

presence of mind, he rushed out and called some men, saying "I could not reach to untie the knot." Could anyone have said anything more exactly to the point?

Home Secretary Cross was the originator of the plank bed in our prisons. He was a very pious Tory, and he set his wits to work to devise something great and glorious that might both please God and hand down his own name to a grateful posterity. The result was that wooden instrument of nocturnal torture which has been cursed by myriads of prisoners ever since. Anything more idiotic, and at the same time malignant, it is difficult to conceive. Yet it is said that Home Secretary Cross was very proud of his invention.

We are pleased to see Mr. Justice Mathew protesting against the use of this plank bed. "Providence," he said, "intended that wretched people should have a time of oblivion and release from their cares and misery, and he did not think that personal suffering of the kind inflicted by a plank bed was necessary." An admirable sentiment, Mr. Justice Mathew, whatever we may think of "Providence."

Shakespeare called sleep the "balm of hurt minds." Pious Mr. Cross caught a glimpse of this in his dull way, and said to himself: "Just so, but I'll see those wicked prisoners get as little of the balm as possible. They shall be hurt all day, and their wounds shall be kept open all night." Perhaps he took a hint from the Christian divines who teach that there is no sleep in hell, and concluded that what was good enough for God was good enough for Mr. Cross.

We have been highly amused by a newspaper report of the speech delivered at Blackburn by Mr. Pedley, the newly-elected moderator of the Conference of Lancashire and Cheshire Churches. This gentleman declared that he would make it criminal for working men to waste five shillings a week on drink, tobacco, and recreations. They should revert to the plain living and dress of fifty years ago, and knock off fifty per cent. of their luxuries. This would ensure the financial prosperity of the Churches. Yes, if the objects, or victims, of this compulsory reformation gave all their savings to the sky-pilots. But would they? We rather doubt it. Mr. Pedley seems to us to be counting his chickens a long while before they are hatched. The working men of England are less and less inclined to pinch themselves for the sake of a lot of white-handed, black-coated fellows, who preach kingdom-come and live on the fat of the land.

It is no wonder, though, that the sky-pilots should long to get hold of all the money that working men spend on "luxuries." Two shillings a week even from (say) five million workers would amount to £26,000,000 a year. It is a big sum, and worth going for—if they could only get it. Ay, there's the rub!

The State of Georgia has allowed twelve shillings a sermon to preachers who exhort the "chaingangs" of convicts in various localities. But there is such a competition amongst the men of God for those three dollars that the State Legislature, being anxious to economise the public expenditure, has decided to put the job up to auction and give it to the lowest bidders. By this means the price of a sermon may possibly be reduced to a dollar, and some cynics will say that even this is a dollar too much.

The Rev. Mr. Deane pleads in a magazine article for keeping up the gentlemanly status of the Church clergy. He thinks the Church must suffer when its pulpits are filled by men of a lower social stratum. No doubt he recollects that Jesus Christ was a carpenter, that the twelve Apostles were fishermen and so forth, and that Paul was a tentmaker, who earned his board and lodgings by plying a big needle and coarse thread on tough canvas. But no doubt he imagines that this was all very well for a start. Times have changed, Christianity has won, and now it has to conserve its conquests. To do this it must keep in with the ruling and privileged classes. On the whole, therefore, we believe the reverend gentleman is right; although he is not quite discreet in letting the cat out of the bag so publicly.

Blessing the crops has not died out in England. The performance has just been gone through by the vicar of Gaywood, Norfolk. Starting from his church, where the congregation consisted of "two old ladies and a dozen restless children," the reverend gentleman headed a procession round the village, accompanied by a brass band, which was probably designed to draw the Lord's attention to the proceedings. Halts were made here and there, and psalms and prayers were read. What effect it had upon the crops remains to be seen.

The Athanasian Creed, that wonderful compound of mystery and damnation, has been denounced in Westminster Abbey by Professor Ryle, President of Queen's College, Cambridge. He says it ought not to be in the Prayer Book. But the men of God who drew up the Prayer Book declared that they were moved thereto by the Holy Ghost. Ought not that personage to be consulted before tampering with this inspired volume? The Holy Ghost should say that it really had nothing what-

ever to do with the Prayer Book, or else admit that it has learnt a good deal since.

Thomas Power, a scaffolder, of Horsleydown, committed suicide by hanging himself. In a letter addressed to his wife he said: "May God forgive me and help you and the children. It is not stated whether the party mentioned has accepted the trust."

Walter Hill, musician, being charged before the bench at Wolverhampton with neglecting his wife and children, went on his knees and put his hands together in the attitude of prayer. The unfeeling magistrate ordered him to pay 5s a week.

The late Dr. Lawson Tait, who was not burdened with much orthodoxy, once performed a successful operation on a patient who, being told it was over, exclaimed, "Thank God!" "Thank God," said Dr. Tait scornfully; "thank me, you mean." We take this anecdote from the *Birmingham Daily Argus*.

Mr. Moody, the evangelist, is not coming to Great Britain at present. He was going to do so, but his plans are altered. Has this anything to do with the terrible attack on Lord Overtoun in the *Labor Leader*? His lordship is a liberal supporter of Mr. Moody, and the *Labor* organ attacks him as a most unprincipled "sweater," who poses as a philanthropist at the expense of his workpeople. The matter has caused much excitement in Glasgow and the neighborhood.

Russian Baptists are causing a lot of trouble to the Orthodox Church, whose priests they call "thieves and robbers." We dare say this is a pretty accurate description; at the same time, we quite understand the priests' resentment, although, as a matter of fact, the wording of the "insult" is accurately borrowed from Jesus Christ.

The Willenhall Urban District Council has decided that no portion of the new cemetery is to be "consecrated." The Council does not see the wisdom of erecting a "Church" chapel, paying a "Church" chaplain, and diverting certain fees into "Church" pockets. Of course this is excellent economy, but has the Council reflected on the consequences on the morning of the resurrection? Will not the best corpses, interred in "consecrated" ground, stand the best chance then? Will they not spring up first when Gabriel's trumpet sounds, and leave the "unconsecrated" refuse to shuffle together as it can? It must be so, we imagine, if they are any burial-grounds "consecrated" at all. The only other explanation is that the clergy have got up the "consecration" dodge for their own pecuniary advantage. But that supposition is positively libellous, and will be instantly rejected by everyone who appreciates their disinterested character.

The Peculiar People say that they never have broken limbs. The Lord looks after them, and fulfils his promise that "not a bone of them shall be broken." But the Lord sometimes nods, it would seem; for Emma Wellard, a member to the Peculiar Church at Southend, was cut to pieces by a train while crossing the line. Perhaps the Peculiar People, who are an honest lot of folk, will kindly explain. We offer them an opportunity of doing so in the *Freethinker*.

It is reported that more missionaries have been killed in China. One of the men of God thus promoted to heaven is the Rev. H. S. Phillips. No doubt he will be suitably avenged. Some Christian country will signalise the event by appropriating a slice of Chinese territory.

The Bishop of London, consecrating the new Church of St. Savior, Ealing, took occasion to say: "It would be a sad day for the country that discontinued erecting churches for the worship of God." This reminds us of the ancient gentleman who declared there was nothing like leather. It traded in it.

Father Burke opposed the election of Miss Reddish by the Bolton School Board to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr. Shullebotham. He was shocked at the thought of a lady sitting with fourteen male members. Perhaps the reverend gentleman would be more reconciled to the matter if there were ladies enough to go round. For our own part, as the Board educates girls as well as boys, we think it his time that the ladies had a look in. Father Burke is a school monopolist.

Religion is not for women only. So says the Rev. A. J. Sacre, rector of East Hanningfield, and he wishes it to be distinctly understood. The reverend gentleman gets on very well with the women, but finds he cannot make much impression on the men—which is not an uncommon occurrence. Old Nick began with Eve in the Garden of Eden—not with Adam; and the clergy who are in the same line of business—namely, deception—have always followed his policy.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, June 25, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road : 7.30, "England and the Boers : A Freethinker's View."

To Correspondents.

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

PERCY WARD.—Thanks for your batches of cuttings.

LOUIS LEVINE.—Always glad to hear from you, however indirectly.

MRS. POWELL.—Thanks for the papers. See paragraphs.

A. B. MOSS.—Pleased to hear of your good meetings at Brockwell Park on Sunday.

W. P. BALL.—Your weekly cuttings are always very welcome.

MARTIN WEBB.—Sorry we cannot find room for your well-written paper. There are journals devoted to Vegetarianism. Why not try one of them?

T. MOORE.—Try to find space next week. Too crowded this week. We had already noticed the Revised Version litigation. Thanks, all the same, for the reference.

F. I. GOLD.—Your letter is too late for this week's issue; it shall appear in our next.

T. D.—Thanks for the copy of Bosanquet's *Philosophical Theory of the State*.

ACQUIRER.—Mr. Charles Watts has apparently quite recovered, though his strength needs a little more recruiting. We understand that he will resume his regular lecturing early in September. This being the platform dull season, he will not speak financially by prolonging his rest. He hopes to do so in "Sugar Plums."

G. W. B.—The writers of signed articles are responsible for the opinions and sentiments expressed therein. Of course it is not expected that every reader will agree with everything that appears in our columns.

JAMES ANDERSON.—Shall appear in our next.

B. BOOTH.—Your letter is a perfect medley. If you have anything coherent to say against Atheism, we will see if we can give you a hearing. Your supposition that Atheism is responsible for the theory that "the world made itself" shows that you don't understand what you are criticising. Atheists do not believe that the world was "made" at all.

A. ALWARD.—Balance-sheet to hand. It is a prosperous document. But when are you going to have a little Freethought propaganda again at Grimsby?

EMMA BRADLAUGH FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges :—A. H. Slow, 10s.; F. Deane, 10s.

T. J. THURLOW.—Received. Too busy to look through it this week, but it shall have early attention.

J. W. GOTT.—Pleased to receive your application (with cheque) for membership in the Secular Society, Limited. You will be nominated, and of course admitted, at the next Directors' meeting, which will be held a few days hence. A hundred new members, at least, ought to be enrolled before the Annual General Meeting in November. We regard this Society as the vital centre of the Secular organisation of the future.

G. COXER.—The envelope was sealed. It must have been had from a very common fault in envelopes nowadays.

JOHN LAMB. the veteran newspaper, of South Shields, has returned to 92 West Walpole-street. His Freethought customers will please note.

PATRIDGE.—See paragraph.

J. R. WITTELL.—Graetz's *History of the Jews* is the best, but is large and expensive. Milman's is not bad in its way. Florio's translation of Montaigne is better than Cotton's. The latter has decided merit, but the style is rather stiff. It belongs to a later and more pedantic period. Florio lived nearer to Montaigne. He was in the full stream of the great Elizabethan age. His rendering is often less exact than Cotton's, but it preserves the spirit of the original better, by means of a rich vocabulary and happy turns of expression.

PARAGRAPHS RECEIVED.—Bolton Evening News—Keighley News—New York Truthseeker—Public Opinion—Ethical World—Boys of Reason—Daylight—Isle of Man Times—Western Times—Torch Two Worlds—Progressive Thought—Sydney Bulletin—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Blue Grass Blade—Edinburgh Evening News—Der Arme Teufel—Essex Weekly News—Boston Investigator.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures this evening (June 25) at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, at 7.30, taking for his subject "England and the Boers : A Freethinker's View." This is the last meeting at the Athenæum Hall for the present. The place will be closed during July and August, unless something unforeseen occurs. Mr. Foote will devote himself during the dog-days to the Sunday Freethought Demonstrations which are being organised. Full particulars of these gatherings have to be deferred till next week, owing to a delay occasioned by correspondence with the Parks' authorities.

Mr. C. Cohen had large meetings last Sunday on Newcastle Town Moor. The evening one was particularly fine. Mr. Cohen was listened to attentively for three-quarters of an hour, when he had to desist in consequence of the rain. He lectures there again this evening (June 25) at 6.30, and on the Quayside at 11.

Ingersoll once said that the Church left off burning people when there were too many people who objected to being burnt. This epigram contains a profound historical truth. Christians drop persecution when they find it doesn't pay—never before. We are pleased to note, therefore, as a sign of progress, that the *Christian Life* expresses itself as glad that England has outgrown prosecutions for blasphemy. We can even afford to smile at our contemporary's remark that "scurrilous papers merely thrive upon prosecution, but perish if left to silent contempt." "Where now," it asks triumphantly, "are the *Freethinker* and the *National Reformer*?" Well, the *National Reformer* is dead, not because Christians killed it by leaving it alone, but because Charles Bradlaugh died. The *Freethinker*, however, is still living, and is not exactly moribund. We even venture to think it has a larger circulation than the *Christian Life*.

Mr. Hope Pinker's statue of Charles Darwin was unveiled at the Oxford University Museum on Wednesday, June 14. An address was delivered by Sir Joseph D. Hooker, who praised Darwin's self-control, indomitable perseverance under bodily suffering, and wonderful grasp of difficult problems. The statue has been presented to Oxford University by Professor Poulton, and is pronounced a remarkable likeness.

The New York *Truthseeker* gives a long report of the unveiling of the Paine Bust at New Rochelle. A special train conveyed two hundred celebrants from New York, and hundreds more attended "on their own." Speeches were delivered by Dr. Foote, Mr. Wakeman, Mr. Walker, Wilson Macdonald (the sculptor), and Mr. Geer (Oregon), and poems were read from Mr. Remsburg (President, Secular Union) and C. Fannie Allyn. Mr. Henry Rowley wound up the proceedings.

The *Torch of Reason*, a Secular organ published away West in Oregon, reproduces some of our "Acid Drops." We are pleased to see them relished at such a distance from the factory.

Daylight (Norwich), a very brisk and bright journal, reproduces our two paragraphs on the discovery by W. Barker, of Gorleston, that Freethinkers, including Ingersoll, are monstrous labor sweaters. *Daylight* also protests against the exclusion of the *Freethinker* and other advanced journals from the Yarmouth Free Library.

The effect of the excellent lecture delivered by Mr. Victor Roger on Sunday last, in Finsbury Park, was greatly marred by the eagerness on the part of some of the "saints" to take a rise out of the Christian fanatics who simply swarm in that part of the Park allotted to speakers. Mr. Roger has an earnest, yet genial, manner of dealing with an audience, and his hearers desire to meet him again. This Sunday Mr. A. E. Elderkin occupies the platform, his subject being "Science and Satan."

Miss Vance's letter in another column calls attention to a serious evil. Freethinkers should show some respect to their own organisation, and fair play to the lecturers at our open-air stations. It is bad business to make audiences for Christian Evidence speakers at the expense of Secular advocates. Those who do so have probably not given serious thought to the matter.

Mr. Sydney Bryant writes to us from Harringay:—"In view of the omission in many of the leading papers of any reference to the strong opinions which the late Dr. Lawson Tait held on the question of Vivisection, I am desired to say that literature bearing on the subject, from his pen, is issued by the London Anti-Vivisection Society. Dr. Tait's opinions were held in the face of much ridicule, and at the cost of not a little odium among his professional brethren, and as recently as April 26 he attended the great demonstration of the London Anti-Vivisection Society. The singularly convincing speech which he made on that occasion has just been republished, and can be had from Mr. S. G. Trist, Secretary, 32 Sackville-street, Piccadilly, London. Dr. Lawson Tait was, I believe, a Freethinker. At any rate, I heard him say at a recent public meeting that he hardly knew which he hated the most—the medical or the religious priesthood."

The Birmingham Branch's annual picnic takes place next Sunday (July 2). It will be by train to Worcester, thence by boat to Stourport, and to Holte Fleet to tea. Saloon carriages will be reserved for the party, and a special steamer. The tickets are priced at 5s. 3d. This includes train, boat, and tea. Tickets should be applied for, not later than June 27, to Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street, Birmingham.

The *Sydney Bulletin* writes in praise of James Thomson ("B.V."), poet and Atheist. We extract the following passages, which will interest many of our readers: "James Thomson is a poet who has not yet come into his kingdom. He is assuredly entitled to rank with the greater English poets of this century, yet even to 'educated' people he is hardly known. The atmosphere in which he wrote is chiefly responsible for this. Thomson never caught the conventional English tone; he was never respectable; his intellect raises him high above the level of the audience captivated by Tennyson; and his hatred of the priestly lie and the kingly lie was so sincere and outspoken that he was inevitably tobooded by a 'religious' and 'loyal' community. Yet his work is so splendid that it is impossible to kill it by silence or neglect. It is surely reserved for the noblest perpetuity. As a poet, Thomson was too intellectual to reach the highest imaginative rank. He is rarely lyrical; and when he warms it is less with emotion than with thought so intense that it kindles into flame. His work has the effect of sculpture rather than of painting, though the sculpture is often flesh-tinted into a closer approximation of life. He is always too human to be hard or cold, yet his work would seem hard and cold if it were not for the sincere man glowing through it. He was a poet of the ear rather than of the eye, eloquent and lucid, yet rarely potent to picture vividly. For majestic rhetoric he is unsurpassed. Milton has no deeper note; even Swinburne's decorative resonance, poetically finer, is not often so strongly, magnificently sonorous as the closing canto of 'The City,' where Thomson literally 'booms' like surf on a hollow sea shore. No one has more inevitable epithets than Thomson, or a greater mastery over cadence; and the loftier his subject the more loftily his language rises to meet it. He is a master of massive, slowly-moving melody."

The attention of well-to-do Secularists is called to the leaderette which appears on another page, headed "The Secular Society's First Legacy."

Mr. Moncure D. Conway is once more in London. On Sunday morning he lectured from his old platform in South-place Chapel. In the course of his address he paid the following tribute—which we extract from the *Daily News*—to the late Edward Truelove:—"Dr. Conway referred to the passing of their dear old friend, Edward Truelove, who all his life was a genuine lover of mankind. While in prison, serene in his consciousness of being there on account of his service to real morality, he made friends of all around him. There was in him a philosophical spirit, able to adapt itself to every situation. He became friendly even with the prison fare, and when released he desired his wife to serve him regularly with the same kind of gruel. (Laughter.) He (Dr. Conway) came to London long enough ago to know some of the old standard-bearers of Freethought, such as James Watson, William Lovett, and W. J. Fox, whose funerals he conducted. To that generation Edward Truelove belonged. The characteristic thing about them all was the essentially moral and humanitarian nature of their Freethought. They were always in the thick of every struggle for the practical improvement of the conditions of the people—their education, welfare, their rights, their happiness. Such were the unpretending men who ploughed a hard soil and made it fertile, and who sowed in tears what we reap in joy."

The Charles Watts Fund.

Mr. George Anderson acknowledges the following donations:—E. Cooke, £1 1s.; A. S., £2. Per Miss Vance: F. Deane, 10s.

A Fourpenny Wilderness.

A JEW D'ESPRIIT ON THE JEW BOOK.

SOMEONE has sent us, presumably for review, a large volume, bound in shiny black cloth, entitled *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments*, etc. (1899). This is, without doubt, a very cheap publication. Indeed, the shiny black cover bears an embossed inscription to the effect that the volume is sold "under cost," whatever that may precisely mean. There is plenty of reading matter for fourpence. Several hundred pages of small type, strongly bound, should satisfy even a Scotchman. The contents are, however, distinctly puzzling. We have given ourselves a glorious headache by examining this book closely for about an hour. Like the bashful curate who had a doubtful egg given him at breakfast, we admit that "parts of it are excellent, thank you." As for the remainder, we cannot discover any sequence in this volume of undigested tracts. The whole thing is merely a *pot-pourri*, a literary Irish-stew. If the indulgent reader cares to imagine *Dod's Peerage*, *Mother Shipton's Prophecies*, *Mrs. Beeton's Cookery Book*, *Rochester's Poems*, *Tupper's Proverbs*, *Philosophy*, *Baron Munchausen's Travels*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Every Man his Own Lawyer*, *Pelronis*, and some auctioneers' catalogues, all bound together in a single volume, he or she will get some faint idea of the incoherency and general confusion of this book.

Its various divisions, too, like an awkward squad of militiamen, are of all sizes, and equally open to criticism. From the first blunder in Genesis to the last absurdity in Revelation, we have discovered very little that merits praise. A few sentences in Ecclesiastes make some pretence to sanity; but, like the plums in a workhouse pudding, there is a cab-ride between each.

The author has, occasionally, a fine flow of language such as in the *Psalms of Curses*, which is the finest piece of slanging we remember off-hand, and might prove useful to landladies who have lodgers in arrears. The so-called "historical" tracts are utterly useless. They are an anonymous, dateless, placeless, legendary *magundi*, of no more value than the *History of Robin Hood*. The search for the gems was as exasperating as the proverbial search for the needle in the bundle of hay. And, as a numerous father and respectable husband, we must reluctantly admit that our anonymous author is very tropical in his treatment of sex matters. He is quite Oriental in his nastiness, and, as we all know, Eastern vice begins where our own leaves off. We know the novels of that gorgon Zola, who is quite the champion at this style of writing, out of our children's reach; but this anonymous genius writes powerfully enough to make a bronze statue blush. The dedication to King Jimmy I. is an historic mistake; it should have been inscribed to Charles II., who would have appreciated this ordure, especially the song of the Royal Solomon. We do not believe in bowdlerising any volume; but ever there was any occasion for such drastic treatment, it certainly should be directed against such a book as this. Unfortunately, if all the objectionable passages were deleted, the volume would be very much reduced in bulk. Furthermore, if the portions of our anonymous author has "lifted" from the Egyptian sacred writings and the Buddhist Scriptures be also removed, we think the volume would be further reduced to the size of a penny novelette.

So, acting on this suggestion, our fourpenny wilderness has nearly vanished. It is a thousand pities it has not really disappeared. It should be published at five guineas and have a lock-and-key on it. Selling such a volume at the price of two cigars is too too utter. We have written enough about it, however, to direct the Scotland Yard *litterateurs* to it. When they have a few minutes to spare from reading scientific works, they might do worse than try this book. They had better wear masks, for they will need them to hide their blushes. Ordure is cheap to-day when so much can be had for fourpence.

It has been my lot, a lot very rare in my country, never to have believed in God even as a child.—*J. S. Mill, London, Auguste Comte.*

Christian Blasphemy.

The disguises which piety puts on are, indeed, not unfrequently suggestive of that which some would describe by a quite opposite name. To study the universe as it is manifested to us; to ascertain by patient observation the order of the manifestations; to discover that the manifestations are connected with one another after a regular way in time and space; and, after repeated failures, to give up as futile the attempt to understand the Power manifested, is condemned as irreligious. And, meanwhile, the character of religions is claimed by those who figure to themselves a Creator moved by motives like their own; who conceive themselves as discovering his designs; and who even speak of him as though he laid plans to outwit the Devil."—*Herbert Spencer, in "Study of Sociologies," chap. ii.*

If there is one paradox more striking than another in the whole array of paradox known as Christianity, it is the "blasphemy" of which Christians in general are habitually guilty. In the first place, the whole doctrine of Christianity—with its hells and its heavens, its damnations, and its angry God demanding the sacrifice of his own son (who was also himself)—seems to an outside observer the most wholesale blasphemy that could well be imagined—that is, if there can be such a thing as blasphemy at all. The typical deity of Christian belief has well been described by Mr. William Watson as—

A God like some imperious king
Wroth were his realms not duly awed,
A God for ever hearkening
Unto his self-commanded laud;
A God for ever jealous grown,
Of carven wood and graven stone.

Yet the Christians, with this deity, who is alternately a bully, a brute, and a booby, feel highly indignant when any Freethinker mildly suggests that—if there be a god—he may not be such an unmitigated scoundrel as the pietist would make out.

But, besides the fundamental blasphemy of the Christian creed as a whole, there is nothing so entertaining as the blasphemy of Christian conduct in incidentals. For instance, the other day we had Dr. Parker's direction to Omnipotence to "damn the Sultan," delivered in a peremptory tone, too, as one would say to a waiter, "Johnny, bring me some claret." As for the peremptory directions to the Infinite to "save" this person or "protect" that, they are legion and too common for notice. When a market-gardener wants a better crop of turnips, or a real "believer" wants to recover from an attack of lumbago, he calls on God at once, as a universal lackey, to do the needful. It is true, no doubt, at the same time, that the farmer will get the best manure and adopt the best expedients, and that the "believer," unless he is of a very peculiar brand and cares to run the risk of Christian imprisonment, will send for the best doctor which his means permit. But they will call on God to lend a helping hand, as it were, in order to supplement the deficiencies of the manure and the doctor. Their "reverence" and simple faith are really touching, and must shame the most hardened unbeliever into silence.

On another side, Mr. Stead has recently been furnishing his example of the ordinary unconscious blasphemy of Christianity. Mr. Stead took charge of the popular side of the peace movement in England, and, with somewhat questionable taste, began his meetings by "engaging in" prayer. That is to say, in the terms of Mr. Stead's creed, his God permits the most awful slaughter and destruction to be devised—nay, has permitted them to go on, and the most appalling engines of butchery and destruction though he could have stopped them or never allowed them at all—until, after centuries of bloodshed, the editor of a monthly magazine, published in London, calls his attention to the matter with a view to its being remedied; whilst all the time, in the very terms of Mr. Stead's conduct, he would stop the horror, if he had the power, without waiting to be asked at all.

There is another aspect of the question which forces itself on our attention, and that is the audacity, so far as his God is concerned, of the professed "believer." No one, for instance, would have the effrontery to talk of Mr. Balfour's "intentions" or Lord Rosebery's "plans" without warrant or authority. But every unpledged curate or newspaper hack is quite prepared to tell you all about the intentions and plans of the supposed Creator of the universe. They will tell you he is "pleased" with this, and "angered" at that, and

"offended" at something else. A Catholic theologian tells you for certain God will do so and so. No, says the Protestant theologian, he will do the other thing. For instance, in the poetic play of Mr. Yeats, with which I dealt recently in these columns, the poet tells us that God judges "the motive, not the deed." Not at all, said Mr. Yeats's critics, he does nothing of the kind. To an outside observer, as I have said, the audacity of the thing is its most striking characteristic. Because these multifarious views are not put forward in any way timorously or with hesitancy as suggestions or hypotheses, they are put forward dogmatically as certainties. In most of the books of "religious instruction" for the young, for instance, you will find statements and assertions made with the greatest precision and force, as though they were certainties, which another theologian as certainly confutes. And each side displays that dogmatism which is the natural concomitant of ignorance.

Pope, it seems, in the *Universal Prayer*, wrote:—

Let not this weak, unknowing hand
Presume Thy bolts to throw,
And deal damnation round the land
On each I judge Thy foe.

One can only conclude that Pope had attained a wider outlook than the theological mind generally. For the spirit of these lines is exceedingly rare amongst the theologians, who have no diffidence in "dealing damnation" with a lavish hand, often even whilst hypocritically professing not to deal it. They, for the most part, have no hesitation in judging who are "Thy" foes, or in constituting themselves "Thy" champions against others of "Thy" children. Inasmuch, of course, as in theological history there is hardly a school of theologians which has not been consistently damned by the adherents of some other school, the whole account probably balances in the ledgers of "faith." So that those of us who stand outside the squabble are left to merely survey the "humility" of the entire spectacle from a distance. We are also left to reflect on the ethics of "belief," which, attributing all kinds of baseness and cruelty to its God, yet denounces and betimes imprisons those who find it more reasonable and noble to think that the world is not ruled by an almighty ruffian, or judged by the standard of a pettifogging lawyer and the letter of a foolish law.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Ingersoll's Paine Oration.

[Delivered at the Academy of Music, New York, on Sunday, May 14, 1899.]

(Continued from page 390.)

PAINE was filled with real love for mankind. I do not see how he loved them, but he did. I tell you it is a job to love this world, and when you have read the history of the human race I tell you affection comes slow. But he did; his philanthropy was boundless; he wished to destroy monarchy, but not the monarch. He voted for the destruction of tyranny and against the death of the king. Just think of it. He wished to establish a government on a new basis—one that would forget the past. In the Assembly, where nearly all were demanding the execution of the king, and where to differ was to be suspected, and where to be suspected was almost certain death, Thomas Paine had the courage to vote against death. A vote against the death of the king was a vote against his own life, and he knew it. This was the sublimity of devotion to principle. For this he was arrested, imprisoned, and doomed to death. Search the records of the world, and you will find few sublimer acts than that of Thomas Paine voting against the king's death. He, the hater of despotism, the abhorrer of monarchy, a champion of the rights of man, a republican, accepting death to save the life of a deposed tyrant, of a throneless king. This was the last act of his political life, and a sublime conclusion of his political career, and that act crowns him forever as one of the noblest of the human race. All his life he had been the friend of man. He had labored, not for money, not for fame, but for the general good. He aspired to no office, had asked no recognition for his services, but he had been content

to labor as a common soldier in the army of progress ; confining his efforts to no one country, looking upon the world as his field of action and filled with a genuine love for the right, he was imprisoned by the very people he had striven to save. Had his enemies succeeded in bringing him to the block, he would have escaped the calumny and hatred of the Christian world. In this country, at least, he would have ranked with the proudest names. And on the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence his name would have been upon the lips of all the orators, and his memory in the hearts of all the people.

But Thomas Paine had not finished his career. He had spent his life thus far in destroying the power of kings, and now he turned his attention to the priests. He knew, just as I know now, that every abuse had been embalmed in scripture, and that every outrage was in partnership with some holy text. He knew that the throne skulked behind the altar, and he also knew that back of that was a pretended revelation from God. He knew that the throne and the altar supported each other. By this time he had found that it was of little use to free the body and leave the mind in chains. He had explored the foundations of despotism ; he had dug under the throne, and it occurred to him that he would take a look behind the altar. The result of his investigations was given to the world in a book called the *Age of Reason*. From the moment of its publication he became infamous ; he was calumniated beyond measure ; to slander him was to secure the thanks of the Church and the approval of God. All his services were forgotten or denied ; he was shunned as though he were a pestilence. Most of his own friends forsook him ; he was regarded as a moral plague, and at the mention of his name the bloody hands of the Church were raised in horror ; he was denounced as the most despicable of men. Why, when I was a boy I used to hear the ministers talk about Thomas Paine ; he was one of the most malicious, mendacious, infamous wretches that ever blasphemed Christ. Oh ! they lacked words to express their horror of this patriot and philanthropist, and, not content with following him to his grave, they pursued him after death with redoubled fury, and recounted with infinite gusto and satisfaction the supposed horrors of his deathbed, and gloried in the fact that he was forlorn and friendless, and gloated like fiends over what they supposed to be the agonising remorse of his lowly death. Is it not wonderful that all his services were forgotten ? Is it not amazing that some kind word did not fall from some pulpit, that somebody was not great enough to accord him at least honesty ? Is it not strange that in this general denunciation some one did not remember his labor for liberty, his devotion to principle, and his zeal for the rights of his fellow men ? He had by brave and splendid effort associated his name with the cause of progress. He had made it impossible to write the history of human liberty with his name left out. He was one of the creators of light, one of the heralds of the dawn ; he hated tyranny in the name of kings and in the name of God with every drop of his noble blood. He believed in liberty, in the sacred doctrine of human equality, and under these divine banners he fought the battle of his life. In both worlds he offered his blood for the good of man. In the wilderness of America, in the French Assembly, and in his sombre cell, waiting for death, he was an unwavering, unflinching friend of his race, the same undaunted champion of universal freedom ; and for this he has been hated, and for this the Church has violated even his grave. This is enough to make one believe that nothing is more natural than for men to devour their benefactors. The people in all ages have crucified and then glorified, and whoever lifts his voice against abuses, whoever arraigns the past at the bar of the present, whoever asks the king to show his commission, whoever questions the authority of the priest, will be denounced as an enemy of man and God ; and in all ages reason has been regarded as an enemy of religion ; nothing has been considered so pleasing to God as a total denial of the authority of your own mind. Self-reliance is one of the deadly sins, and the idea of living and dying without the aid and consolation of superstition has always horrified the Church. By some unaccountable infatuation belief has been, and still is, considered of immense importance. All religions have been based on the idea that God will forever reward the true

believer and eternally damn the man that doubts or denies. To practise justice, to love mercy, that is not enough ; that is not enough. You must believe in some incomprehensible creed. If the creed is reasonable, you will not be rewarded for not believing it. God only rewards you for believing what is unreasonable. You must say "Once one is three and three times one is one," and the man who practised every virtue, but failed to believe, was execrated ; and nothing so outraged the Church as a moral unbeliever ; nothing was so horrible as a charitable Atheist. When Paine was born the world was religious, the pulpit was the throne, and the Churches were making every effort to crush out of the brain the idea that it had a right to think.

If I have not the right to think, who has ? That's all there is to it. And if another man says he has the right, "Where did you get it ?" If I have not the right to express my thoughts, whose thoughts have I the right to express, and how did that other fellow get the right to express the thoughts that I repeat ? No. Thomas Paine made up his mind to sacrifice himself for the good of his fellow men. Great man. He commenced by the assertion that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system. No wonder the Church began to hate him. He believed in one God, and no more.

Well, one infinite God ought to be enough. How he believed in God, I don't know ; but he did. After this life he hoped for happiness, and he believed that true religion consisted in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy ; in offering to God the fruit of the heart. He denied the inspiration of the Scriptures. That was his crime. He contended that it was a contradiction in terms to call anything a revelation that comes to us secondhand ; it is only a revelation to the man to whom God revealed it, and after that it is hearsay. Admitting that the first man had the word of God, you have nothing but the man's word. This argument never has been, and never will be, answered. He denied the divine origin of Christ, and showed conclusively that the pretended prophecies in the Old Testament, said to speak of him, had nothing to do with him one way or the other. And yet he believed that Christ was an amiable and virtuous man, and on this point he entertained the same sentiments now held by the Unitarians, and, in fact, by the ones you may call the most enlightened Christians. Paine denied the story of the creation, and all the scientists now say that he was right ; and the intelligent ministers—I don't mean by that millions—but the intelligent ministers, they say the same thing exactly.

Paine denied the Fall of Man, and now every biologist in the world says that the fact is that we have come up from lower forms, from degradation, to the place we now occupy ; that it is false ; that we were once perfect, and have fallen. Paine denied the Fall, and every man of sense agrees with him ; I mean every man of sense and information.

Paine denied the Flood ; thought it idiotic, cruel, infinitely senseless, and stupid. And now Dr. Briggs agrees with him. But Briggs is ordained, and Paine has been damned. Paine denied the Tower of Babel story, and I guess nobody in the world, except Clendenin,* believes it. He denied that Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt ; and the Higher Critics as they call themselves, say the same. He laughed at the miracles of Egypt ; he laughed at God overrunning a land with frogs and locusts, and covering people with lice. He laughed at the idea of God, or wept, to think that God was so infinitely cruel, merciless, and fierce that he killed all the firstborn of Egypt on account of the crime of a king. Think of a God that would do that ! What a devil he would have made ! And it turns out that he is the real God, he has one enemy anyhow ; I am against him. A God that would destroy a helpless babe in the arms of its mother on account of a crime of a king, and a God that would destroy, that would mangle with hail, innocent cattle because he was mad at the monarch—such a God has not good sense. Or, maybe, he was insane.

* The Rev. Dr. F. H. Clendenin, of St. Peter's Church, West Chester, leader of the fight against the ordination of Dr. Charles A. Briggs to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church. Dr. Briggs was ordained by Bishop Potter on May 14, 1899—the day on which this address was given.

Paine denied the miracles of the wilderness. So did Dean Stanley. So did Colenso, and every other intelligent man who ever studied the subject. He denied that wars were waged by the command of Jehovah where the old and decrepit were killed, where the mothers were destroyed, and where even the unborn babes were massacred with the sword of war. He didn't think that God was that cruel, that bloody. So he doubted about that fellow going to heaven in a chariot of fire. He doubted about the story of Daniel in the lions' den. He doubted about Jonah, and who does not? I mean, who that has any sense? And now all the ministers that pretend to be students, that pretend to have some brain, agree with Thomas Paine.

They have just got where the ashes of his bivouac fires can be found. There is where they are standing now. And they don't call themselves blasphemers and devils and miscreants; they are theologians; they are the Higher Critics. Good. I am glad to see that. So Paine denied the New Testament miracles; that is what Dr. Briggs is doing now, and Bishop Potter is sitting in his corner. I have more respect for him than I ever had before. Paine doubted about that Holy Ghost. You know that is a vague kind of being, anyhow. He is just the same as God and just the same as Christ, you know; but his disposition is different. Christ says: "Forgive your enemies." But the Holy Ghost, any sin against him can never be forgiven either in this world or the world to come. He is probably the most malicious thing in the universe that has wings. A great thing, the Holy Ghost. Paine denied that Christ raised the dead or cured leprosy with a touch. You know he was walking along one day, and there was a woman walked up and touched his clothes, and he felt virtue go out of him. A funny feeling that would be. And he turned around and saw who touched him. He found this woman had, and she was cured. Now, I tell you when a man is that miraculous that he does miracles without his own volition, he certainly is divine. Paine denied that. He denied the Resurrection, he denied the Ascension, and he denied the Pentecost, where cloven tongues of fire waved over those fellows' heads. And Dr. Briggs says he is right.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

CHRISTIANITY AND SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You speak in very disparaging terms in your last issue (June 11, p. 374) of Sir G. G. Stokes as a theologian. You say a discourse of his at the Hall of Science was "insufferably stupid." I will not discuss that verdict, but will state that I know that Sir George Stokes is one of the most truth-loving persons living; that he has given great attention and thought to many of the subjects more largely discussed now a days. He is one of the most truly liberally-minded men I have ever known, and he remains a devout and convinced Christian.

Though Lord Kelvin has publicly stated that Sir George Stokes has been his master in science (a view which, perhaps, the sixty-eight addresses presented to Sir George on June 2 at the Universities, Societies, and other bodies of the whole of the civilised world, may confirm), still I imagine Lord Kelvin is, in general estimation, the greatest English-speaking scientist living. At Cambridge (June 1) he expressed to me warmly his wish for the success of the Christian Evidence Society. These two eminent past Presidents of the Royal Society have been succeeded by that saviour of tens of thousands of lives, Lord Lister. He, also, is a devout Christian.

I have for some years named Pasteur (than whom France never produced a greater or more beneficent man of science) as a Christian, and I was a little surprised at your saying in the *Freethinker* of March 26 (p. 201): "We always understood that he was a Theist, but not a Christian. To say he was a devout Catholic seems quite absurd."

As I am very particular as to facts, and could not clearly recall the reasons for my statements, I at once wrote to an Englishman in Paris asking him to let me know what Pasteur's creed was. He did not reply, but I have since found he is notoriously a bad correspondent. The other day I happened to be in the company of a Roman Catholic Bishop, and consulted him. He said he had always understood Pasteur was a Catholic, but would *carefully* inquire. He did so, and received, from what he justly considers an absolutely reliable quarter, this testimony: "He [Pasteur] lived and died a militant Catholic, and has always been considered as a

champion of the faith by Frenchmen in general, and by scientists in particular."

I do not for a moment contend that Christianity must be Divine because four of the greatest men of science, at the close of the nineteenth century, have so regarded it; but I think, all the same, such a fact should make even a man of such superior powers as yourself pause a moment before calling one of them "insufferably stupid."

June 12, 1899.

C. LLOYD ENGSTRÖM.

[We never said that Sir G. G. Stokes was "insufferably stupid." Mr. Engström should really be more careful. What we said was that a certain lecture of his at the Hall of Science many years ago was "insufferably stupid." We thought so then, and said so; we think so still, and we say so. Sir G. G. Stokes is a great scientist, but mathematics and such things do not make a man's opinion of great value on *all* subjects—especially on subjects with which he is imperfectly acquainted. We advise Mr. Engström to take the candid opinion of some competent friend as to the value, for instance, of Sir G. G. Stokes's Gifford Lectures. With regard to Pasteur, Mr. Engström must pardon us for not accepting as final the declaration of a nameless Catholic Bishop, presumably English, who made careful inquiries of a nameless reliable authority. Some day or other, when we have the leisure, we will hunt up a discourse of Pasteur's which we still recollect, and see whether it is consistent with Christianity, in any honest sense of the word.—EDITOR.]

SECULAR PROPAGANDA IN THE PARKS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I desire to call attention to a long-standing and ever-increasing complaint amongst those who are responsible for the carrying out of the outdoor propaganda, in the hope that a protest from you will have the effect of bringing our well-meaning, but misguided, friends to their senses. Nearly all our Branches who have lecture-stations in the London Parks, and who engage lecturers, provide platforms and chairmen, are finding their work considerably hampered by the injudicious behavior of their own friends and members, who persistently destroy the effect of the organised meetings by debating either with the C.E.S. lecturer, or allowing themselves to be drawn into an undignified wrangle with some half-demented and peculiar exponent of the thousand-and-one creeds. For some years past it has been no uncommon thing to find in Hyde, Regent's, or Finsbury Park three or four little gatherings of twenty to thirty people, in addition to the C.E.S., "The Sovereign Grace," "The Flying Roll," etc., with a Secularist in their midst, who should know better than to stand upon the fringe of the crowd gathered around his brother Secularist, and interrupt him and his audience the whole afternoon. On Sunday last I attended the lecture in Finsbury Park, and was particularly grieved to find, within fifteen minutes after the lecturer for the afternoon had commenced, three Secularists (two of whom, I grieve to say, were members of the N.S.S.) were opposing, at full lung power, the C.E.S. lecturer and two other persons, who, without their aid, could not have collected, or held, an audience of *two*; and this within ten yards of each other! A moment's reflection will show this is unjust to the lecturer and undignified to the Cause. If friends in Finsbury Park, or elsewhere, feel they have any interesting matter to put before an audience, I shall be delighted to utilise their spare energy, if they will communicate with me; or, should they feel unable to occupy the full time usually taken up by a lecturer, we could arrange an experience meeting for them, which would at least prove as interesting as the experiences we are accustomed to get from our opponents. If, however, they must hear themselves talk, I earnestly hope in future they will be considerate enough to wait until the lecture arranged for by the Branch has terminated.

EDITH M. VANCE.

His Ardent Wish.

THE parson grips his daily rag,
And reads it eagerly.
The anguish of his balked desire
Is terrible to see!

He gallops o'er the paragraphs
With eyes like Argand lamps;
He madly grinds his double teeth,
And now and then he stamps.

He mutters, as he scans the page:
"A Wesleyan—a Jew—
A Catholic—a parson—zounds!
An Anglican or two!"

And darker still the tempest lowers;
His crinkled forehead sweats;
While disappointment goads him on
To kick the household pets.

He grabs his hat, and leaves the house
With agitated stride,
Exclaiming: "Damn these Atheists!
They *will* not suicide!"

EX-RITUALIST.

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, "England and the Boers: A Freethinker's View."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A Concert.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 7, Stanton Coit, "Women as Reformers."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, Stanton Coit, "Women as Reformers."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A. B. Moss.
BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15 and 6.30, E. Pack.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, W. J. Ramsey.

FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, W. Heaford.

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, Arthur E. Elderkin, "Science and Satan: A Criticism of *Evil and Evolution*."

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

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton, "The Atonement."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, F. A. Davies; 7, E. White. June 28, at 8, W. J. Ramsey.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A lecture.
THE TRIANGLE (Salmon-lane, Limehouse): 11.30, E. Pack.

June 27, at 8, C. Cohen.

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

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, S. Jones.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, A lecture.
WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, E. Pack.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A lecture.

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

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. E. Jordan, "The Mining Tribute."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A Lecture—Committee meeting. The hall will be closed during the months of July and August.

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

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A lecture. See Saturday's local papers.

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

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: 11 (Quayside), C. Cohen; 6.30 (Moor Edge, near Recreation Ground), C. Cohen.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—June 25, Newcastle-on-Tyne. 27, Mile End.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—June 25, m., Battersea. July 9, e., Edmonton. 16, m., Clerkenwell; a., Hampstead Heath; e., Kilburn. 23, m., Mile End.

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

R. P. EDWARDS, 52 Bramley-road, Notting-hill.—June 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 25, m., Pimlico Pier; a., Brockwell Park; e., Peckham Rye.

A. E. ELDERKIN, Watford.—June 25, Finsbury Park.

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