

THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XIX.—No. 27.

SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1899.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Punishment of the Vestal.

It was Numa Pompilius who, when Rome was young, instituted the Vestal Virgins. In his time there were two; Servius added two more, and the number four, says Plutarch (writing in the first century), "has continued to the present time." The Vestals took the vow of virginity for thirty years, spending the first ten in learning their duties, the second ten in responsible office, and the last ten in teaching novices. After that, they might pass out into the world and marry; but few cared to change their solitary state for so late a wedded life. To them was committed the keeping of the holy fire on the altar; and in their inviolable charge were placed wills and other important documents. When these sacred maids stirred abroad, they seemed to sanctify the very air they moved in. Officers bore in front of them the magistral axe and rods (the fasces). He who passed upon the chair they were carried in was put to death. If, perchance, they met a criminal on his way to execution, the meeting brought him salvation, for his name was spared in the name of the stately Vestals. They were valued for purity, for personal and civic integrity, for the honor of Rome.

If a Vestal neglected any of the smaller duties which the state assigned to her, she was whipped. But the scourge might only be wielded by the high-priest, and he must hang a curtain between himself and the virgin whom he chastised. But if a Vestal indulged in forbidden love, and broke the awful vow of chastity, she must needs die. And this was the manner of her death. There was a gate in the wall of Rome named Collina, and near the gate rose a mound of earth, just inside the city. Under the mound was excavated a small cell, to which a flight of stairs gave access. In the cell were placed such things as bread, water, a pan of milk, and some oil. And she who lay a prisoner in the death-cell had enough of food to make her feel tenfold the terror of starvation. When all things were made ready, the Vestal who had sinned against the dignity of Rome was laid in a litter as if she were a corpse, and tied with cords, and her mouth so muffled that she could make no cry. In this litter she was carried through the streets; and, though people might be filled with a vast concourse of mourners, none uttered a curse or a sneer. Though the sun might shine, the sky appeared dark; for the city shadowed with sorrow and shame.

After the bearers of the litter had made a pause in the Forum, they proceeded slowly to the dreadful mound near the Gate Collina. Halting before the little door, they released the Vestal from the bier, and laid her on the ground. Then the High Priest raised his arms towards heaven, and prayed; but he prayed in a whisper, as if not even the birds of the air should know the disgrace that had befallen Rome. When he had uttered his supplication, he led the veiled woman to the entrance of the house of death, and placed her on the steps. He and his fellow-priests turned their backs upon her as she went down to the cell. When she had descended, they drew up the steps, and heaped soil over the doorway. No man ever saw the Vestal alive again, and she saw no man. The earth had devoured her in dead silence. And the fire leaped upon the altar, and was fed by other hands.

In all the history ever written I can recall no scene more impressive than this of the execution of the fallen Vestal. It is far more solemn and affecting than the tragedy of the Crucifixion.

Why is this?

Because in the one case there is a stern logic—terrifying, but magnificent; in the other there is a false sentimentality. In saying this, I have in mind the orthodox interpretation of the death of Christ as an atonement for the transgressions of the human race. "Behold the Lamb of God," says the Fourth Gospel, "which taketh away the sin of the world." That is the fundamental error of Christian theology. It is a moral error; it is also an artistic error.

It is a moral error. Never was it, never will it be, never can it be just that one man should suffer for the ill-doing of another. It may be generous; it may be expedient; it may be heroic; but not just. Either a condemned man deserves to die, or he does not. If he does not deserve to die, neither he himself should suffer nor a neighbor in his place. If he does truly deserve to die, then he himself should bear the penalty, and not a substitute. How can a sinner be made righteous by connivance in an act of injustice? If the Tiber is foul, will it avail to cleanse the Thames? And if the earth has become vile, can the holiness of the stars purge its wickedness? The innocent soul may shriek under the lash for all eternity, but its blood will never wash away the sin of the guilty. "The sin that sinneth, it shall die." So spake the Old Testament, austere and sanely. So also spake old Rome; and when the Vestal went down to her last meal, even she might feel that the doom was just. No babe was made to weep instead of her; no guiltless life was banned for her sake. She fell, and she died; and the thunders of judgment rolled away into the everlasting stillness, and nature could smile as if the principle of justice had been vindicated.

The Crucifixion is also an artistic error. There is always a sublimity in a martyr's death. If we did not know what hideous doctrine lurked behind, we might find much to admire in the story of the last hours of Jesus, whether mythical or semi-historical. The farewell tears of the disciples at the Supper; the sleeping of the faithless Three; the sweating of blood; the flight of the apostles; the trial of the solitary preacher before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate; the weeping daughters of Jerusalem; the nailing on the tree between two thieves; the shriek of the thirsty sufferer; the last sob of the Forsaken—all these are incidents well calculated to stir the imagination; and a long array of Christian artists have found in their details full material for many a pathetic canvas. But when the priest thrusts himself upon us with his explanations—when the priest insists that this death is the death of an Innocent in favor of a craven herd of sinners whose deepest sin is to let Jesus bear their punishment, our sense of unity revolts. We recoil disgusted. We came to see heroism, and have beheld a butchery. We looked for the splendid, and discovered the mean. Art is outraged. Incongruity blurs the picture, and we stumble amid a chaos of irrational ideas. It is as if Plutarch told us that the Vestal who sinned was crowned queen of Rome, and her punishment borne by the tenderest and chastest mother in the City.

Such is the contrast between the pagan and the Christian conceptions of tragedy. The pagan conception appeals us, but we acknowledge its justice. The Christian conception first excites our pity, and then our abhorrence.

F. J. GOULD.

Through Nature to God.

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

II.

MR. FISKE'S first essay is on the Mystery of Evil. He says it is a well-worn theme, and we are unable to see that he throws any fresh light upon it. He refers to the "helpless and hopeless bewilderment into which all theologies and all philosophies have been thrown by the problem of the existence of evil." Logically speaking, the helplessness and the hopelessness remain for all Mr. Fiske's endeavors. Half way through this first essay he confesses that the problem of evil is still "enshrined in a mystery impenetrable by finite intelligence." Now, if that be the case—and assuredly it is, and ever must be, from the Theistic point of view—Mr. Fiske only wastes his own and his readers' time in advancing explanations. Fifty-six pages on a mystery are fifty-six pages too many. A mystery is a mystery, and there is an end of the matter. Still, we may ask *how* it is a mystery. And what is the answer? The mystery of evil is only a mystery to the Theist. It is not a natural mystery, pertaining to the unknown; but an artificial mystery, pertaining to an arbitrary hypothesis. It is not the mist of ignorance, but the smoke of confusion. The mystery is *created* by the hypothesis. The Theist starts with the assumption of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omni-benevolent God. Then he finds that certain stubborn facts do not fit in with his assumption; and, instead of modifying his theory—as Mill told him he should do, and indeed did for him—he sticks to it in spite of the hostile facts, and calls the contradiction a mystery. For the solution of it, he says, we must wait. And how long? Why until we are dead, or perhaps still longer. Meanwhile we must perform an act of faith; that is, we must believe the Theistic doctrine in spite of reason. "Could we raise the veil," Mr. Fiske says, "we should see" certain things which he asserts. Well, if the veil *were* lifted, we should of course see what there is to be seen; but as the veil is *not* lifted, Mr. Fiske and all other Theistic apologists are indulging in guess work—which may be very entertaining, but can hardly be instructive.

Generally the Theist concerns himself with the *continuance* of evil. But, as Cardinal Newman remarked, the real difficulty is not so much why it continues, but why it ever began. The usual explanation is this, that God is opposed by a powerful enemy, called Satan, the Devil, and a multitude of other names. This is sufficient to those who cannot see beyond their noses, and have no disposition to look further. But it is only a temporary expedient. The question arises, Who made Satan? If God created him, and can destroy or restrain him, but does not, God is responsible for all his villainy. If, on the other hand, God did not create him, he is a co-eternal and independent power; in which case God is not God, for there are then two deities, and which of them is really good and which evil, or whether they are both mixtures, are questions that are incapable of solution.

The anonymous author of that in some respects powerful book on *Evil and Evolution* contends for the existence of Satan, and advises the clergy not to give up the doctrine of a personal Devil, unless they wish to see Theism itself laid in ruins by modern science, which shows us that evil is neither superficial nor evanescent, but wrought into the very texture of life upon this planet. Mr. Fiske, however, takes the opposite course—which exhibits the old harmony in the household of faith. Science has demonstrated the unity of nature; there are no interpolations in the drama of the universe; and one master-mind must preside over the design and the performance. "God," says Mr. Fiske, "is the creator of evil, and from the eternal scheme of things diabolism is forever excluded. Ormuzd and Ahriman have had their day and perished, along with the doctrine of special creations and other fancies of the untutored human mind."

God then, according to Mr. Fiske, is the creator of evil. It is a bold saying, though of course not original, for we find it in Isaiah. The majority of Theists, we

fancy, would regard it as blasphemous. But there is no escape from it if you drop the Devil, and that is what the Churches themselves are all doing. There is not a single reference to the Devil in the new Free Churches' Catechism, and many clergymen openly say that the Devil is not a personality, but a personification.

Well, if God created evil, it must have a definite function, and that function must be beneficent. Mr. Fiske does not try to minimise the suffering and degradation of this world. He draws some powerful pictures of both. He allows that progress is through misery and death." But there is progress. That is the great fact. God is really aiming at the development of human character. To this end there *must* be evil, for we only know good by evil. Our knowledge is relative; it is founded on contrast and discrimination. If there were no evil, there would be no good—that is to say, we should not know it as good. Thus it is that "hideous hatred and strife" and "widespread famine and death" furnish the "indispensable conditions for the evolution of higher and higher types of life." But what is meant by "indispensable"? It appears to us that Mr. Fiske is the victim of his own reactivity. He assumes that what is *could* not have been otherwise. True, he does not say so, but that is the underlying assumption. And does not this make God himself the victim of external conditions? To reply that he created the conditions is only to put the difficulty a step further back. Could he have created them differently? If you say Yes, you make him morally responsible for the involved cruelty. If you say No, you make him subject to a higher necessity.

Mr. Fiske argues that when the human race is properly evolved, according to God's slow plan, the face of evil "will lapse into a mere memory." But its impress upon the human soul "will remain as an indispensable background against which shall be set hereafter the eternal joys of heaven." But this is prophetic. Let us keep to this world and what we know. Here and now that Theists must justify the ways of God to men.

G. W. FOOTN.

(To be concluded.)

Christianity and Toleration.

PROTESTANTISM, with its open Bible, has everywhere maintained laws against blasphemy and heresy. The laws against heresy have fallen into desuetude in England, but while they lasted they were singularly ferocious. We heard the late Lord Coleridge say from his seat in the Court of Queen's Bench, as Lord Chief Justice, that the Protestant laws against Roman Catholics, particularly in Ireland, where they were executed with remorseless ferocity, are without parallel in the history of the world. Catholicism, however, is no longer under a ban. Even the Jews have been admitted to equal rights with their fellow citizens. But laws still remain in existence, and are occasionally put into operation, against "blasphemers." According to the language of common law indictments, it is a crime to bring the Holy Scripture or the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt. It is true that many Christians are ready to profess a certain aversion to such laws, but they make no effort to repeal them. Many others contend that "blasphemy" is a substance of manner, that the feelings of Christians should be protected, and that, while men should not be punished for being Freethinkers, they should be punished for wounding orthodox susceptibilities. It is not proposed, however, that any limitations of taste or temper should be imposed upon Christian controversialists; and contention may therefore be regarded as a substitute for bigotry. On the whole, it may be said that Catholicism without the Bible, and Protestants with the Bible, persecute unbelief to the full extent of their opportunities, and it is only as toleration grows from other roots that it is nourished by other causes, that the Bible is kept out of subtle interpretations of simple texts in favor of a prevailing tendency.

—"The Book of God" (By G. W. FOOTN.)

The Ethics of Persecution.

That all forms of Christianity have, with rare exceptions, persecuted antagonistic opinions to the exact extent of their political opportunities is a statement the truth of which will be questioned by no competent student of history. That these persecutions have been the nature of logical deductions from or consequences of the fundamental principles of Christianity seems to be a statement that is equally sound, however much its accuracy may be questioned by Christians or by Free-thinkers of a sentimental type. So far as Christians themselves are concerned, each will readily admit that persecution has been one of the features of religious organisation, although they will usually accompany the admission with the saving clause that their own particular "doxy" has been the one exception to the general rule. Still, so long as one sect of Christians laboring its "brothers in Christ," one may feel certain that the attack will not be wanting in heartiness, and will often be directed with considerable shrewdness and accuracy. The cloud of prejudice is lifted for a moment, and the indication of some of the evils of Christian organisation affords a plausible pretext for justifying the normal vindictiveness of sectarian feelings.

A good example of this is found in the *Church Times* of June 16, in an article on "The Ethics of Persecution." The occasion of the article was the unveiling of a memorial to the "Kent Martyrs" at Canterbury, and is interesting as showing that even a Christian journal can recognise some of the evils of religion—when it is its purpose to do so. For, as an advocate of Socialism, the *C. T.* poses as a sufferer from the persecuting spirit displayed by the "Protestant" party, which, with Sir W. Harcourt at one end and Mr. Kensit at the other, has been clamoring for the State to suppress certain practices in the State Church, and seizes that opportunity of reminding the world that the belief that persecution is dead is "a pure delusion, based on an overweening conceit," and that all sections of the Protestant Church have in their day persecuted as bitterly as ever did the Church of Rome. If the Catholic Church has, on the whole, persecuted more than other churches, the reason is simply that its opportunities for doing so have been greater. As the *Church Times* says: "The fact is that many of the sufferers during the Reformation period were just as intolerant as those who persecuted them, the chief difference between them being, the one had political power and the other had not.... It was not lack of will, but of power, which prevented the Puritans from treading in the steps of Thomas Catholics to the bitter end."

In my opinion, this point, that, as organisations, the Protestant Churches have been, and are, as much opposed to real liberty of thought as the Roman Church itself, cannot be too strongly emphasised; and the admission is all the more noteworthy as coming from one of the leading organs of the Established Church. Whatever freedom of thought resulted from the break with Rome was as much to the distaste of the "Reformers" as to the parent Church, and was suppressed as speedily as possible. Indeed, the suppression of heresy by force as a moral and religious duty was preached with far greater earnestness by Protestants than it had been even by Catholics. In Germany, in Switzerland, in England, in Scotland, and in America dissent from the different Protestant dogmas was punished by horrible and revolting tortures, which formed the prelude to a death that was rendered welcome by the Christian treatment that had preceded it.

Nor were these persecutions the result of any sudden outbursts of rage, or the work of irresponsible preachers. "Persecution among the early Protestants," says Lecky, "was a definite and distinct doctrine, digested into elaborate treatises, indissolubly connected with a large portion of the existing theology, developed by the most enlightened and far-seeing theologians, and enforced against the most inoffensive as against the most formidable sects. It was the doctrine of the palmy days of Protestantism. It was taught by those who are justly esteemed the greatest of its leaders. It was manifested most clearly in those classes which were most deeply imbued with its dogmatic teaching.....And in

nearly every country where their boasted Reformation triumphed, the result is to be attributed mainly to coercion." There was scarcely a single Protestant leader that refrained from encouraging the forcible suppression of heresy. Luther asserted roundly that he wanted not toleration for "such as denied the common principles of the Christian faith"; Calvin gave to one of his works the descriptive heading—*In which it is Proved that Heretics may be rightly Coerced with the Sword*; Knox asserted that "It is not only lawful to punish to the death such as labor to subvert the true religion, but the magistrates and people are bound to do so unless they will provoke the wrath of God against themselves.....None provoking the people to idolatry ought to be exempt from the punishment of death." Even such men as Locke and Milton took up substantially the same position, the former denying toleration to Atheists on the ground that "The bonds of society could have no hold upon such as deny the being of God," and the latter to Catholics on the ground that as Popery "extirpates all religious and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpate"; while, coming lower down both in time and quality, we find Paley asserting that it is no infringement of religious liberty to restrain the circulation of ridicule or invective on religious subjects, and that it is quite permissible to shut out dissenters from any share in the administration of the country.

The fact is, as I have said, that whatever freedom resulted from the break with Rome was, so far as Protestants were concerned, both unforeseen and unwelcome. In inviting people to leave the Church of Rome some impetus was necessarily given to the right of private judgment, and the rapid multiplication of sects would do something to carry this movement still further; but to speak of the leaders of the Reformation as "Freethinkers," or as consciously working for freedom of thought, is to speak in ignorance of facts, and to show an utter absence of historical judgment.

The *Church Times*, then, is quite correct in its statements—so far as they go. It is only at fault in assuming that any thoroughly Christian body can ever be free from the taint of intolerance, or that it itself is any exception to the rule. Persecution may take different forms. The heretic is burned in one age, imprisoned in another, excluded from political privileges in a third, and socially boycotted in a fourth; but there is the same temper throughout, modified only in the form in which it expresses itself. The body of believers, represented by the *Church Times*, has no more objection to the creation or continued existence of Acts of Parliament for the prevention of secularising the Sunday or the growth of anti-Christian propaganda than the most fanatical follower of Mr. Kensit. In the very issue from which I am quoting there is an exhortation to Churchmen to shun the society of certain people who have printed and circulated a parody on one of the Church's hymns. It is hard to find any essential difference between socially ostracising people for a difference of opinion and the more forcible practices of earlier generations. It is only a week or two ago that the same writer was invoking parliamentary assistance to prevent Sunday trading and the like, and one can only conclude that the *Church Times's* cry for liberty is at bottom on all fours with the same cry in the mouths of John Calvin or John Knox.

"What lies at the root of all persecution," says the *Church Times*, "is narrowness, and when to this is joined the possession of power to force your views on others, then we have persecution full blown." Granted; but what the *Church Times*, in common with Christians of all classes, fails to see is that, if persecution is to be attributed to narrowness of mind, this state of mental imperfection has always been absolutely essential to the acceptance of Christianity itself. Whether we say the Puritans were bigots because they were Christians, or Christians because they were bigots, we are on equally firm ground. The temperament of a man may determine the opinions he adopts, or the opinions a man holds may react and fashion his temperament. It is highly probable that John Calvin would have been narrow-minded and intolerant in any other walk of life than the one in which he has secured notoriety; but what is certain in the case of Calvin is that, as has been the case with Christians generally, the original intolerance was intensified by the religious opinions held, and the

most savage bigotry given thereby an air of intense moral worth. It may be perfectly true that the elements of a Torquemada are in all men; but it is equally true that these may be either modified or exaggerated by the intellectual convictions entertained. And it is certain that a broad and liberal type of mind that would have revolted against persecution in any period preceding our own would have been equally certain to have rejected the whole scheme of Christianity. Even in our own period it has only been possible for liberal-minded men to accept Christianity by putting upon that religion an interpretation which involves a complete negation of its historical meaning.

It is not in human nature, as normally constituted, to believe in the Christian dogma of exclusive salvation; to thoroughly realise, with an intensity vivid enough to have any influence on conduct, that disbelief in Christianity spells eternal damnation; that, in the words of Spurgeon, "If you could get together murder, theft, and adultery, and roll them all into one black mass of corruption, they would not then equal the crime of unbelief." It is not possible for people to thoroughly believe all this without having some amount of ill-feeling roused against the unbeliever. We shrink from countenancing the presence of the thief and the murderer, and do our best to suppress them; and if orthodox Christianity be true, if it be accepted as an unquestionable fact, without which civilisation must either decay or stagnate, then there is as much logical justification for the forcible suppression of heresy as there is for compulsory vaccination, compulsory education, or compulsory sanitation. If Christianity be true, the heretic is a social plague-spot; his suppression becomes a social duty of the most imperative kind; and, in saying this, I am only putting into words the feelings that have animated large bodies of Christians in all ages.

For persecutors have not always been bad men—so far as their intentions were concerned. Undoubtedly religious persecution has often been the cover for political or personal aggrandisement, but persecution could hardly have endured throughout the ages unless it had been supported by a considerable quantity of honest, but ignorant, "good intentions." There is no plainer and, at first sight, no more startling fact than that the most savage spirit of persecution has often been joined to the most intense moral sincerity. The cause of persecution has, it is true, been intellectual narrowness; and that intellectual narrowness was, and is, only another name for intense religious belief.

For the simple fact is that tolerance in religion and indifference to religion are only two names for the same thing. The only people who can really be tolerant of disbelief in Christianity are those who believe that, after all, they may be wrong; that Christianity is at best only a plausible hypothesis, but that belief in it is of comparative unimportance as compared with beliefs or actions that can be tested by human needs and in the present state of existence. So long as people are seriously convinced that supernatural beliefs are not only essential to a man's welfare here, but also to his eternal welfare hereafter, so long must heresy excite intolerance by its presence. It is only as people begin to disbelieve in the necessity of religious opinions that they begin to tolerate dissent from them. Scepticism is not only a force that furthers the development of real freedom of thought, but is, in truth, the essential condition of its existence.

C. COHEN.

Secularism in the Churches.

AMONG the many encouraging results of the present unrest, which is visible in the various religious bodies throughout the country, none is more gratifying to us than the triumph of Secular principles in the Churches. Not only are most of the old orthodox doctrines given up, but the very views which we, as Freethinkers, have always regarded as of the highest importance are now taught from Christian pulpits. For years it has been the groundless boast of the exponents of Christianity that Secularists borrowed whatever was good in their teachings from the New Testament; now, however, "the scene is changed," and our opponents find it absolutely necessary to incorporate in their preaching

the essential parts of Secular philosophy. The *Cambridge Gazette* of last week observes that it has been frequently said "that the great want of the present day is a religion of common sense." Such a religion cannot be recognised in the old domain of theology, therefore it is sought for and discovered, in the practical enunciations of Secularism.

This departure from the old forms of Christian activity is readily understood by those who note the trend of modern thought. The truth is, "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" is not in touch with man's present mundane requirements. Hence, less interest is now taken in the Church than in former times, and, in many instances, there is a marked falling off in membership. In the *Nineteenth Century* for the past month the Rev. Anthony C. Deane has an article dealing upon this subject, in which he points out that the official figures published in the *Guardian* sufficiently show that the number of candidates for ordination is diminishing. For the last five years they are as follows (including priests and deacons):—

1894	1,428,	of whom 62 per cent. were grad's of Oxford or Cambridge
1895	1,420,	" 60 " " " " "
1896	1,321,	" 58.4 " " " " "
1897	1,297,	" 58.7 " " " " "
1898	1,276,	" 57.9 " " " " "

It appears a similar state of affairs obtains in America. A regular contributor to *Secular Thought* (Canada) gives the following suggestive information in its issue of May 27: "A Methodist Episcopal reverend of the name of Goodell has been letting a big cat out of the bag anent the condition of his church. He says: 'In three of the largest Conferences in Methodism, having 800 preachers, 160,000 members, and \$16,000,000 invested property, we have in one year lost 200,000 members. And the Baptists, so a minister recently told me, are in about the same condition. In New Hampshire where formerly religion thrived, there are towns where there are no open churches or ministers—no one to marry, to baptise, or to bury.' The same story is seen in one of the papers, is told of Pennsylvania; and is here said of New Hampshire; and probably it would be true of nearly every State of the Union. The churches are rapidly losing their hold of people, and no wonder. While the exigencies of life require that popular education shall be progressive, the clericals go on stuffing their minds with a lot of antiquated rubbish that only serves to make them objects of pity where they are the subjects of contempt and ridicule."

For years Secularists have been pointing out that the Churches should be utilised in the interests of the people, and that the pulpit should be made an instrument for the diffusion of useful knowledge. Within the last half-century some notable changes for the better have taken place in the religious world, and still further improvements are now being made. Secular agencies are rapidly supplanting alleged spiritual means. For instance, it has become a regular thing now to publish and advertise that certain eminent choirs will render special music at Church services. This proves a better method than the simple story of the Cross. The Roman Catholics have always made a feature of them with pronounced results. It is also well known that trained musicians appear daily in the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, and even General Booth's brass bands, when playing in tune, tend to make religion lively on Sundays in the public streets. It must not be inferred that, as a general rule, at least, depreciate the value of good music; on the contrary, we hail it with delight, believing that, as an emotional charm, it cannot be surpassed. Our object is to point out that it is the secular elements in the Churches that win adherents, not theological doctrines. Human efforts are proving more potent in attracting the general public than the alleged divine message.

But our attention is now more particularly directed to the appearance of a teacher of science as a "prophet" in the Church of England. Instead of the old theological trinity of the "three incomprehensibles," we have the new secular trinity of "Air, Light, and Water." And surely "the gospel of fresh air" is of more importance in daily life than the gospel of "faith without works." On Sunday, June 11, the Rev. Theodore P. Rockwell, vicar of All Saints', South Merstham, introduced Dr. Usher, who addressed the congregation upon the "Gospel of Fresh Air." In announcing the appearance

is clearly expressed and made in favor of an individual or body of individuals. For example, a bequest to such a Society as the National Secular Society or a properly constituted local branch of that Society, or to the recently formed Secular Society, Limited, would be valid if the testator's object was unequivocally stated.

It is rather amusing to notice the somewhat vague notions of the judge on the subject of Freethought. Lord Kincairney is known as an able and painstaking judge, but he is not quite clear as to the meaning of some of the terms he is compelled to use. He has a faint glimmering of the fact that Freethought is "some form of disbelief in, and opposition to, revealed religion," but he confounds it with Deism. He seems, however, to have no sympathy with the bigoted and ignorant statement of the plaintiff that Freethought propagandism is illegal and *immoral!* The remark that "books of the most unquestionable orthodoxy would answer the description" of "books dealing with the subject of Freethought" will not be satisfactory to the lay mind. It is quite true that no information was laid before the judge as to the late Mr. Hardie's opinions, but surely this was an omission. What was there to prevent evidence being taken from friends of the deceased as to his opinions? If this had been done, the judge could have had little difficulty in deciding that Mr. Hardie's intention was to advance the cause of Freethought by the sale of propagandist literature.

The trustees state that they made an effort to obtain a tenant, and that they could not find a suitable one. It would be interesting to know the extent of their efforts. A letter appears in a local evening paper from a bookseller who says he was ready to apply for the tenancy of the shop, but that he had no opportunity of doing so. The result is to be regretted in more ways than one, and it may be hoped that the last has not been heard of the case.

A.

A Younger Brother of Voltaire.

An advanced movement like our own can have no better champion than a humorist. No human emotion is so readily awakened as that of which laughter is the sign. And if the cause be a great one, and if the arguments, barbed by wit and winged by laughter, have any intrinsic worth, they strike the deeper and take the stouter hold because of the humorous nature of their presentation.

In a theological discussion a laugh is a blessing; thus a laugh-maker like Colonel Ingersoll is genuinely our benefactor. The artificial solemnity of the subject makes a joke more jocund, as the arms of a fair *Ethiopia* give a double beauty to her pearls.

The defenders of that transcendent imposture known as Christianity have lost themselves in trackless deserts of so-called "evidence," and almost drowned the subject in oceans of verbiage. But Colonel Bob, the *Voltaire de nos jours*, has challenged the defenders of orthodoxy with a smile. There is no point of importance upon which the Colonel has not wittily touched. There is no fallacy in that enormous tissue of fallacies which he has not laughingly exposed.

That is one reason why the Colonel has such bitter enemies among the long-necked geese of orthodoxy. The professional defenders of the Religion of the Man of Sorrows realise that it is ridicule that kills. Gravity is what they want. Opponents who treat religion seriously play their game for them.

Without it is based on seriousness, said Heine, wit is only a sneeze of the reason. With all his wit there never was a more earnest soldier of progress than Ingersoll. Although we have compared Ingersoll to Voltaire, the Colonel's irony is not Voltairean. There is no venom in his ridicule, but rather the suavity of Renan. Of Ingersoll's quality his *Mistakes of Moses* contains some fine specimens. In his witty banter of the Bible account of Creation of man and woman he says:—

"Imagine the Lord God with a bone in his hand with which to start a woman, trying to make up his mind whether to make a blond or a brunette."

Another example occurs in his remarks about religious opinions being more or less a matter of geography:—

"Had we been born in Turkey, most of us would have

been Mohammedans and believed in the inspiration of the Koran. We should have believed that Mohammed actually visited heaven and became acquainted with an angel by the name of Gabriel, who was so broad between the eyes that it required three hundred days for a smart camel to travel the distance. If some man denied this story, we should probably have denounced him as a dangerous person, one who was endeavoring to undermine the foundations of society, and to destroy all distinction between virtue and vice. We should have said to him: 'What do you propose to give us in place of that angel? We cannot afford to give up an angel of that size for nothing.'"

Passages like these are brain-fleas which jump about among the slumbering theologians. There are numbers of other examples which we might have given, but our readers had better look them up for themselves. The simile of the value of prayer to the man trying to pull himself by his boot-straps, the description of the Puritan habit of dividing the sexes at public worship, and many others, will occur readily to our readers. They wet the appetite like caviare. Ingersoll's humor is characteristically genial. Unlike American fun, it is not hard and unsympathetic. There is no cynicism in it, no tendency to laugh at human nature, no making game of its weaknesses.

Men very seldom talk as they write, but the Colonel is an exception. His conversation has a racy vigor of its own. We wish we could give our readers some notion of its Gargantuan abundance and humor, its brilliancy of wit, and spontaneity. He daily flings about epigrams and jests, the least of which must be the despair of many men. The physiological value of laughter has not been appraised yet. Doctors rightly bestow a certain prominence on cheerfulness, and give it a place in the pathology of copœia. No one except the dyspeptic owls of orthodoxy will dispute that the humorists are benefactors. Ingersoll has kept us all laughing for years, and we hope he will do so for many years to come.

MIMNERMUS.

Acid Drops.

NONCONFORMISTS are thoroughly dissatisfied with the Marriage Act of the Tory Government, which came into force, we believe, on April 1—a very suitable date for the recent Methodist New Connection Conference. At Manchester, a resolution was passed regretting that the Government had "perpetuated in the Act many of the irregularities most offensive to Free Churchmen." The Dissenting ministers really want it to be put on exactly the same level as Church parsons. But they hardly likely to see this done. Gradually, though too slowly, the public is becoming conscious that there is only one proper settlement of this question. As a public opinion marriage is a civil contract, involving not only the man and wife, but their offspring. As a private act, it may be religious or otherwise. Hence the French law, which makes civil marriage alone obligatory, and leaves the religious ceremony to the taste of individuals, as an option that may have a special sacredness and force for them but as religionists, and not as citizens.

When civil marriage has to be gone through by an applicant apart from and independent of any religious ceremony, shall have a sweeping change in the Registrar's Office which seems designed to make common people, and especially the women folk, feel that they have not been married. Marriage is the greatest event in a woman's life; she places her happiness, her all, in the hands of her lover; she hopes to be the good mother of his children, and to go hand in hand with him and them through joy and sorrow, trial and triumph, sunshine and shade; and this intimate union, which is a contract in the eye of the law, is something more than a mere legal tie. The future Religion of Humanity will provide for it accordingly. How repugnant it is, then, to sneak in and out of a dingy office in a back street, as is the fashion in England, the case of civil marriages! The French ceremony is performed in a public place, and amidst circumstances of some grandeur. There is, in short, a social consecration of the marriage. Something of the kind is absolutely imperative.

Sam Jones, the Yankee revivalist, preaches the Gospel with a strong, and often without sugar. Something of this kind upset him at Louisville, and this is how he thundered at the offending city: "There will be deaths in Louisville every thirty days that will startle the town from centre to centre."

ference. God will punish you, and the awful words I now speak will come back to you with shocking vividness." No doubt Sam Jones was in a devilish bad temper, but we fancy he is mistaken in supposing that God Almighty is bound to honor any bill of destruction he chooses to draw upon that personage. Bills of that sort in the Old Testament generally ran for forty days; moreover, they were usually honored first and drawn afterwards.

"Marchand," the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News* says, "struggled for the glory of the French flag, with the sub- motive of affording a great field in Africa to Catholic missions." No wonder the French clerical party is so mad over the Esnoda incident.

The *Daily News* Vienna correspondent interviewed the Frenchman Rousseau, who was the victim of an anti-Semitic hospital with deep gashes on his skull and a broken rib. He is forty-one years of age, stands six feet high, and has a handsome countenance. He is a born tramp, having wandered on foot through all the countries in Europe and through a great part of Asia. Even amongst the Tartars he found hospitality. Wherever he came the women took his sword from him, rinsed it, and filled it with fresh milk. "Nobody ever beat me in those parts," he said. The violence was done to him, on account of his Jewish blood, near the Christian city of Vienna.

The Catholics hope to get their Westminster Cathedral ready for the opening function, although it will be far from complete, by September, 1900. Donations pour in for it still at the rate of about £4,000 a month. Father Kenhelm in America has even collected nearly £7,000 in Spain and South America. When so much money is given so cheerfully to promote superstition, there should be a rival generosity for the benefit of Freethought.

There will be an increase of a penny in the London School Board rate this year. Already the cost of elementary education is four times as much as it was calculated ever to be when Mr. Forster introduced the Education Act of 1870, and no one can see the end of it. Of course there is some return for the expenditure of the ratepayers' money. Education is an investment that must yield a dividend. Still, the poor ratepayer has cause to look glum at the rise in his quarterly bill for another year. He is pretty well reaching the limit of his endurance.

On the top of the local rates come the imperial taxes. We have a Government that takes more and more money out of our pockets, and disburses it with the lordly generosity of a spendthrift. Its latest bit of charity is a dole of about ninety thousand pounds a year to the Church parsons. These gentlemen have to pay rates on their tithe properties, and they regard it as scandalous. The Government cannot relieve them from paying their rates, but it votes them a large sum of money to pay with; or rather the Government pays the rates for them in a somewhat roundabout but thoroughly economical way. Good old Church! Dear old parsons! What a day of reckoning will come when the people once awake!

There is a Divorced Men's Club in San Francisco. The President's wife divorced him because he smoked, and the Secretary's wife divorced him because he made a noise working in the cellar, which she mistook for burglars. These unhappy men wish others to profit by their sad experience, and claim that they have already saved several men who intended to marry. Of course it sounds very funny, but we propose it has its serious side. A rational divorce law is a necessity in civilised communities, but when divorce is made too easy it tends neither to the real happiness of adults nor to the welfare of children. The American girl seems to assume too readily that the world was made for her, and that if it doesn't suit it must be altered. "She gets a divorce," Gertrude Atherton says, "if her husband is not as she would have him, and so begins her life over again"—probably with the same result, for when the first glamour of passion is over on this side of the Atlantic. "If the married English girl," she says, "has not got just everything she wants in her husband, she falls back on the traditions of duty that have been planted in her. She just sits down and makes the best of her life."

Paul says that the man was not made for the woman, but the woman for the man. American ladies seem apt to go to the opposite extreme. They were not made for their husbands, but their husbands were made for them. Both extremes are false and absurd. There are no perfect beings in this world, at any rate; and no companionship can subsist without give and take on both sides. A recognition of this fact is the wisdom of love and friendship. And blessed are those who do not expect too much; yea, twice blessed, for they bless themselves and everyone around them.

After all the selfishness of so many people's "love," how

ennobling it is to turn to a case like that of Madame Dreyfus. Such a woman draws the homage of men as the moon leads the waters. We are not surprised that universal sympathy is felt for her by people of all opinions at Rennes. One shop-keeper said: "I firmly believe that man is a traitor; but if his wife drove past at this moment, I would bare my head as before a Madonna or a funeral."

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes is making history as Wesleyan Methodist president. He allowed one hundred pounds to be accepted from that eminent and devout Christian, Mr. Cecil Rhodes, for the Methodist Million Fund, and, not content with offending thousands of members of the denomination by remaining silent when the fund was increased in this undesirable way, the president betook himself to the Prince of Wales's levee. He did not go there to convert the Prince, but merely to bow before him. The company of the Prince may be good enough for bishops and baccarat players, but we do not think that even the ghosts of Wesley or Whitfield ever trouble the princely sleep. These spectres have too much respect for themselves. Not so the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. One day he is a pure Democrat; next day he is the most snobbish of snobs. The worship of the Prince goes a stage further this week. In this week's *Methodist Times* Mr. Price Hughes praises the Prince of Wales for the example he has just set to the upper classes in ordering no more hot rolls to be supplied to Marlborough House on Sunday. What condescension and thoughtfulness! Doubtless the Prince has eaten his rolls hot for forty years, and it must have been a hard fit of indigestion that caused the issue of the new order. Mr. Hugh Price Hughes, however, makes out that the Prince does not wish the bakers to labor on Sundays. If his Royal Highness is serious, he can do a great deal more than stop the delivery of a few rolls on Sunday morning. But we hope he will not. A further exhibition of common sense on the part of the Prince might have an injurious effect on the Wesleyan presidential brain.—*Edinburgh Evening News*.

M. A. P., Mr. T. P. O'Connor's paper, prints a eulogy of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. The writer remarks that Mr. Hughes has a convincing way and seldom fails. But it is admitted that "there was once an awkward *contretemps* with regard to a certain 'atheist shoemaker,' on an occasion when the reverend gentleman "allowed his enthusiasm to outrun his discretion." "*Contretemps*" is distinctly good. It reminds us of the man who did seven years for forgery, and always alluded to it afterwards as his "misfortune."

The Catholic Truth Society—what an ironical title!—publishes a "Biographical Series" for the mob of true believers. One of these productions lies before us; it lies, that is, in both senses of the word. It is a romantic life of St. Peter Claver, a Jesuit missionary to the negroes, who lived from 1580 to 1654. This gentleman seems to have been an accomplished miracle-worker. Still, he died at last, as they all do, whether they can work miracles or not. But even in the grave he was wonderful, for when it was opened his body was found uninjured, with the exception of a little damage to the head, which was evidently his weak place. Not only was his body uninjured, although laid in quicklime that had eaten away the clothes, the coffin, and the ironwork, but it was "without the least mark of corruption." Such are the ridiculous fables with which the Catholic Church still imposes upon the credulity of the multitude of superstitionists.

We have often said that, while veracity was always recognised as the root virtue by Paganism, and especially by the Stoics, it gets very little recognition in the Bible, and has never been much honored by the Christian Church. Something like this is admitted by the Rev. Dr. Charles A. Briggs in his *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* just published by T. and T. Clark, of Edinburgh. Referring to the Prophets, he says that "they seem to know nothing of the sin of speaking lies as such.....They were altogether unconscious of its sinfulness. The holiest men did not hesitate to lie, whenever they had a good object in view, and they showed no consciousness of sin in it." Dr. Briggs finds that the Jews learnt the virtue of truthfulness, as far as they did learn it, after the return from the Exile, and then "largely under the influence of Persian ethics." That is to say, God's chosen people, the recipients of his only revelation, or at least of his special revelation, had to learn the first great moral virtue from the Heathen. Could anything be more ludicrous? Does not this very fact settle for ever the claim of the Bible writers to be inspired?

Rev. Dr. Foster, a leading divine of New York, who gave scandal by eloping with his cook, has announced his repentance. Perhaps he has had enough of the cook. Anyhow we have no doubt that he will be cordially welcomed back in the soul-saving business.

Another New York revivalist, who worked chiefly amongst the Jews, with slender success, has been discovered living a life of the wildest profligacy behind the scenes. According to a Laffan telegram, "the scandal is immense."

Dr. Creighton, Bishop of London, declares that he would rather see the Church disendowed than the Church disestablished. We venture to think he is romancing. What we want to see is disestablishment *and* disendowment. Then the Bishop of London ought to be thoroughly happy.

Doth Job fear God for nought? asked wily Satan. His Sable Highness might ask the same question no less pointedly of many sky-pilots of the present day. Dignitaries of the Church of England get their thousands a year for preaching "Blessed be ye poor." Many eminent Nonconformist ministers have lumping salaries. Across the Atlantic there is Bishop Potter, of New York, with £3,000 a year. The late Dr. John Hall had £4,000 a year and a palatial residence. Ward Beecher had the same stipend. Five ministers in New York have £2,500 each, and at least twelve receive £2,000 each. For the sake of sceptical readers we may state that these figures are taken from the *Christian World*.

The "mystic faith-healer," Dr. Edwards, from Australia, recently arrested in Paris for alleged fraud, is, it seems, identical with a man well known on this continent. Arriving in Melbourne in 1885, he was engaged as glove-fitter by a leading soft goods firm, his name then being Edouardo Geismardo. He was so clever at his business that the glove operations of his employers grew by leaps and bounds. Then he took a shop of his own, where his effective personality drew a large business; a luxuriance of wavy hair, dark, piercing eyes, and splendid Italian features attracted the fair sex of Melbourne to his "Glove Boudoir." Then he disappeared suddenly, and was arrested at Albury for fraudulent insolvency. He disgorged the money found on him, and promised settlement of his debts. Another disappearance, and an "electric healer," Professor Richard by name, shone in Melbourne. He was visited by a patient, who discovered him to be Geismardo, the glove man, and, as he had proved a debt in insolvency, he claimed the intervention of the assignee. Richard fled again, and came to Sydney, where he gave exhibitions of his "healing power by electricity." He has now, it would seem, bleached his jet black hair. The man who now represents himself as St. Paul arisen from the dead is no other than the clever Italian glove-fitter.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

The Pope has completely recovered from his operation, and the doctors say he may live to be over a hundred. We condole with the Cardinals who aspire to step into his shoes. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.

Three hundred years ago the old St. Paul's Cathedral was often the resort of very disreputable company. It was not so much a den of thieves, perhaps, as a den of blackguards, although thieves were by no means absent; and it is said that even the necessities of nature were attended to quite recklessly in the sacred edifice. Of course matters are much better there now, but it appears that the visitors are not all bent on the worship of God. A correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* says that while he was seated quietly under the dome he was approached by a seedy-looking man who took a chair beside him, and, after remarking that it was a fine day, asked him if he wanted to buy a watch. Suiting the action to the word, the peripatetic merchant unstrapped a small bag, and disclosed to view a number of cheap American articles.

Reports have often come from America of ladies selling kisses at Church bazaars. It is said that they do a brisk business on such occasions. The stock-in-trade is not excessive, and the turn-over is rapid. A good many men try the novelty—let us hope *it is a novelty*—of kissing their neighbors' wives and daughters. Ideally, of course, it is not exactly an edifying entertainment, but the Lord's work is benefited, and religion covers a multitude of offences.

At Cincinnati, we read, kissing was introduced at a charity bezaar on Saturday, June 24. Dozens of ladies volunteered to be kissed and hugged at tariff prices, but the men had to be blindfolded. One of them, named John Reynolds, led out his lady and kissed and hugged her tremendously. He enjoyed himself immensely. But when the bandage was removed from his eyes he found that he had been squeezing and osculating his own wife. He therefore demanded his money back, and as it was not returned he smashed the furniture. It took more than one policeman to subdue him. Perhaps his wife supplemented the controlling action of the police in subsequent domestic retirement.

A good Sarah Bernhardt story is going the rounds, on the authority of her biographer, M. Huret. When the great tragedienne was in America, she entered a church one day and heard the minister denounce her as an imp of darkness, a female demon sent from the modern Babylon to corrupt the New World. During the day the clergyman received this note: "My dear confrere—Why attack me so violently? Actors ought not to be so hard on one another.—Sarah Bernhardt."

The Bishop of Ripon, speaking recently at Rochester, said that Christians had yet to understand what was meant by following Christ. We presume the Bishop understands himself; but, if he does not, he is in an excellent position to study it. His big salary and handsome residence should afford him an ample opportunity of fathoming the matter. Even if he fails, he will have had a good time at the finish.

The Governor of Wandsworth Prison, writing to the *Times*, says that his establishment receives about 100 male prisoners a year, and "it is the exception for any one of them to tell us he has never been to Sunday-school."

According to the *Christian World*, a woman of Burlington, Vermont, conceived the idea that on a certain day she must crucify herself in atonement for her sins; so she drove a nail through both her feet, and another through her left hand and laid down to die. Fortunately (perhaps) she was discovered in time and taken to the hospital, where science is endeavoring to remedy the mischief of superstition.

A correspondent in *New Ireland* asserts that good Irish priests are "as Cæsar's wife, few and far between."

High Church regard for the fair sex is of a very curious and questionable order. Down at Cardiff, for instance, the vicar of St. Andrew's has banished all the lady singers from the choir, whereupon the male singers struck, and the choir-master was left alone in his glory.

Lord Halsbury has delivered his jeremiad in the Chamber against the admission of women to the new vestries that are to supersede the London vestries. His wintry lordship said that women were very bad guides in politics. They were against all compromise and wanted everything perfect. Ahem! Is this reminiscent of the domestic goddess? Can it be that Lord Halsbury, the old Braddaugh-baiter, is not too highly appreciated at home?

Here is another sample of the way in which those who love the Lord love each other. The rector of Fyfield, Essex, recently invited cyclists generally to a church parade, and afterwards gave them tea on his lawn. This has grieved and distressed the Rev. David Tasker, who, speaking at the Newcastle Presbytery, strongly condemned Sunday cycling church parades as a desecration of the Sabbath. Cycling parades, he said, *took the young people away from their churches*. There's the rub! He further supported a resolution regretting that Christians should countenance such gatherings, and calling upon ministers, Sunday-school teachers, and leaders of Bible classes to warn young people against the sin of turning the day of rest into one of amusement. David must rise early and ride hard if, at this hour of the day, he wishes to keep up with the "bike."

Rev. Dr. Fairbairn is of opinion that superstition is as bad in Europe as it is in India, and even worse in Italy. "The figures of Christ on the Cross," he says, "are often so hideous and so horrible as to be more offensive than any image of a Hindu god." This remark was made to Dr. Fairbairn by a distinguished Hindu, and he does not see how to refute it.

Rev. W. Scott King, the Wesleyan chaplain at Dartmoor, has been preaching to eight hundred convicts on the religious teaching of Marie Corelli's novels. We fancy they are well suited to Dartmoor.

Mr. King was once attacked in his own house by an escaped convict. He seized a loaded gun, and called upon the man of sin to surrender—and finally shot him down. Then, thinking he had inflicted a fatal wound, he knelt down to pray for his "parishioner" for kingdom-come. What a paradoxical picture!

The *Sporting Times* tells a story of an Irish tenant and a travelling politician. The tenant said they had got rid of their landlord, and would have only one landlord over them in the future, namely Providence, who would see that there was no more eviction in that country. "I don't know that," said the politician. "He evicted the first two tenants he had." "And the Irishman is thinking the matter over again."

Matter, as such, is indestructible; it cannot be annihilated; no grain of dust in the universe can vanish from, and none can enter, it. It is the greatest service rendered to us by chemistry that for the last hundred years it has taught us this indubitable fact, that the unceasing changes and transformations of phenomena which pass daily before our eyes—the formation and destruction of organic and inorganic bodies, and figures, do not consist of the formation of matter from the non-existent, nor of the destruction of matter then present. It is generally thought in earlier times, but that this is not so, consists in nothing save in a continual and unbroken re-formation of the same substance, of which the mass and the quality remain unalterable and identical in all ages.—*Büchner*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 2, Finsbury Park, Freethought Demonstration, 3.30.

To Correspondents.

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

MR. COX.—We note that the Liverpool Branch's picnic is fixed for July 16. Of course we will print particulars if you send them.

W. W. HOWARD, referring to the statement by "Mimnermus" that portions of the Bible have been "lifted" from the Egyptian Sacred Writings and the Buddhist Scriptures, asks that writer to furnish evidence for the second half of his assertion.

STEWART.—It is not a matter that we can take up at present. We show your appreciation of Mr. Cohen.

GENESHEAD FRIEND writes: "I had Mr. Cohen in seeing me on Saturday, and I mentioned to him a little plan I had thought of for making a regular subscription to the work. I am one of those whose hands are full of work, and I hate correspondence; so I offered, if some one would come over from Newcastle, to give 10s. per month—half to go to the local fund and half to go to headquarters. I fancy there must be others like myself who have workers who would willingly do this."

H. PERCY WARD.—Thanks for cuttings, also for the note *re* Northampton.

R. JOHNSON.—Thanks for your kind letter, from which we shall make an extract shortly, when the matter is dealt with in the *Freethinker*.

G. WOODWARD.—Shall appear.

D. B. who witnessed the scene in Finsbury Park last Sunday, speaks highly of the courage and coolness displayed by Miss Vance "in what would have been a trying position for a man." This correspondent hopes there will be a big gathering at to-day's (July 2) Demonstration.

R. P. EDWARDS complains that for three successive Sundays the lecturers engaged have failed to turn up at Hammersmith. This is very regrettable. The matter should be brought to the attention of the N.S.S. Executive.

F. J. DAVIES.—Must wait till next week.

R. R. SPARKES.—See paragraph. One of the Sunday Freethought Demonstrations will be held at West Ham.

R. R. (Plymouth Branch).—We cannot decipher your signature. It is strange that so many people make that the least legible part of their letters. With regard to your question, there are several Freethinkers on the West Ham Town Council. Alderman Fulcher is one. He moved the last *Freethinker* resolution which was defeated. Had all the Socialist and Labor members stood firm, the resolution would have been carried; but some of them were weak-kneed. The "change of things" is this—had the *Freethinker* been removed from the Free Library tables, and is only supplied to readers on application to the librarian.

J. HOOPER.—Forwarded as desired.

MILLIE DYSON.—Sorry to hear of your accident, but glad you like the excellent fare provided week by week in the *Freethinker*. We note your statement that the *Boys' Friend* is dated at the foot of the last page. But life is not long enough to hunt all over a paper for the date. One expects to find it in its usual place on the front page. We note, also, that you read the conditions of the competition differently. Still, we hope you are right, and that you have a good chance of winning.

H. HOLMAN.—Keep pegging away. The proverb says that London was not built in a day; neither will the Rhondda valley be converted to Freethought in a week. Don't be discouraged. That is our message to the friends there.

W. KEST, 24 Albert-street, St. Paul's, Bristol, asks Mr. Almay, if he should meet his eye, to return some books he had from the library about a year ago.

F. D. (West Ham).—We cannot undertake to answer such letters privately. Spiritualists are not necessarily antagonistic to Secularism. However, if you wish to take the offensive, you should decline discussion and ask for investigation. Demand a committee to ascertain whether the alleged facts are real facts. That is the first thing to be decided.

E. W. (Leicester).—We remember seeing the Prayer Book used in a Wesleyan Chapel in our boyhood, but we thought the practice had been discontinued. We note your statement, as a Freethought convert from Wesleyanism, that the practice still obtains. Thanks for pointing it out. We don't ape infallibility, and are always willing to learn.

T. SNORE.—Received, and is being read.

W. W. STRICKLAND.—The notes on Omar Khayyam were not from our own pen, but from those of a contributor. Still, we were old Persian almost by heart before that contributor was old enough to wield a pen in public; and we are decidedly of opinion that Omar—that is, the Omar of Fitzgerald, who is the Omar, after all—was a very determined sceptic, although not a positive Atheist. Glad to hear from you at any time.

E. C. CLARK.—Thanks for the cuttings, etc. We hope to make use of them soon.

T. D.—We are obliged for the two volumes by Ruskin and Sains-

D. P. SWATLAND.—Glad to hear you were "delighted" with our paragraph, and have sent it on to the party concerned.

GLASGOW BRANCH.—Your postcard arrived as we were going to press. We note here that your annual picnic takes place to-day (July 2), brakes starting at 10 a.m. from the foot of Queen-street for Gleniffer, and tickets 1s. 6d. each; also that the excursionists should bring their own provisions.

J. MUNTON.—Thanks for the cutting. See paragraph.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Public Opinion—Zoophilist—People's Newspaper—Freidenker—Sydney Bulletin—Free Society—Edinburgh Evening News—Isle of Man Times—Ethical World—Torch of Reason—Vegetarian—Crescent—Progressive Thinker—Oxford Times—New York Truthseeker—Blue Grass Blade—El Libre Pensamiento—Two Worlds—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 being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription expires, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

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.

ARRANGEMENTS are now completed for most of the projected Freethought Sunday Demonstrations in London. Miss Vance is seeing to the details, but Mr. Foote will exercise a general supervision as before. Mr. Wilson, who gratuitously provided a brake and pair of horses for last year's Demonstrations, will kindly do the same again, and this will minimise the expenses.

The first of these Demonstrations will take place this afternoon (July 2) in Finsbury Park at 3.30. Mr. Harry Snell—who has been very unwell, but is now happily much better—will act as chairman, and the speakers will be G. W. Foote, A. B. Moss, and W. Heaford.

We make a special appeal to the Freethinkers of North London to rally in goodly numbers on this occasion. There must be no repetition of the disorder which occurred in Finsbury Park last Sunday, when a few noisy Christians, backed up by a lot of loafers, caused what might easily have been a serious disturbance. Mr. Elderkin, the lecturer, who had spoken well and given no sort of offence, Mr. Bater, and others, were pushed about, and Miss Vance was heavily kicked by some orthodox blackguard. These people must be taught that Freethinkers fully intend to assert their rights like other citizens. Probably they will keep quiet enough if the Secular platform is surrounded by a stalwart band of Freethinkers.

Mr. Foote had a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when he gave a Freethinker's view of "England and the Boers." His lecture was evidently much appreciated. Mr. Hartmann occupied the chair.

The Sunday evening lectures at the Athenæum Hall are discontinued for the present, probably throughout July and August. Mr. Foote will reopen the hall himself in September, and will be followed by Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. Cohen, and other lecturers. Meanwhile the work of propaganda will be carried on most effectively by means of the open-air Demonstrations.

The Free Religious Association held its thirty-second Annual Convention in Hollis-street Theatre, Boston, on Friday, June 2. Large audiences were present, particularly in the afternoon, when Colonel Ingersoll was announced to speak. Every seat was then occupied, and the "standing room" was crowded. Various speakers, representing various schools of thought, addressed the meetings, including Professor Josiah Royce, of Harvard University; Professor James Hyslop, of Columbia University; Colonel T. W. Higginson, the Rev. B. Fay Mills, the Rev. J. L. Jones, and the Rev. S. L. Crothers. Colonel Ingersoll's address was the event of the day. He spoke for an hour and a-half on "What is Religion?" and was greatly applauded. A verbatim report of his speech is promised in the *Boston Investigator*.

The Irish "Invincible" who was liberated last week, after seventeen years' imprisonment, was most surprised by two things—motor carriages and women on bicycles. How much more would the apostle Paul be astonished if he could revive and see what the ladies are up to nowadays—the ladies whom he told to obey their husbands in all things, whom he forbade to teach, and for whom he prescribed the fashion in which they should wear their back-hair. "I'll just go back to the grave again," Paul would say at the sight of a World's Parliament of Women which is now sitting in Westminster Town Hall. No doubt most of the ladies there profess and call themselves Christians, but they have really left essential, historic Christianity far behind them. Anyhow they have dropped Saint Paul.

The Countess of Aberdeen, as president, delivered a very sensible address. She remarked that women's organisations, distinct and apart from those of men, were only temporary expedients. Man was not meant to live alone. Still less was woman. The redemption of the race was to be compassed by men and women joining hands and combining to do each their own shares of the work. Nor was it their aim to emancipate woman from domestic cares and duties. Rather was it to raise the standard of woman's mission everywhere, but first and foremost in her own home. For it was by its home life that every country represented at the Congress would stand or fall. And the future for which all had met to work was a future of better parents, better citizens, better men and women.

The Plymouth Branch of the N.S.S. holds a meeting this evening (July 2) at the Democratic Club, at 7. Members are earnestly invited to attend, and friends will be welcome.

The new N.S.S. Branch is formed at Porth, South Wales. Unfortunately, all the local public buildings are refused for Freethought lectures. Still, the Branch means to do its best in the circumstances. A meeting will be held this evening (July 2) at 6 at 100 Primrose-street, Tonypanyd.

Mr. C. Cohen lectures at the Grove, Stratford, this evening (July 2) at 7. The local "saints" will doubtless rally round him in full force and bring as many as possible of their Christian friends and acquaintances. We are asked to state that the new West Ham Branch meets every Thursday evening in the Rock Room of the Workmen's Hall, West Ham-lane, Stratford. This is now its fixed address.

The Rev. T. T. Waterman, one of the secretaries of the Christian Evidence Society, writes to the London *Echo* in reply to a correspondent who wanted to know why the authorities did not stop the Secular meetings in Hyde Park. Mr. Waterman is good enough to say that "the prevention and suppression of error cannot be rightly accomplished by prohibition, prosecution, or persecution." This is not, perhaps, all that might be said, but it is something for a Christian.

The New York *Truthseeker* notes the success of the National Secular Society's annual Conference at Birmingham. Referring to Mr. Foote's unanimous re-election as President, the *Truthseeker* says that "the English Secularists are still loyal to the man who so worthily represents them wherever they have a battle to fight."

How to Help Us.

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

Question not, but live and labor
Till your goal be won,
Helping every feeble neighbor,
Seeking help from none;
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone—
KINDNESS in another's trouble,
COURAGE in your own.

—Adam Lindsay Gordon.

The conception of a personal God, creator and ruler of the world, does not give the slightest help towards a truly rational view of the world.—*Ernst Haeckel.*

Ingersoll's Paine Oration.

(Continued from page 413.)

Now, the only reason that ministers have for hating Paine is that they have been obliged to adopt his opinions. In the time of Paine the Church believed and taught that every word in the Bible was absolutely true. Since that time it has been proven false in its cosmogony, false in its astronomy, false in its chronology, false in its history, and nearly everything else. Who on earth at the present time pretends to settle any scientific question by a text from the Bible? Nobody. I mean, that has got any sense. The best minds in the orthodox world to-day are trying to prove the existence of a God. They have given up the rest. All other questions occupy a minor place. You are no longer asked to swallow the Bible whole—whale, Jonah and all. You are simply required to believe in God and pay your pew-rent, or keep still. There is not an enlightened minister beneath the dome of heaven who will now insist that Samson's strength was in his hair—or one; or that the necromancers of Egypt turned water into blood and made snakes out of pieces of wood—or one. These follies have passed away.

Paine thought the barbarities of the Old Testament inconsistent with what he believed to be the character of God. And that is where Paine made his mistake. It is the only mistake he made. He said these things can't be proved, and, according to the Bible, God is cruel and heartless, and at the same time he praises the God of nature. Now, you know, if we are honest, the God of nature is just about as cruel as the God of the Old Testament. The God of nature, that sends pestilence and famine; the God of nature, with earthquakes and cyclones; the God of nature, with all the horrors of life. Think of it; he is about as bad as you can tell. That was about the best Paine could do. He did the best he could, and he attacked the Bible exactly as he attacked the pretensions of kings. All the pomp in the world couldn't make him cower. He knew no "Holy Holies" except the abode of Truth. The attention of the really learned had not been directed to an examination of our revelation. It was accepted as a matter of course. The Church was all-powerful, and no one except he was imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice thought for a moment of denying the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The infamous doctrine that salvation depends on belief was then believed and preached, and to doubt it was to secure the damnation of your soul. This absurd and devilish doctrine shocked the common sense of Thomas Paine. This doctrine, although infinitely ridiculous, has been universal, and for the overthrow of this Paine exerted his strength. He left few arguments to be used by those who came after him, and he used none that have been refuted. The combined wisdom and genius of mankind cannot conceive of an argument against the liberty of thought. Neither can they show why a man should be punished in this world or in another for acting honestly in accordance with his reason. As for a doctrine with every argument against it, and defended by the orthodox world. Can it be possible that we have been endowed with reason simply that our souls may be caught in a snare, and that we may be led by its delusive glare out of the narrow path that leads to joy into the broad road that empties into hell? Is it possible that we have been given reason simply that we may through faith ignore its deductions? Ought a sailor to throw away his compass and steer by the stars? If reason is not to be depended on in matters of religion, why should it be relied on in matters affecting ourselves and our fellow-men? Why should we throw away the laws given to Moses by God, and have the audacity to use the little ones made by ourselves? If God made those laws, we should stand by them now.

I say down forever with any religion that rests upon an ignorant altar the sacrifice of the impious Reason, that compels her to abdicate the imperial throne of the soul, strips from her form the imperial purple, snatches from her hand the sceptre of thought, and makes her the bond-woman of a senseless faith. Down with such a religion, and forever down with a God who demands the sacrifice of reason.

If a man should tell you that he had the most beautiful painting in the world, and yet when you stood in front of it he should insist on your having your eyes shut, you would likely suspect that he had no painting, or that it was some pitiable daub. Should he tell you that he was the most wonderful performer on the violin of the whole world, and yet refused to play unless your ears were securely stopped, you would think, to say the least of it, that he had an odd way of convincing people of his musical ability. But would his conduct be any more wonderful than that of a religionist who asks that before examining his creed you will have the kindness to throw away your reason. The first gentleman says: "Keep your eyes shut; my picture will bear anything but being seen"; the second gentleman says: "Stop your ears; my music objects to nothing except being heard"; the last says: "Away with your reason; my religion dreads nothing except being understood."

That is it. As far as I am concerned, I am willing to admit that Christians are honest, and that most ministers are sincere. When a man talks like an idiot I take it for granted he is sincere. We do not attack them. We attack their creed. We believe their doctrines are hurtful. We believe that the frightful text, "He that believeth not shall be damned," has covered Christendom with blood. It has filled the heart with arrogance, cruelty, murder. It has caused religious wars, bound hundreds of thousands to the stake, founded inquisitions, filled dungeons, invented instruments of torture, made blasphemy a crime, investigation a sin, self-reliance a happiness. It has poisoned the springs of learning, misdirected the energies of the world, filled countries with want, housed people in hovels and fed them with famine, and but for the efforts of a few brave men it would have taken this world back to the midnight of barbarism and left the heavens without a star.

The maligners of Paine said that he had no right to attack this doctrine, because he was unacquainted with the dead languages, and for this reason it was a piece of pure impudence in him to investigate the Scriptures.

Is it necessary to understand Hebrew in order to know that cruelty is not virtue, and that murder is inconsistent with infinite goodness? Is it necessary to understand Hebrew to know that eternal punishment can be inflicted upon man only by an eternal fiend? Is it really essential to conjugate the Greek verbs before you can make up your mind as to the probability of dead people getting out of their graves? Must one be versed in Latin before he is entitled to express his opinion as to the genuineness of a revelation from God? Common sense belongs to no tongue. Logic has not been buried with the dead languages. Paine attacked the Bible as it is translated, and if the translation is wrong, let its defenders correct it. And, if it is wrong, why did God allow his revelation to be mistranslated? Why don't he attend to his books?

Of course, the Christianity of Paine's day is not the Christianity of our time. One hundred and fifty years ago the foremost preachers of our time would have been torn in pieces. A Universalist would have been imbrued in blood, a Unitarian would have found themselves in the stocks, and their tongues bored through with heated iron. Less than one hundred and fifty years ago the following law was in force in Maryland: "If any person shall hereafter, within this province, wittingly, maliciously, and advisedly, by writing or speaking, blaspheme or curse God, or deny our Savior, Jesus Christ, to be the son of God, or shall deny the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or the Godhead of any of the three persons, or the unity of the Godhead, or shall utter any profane words concerning the Holy Trinity or any of the persons thereof, and shall thereof be convicted by verdict, he shall for the first offence be bored through the tongue and fined twenty pounds, to be levied of his body. And, for the second offence, the offender shall be stigmatised by burning in the forehead with the letter B (blasphemy), and fined forty pounds. And that after the third offence the offender shall suffer death without the benefit of clergy." And, do you know, that law was never repealed in the District of Columbia until 1876. In the Old Testament the death penalty was attached,

you may say, to hundreds of offences, and it has been the same in all Christian countries. To-day, in civilised governments, the death penalty is attached to murder and treason, and in some it has been entirely abolished. What a commentary upon the divine system!

In the days of Paine the Church was ignorant, bloody, relentless. In Scotland the kirk was at the summit of its power, and the Scottish Church was a full sister of the Spanish Inquisition. It waged war upon human nature. It was the enemy of happiness, the hater of joy, the despiser of liberty. It taught parents to murder their children rather than to allow them to propagate error; and if the mother held opinions of which the kirk disapproved, her children were taken from her arms, her babe from her bosom, and she was not allowed ever to see them or write to them one word. In Scotland they would not allow shipwrecked sailors to be rescued from drowning on Sunday. They had no business to be on the water Sunday. It sought to annihilate pleasure, and to change mankind into a horde of pious and heartless fiends. One of the most famous Scotch divines said: "The kirk holds that religious toleration is blasphemy." What a heavenly spirit! And the same Scotch kirk denounced beyond measure the man who had the grandeur to say: "The world is my country, and to do good my religion."

At that time nothing so delighted the Church as the beauties of endless torment and listening to the weak wailings of damned infants struggling in the slimy toils and poison-folds of the worm that never dies.

About the beginning of the nineteenth century a boy, Thomas Aikenhead, was indicted and tried in Edinburgh, Scotland, for blasphemy. He had made fun of Moses. And one night, being with his companions, and the weather being pretty cold, he said he wished he was in hell that he might get warm. He was a boy of a merry spirit. And he was indicted, and he was convicted. And the poor wretch retracted, begged the pardon of the kirk. But, notwithstanding this, notwithstanding that he begged for mercy, he was found guilty and hanged. His mother wanted his poor strangled body. They would not give it to her. He was buried at the foot of the scaffold, and covered with stones.

Such was the mercy of the Scotch kirk. They loved God! Ah! Prosecutions and executions like this were common in every Christian country. And all of them based on the belief that an intellectual conviction is a crime. No wonder the Church hated the author of the *Age of Reason*!

All the orthodox preachers forgive Torquemada for the Inquisition. They forgive John Calvin. They forgive John Knox. They forgive the Episcopalians for persecuting the Covenanters. They forgive all these holy wretches. But they cannot forgive an enlightened philanthropist who was willing to die, not to kill his fellows, but to benefit mankind.

In those days England was filled with Puritan gloom. Religious conceptions were of the grossest nature. The ideas of crazy fanatics and extravagant poets were taken as facts. Milton clothed Christianity in the soiled and faded finery of the gods. He added to the story of Christ the fables of mythology. He gave to the Protestant Church the most outrageously material ideas of the Deity. He turned all the angels into soldiers, made heaven a battlefield, put Christ in uniform, and described God as a militia general. His works were considered by the Protestants nearly as sacred as the Bible.

Heaven and hell were realities. The judgment was expected. Books of account would be opened. Every man would hear the charges against him read. God was supposed to sit on a golden throne surrounded by the tallest angels, with harps in their hands and crowns on their heads. The goats would be thrust into eternal fire on the left, while the orthodox sheep on the right were to gambol on sunny slopes forever.

The nation was profoundly ignorant, and consequently extremely religious, so far as belief was concerned.

(To be concluded.)

The Charles Watts Fund.

Mr. George Anderson acknowledges the following donations:—G. Harlow, £1 1s.; Mr. Rice, 5s.

Coins and Medals.

(Concluded from page 406.)

THE English series of coins are, perhaps, somewhat uninteresting to any save enthusiasts until the reign of Edward III., as the coinage was practically confined to silver pennies. In our youth we were taught that 24 grains made 1 pennyweight. But the silver penny has not weighed 24 grains for many centuries. Every successive sovereign reduced the weight lower and lower, the last sinner in this respect being George III. At the time of the Norman Conquest the penny weighed 20 grains; but at the present day the silver penny (only coined as Maundy money) weighs only $7\frac{1}{4}$ grains. Although the *weight* has thus been reduced, the quality of the metal has not suffered much. The Tudors were the only princes who tampered with the quality to any extent. That sanguinary rascal, Henry VIII., debased his coins so much that his silver ones frequently looked like brass. This was not owing to any want of the precious metals, or to the poverty of the kingdom or the king. It was merely one of his tricks to enrich himself at the expense of his subjects; and, with true hypocrisy, the monarch placed upon his fraudulent money the inscription, "Render to every man that which is his own" (!) When Edward VI. came to the throne, his ministers talked grandly about the injury done to British trade by the base coins of his father, and promised immediate relief. But, so far from endeavoring to improve matters, the greater part of the coinage of Edward VI. is even worse than that of Henry VIII.; and it was left to Queen Elizabeth to call in this base coinage and substitute better. The queen, however, with that thrift which always characterised her, sent the bad money over to Ireland, so that she lost nothing by it after all.

Queen Elizabeth is also responsible for another reform. When Edward III. first commenced striking gold coins, he placed upon the reverse the inscription: "Jesus, passing through the midst of them, went his way" (Luke iv. 30). This text was used in the Middle Ages as a charm against theft. Objects marked with it were supposed to be able to pass through the midst of robbers without being stolen. But Queen Elizabeth discontinued the use of this motto, because the experience of two hundred years had proved that coins bearing it were rather more liable to be stolen than other pieces.

Bloody Mary was somewhat surprised at being called to the throne; and her coins bear the legend: "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalm xcvi. 23). The Protestants were not so strongly convinced as the Queen that it was the Lord's doing. Queen Mary was greatly concerned in the pursuit of "Truth"; and upon some of her coins we read: "Truth is the daughter of Time."

As the reader will have observed, the inscriptions upon English coins used to be of a very religious character; but the religion has died down, until it is now only represented by "D. G." In 1849 it seemed as if the "D. G." would disappear also, for the new issue of the florin came out with the simple title, "Victoria Regina, 1849." A great outcry was immediately raised against this coin, which was entitled "the godless florin," "the graceless florin," "the Atheist florin," and the authorities had to alter the legend to soothe the religious conscience. These 1849 florins used to be very scarce, owing to their being kept as curiosities; but latterly there seem to be a fair number in circulation, and they escape notice from people unacquainted with their history.

In choosing the mottoes for their money, most of our sovereigns seem to have been guided by a somewhat cynical humor. Henry VIII. describes himself upon his coins as "A shining rose without a thorn." Bloody Mary was another "Rose without a thorn." But the greatest humorist of all was Charles I. He set England, Ireland, and Scotland together by the ears, and placed upon his coins the motto, "Kingdoms in harmony flourish." He estranged his subjects, and struck money with the inscription, "The people's love is the king's protection." His judges were corrupt, and he placed upon his coins, "Justice strengthens the throne." He tampered with Protestantism, set aside the English law, and attempted to override Parliamentary privilege; and

his money bears the well-known Declaration, "The Protestant Religion, the Laws of England, and the Privileges of Parliament." After the Royal Family lost its head, the Commonwealth coins appeared; beyond the fact that their inscriptions were in English, they were only remarkable for their ugliness. Oliver Cromwell's money bears the motto, "Peace is sought by War"; which may be recommended to the notice of his admirer, Mr. W. T. Stead. There are some people who assert that the Great Rebellion was a *religious* outburst, and that the Restoration brought in irreligion. Such persons should ponder over the coins of Charles II., with their statement, "I reign under the auspices of Christ." James II. is remembered by his "gun-money," issued in brass and bronze for want of silver. He was somewhat unfortunate in the mottoes placed upon it—"A token of better fortune," and "I triumph by the victory of Christ." The Battle of the Boyne was a triumph for the other side; and, as any Ulsterman will tell you, William of Orange saved the country from "brass, money, and wooden shoes."

Some of our English coins commemorate successful piracy. Thus "Vigo," upon money of Queen Anne, tells of captured Spanish treasure; and "Lima," upon coins of George II., has the same significance. The initials S.S.C., on the money of George I., bear witness to the South Sea Company, and show that company-promoting flourished before the time of Mr. Hooley.

But perhaps we had better pause. It will be enough if we have reminded the reader that the study and hoarding of coins, rusty or not, is a pursuit just as important, and quite as entrancing, as any other.

CHILPERIC.

Happiness in Hell—At Last!

The conversation at a dinner-table turned on Spiritualism. Said one of the guests: "I heard the other day of a *séance* at which a woman appeared to her husband.

"Is that you, 'Arriet?"

"Yes, it's me," ungrammatically replied the deceased.

"Are you 'appy, 'Arriet?"

"Yes, very 'appy."

"'Appier than you were with me, 'Arriet?"

"Yes, much 'appier."

"Where are you, 'Arriet?"

"In 'ell!"

They Wanted D.V.

In a small country village in Yorkshire, one Sunday, the villagers observed the following notice pasted on the church doors:

"On Tuesday next the annual Easter meeting will be held in the vestry at two o'clock, D.V."

"What does 'D.V.' mean?" was the question each man asked himself and his neighbors. No one could solve the difficulty. At last they went in a body to the oldest man in the place. He had once been sexton, but now could scarcely leave his house on account of lumbago. The villagers thought surely this man would know, if anybody did. But even he was puzzled. "D.V., D.V.," he kept saying. "I never heard of D.V."

Suddenly a bright thought struck him.

"D.V.? Why, that means Dinner in the Vestry, of course." Imagine the vicar's surprise when on Tuesday all the vestrymen came punctual to the minute, and each laden with a mug, knife, fork, and spoon, after the manner in which Yorkshire rustics generally go to a tea-meeting.

A Little Surprise for the Parson.

A clergyman, who was very particular about his personal appearance, went to preach in a country parish. Finding no glass in the vestry, and fearing his hair might not be quite as smooth as it should be, he asked the clerk if he could get him a glass. The man was gone some minutes, but at length returned and produced a parcel very mysteriously from under his arm. To the astonishment of the clergyman, when it was opened it contained a bottle of whisky, with water in a tumbler. "You mustn't let on about it, mister," said the clerk, "for I got it as a great favor, an' I shouldn't be 't all, bein' church hours, if I hadn't a-said it was for it."

Smitten.

(Up to date.)

His kiss was like a blow unto
Her modesty. With meek
And truly Christian spirit
She turned the other cheek.

Book Chat.

Mr. F. J. GOULD's letter in this week's *Freethinker* will be of interest to the "literary" section of our readers. For our own part, having just read Milton through again, we are more than ever satisfied of Shakespeare's immense superiority. The very choice of theme counts for much in the comparison. Shakespeare walked with no shadows, however grand or colossal; his traffic is all with human nature, the imperishable, the unchangeable, which precedes and outlasts every dynasty of demons or gods. Milton's figure of Satan is certainly a great one, and his idyllic scenes in Paradise are exquisitely beautiful; but, after all, Satan interests us as the great and daring rebel, with human qualities, although labelled "fallen angel"; and Adam and Eve, although mythological characters, are portrayed as human beings. Much of Milton's epic is grotesquely absurd, in spite of its formal dignity. God the Father was doomed to be a failure, for how can Omniscience and Omnipotence be made to talk and act? God the Son is a bit of a prig, and God the Holy Ghost is the palest of poor phantoms. The truth is that Milton's genius deserted him in heaven. But that was only natural when you come to think of it. The great Books of *Paradise Lost* are the first two; the other ten contain glorious passages, but the mighty wings no longer sweep triumphantly in steady, sustained, and irrepressible flight.

Milton has wonderful verbal felicities that will always delight the student of literature. As a formal artist in words he is unmatched. But word-artistry is not everything. Tennyson did some fine things in that line, but he was a greater poet in *Rizpah*. Something sublimer than Shakespeare's, however marvellous, is revealed in simple words of Cordelia, where every syllable seems a living, palpitating reality. And then, as against Satan and Adam and Eve, place all the amazing gallery of Shakespeare's creations! Milton himself, great as he is, sinks in the comparison. Lastly, think of Shakespeare's boundless knowledge of human nature, his inexhaustible fund of imagery, his free-flowing language which seems so simple because it is not so much the art that adds to nature, but the art over it that nature makes. In Milton at his greatest you see the workmanship, in Shakespeare you see something organic and spontaneous, that moves rather by instinct than by deliberate aim.

Lycidas is very beautiful, but the grief is a little frigid. It was not the piercing lyrical cry of Catullus over his dead brother. In some respects, however, it is the high-water mark of Milton's poetry. Adumbrations are in it of the Puritan ossification which came over his genius. If the truth must be told, the great epic of after years did not fulfil the promise of that effort of his youthful prime.

Turn from *Lycidas* to Shakespeare's Sonnets, and note at once the profusion of his genius. One is tempted to say that Milton might have been cut out of Shakespeare without leaving an irreparable wound. What are the Sonnets all about? asks Mr. Gould. Well, if you want to find hidden motives and secret histories—as is now the fashion—you may well ask the question with bewilderment. But if you just read the Sonnets, as you should read the Plays, without troubling yourself overmuch about the commentators, you will perhaps discover in them enough to convince you that their author was, merely by virtue of them, the greatest poet of his age, and the most pregnant, subtle, and suggestive poet in the whole of English literature. Milton wrote some very fine sonnets, but Shakespeare's sonnets are not "fine"—with or without the adverb—they are the very "stuff o' the soul." One touches life in them, and is not life the "miracle" of nature?

Milton is the grand satrap of a noble province in the empire of poetry, but Shakespeare is the emperor himself who takes precedence everywhere.

When the D.C.L. degree was conferred at Oxford upon Lord Kitchener and Mr. Cecil Rhodes, it was also conferred upon the learned translator and editor of Pausanias, and author of that remarkable book entitled *The Golden Bough*, a masterly study in comparative religion, deserving to rank with Dr. Taylor's great work on *Primitive Culture*. Mr. Frazer makes infinitely less noise in the world than the Smasher of the Khaffa or the South African Colossus, but it is just possible that his profound investigation of world-wide religious ideas—tracking them to their superstitious origins—may have more effect upon the world, indirectly, than the work of the great General or the work of the great Empire Builder.

Mr. Frazer's own opinions are only to be read "between the lines" of his splendid book. But the last paragraph of *The Golden Bough* is expressive enough to the sagacious reader. Here it is—
"If, in bidding farewell to Nemi, we look around

us for the last time, we shall find the lake and its surroundings not much changed from what they were in the days when Diana and Virbius still received the homage of their worshippers in the sacred grove. The temple of Diana, indeed, has disappeared, and the King of the Wood no longer stands sentinel over the Golden Bough. But Nemi's woods are still green, and at evening you may still hear the church bells of Albano, and perhaps, if the air be still, of Rome itself, ringing the Angelus. Sweet and solemn they chime out from the distant city, and die lingeringly away across the wide Campagnan marshes. *Le roi est mort, vive le roi!*"

* * *

The poet Gray was one of the most delightful of letter-writers. Carlyle, indeed, said—as some think rather extravagantly—that it is chiefly from his letters that we know Gray to have been a man of genius. We are pleased to see the announcement that an edition of Gray's Letters is to be added to "Bohn's Libraries." The editor is the Rev. D. C. Tovey, Clark Lecturer in English Literature at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Correspondence.

SHAKESPEARE AND MILTON.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The question you have put to me in your kind notice (June 18th) of my Children's Book places me in some difficulty. Do I think Milton a greater poet than Shakespeare? It is true I have often thought so. For sustained poetic fancy and melodious lines I know nothing that, to me, seems nobler than Milton's "Lycidas." I hear people praise Shakespeare's "Sonnets," and I must not accuse them of insincerity. But, to tell the dreadful truth, a large part of the "Sonnets" is Greek to me; I simply cannot understand what it is all about. Then as to the relative merits of Shakespeare's plays and Milton's "Paradise Lost." It is often observed of Shakespeare that he held the mirror up to nature. No doubt he did; and that made his work so much the easier. I mean that he was always able to go out into the highways, and seize new samples of character; his countrymen—and (let me add it with my cap off) his countrywomen—gave him a hundred brilliant cues. Milton, on the other hand, dwelt amid the spectres of the Brocken; his God and Gabriel and his majestic Satan are towering and impressive phantasies for which his creative skill found little material in real life; and with these impalpable shadows he furnished the plot of a grand, continuous epic. But, after all, Shakespeare and Milton lived in two different universes of thought. To compare them is like comparing the humanist and dramatic mythology of the Greeks with the mystical and didactic philosophy of the Buddhists. I do not feel equal to such a task. And, in good sooth, I often waver in opinion. One moment I swear that Milton's picture of the Council in Hell is the very eminence of poetic writing; but the next moment I look at the swart Othello moaning over the dead Desdemona—and I know not how to handle the scales aright.

F. J. GOULD.

Profane Jokes.

An old Scotch woman was dying. The storm was raging without, the wind was howling, and the rain dashing against the window panes. Her people and the doctor were gathered round her bed. "I maun dee, doctor; I maun dee," said the sick woman. "Ay, Ay, I'm mickle feart ye are gaun," the doctor replied. "Weel, weel, the Lord's will be done," his patient responded, "but it's an awfu' night to be gaun skirlin' through the clouds."

A minister, some few Sundays ago, astonished his hearers by addressing the Deity, not as "Thou who holdest in thy hands the heart of kings," but as "Thou, in whose hands is the king of hearts."

Mrs. Kelly—"So th' magistrate sint yure poor little Timmy t' th' reformatory? Sich a good choild, too." Mrs. Grady—"Shure, an' he wort hot, Mrs. Kelly. Ivyrthing thot darlint iver shtole he'd bring roight home t' his mother. He wort thot good Oi wor goin' t' make a priesht out av 'im."

Bishop Wilberforce had rebuked a young clergyman for his fondness for fox-hunting. The Bishop urged that it had a worldly appearance. The curate replied that it was not a bit more worldly than a ball at Blenheim Palace at which the Bishop had been present. The Bishop explained that he was staying in the house, but was never within three rooms of the dancing. "Oh, if it comes to that," replied the curate, "I am never within three fields of the hounds."

On visiting a parishioner dangerously ill, he told him, with the idea of comforting him, that we can but die once. "Yes, sir," said the dying man, "that is my trouble; if we could die several times, I should not mind dying just this once."

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.): Closed during July and August.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Bohemian's Comedy Co. in "Kleptomania."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, E. Pack.

BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15, F. A. Davies, "Faith and Finance"; 6.30, F. A. Davies.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "The Early Christians."

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

FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, C. Cohen.

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, Annual Demonstration—Messrs. G. W. Foote, W. Heaford, H. Snell, and A. B. Moss.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): Lectures every week evening at 8. Sunday, at 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

HAMMERSMITH (The Grove): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH (Jack Straw's Castle): 3.15, R. P. Edwards.

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, F. Schaller.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton, "The Life and Adventures of Mr. Samson."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford; 7, J. Rowney. July 5, at 8, S. Jones.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15 and 6.30, E. Pack.

THE TRIANGLE (Salmon-lane, Limehouse): 11.30, J. Rowney. July 4, at 8, R. P. Edwards.

S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): 11.15, W. Sanders. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Stanton Coit.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, A lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What must I Do to be Saved?"

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): Annual Pic-nic at Holt Fleet. Start New-street Station at 7.25.

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row): 7, Violin Selections by Professors Elliot, Ray, and Thomas; 7.15, A. Forder, "Take a Road of Your Own."

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): 7, Gustav Smith, "Towards Socialism."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): The hall will be closed during the months of July and August.

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

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (1 Grainger-street): 3, Annual Meeting—election of officers, etc.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson, "The Economic Effects of Disarmament." Members and friends should attend to learn particulars of special excursion on the 9th.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—July 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Victoria Park.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 2, a., Finsbury Park. July 9, e., Edmonton. 16, m., Clerkenwell; a., Hampstead Heath; e., Kilburn. 23, m., Mile End.

R. P. EDWARDS, 52 Bramley-road, Notting-hill.—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.—July 2, m., Battersea Park; a. and e., Peckham Rye. 9, m., Hyde Park; a., Hampstead Heath; e., Kilburn. 16, m., Mile End. 23, a. and e., Peckham Rye. July 30, m., Battersea Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—July 16, Public debate at Northampton.

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