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What is Religion?

[An Address delivered by COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL before the American Free Religious Association at Boston, June 2, 1899.]

It is asserted that an infinite God created all things, governs all things, and that the creature should be obedient and thankful to the Creator; that the Creator demands certain things, and that the person who complies with these demands is religious. This kind of religion has been substantially universal.

For many centuries and by many peoples it was believed that this God demanded sacrifices; that he was pleased when parents shed the blood of their babes. Afterwards it was supposed that he was satisfied with the blood of oxen, lambs and doves, and that in exchange for, or on account of, these sacrifices this God gave rain, sunshine, and harvest. It was also believed that, if the sacrifices were not made, this God sent pestilence, famine, flood, and earthquake.

The last phase of this belief in sacrifice was, according to the Christian doctrine, that God accepted the blood of his son, and, that after his son had been murdered, he (God) was satisfied, and wanted no more blood.

During all these years, and by all these peoples, it was believed that this God heard and answered prayer, that he forgave sins and saved the souls of true believers. This, in a general way, is the definition of religion.

Now the questions are: Whether religion was founded on any known fact? Whether such a being as God exists? Whether he was the creator of yourself and myself? Whether any prayer was ever answered? Whether any sacrifice of babe or ox secured the favor of this unseen God?

First.—Did an infinite God create the children of men? Why did he create the intellectually inferior? Why did he create the deformed and helpless? Why did he create the criminal, the idiotic, the insane?

Can infinite wisdom and power make any excuse for the creation of failures? Are the failures under obligation to their creator?

Second.—Is an infinite God the governor of this world?

Is he responsible for all the chiefs, kings, emperors, and queens?

Is he responsible for all the wars that have been waged, for all the innocent blood that has been shed?

Is he responsible for the centuries of slavery, for the backs that have been scarred with the lash, for the babes that have been scathed from the breasts of mothers, for the families that have been separated and destroyed?

Is this God responsible for religious persecution, for the Inquisition, for the thumbscrew and rack, and for all the instruments of torture?

Did this God allow the cruel and vile to destroy the brave and virtuous? Did he allow tyrants to shed the blood of patriots?

Did he allow his enemies to torture and burn his friends?

What is such a God worth?

Would a decent man, having the power to prevent it, allow his enemies to torture and burn his friends?

Can we conceive of a devil base enough to prefer his enemies to his friends?

If a good and infinitely powerful God governs this

world, how can we account for cyclones, earthquakes, pestilence, and famine?

How can we account for cancers, for microbes, for diphtheria, and the thousand diseases that prey on infancy?

How can we account for the wild beasts that devour human beings, for the fanged serpents whose bite is death?

How can we account for a world where life feeds on life?

Were beak and claw, tooth and fang, invented and produced by infinite mercy?

Did infinite goodness fashion the wings of the eagles so that their fleeing prey could be overtaken?

Did infinite goodness create the beasts of prey with the intention that they should devour the weak and helpless?

Did infinite goodness create the countless worthless living things that breed within and feed upon the flesh of higher forms?

Did infinite wisdom intentionally produce the microscopic beasts that feed upon the optic nerve?

Think of blinding a man to satisfy the appetite of a microbe!

Think of life feeding on life! Think of the victims! Think of the Niagara of blood pouring over the precipice of cruelty!

In view of these facts, what, after all, is religion?

It is fear.

Fear builds the altar and offers the sacrifice.

Fear erects the cathedral and bows the head of man in worship.

Fear bends the knees and utters the prayer.

Fear pretends to love.

Religion teaches the slave virtues—obedience, humility, self-denial, forgiveness, non-resistance.

Lips, religious and fearful, tremblingly repeat this passage: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." This is the abyss of degradation.

Religion does not teach self-reliance, independence, manliness, courage, self-defence. Religion makes God a master and man his serf. The master cannot be great enough to make slavery sweet.

If this God exists, how do we know that he is good? How can we prove that he is merciful—that he cares for the children of men? If this God exists, he has on many occasions seen millions of his poor children ploughing the fields, sowing and planting the grain; and when he saw them he knew that they depended on the expected crop for life; and yet this good God, this merciful being, withheld the rain. He caused the sun to rise, to steal all moisture from the land, but gave no rain. He saw the seeds that man had planted wither and perish, but he sent no rain. He saw the people look with sad eyes upon the barren earth, and he sent no rain. He saw them slowly devour the little that they had, and saw them when the days of hunger came, saw them slowly waste away, saw their hungry, sunken eyes, heard their prayers, saw them devour the miserable animals that they had, saw fathers and mothers insane with hunger kill and eat their shrivelled babes, and yet the heaven above them was as brass and the earth beneath as iron, and he sent no rain. Can we say that in the heart of this God there blossomed the flower of pity? Can we say that he cared for the children of men? Can we say that his mercy endureth for ever?

Do we prove that this God is good because he sends the cyclone that wrecks villages and covers the fields with the mangled bodies of fathers, mothers, and babes? Do we prove his goodness by showing that he has

opened the earth and swallowed thousands of his helpless children, or that with the volcanoes he has overwhelmed them with rivers of fire? Can we infer the goodness of God from the facts that we know?

If these calamities did not happen, would we suspect that God cared nothing for human beings? If there were no famine, no pestilence, no cyclone, no earthquake, would we think that God is not good?

According to the theologians, God did not make all men alike. He made races differing in intelligence, stature, and color. Was there goodness, was there wisdom in this?

(To be continued.)

Nature and God.

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

III.

(Concluded from page 418.)

WE put it to Mr. Fiske that the God whose method of evolution is "the pitiless destruction of all individuals that fall short of a certain degree of fitness" is himself the creator of the unfit who are thus mercilessly eliminated. Is he to receive credit for the fit and no discredit for the unfit? Why did God create the unfit at all? That he could have done otherwise is proved by the fact that he created the fit. Even if a certain amount of trial is necessary to the higher development of character, might not God have started the process at a point where the clumsy and brutal method of famine and slaughter was no longer needed? The author of *Evil and Evolution* perceives the force of this question. Accordingly he argues that all maladjustments—and it is upon these that natural selection operates—are caused in some mysterious way by Satan. Mr. Fiske, however, contends that the divine method is *not* clumsy and brutal. But there is a singular looseness in his logic; for, instead of attempting to vindicate the *method*, he expatiates upon the high value of certain of its *results*; as though the rule of doing evil that good may come, which is condemned in human morality, becomes not only permissible but glorious in the ethics of divinity.

Mr. Fiske's argument is as follows. There came a time in the history of the evolution of life when natural selection operated through "psychical variations, to the comparative neglect of physical variations," and this was "the opening of a new and greater act in the drama of creation." Man then decisively appeared, and thenceforth there was to be very little alteration in his bodily structure, but endless alteration in his brain—or, as Mr. Fiske and other Theists prefer to say, in his intelligence and character. Now the central fact in the genesis of a real Humanity is "the increased duration of human infancy." This led to a real Maternity, and that to a real Paternity; and these are the great germ-causes of all morality and civilisation. On the whole, therefore, Mr. Fiske feels entitled to say that the ultimate goal of the world-process is "the perfecting of human character." God is slowly, but surely, bringing man into his own divine likeness. He did not make him so straight away, as the book of Genesis declares, but has been engaged in the operation for myriads of years, and is still very far from having brought it to completion.

Now we venture to think that such a reading of the "cosmical purpose" could only be prompted by human vanity. It reminds us of La Fontaine's fable of the lion and the picture. The painter had drawn a battle between a lion and a man, in which the king of the forest was ignominiously defeated; but a lion who walked in and had a look at the picture said it was very fine, but the catastrophe would have been different if lions could paint.

Mr. Fiske admits that "nine-tenths of our planet's life-history had passed away without achieving any higher result" than the "horrible brutes" of the Jurassic period:—

Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime.

But the "mills of God grind slowly," and who shall hurry the master of eternity? He will come out all right at the finish, and Mr. Fiske already catches the

most reassuring glimpses of his ultimate triumph. But was it not Huxley who said that at this rate, as the earth is cooling down, the perfected man is likely to be a perfected Esquimaux?

We quite agree with Mr. Fiske as to the immense importance of the prolonged infancy of the human species. But what is it owing to? Simply to the growth of human intelligence; in other words, to the increased complexity of the human brain. Morals may almost be described as the social result of intellect. This does not mean that a very intellectual man is necessarily very moral. It means that intellect creates the conditions in which morality develops. And in the long run Socrates was profoundly right in declaring that wisdom and virtue are identical. They are identical in this sense, that virtue is an aspect of wisdom. The primary thing, therefore, is the growth of intellect—that is to say, the development of the brain; and this is a perfectly mechanical result of natural selection. There is a moral element in the result, but there is none in the process. Natural selection operates through life and death. And it goes on killing out the unfit even when the process is doubly and trebly veiled; for sexual selection, and social election, are after all but forms of natural selection; and it makes no real difference that the unfit individual is kept alive, if he is eliminated from the race by the difficulty of begetting or rearing offspring. The great essential fact is, that the dice are loaded against him in the game of existence.

From the ethical point of view, progress is like a race. There are many starters, and a few reach the goal, one taking the first prize, another the second, another the third, and the rest gaining an honorable mention. Mr. Fiske ignores all who drop by the way—dead or dying; he bids us look at those who reach the winning-post; and then he points to the one who takes the first prize, exclaiming: "Lo, we shall all be like him in time."

There is level after level of coarse life, plagued with famine, war, and all manner of misery. As the levels diminish they become more refined, but the suffering continues, though in forms of greater subtlety. Finally, the perfected man—the perfected Mr. Fiske—appears at the top, holding up his hands to heaven, and thanking God for the glory of the apex of all that terrible pyramid.

Juggle as he may, the Theist cannot justify the ways of God to men. And he knows it. Always at the end he creeps behind the shelter of "mystery." But, as we have already pointed out, the mystery is one of his own creation. It is simply the contradiction between his theory and the facts. To the Atheist there is no mystery in the matter. Evil is as natural as good. "There's nothing good or ill but thinking makes it so." Evil and good are how things affect us. And often, as the proverb says, one man's meat is another man's poison. A mild Hindu may go out and meet a hungry tiger, and the survival of the fittest, in that case, may mean that the tiger goes home with the Hindu inside him. And perhaps the repleted tiger, somnolent after a full and highly-relished meal, may feel in his dim way some stirrings of that sense of thankfulness which the religionist so often experiences, even when his own advantage manifestly involves someone else's detriment or plainly stands out against the background of someone else's ruin.

After all, Mr. Fiske leaves the "problem of evil" just where he found it. The orthodox theologian tells us that the "mystery of pain" will be cleared up in the sweet by-and-bye. When his argument is concluded we have still to wait for its verification. And it is precisely the same in Mr. Fiske's case. He also relies on the future tense. In "the fulness of time," in "God's own time," Evolution will vindicate Providence in a "triumphant chorus of Humanity purified and redeemed"—which we take to be on a logical level with the dialectic of the clergyman who terminated a discussion when it was waxing too dangerous by exclaiming, "Let us pray."

Mr. Fiske's arguments about the existence of God and about Immortality are not likely to carry conviction to anyone who is not already a believer. Wishing to show that the human "soul"—nothing is said about the souls of animals—is not an aspect of matter, nor a product

of matter, he asserts that there is "no such equivalence between physical forces and the phenomena of consciousness as is alleged by the Materialist. He declares that thought and feeling are outside "the closed circuit of physical transformations." At the same time he allows, it may be that thought and feeling could not continue to exist if that physical segment of the circuit were taken away—which is really all that the philosophical Materialist contends for. Mr. Fiske presumes too much on present ignorance. While rebuking the Materialist for imagining that matter and mind are not separate entities and bidding the Materialist consider their absolute disparity, he confesses that in the luminiferous ether he finds "a mode of material existence quite different from anything that had formerly been known or suspected." "In this mode of matter," he says, "we find attributes united which all previous experience had taught us to regard as contradictory and incompatible." "If, then, he should see the peril of arguing that the "attributes" of matter and mind cannot be similarly united" in one radical identity.

With regard to the "Deity as Personality," Mr. Fiske admits that we cannot conceive of personality except as limited. Infinite knowledge, infinite intelligence, infinite power, are unrealisable phrases. "Such difficulties," Fiske says, "are insurmountable." Nevertheless, he contends that the "human element" must be retained in the conception of God, or Theism "instantly vanishes." "That which has "from the outset chiefly interested man is gone." This is perfectly true. Man has always been really interested in himself. All his gods have been fashioned in his own image. He has made them in his own likeness; male and female created him in his own image. And it is idle for Mr. Fiske to hope that this anthropomorphism will chasten down to the point at which the masses of mankind will worship the God of evolution. Indeed, he appears to feel this himself; for he states as follows the "three essential elements" of religion:—

"First, belief in Deity, as quasi-human; secondly, belief in an Unseen World in which human beings continue to exist after death; thirdly, recognition of the ethical aspects of human life as related in a special and intimate sense to the Unseen World."

Now we venture to say that the all-important thing in some of our catalogues, at least to nine hundred and ninety-nine persons out of every thousand, is the doctrine of a future life. Man worships gods for selfish reasons. All the time he is thinking of his own prospects. And when he ceases to believe in a future life, all the other questions of theology dwindle down to mere points of scientific discussion. God is never really more than the basis and guarantee of man's immortality.

What is the evidence of man's immortality? Mr. Fiske himself once admitted that his own belief in the doctrine of a future was but a supreme act of faith in the goodness of God. Now he formulates what he regards as an original argument in favor of the belief which he first accepted on grounds of emotion. Starting from the truth that evolution always works through adjustment to external facts, which is the law of all continuous life, he pleads that the Human Soul (something akin to itself not in the realm of fleeting phenomena, but in the Eternal Presence beyond." An adjustment has been going on in man in correspondence with the Unseen World. And it is asked by Mr. Fiske whether "only the subjective term is real and the objective term is non-existent." To answer this question in the affirmative, he says, is to fly in the face of the "whole argument," for he thinks it is original. But is it anything more than a modification of the old argument that adjustment always points to an objective end, and that therefore the instinct of immortality must be held by analogy to a fulfilment in the great hereafter? Anyhow, we must credit Mr. Fiske with the admission that his argument "does not pretend to meet the requirements of scientific demonstration." We should think not of it as a scientific demonstration. In the first place, speculation in science is always of questionable value without the possibility of verification; and it is impossible to verify any speculation about a future life without actually dying—which is extremely awkward. In the second place, it is provable from history that man has adjusted himself, millennium

after millennium, to gross intellectual blunders and monstrous superstitions. A psychological type is thus bred, and may be almost indefinitely perpetuated, if the opposite type is only crushed out in every generation, and if the prevalent type is not inconsistent with the continuance of the species. That is to say, man can go on doing himself all sorts of injury—mental and moral as well as physical—as long as he does not carry it to the length of self-destruction. We see this in individuals, we see it in nations, and we see it in history. Mr. Fiske's argument amounts to this, therefore, that man must be wise if he does not perish of his folly. And just as he "proves" the probability of a future life, he might "prove" the reality of witchcraft or any other superstition which has been long-lived and almost universal.

It appears to us that the whole question lies in a nutshell. Is the Theism of Mr. Fiske, and others who try to press evolution into the service of religion, a development or a retrocession? Is its God an essence or a residuum? For our part, we should say that this deity is what is left when all the definite gods of the Pantheon are broken to pieces and ground to powder; namely, the abstract form and the general designation. A bubble is blown with real soapsuds, but it grows ever thinner and more transparent, and is perhaps most beautiful when it is at the very point of breaking. But the beauty does not save it. It breaks and disappears.

We read in Homer of the patient wife of Ulysses, who baffled her suitors during his long wanderings in strange lands, by weaving a garment all day and unravelling it at night. When it was finished she was to admit that the wanderer was dead, and choose one of her suitors for her second husband. But the garment was never finished, and the devoted wife kept on spinning till the man of her heart returned. She must, however, have had the idea of that unfinished garment impressed almost indelibly upon her brain. And is it wonderful that man is in this respect like Penelope? Through countless ages he has been making gods and destroying them. He is now the victim of his past creative energy, and is haunted by his own conception. The idea of God is branded into him, but will it not vanish in the course of time, since he no longer makes new gods, but merely worships the old ones inherited from his ancestors?

G. W. FOOTE.

Protestant Egotism.

CHRISTIANITY is presented to the world as a religion of love, and yet amongst its principal exponents a feeling very much akin to hatred is frequently supreme when they come in contact with those who fail to agree with them in their theological opinions. Jesus is reported to have said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." If the manifestation of affection towards each other is to be taken as evidence of discipleship, then it is clear, according to the history of the Christian faith, that Christ has had very few genuine disciples. For, from the very inception of the Christian religion, its leading advocates have shown, to put it mildly, a marked lack of love not only towards those who rejected their opinions, but also towards those who shared their faith. Even the New Testament records that contentions, lying, and indignation were indulged in by the early followers of Christ. Those of our readers who have studied the history of Christianity will know how the same course of conduct has been followed during the various stages of its development.

Of course Protestants will agree with us in attributing to the Roman Catholic Church all the vices it is possible to conceive, but they are egotistical enough to allege that similar vices cannot be urged against them. In this they are mistaken, for, while not attempting to palliate the crimes of Roman Catholicism, we are not oblivious of the fact that Protestants have been guilty of treating not only heretics, but those of their own faith, with the severest cruelty and injustice. Love and harmony have too often been conspicuously absent in their dealings with their co-religionists. Even the orthodox Dr. Dick, in his *Philosophy of Religion*,

deplores the "many boisterous and malignant disputes which have taken place between Calvinists and Arminians, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and Methodists, respecting the speculative points in which they disagree." And he adds: "There is a prevailing disposition in one religious party to speak evil of another; and it appears, in many instances, to afford a degree of satisfaction when one party can lay hold of the inadvertencies of another denomination, or even of the imprudence of a single individual, in order to asperse the character of the whole body, and to hold it up to general contempt. Even among Christians belonging to the same religious society, how often do we behold a display of bitter envyings, contentious dispositions, and malignant passions" (p. 367).

Surely Christ's love-test of discipleship is not visible in the instances he referred to, any more than it is in numerous other cases which we have not space here to go into at any length. Both Luther and Calvin indicated their hatred to their Roman Catholic brethren in a most unmistakable manner. The latter prayed to God that "the bloodthirsty Catholics may be sent down to hell and there burn for ever." No one would, we presume, be foolish enough to regard the Protestant Star Chamber as a monument of love; any more than the conduct of the English Independents towards the Quakers in America; the prosecutions carried on by the reformed clergy in Scotland in 1646; the scenes in Barbadoes and Demerara not many years since; the religious persecutions in Switzerland; and, subsequently, in Dorsetshire in England. But, as Dr. Dick observes: "We need not go back even to the distance of half a century in order to find instances of religious intolerance among Protestant communities and churches; our own times unhappily furnish too many examples of a bigoted, intolerant, and persecuting spirit." The brutal treatment which Freethinkers have received from pious Protestants during the lifetime of the present writer fully bears out the indictment made by the Christian writer above quoted. Thus, then, the spirit of persecution and hatred has been an active force both among Catholics and Protestants. The manifestation of cruelty and injustice has only been a question of degree. The Freethinkers of to-day are hated by the more devout orthodox Protestants, but fortunately the secular spirit of the age compels them to keep their evil passion in subjection. It is a fact beyond doubt that the egotistical claim of Protestants, that they have more love for their fellows than have the Roman Catholics, is utterly fallacious. Given the power to exercise their fanatical religious propensities, and they would still be stern opponents of the exercise of that freedom of thought which it is our pride and duty as Secularists to defend.

But the egotism of Protestants is not confined to conduct towards their fellow-men; it extends to the domain of their respective religious belief. They denounce, in the strongest terms possible, the religion of the Catholic Church, designating it as false, absurd, and blasphemous. During the recent May meetings in Exeter Hall, Archdeacon Taylor said "that Romanism was debased Christianity." It is not our intention to attempt to defend either the Catholic or the Protestant view of religion. From the standpoint of reason they are both thoroughly absurd; but, from a theological standpoint, Catholicism appears to us to be the more consistent. Still, the Archdeacon should remember that Catholics teach, in common with Protestants, that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews iii. 6). They find the Apostle exhorting them: "Above all things, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians vi. 16). This faith is required, not simply in essential and fundamental doctrines, but in every doctrine of revelation. Christ told his Apostles to "Preach the Gospel," adding, "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). Moreover, faith, we are told, is one. "There is," says the Apostle, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians iv. 5). Hence the Catholic Church assumes that there can be but one system of religion. And that one they possess, as taught by Christ, and guaranteed by him to be kept pure when he promised his disciples to be with them, even unto the end of the world. His disciples are represented by the Church, which is supposed to be

the legitimate successor of the Apostles, and which is appointed by Christ to determine what is truth and what is heresy. Hence, when divisions arise, and conflicting doctrines are mooted, the Pope, acting as the successor of the Apostles, and the legitimate representative of Christ, at once announces how certain passages are to be understood, and in what sense they are to be interpreted, which decision must be accepted as final on pain of everlasting misery. This authority is assumed in virtue of the promise of Christ, that he would be with the Church until the end of the world, in which case error in interpretation on the part of the Head of the Church is thought to be impossible. The tradition of the Church and of the Fathers, handed down from the time of the Apostles, together with much that Christ and his Apostles said which is not recorded in the gospels, assist materially the Catholic Church in arriving at a correct conclusion on any point of controversy. John (xxi. 25) says: "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books which should be written." And then, in the Acts, it is said that Christ, after his ascension, was among his disciples conversing forty days "of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." And as much of what was then said, as well as many truths uttered on other occasions, is not to be found in the New Testament, the Catholic Church refers to this unwritten word for information on so many important subjects.

Here we have the foundation upon which the teachings of the Catholic Church are based. No doubt the doctrines of the real presence, transubstantiation, penance, and purgatory may easily be shown to be absurd from a reasonable standpoint, but the same could be said with equal truth of many Protestant doctrines. Of this we have often given ample evidence, and we are prepared to do so again if required. According to the Catholic Church, all doubts may be set at rest, all perplexities avoided, all schism prevented, and hell escaped by placing an implicit faith in the decisions of the Church, and subduing individual thought which so often leads to heresy, and incurs the alarming consequences of eternal punishments. It is impossible to have a united and consistent Church based on Protestant principles. Just as easy would it be to unite on the water, as to harmonise independent reason with the humiliating theology of the Bible. Once abandoned the Catholic Church, which undertakes to save its members from thinking, and still remain within the Christian faith, and you are on a mental sea of commotion, without screw, rudder, sail, or anchor; you are at the mercy of every wind of doctrine or wave of prejudice.

With all its egotism, Protestantism has two prominent inconsistencies. The first is a variety of conflicting sects, each taking the same alleged infallible book as a guide. The second is the howl of heresy at once directed against anyone who applies his private judgment to the interpretation of any given passage in a number of passages in the Bible. With their professed love of private judgment, Protestants, to be consistent, should welcome every independent opinion, and encourage all honest inquiry. Instead of this, no sooner does a man exhibit the faintest ray of judgment gained through the adoption of private judgment, than a discordant howl is set up of heresy and infidelity. Penance must follow if he wish to avoid social ostracism and ecclesiastical censure. Let a man say that he disbelieves the popular theology, that to him the forms seem absurd, its worship a mockery, its principles reasonless and heartless, and that he will think for himself. Let him declare himself thus, and the door of hypocrisy is closed against him; the sneers of the imbecile are thrown at him, and the pity of the world extended to him. Thus Protestantism, abandoning its essential requisite of all theology—implicit faith in the Bible as explained by its appointed interpreters—is driven to what to them is the inconsistency of private judgment in order to repudiate the infallibility of the Catholic Church; and then, assuming infallibility for themselves, they denounce, defame, and persecute those who their consistency, become the victims of a system which originated in fanaticism, and which has been perpetuated by delusion and fraud.

Where were the Israelites?

has been shown in a former paper, the Bible gives dates for the Exodus—viz., B.C. 1643 and B.C. 1497. After leaving Egypt, we are told, the Israelites spent forty years wandering in the wilderness of Sinai; it follows, therefore, that we have also two Biblical dates for the entrance of that people into Canaan—viz., B.C. 1603 and B.C. 1457. In each of these years, divided by nearly a century and a half, the Hebrews are represented as having entered Palestine under a great leader named Joshua, the Saviour, otherwise Joshua, and during the succeeding seven years they are stated to have conquered, and in great part exterminated, the original inhabitants, and, finally, to have portioned out the conquered land among themselves. In Joshua xii. 7-24 is a list of thirty-one kings of Canaan who are said to have been defeated by the Israelites, whose territories extended from Lebanon in the north to Mount Seir in the south, including "the hill country.....the lowland.....the Arabah.....and the slopes and the wilderness"—in short, the whole of Palestine. These kings are further stated to have been Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites. It will be interesting to see how these statements accord with what we know of real history.

From Egyptian monumental inscriptions we learn that the inhabitants of Palestine and of a great part of Syria were subject to Egypt from about 1630 to 1200 B.C., though the dates are somewhat uncertain. We learn also that these people often attempted to throw off the Egyptian yoke, but were as often reconquered and reduced again to subjection. The Hittites, during this period, were a great and powerful nation who occupied the country between Lebanon and the Euphrates, and for centuries assisted the nations of Canaan to resist the Egyptian domination. The Amorites inhabited the mountainous districts of Palestine; the Phœnicians or Canaanites, the lowlands and the coast. About the year 1630 B.C. Thothmes I. marched through Palestine into northern Syria, and effected the conquest of those districts. At this time, according to the earlier of the two Biblical dates, the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, and, therefore, it is not a matter of surprise that they did not come in contact with the Egyptians and knew nothing of what was taking place

about half a century later Thothmes III., in the twenty-second year of his reign, entered Canaan with a large army to suppress revolts which had been stirred up by the Hittites. The Egyptian king, marching northward, found a coalition of Phœnicians, Amorites, and Hittites waiting him in the valley of Megiddo. A great battle was fought which was obstinately contested on both sides, until at length the confederate princes were forced to give way. Many battles and sieges followed, which Thothmes gained fourteen victories; but all the conquered provinces were not completely subjugated until the war had lasted seventeen years. The question now arises, Where were the Israelites during this period? According to the earlier Biblical date, they had exterminated the Canaanites and occupied their cities. How, then, that Thothmes found only Hittites, Phœnicians, and Amorites, and these both great in numbers and great in might? Further, the cities captured by the Egyptians were scattered throughout the entire land, and many of them were in districts that are stated to have been inhabited by the Israelites. Among these were: Kadesh, Merom, and Hazor, in the territory of Asher; Chinneroth, in that of Zebulun; Shunem, Bethanath, Zarethan, and Kishon, within the portion allotted to Issachar; Megiddo, Taanach, Ibleam, Ophrah, and Naphtali; Joppa, Sharon, and Laish, situated within the territory of Dan; Beeroth and Gibeah, in the territory of Benjamin; Beth-Anoth, within that of Judah; and Beeroth, within the district allotted to Asher. All these districts up to this time the Israelites had not entered Canaan, and had Canaanitish inhabitants. It is certain, then, that the original occupiers of the land, as recorded in the book of Joshua, were in great part exterminated, the Hebrew warriors? The only answer we have to this question is that given by the editor of the *Rock*,

who states (as previously quoted) that "at this time it can be shown that the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness on their way from Egypt to Palestine"; but this apologist does not attempt to show what he says "can be shown," and for the best of all reasons. However, not to press the question, we will pass to about a century or so later, and give the Hebrew invaders time to firmly establish themselves in the Canaanitish cities.

From the tablets of Tell-el-Amarna (about 1500-1450 B.C.) we learn that Syria and Palestine, though in a somewhat unsettled state, were still subject to Egypt. Among the dispatches is one from the king of Babylonia, in which he tells the king of Egypt that in his father's reign the nations of Canaan applied to Babylon to assist them in throwing off the Egyptian yoke, but were refused. In a letter from the king of Jerusalem the writer informs the Egyptian monarch that he had paid the tribute exacted of him, and had not been speaking treason, as his enemies had reported. He also says that certain confederate princes (Khabiri) were stirring up rebellion in the district between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean, and that the Egyptian governor of Gaza had taken no steps to suppress the lawlessness. Further, among the cities mentioned in these tablets are Gezer, Hazor, Jerusalem, Lachish, and Megiddo, which in the book of Joshua are stated to have been captured by the Israelites, but which were certainly not then in the possession of that people. From these and other letters and dispatches it becomes clearly evident that the Hebrew tribes had not yet entered Palestine. The question, therefore, again arises: Where was this nation of mighty conquerors at this time? "Oh," say some of our Bible reconcilers, "the Hebrews were the Khabiri. They had completed their forty years' wanderings, and were now about to commence the conquest of Canaan." Very well, we will pass on to about half a century later.

About 1400 B.C. the Egyptian monarch, Seti I., overran the whole of Palestine, and brought that country again under Egyptian rule. This done, he concluded a treaty of peace with Mautnur, the king of the Hittites, the latter engaging not to molest the reconquered provinces, and not to encourage their people in rebellion against Egypt. From these facts it is evident that the Israelites had not yet taken possession of Canaan, though, according to both Biblical dates, they had exterminated the original inhabitants and resided in their cities. It is, therefore, necessary again to ask: Where were these Semitic exterminators? To this question there appears to be but one answer: they were wandering in the wilderness. We will, therefore, pass on to the son and successor of Seti—namely, Rameses II., who reigned for sixty-seven years.

Upon the death of Seti nearly all the provinces of Western Asia, including Palestine, revolted from the authority of Egypt. To put down this rebellion Rameses raised an immense army and came into Canaan. After subjugating that country he crossed the Lebanon and advanced against Kadesh, a stronghold of the Hittites on the River Orontes. Here the Egyptians fell into an ambush. The Hittites and Amorites bore down upon them, and cut many to pieces. Rameses was separated from the main body of his army, and to rejoin it hewed his way almost single-handed through the ranks of the enemy. The battle lasted all day, leaving the result doubtful. Next day it was renewed, and Rameses gained a great victory. A long struggle ensued, which lasted for many years, until at length the Egyptian king was glad to come to terms with his Hittite antagonist. A treaty of peace was concluded (about B.C. 1350) which was ratified by the marriage of Rameses with the daughter of "the great king of the Hittites, Khita-sir, the powerful." In the Hittites the people inhabiting Canaan had a great and potent ally, whom the Hebrews would have to vanquish before they could take possession of the land; they would also have to reckon with the king of Egypt to whom Canaan was tributary—each a task utterly beyond the power of a few tribes of shepherds. During these wars an enormous number of captives was taken and carried to Egypt, where they were probably set to brick-making. Among the cities captured by Rameses were Merom and Salem, and "Tabor in the land of the Amorites," which, according to the Bible accounts, were occupied by the Israelites; but that nation had not as

yet appeared. It, therefore, once more becomes necessary to ask: Where were those alleged conquerors of Canaan at this time? The reply to this question must be—they were wandering in the desert of Sinai. We will, therefore, come to the next reign, that of Merenptah I., son of the great Rameses.

In the days of this monarch a number of combined nations, headed by the king of Libya, attempted the invasion of Egypt, but were repelled by Merenptah, who, after making about 9,000 prisoners, followed up his victory by subjugating all the Syrian cities and provinces that had cast off the Egyptian yoke, including Yanuh and Pa-kanana, in the neighborhood of Tyre, and Jezreel, a city of the Hebrew tribe of Ephraim. Once more, then, the question arises: Where were the Israelites during this reign? The answer, as given by the majority of Christian apologists (including Professor Rawlinson), is that they were wandering in the wilderness. Accepting this statement—though the date is more than a century later than either of the Biblical dates of the Exodus—we will pass over three-quarters of a century, and come down to the time of Rameses III.

In the reign of this king (about 1230-1200 B.C.) a great confederacy of the kings of Western Asia and the islands of the Mediterranean over-ran Syria and Palestine, and pitched an immense camp in "the land of the Amorites." After plundering the inhabitants of Canaan right and left, they arrived at the frontiers of Egypt, which they commenced to attack both by sea and land. They were met by Rameses, who, by means of an ambush, threw their hosts into confusion, and, after immense slaughter, succeeded in driving their broken armies from the field. Rameses also put to flight the galleys that covered the sea on the Egyptian coast. Following up his double victory, the Egyptian king marched through Judea into Syria, and reconquered, one after the other, all the revolted provinces. This accomplished, he returned to Egypt with a large number of prisoners, including 38 kings or chieftains. Of the achievements of this Egyptian monarch Professor Sayce says: "Like Rameses II., he also claims the capture of 'the district of Jerusalem.' But his list contains no reference to the name either of Judah or any other Israelitish tribe." The Lord's chosen people were unknown in Canaan; they had not yet taken possession of that country. This fact is proved both by the absence of any mention of the Israelites in the Egyptian inscriptions, and by the complete silence of the Hebrew historical books respecting the Egyptian kings and their invasions. Wars and oppressions in connection with the Moabites, Midianites, Ammonites, and Philistines are recorded, but not a word is said about the country having been over-run by any of the Egyptian monarchs. The Israelites could not have dwelt in the land during the periods mentioned without being harassed, pillaged, subjugated, and put to tribute like the other inhabitants; but, as just stated, there is not a single word in the Jewish sacred writings concerning this long Egyptian domination, though, according to the dates given in the Bible, the Hebrew tribes had, for two or three centuries, been occupiers of Canaan. The question, therefore, once more claims our attention: Where were the Israelites as late as 1200 B.C.? Is it necessary to seek far for an answer? These bands of ruthless slaughterers of women and children, and of babes and sucklings, were at this time wandering in the wilderness between Sinai and the south of Palestine.

There is a gap in Egyptian history of about two hundred years (B.C. 1200-1000), concerning which very little is known. As soon as our Christian apologists and Bible reconcilers fully recognise the fact that none of the reigns mentioned will serve them, they will doubtless cast to the winds the two Biblical dates for the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan, and coolly fix upon some portion of this unknown period for the occurrence of those legendary events. This is one of the usual Christian evidence methods. Meanwhile, the Israelites ought to begin to tire of their 400 years' wandering in the wilderness without getting any nearer to the promised land, or to the people they were sent to exterminate.

ABRACADABRA,

The mainspring of superstition is fear.—*Spinoza*.

Christianity; or, Mendicity and Mendacity.

THE Christlike Christians of the Christian age
Believed in their belief, nor worked for wage;
All faithful to the faith, their trades they fled,
The morrow scorned, and prayed for daily bread.
They copied Christ; to labor gave them qualms;
They therefore lived on faith in God—and alms.
These shiftless Christians hoped for final shift
By apeing Christ's contempt for work and thrift.

They never planned a scheme that ever failed,
Nor died, unless they wished, nor even ailed;
For Christ had said to all that should believe:
"Whate'er you ask in faith, you shall receive";
So those that wished had merely once to pray
To live exempt from sickness and decay.
Like Christ, they strove, with simplest of simplicity,
To cultivate unreason and mendicity.

The Christians of the present Christless day
Believe but that which they believe will pay;
The payment might be gold, or rank, or food,
Or minus-hell—whate'er they think is good.

We seek what most we like, or least we dread;
The sage expects it now; the fool, when dead.
A witting sacrifice of aught for nought
Was never made, nor even can be thought;
For what seems *more*, the saints renounce the less.
The sinners show an equal selfishness.
In selfish sacrifice we seek for bliss;
Renouncing this for that, or that for this;
But, Christians all, in comfort or distress,
Are infidels to all that they profess;
Their boasted creeds their ev'ry act denies;
And all, in name of Truth, engender lies.

The early Christians lacked the means of thought;
To-day these means are found by all, when sought.
Folk, *then*, were fools enough to trust the Lamb;
Folk, *now*, are merely knaves enough to sham.
The former withered in a blind felicity,
Content with ignorance and mere mendicity;
The latter flourish through their great capacity
For self-deception, humbug, and mendacity!

G. L. MACKENZIE

Acid Drops.

Two more Peculiar People have been committed for on a charge of manslaughter. Frederick Norman and Eleanor Norman, the former a potato salesman at Stonecutter-street, and the latter a dressmaker, are accused of causing the death of their daughter, aged five years, by withholding medical assistance from whereby she died. They will be tried at the Central Criminal Court. Of course they declare that calling in a doctor against their religious belief, but this will not avail when they stand before a Christian judge and jury. In England it is illegal to be a sincere Christian. The profession of Christianity is almost necessary, but the practice of it is regarded as a sure sign of lunacy or criminality.

Mr. Foote's open letter to Mr. Justice Wills, who was written by Thomas George Senior, one of the Peculiar People, after months' hard labor as a felon, is still in print. It has thirteen thousand copies printed for free circulation, and but some of the two thousand penny copies are still for sale. It should be distributed by Freethinkers, who can obtain it at Mr. Forder's, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

The agitation against the Christian Science Faith is spreading in America. Meetings have been held in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, and other places, to protest against their being allowed to treat patients. Opposition meetings, however, are being held by the Christian Scientists, but they will probably find it difficult to persuade the average Christian of to-day that Christianity and Science have any sort of relationship.

The rumpus in Belgium, which has gone to the length of street-fighting and barricades, is very intelligible in the following figures. Owing to the present distribution of seats, 930,000 Clerical voters are represented by 112 Deputies, while 980,000 Liberals, Socialists, and Anti-Clericals are represented by only 40 Deputies. The present Government, of which is a Catholic, seeks to perpetuate this injustice by a Bill which has been passed, and has actually received the King's signature. Is it any wonder that the leaders of the minority in the Chamber, who, as they do the majority of voters in the country, should test with the utmost vehemence against such an act of partiality?

brigandage? If they did not stand up for their rights, they would be unfit to enjoy them.

"Is Britain on the Down Grade?" is the subject of letters various writers in the July number of the *Young Man*. Conan Doyle sees no sign of decadence, and knows "no evidence of a northern race having decayed." Mr. H. G. Wells thinks we have gone backward since the "sixties." "We are gentler," he says, "and far less violently vicious and criminal than our fathers, possibly because we are more and more accustomed to the policeman; we are mainly far less honest and far less capable of generous political movements." Dean Farrar deprecates the absence of the spirit of martyrdom. "If," he exclaims, "our age could but produce one dauntless and far-sighted man!" "What an opportunity for the Dean himself! Mr. Albert Spicer says that "we are suffering from the fact that too many of our leaders, both in the press and in politics, are eminent writers and speakers, but they have lost their faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ." We suppose this is a hit at Lord Rosebery and Mr. John Morley. Mr. Spicer sighs for a Christian statesman like the late Mr. Gladstone. But he believes he will sigh in vain. Mr. Gladstone was the last of the Christian statesmen. No other public man will ever be able to mix up religion and politics as he did. The time has gone by.

Sixteen school-girls at Lee went to Ilfracombe for a bath, and were cut off by the tide. Unless help came, they were in immediate danger of drowning. Twelve of them went down and prayed, but no help came from the quarter to which they addressed themselves. One of them had the sense to mount a rock and wave a red garment. This was done by a lad of fourteen, who ran all the way to Lee and caught some boatmen, who rescued the whole party. By the time they were waist high in water, and in another ten minutes would have been washed out to sea. No particular thanks are due to "Providence." It is a case of "Bravo the

That Sunday-school excursion to Pwllheli ended very sadly. Thirteen of the excursionists got into a boat that should only have held eight, the result being that it was swamped and all of them were drowned. Considering who they were, and the fact that several ministers accompanied the excursion, it would have expected more consideration on the part of "Providence."

Sunday boating grieves the soul of the Rev. H. K. Simcox, of Exelme Rectory, Berks. He protests that he is not a vegetarian, and has no objection to the working classes having a little recreation on Sunday, but he hates seeing the lawns crowded on the Lord's Day by rich and leisured pleasure-seekers. It is one of the ways, he says, in which the people are being led to forget God—in other words, to forget the Church and the parson. The reverend gentleman has our sympathy.

After defaming and persecuting the Birmingham Secularists, the Bishop of Coventry has devoted his mental and moral resources—such as they are—to the Sunday trading question. In his course he works his hardest himself on Sunday, but it seems his pious soul to think of shopkeepers selling newspapers, milk, sweets, tobacco, and even meat, on that holy day. He has presided at a meeting of clergy at Birmingham, in which a committee—including some "traders"—was formed to carry out the Bishop's great design. No doubt his lordship will become the terror of the Birmingham "kids." He has his principal eye on their Sunday lollipops.

A little while ago we had to devote an "Acid Drop" to the *Saturday Special* on account of its editorial nonsense about the poet, James Thomson ("B. V."). We have now to devote the favor to the *Saturday Review*. Noticing the new edition of Thomson's principal poems, recently published by Mr. Bertram Dobell, it remarks that "Mr. Thomson has not yet written an ode to Satan"—an expression which implies that, in the writer's opinion, Thomson is still living. Then we are informed that Thomson "rants and raves," which we presume is the "culchawed" of saying that he dissents from the reviewer's religion. It is admitted, however, that the ranting and blaspheming poet displays "some sickly skill." What we should deny the reviewer is the substantive, not the adjective.

The *Saturday Review* critic opines that the appreciators of Thomson's masterpiece must be persons whose "wages of sin" have rotted away their consciences and souls." The critic evidently believes himself to be the type of the "healthy mind." It might abash his confidence to learn—"he is obviously very ignorant—that amongst the "unhealthy minds" who appreciate Thomson are George Meredith, John Morley, A. C. Swinburne, and William Rossetti. George Eliot, when living, sent him a letter of very strong praise.

Really the *Saturday Review* must be in the last stage of

degeneration to allow a scribbler like this, so incapable and so pretentious, to vomit his anonymous and impudent folly over a distinguished poet like James Thomson. There might be some excuse if the author of *The City of Dreadful Night* were only just challenging public criticism, for the common hacks of the press have nothing to guide what they are pleased to call their judgment at that stage; but Thomson has been dead for nearly twenty years, and enough has been written about him by competent critics to save all but gratuitous and invincible idiots from such an exhibition as this *Saturday Reviewer* makes of himself.

The *Daily News* calmly refers to some Egyptian vases in the Latin Room of University College, London, which are supposed to date about 5,000 B.C. This is a thousand years before Jehovah (according to the Bible) manufactured the first man.

The capitalised value of the Tory Government's new dole of £87,000 a year to the clergy amounts to three millions sterling. This is a direct endowment of the Church of England by parliament. Henceforth the Church's apologists will find it difficult to play the old game of pretending that it derives no money from the State.

Mr. Balfour gave the Nonconformists a shrewd thrust in the debate on this Clergy Relief Bill. He called their attention to the fact that all their churches and chapels are exempt from rates and taxes. To that extent the Dissenting Churches are all endowed by the State.

Henry Sutton, a young marine, only eighteen years of age, was on sentry-go at Forton Barracks, where he shot a lance-corporal named Alfred Valentine Davis. The jury found him guilty of unlawfully wounding, but he was discharged on the ground that he had become unnerved by hearing 'ghost stories. Another illustration of the evil effects of superstition.

Miss Marie Corelli, the lady who is so familiar with Satan, is actually writing two novels at once; and it is said that the advance royalties paid to her by her two publishers are "unprecedented in the recent annals of publishing." Evidently it pays to write mystery, piety, and florid nonsense.

Dreyfus is reported to have said, and the *Daily Chronicle* correspondent vouches for it as authentic: "My condemnation and sentence were a symbol of anti-Jewish odium. My judges were involuntarily deceived. May my undeserved expiation put an end to all racial or religious feuds in the Army, and in that France which I have passionately loved and served."

Mr. John Hall, shipowner, of Newcastle, who died leaving personally valued at half a million sterling, has left £10,000 towards a bishopric fund at Newcastle. This is a wretched waste of money. But perhaps the testator thought it would smooth his road to heaven.

Freethinkers who have any decent share of wealth should think over this John Hall legacy to the Church, and ask themselves whether they ought not to remember the Freethought movement in their own wills. Any bequest to the Secular Society, Limited, will be perfectly secure, and *must* be devoted to promoting the Secular objects set forth in the Memorandum of Association.

Colonel Ingersoll's address to the Free Religious Association at Boston, which we begin the reproduction this week from the *Boston Investigator*, did not win the approval of the Unitarian *Unity*—"Our Western brother," as it is called by the good old slow-paced *Inquirer*. Instead of pulling a long face, as befitted the gravity of the occasion, Ingersoll "wielded the weapons of sarcasm." *Unity* allows that he is a "gifted orator," but says he "has become so habituated to the methods of sarcasm and to the habits of the humorist that it is hard for him to escape the debilitating temptation to provoke a laugh, even when dealing with men's serious convictions and their most sacred feelings." Poor Ingersoll! He is evidently going to be damned for having a double dose of wit. Had he only been dull, he might have been a Christian.

"Providence" has been busy in Texas. Floods have done damage there to the extent of four million dollars, and more than fifty people have been drowned.

The "rioters" at Barcelona showed a true instinct in attacking the house of the Jesuits. A party of monks just arrived from the Philippines had to be rescued from the mob by the police. The people of Spain are waking up to the real secret of their misfortunes. We hope to see them going strongly against the curse of priestcraft.

A chap who is just out of Harvard told me the other day

that at his college much use is made of the Bible as literature. One of the exercises, he said, is for the student, being given a subject for treatment, to throw his remarks into the ancient style in which the Bible is written. He told me also that the professor of literature, on one occasion, took the story of Naaman (I understood him to say Nahum, but think he meant Naaman) and his faith-cure for the theme of a discourse, and that the boys all thought it was great. One student, so the young man related, learned a chapter of Psalms to give as a recitation in a prize contest. That interested me, and I inquired how the student succeeded. "Well," he replied, "he showed up in the finals, but he didn't get the decision. The committee was unanimous in giving the medal to a fellow who recited Ingersoll's 'Vision of War.'" This may fall under the Colonel's eye and apprise him for the first time that he has won in an essay competition with King David.—George Macdonald, in "Truthseeker" (New York).

The great Talmage has been captured by a patent medicine firm. It is not stated, however, what they gave him for his testimonial. But it is known that he has made a lot of money for a great many years by puffing the spiritual quack medicine called Christianity.

Ian Maclaren, the novelist, who is also the Rev. John Watson, Presbyterian minister, of Liverpool, confides the following opinion to a *Chicago Record* interviewer: "American churches are conducted, to a considerable extent, as large business concerns, money-making permeating everything." We have no doubt that this is true; still, Ian Maclaren need not have gone all the way to America to discover churches like that. There are plenty of them at home in England. But of course it is easier to denounce hypocrisy when it is three or four thousand miles distant.

The Burnley weavers have agreed to work henceforth on Good Friday. This is rather rough on the gospel-shops. But perhaps the men of God will try to capture the weavers on Easter Monday. It will take them all their time, though!

There is a Hampstead Antiquarian Society. We don't know how many members it has, or whether they are men, women, or children. It looks as though they were the last, for they went to the British Museum the other day and allowed themselves to be lectured by that fantastic old gentleman, the Rev. Dr. Kinns. He told them that the Assyrian inscriptions confirmed the Bible story of the Deluge, the history of Sennacherib, and the narrative of Daniel. Old Kinns himself is such a mental oddity that we daresay he believes all this nonsense. But what is to be said of his statement that the Egyptian records confirm the story of Joseph and that of the Exodus? When romance is carried to such a length it merits a severer designation.

Dr. Parker hasn't beaten "God damn the Sultan" yet, but he is evidently training for a record performance. The other Sunday evening he referred to a man who had struck a woman as "some damnable beast." He can't get rid of the "damn."

What God hath joined together let not man put asunder. That be hanged! says Bishop Hurst, of the American Methodist Episcopal Church. This gentleman has just obtained a legal separation from his second wife on the ground of incompatibility of temper. It is not stated which has the "temper."

The Bedfordshire case was fruitful in disillusionment. Bedfordshire himself funked and sold his friends. His comrades, the Dawsons, disgusted the Defence Committee. And the solicitor, Wyatt Digby, who was introduced by Dawson, kept the hundreds of pounds that were raised and paid to him, without doing the work, and without paying Mr. Horace Avory his fees. Representations were made to the Incorporated Law Society, and the result is that Wyatt Digby is struck off the roll of solicitors. This is some satisfaction, anyhow.

The Ascent Through Christ is the title of a new book by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A. He speaks like any parson of demonstrably false Bible theories as "beneficent illusions." Perhaps it would spoil the game to call them "useful lies." He also argues that, although the bodily ascension of Jesus "savours of the notion of a materialistic heaven," it is probable that the sympathetic Savior really went up in a cloud as a special convincing favor to his simple-minded disciples. He wouldn't do it now, but it was a kind "accommodation" then. Perhaps, after all, it was only a "beneficent illusion."

The chaplain of the Watford Union has been complaining to the Board of Guardians that the paupers will not attend church. It was resolved to hang a copy of an old rule in the wards, evidently to draw the attention of the paupers to the

great privileges they were losing by staying away from the chaplain's ministrations.

The Wesleyans have erected a memorial tablet to the late Dr. Moulton in Wesley's Chapel, City-road. The sculptor (Mr. Adams-Acton) fee was four hundred guineas. The whole chapel has been renovated, the entire expenditure amounting to £29,000. Yet in many poor country districts poverty-stricken members are denying themselves in order to contribute money to the Wesleyan Twentieth Century Fund.

Having duly rejoiced over the Prince of Wales's abandonment of his Sunday morning hot rolls, the Rev. Hugh Hughes should now turn his attention to the Queen and induce her to stop the Sunday band on the East Terrace of Windsor Castle. Not only does the Queen herself seem to like this desecration of the holy Sabbath, but she allows the public to come and enjoy the music. It is very sad, and the Hughes should swear not to eat or drink again until it is remedied.

Mr. Hughes declares that the new Free Churches' Christianity demonstrates the unity of the Free Church Christians. But at the present moment the two chief officials of the Baptist Union are in utter disagreement over the question of Biblical Inspiration. Dr. Clifford is President, and Mr. Cuff is Vice-President. And what does Mr. Cuff say of Dr. Clifford's book on the Inspiration and Authority of the Bible? He says it is "an awful thing," "an intolerable book," and "will not be silent about that book anywhere." Yes, they are very united, only the Baptist vice-president is Cuffing the Baptist president.

The Chinese "heathen" mob the Christian foreign missionaries. English Christians, not twenty miles from London, last month mobbed the Mormon foreign missionaries who were obliged to seek the protection of the police.

Why does the London Anti-Vivisectionist Society publish such a namby-pamby, partisan tract as the one entitled *Prejudice and the Mind of Christ*, by the Rev. Seymer E. Terry? This gentleman says he is opposed to vivisection because he believes it is opposed to the mind of God. "When I cast my eyes around me," he says, "upon the creatures He has made, I see no unnecessary pain inflicted upon them by His loving hands." Really, now! This gentleman must be very shortsighted. What does he think of a cat running about with its poor panting bird in its mouth? What does he think of the claws and fangs of a tiger rending its quivering prey? What does he think of a pike terrorising a mile of water with its biting right and left for sheer devilry? What does he think of a shark grinding up a shipwrecked sailor in its jaws? What does he think even of a flea—a most terrible-looking creature under the microscope—tormenting a helpless baby in its cot? What does he think of a Christian shooting tame pigeons, coursing rabbits, or hunting domesticated animals with savage dogs?

But the cream of this reverend gentleman's pious little job is to come. Later on he forgets all about the "unnecessary pain," and quotes as "true" St. Paul's declaration that "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." You have never to wait long to catch a parson giving himself away.

Converts to Rome.

The new edition of *Converts to Rome since the Trinitarian Movement to May, 1899*, compiled by Mr. W. G. Gorman (St. Paul's, Sonnenschein), gives some very interesting statistics. According to this authority, no fewer than 446 Anglican clergymen have "gone over" in the period mentioned. Next in number come "Members of the Nobility," 47. The Army officers who have 'verted are set down at 205, authors, poets, and journalists at 162, legal profession at 129, public officials at 90, medical profession at 60, Naval officers at 39, barristers at 32, and peers at 27.

Of the converts, 158 have become priests and 290 "secular clergy." From Oxford there have been 445 converts, the Church providing 55 of these, Exeter College 45, Oriel College 30, Balliol 30, Brasenose and Magdalen each 22, and University College 20. The total from Cambridge University is given as 211, which is less than half that from Oxford. Of this 211 fewer than 79 were from Trinity College, St. John's, and the next with only 28. Trinity College, Dublin, provided 10 converts, London University 11, Durham University 10, King's College, London, each 10, while only 9 came from the four Scottish Universities.—*Westminster Gazette*.

The successors of Peter have since reversed the apostle's early practice: instead of now casting their nets into the sea, the modern representatives of the disciples of Jesus draw their sees into their nets.—Charles Bradlaugh.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 9, Hyde 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 Carnina-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

P. BALL.—Thanks for your ever-welcome weekly batch of cuttings.

T. ROBERTSON.—Sorry to hear of the facts in the first part of your letter, but pleased to know that the Glasgow Branch has had such a prosperous winter, and that it is in a better financial position now than at any previous time during the past seven years.

LILIAN S. BRANSBY.—Thanks all the same.

E. PINDER.—Thanks for the cutting. Mr. Foote is in excellent health.

R. EDWARDS.—We are very sorry to hear of the wretched muddle of Peckham. It is a great pity that the work there passed out of the hands of the Camberwell Branch. Mere enthusiasm is no substitute for steady energy and proper resources. Something will have to be done. The matter is receiving the President's attention.

A. B. MOSS.—Pleased to hear of your highly-successful meeting at Stratford.

Mrs. WHEELER.—Mrs. Wheeler, widow of the late J. M. Wheeler, desires to thank the subscribers to the Wheeler Memorial Fund which she collected through the *Freethinker*. As we stated a few months ago, there were reasons which justified us in declining to authorise the Treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, to pay the Fund over to Mrs. Wheeler. Our object was simply to ensure the Fund being used for her own benefit. It is unnecessary to say more. The principal difficulty being removed, we gave Mr. Hartmann the authorisation, and he paid the full amount to Mrs. Wheeler, without any sort of deduction. We have only to add that the *Freethinker* lists of subscriptions were checked on her behalf by Mr. George Ward.

E. ELDERKIN.—Your cuttings are valued.

R. BOOTH.—It is impossible to answer your letter in a paragraph. If you continue reading the *Freethinker* you will gradually gain light upon the points you raise. Perhaps you would be helped—you should be—by reading Büchner's *Force and Matter*, which Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., will supply you for 2s. 6d.

F. HERRMANN.—We do not know how you could obtain the book mentioned by the late Dr. Perfitt. Your only chance is to apply at second-hand bookshops. Thanks for the papers. But the "flat earth" man is too silly for anything, and isn't even worth mentioning.

C. COHEN informs us that he is somewhat better, and hopes to be able to lecture to-day (July 9). He has been laid up by an ulcerated throat. This accounts for the absence of his usual article in this week's *Freethinker*.

As we are going to press we hear of the death of Mr. Stocker, the veteran Freethought newsagent, of Liverpool. He was very old and infirm, and the wonder is that he held out so long before he died in harness, as he would have wished. Not many hours before the end he was out delivering the morning papers. Mr. Stocker was a man of tried courage and much natural intelligence.

W. C. COLE—Wednesday morning is very late to apprise us of what happened on Saturday evening. We could find room in our next issue for a decent obituary.

RECEIVED.—Northern Daily Telegraph—Pictorial Magazine—Daily Mail—The Echo—Two Worlds—Grays Gazette—Huntingham Daily Mail—Young Man—Inquirer—Zoophilist—International—New Century—Ethical World—Otago Witness—Progressive Peace (Joachim Kaspary)—Literary Guide—Pro-Freethinker—Isle of Man Times—De Verije Gedachte—Truthseeker (New York)—Independent Pulpit—Freidenker—Lorch of Thought—Der Arme Teufel—Blue Grass Blade—The League for Reason—Boston Investigator—English Mechanic. Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

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.

Contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription expires, subscribers will receive a 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.

Persons who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by making 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, 10s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

THE first of the Sunday Freethought Demonstrations was held last Sunday in Finsbury Park, and in spite of the showery weather there was a very large gathering around the platform. During Mr. Foote's speech it swelled to splendid proportions. Mr. Harry Snell acted as chairman, and opened the proceedings with a neat, telling address. Mr. Robert Forder followed and spoke well. Then came Mr. Moss, who kept the meeting alive. Mr. Heaford spoke last with his usual vigor. And after a few closing words by Mr. Snell the brake drove away amidst general cheers, and the howls of a little knot of the baser sort of Christians. These fellows are fond of disturbing Freethought meetings, but they had no chance on Sunday. There was a rally of Freethinkers around the platform, most of them of course from North London, though not all, for five came from the East London Branch wearing N.S.S. badges, and looking as though they didn't mean to be trifled with.

Miss Vance, Mrs. Henderson, and other friends, went through the crowd during Mr. Foote's speech and took up a good collection. Mr. Cohen was unfortunately not present, owing to indisposition.

The second of these Demonstrations will be held this afternoon (July 9) at 3.30 in Hyde Park, near the Marble Arch. The speakers will be Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, Moss, and Heaford. There is sure to be a big crowd. What is wanted is a sufficient body of Freethinkers around the platform to hold any disorderly element in check.

The wheel has come nearly full circle. Dreyfus is back in France, and is awaiting a trial which can hardly be anything else now than a formal preliminary to the declaration of his innocence. Even men like Déroulède are beginning to trim their sails afresh, for they see that the wind is blowing steadily in the direction of justice. A few fanatics are still left crying "Down with the Jew," but France is sick of that folly, and the rabid Drumont himself is screaming to half-empty benches.

Once more we pay a tribute of veneration to Madame Dreyfus. That noble wife and mother is worthy of the best days of Greece or Rome. We have not heard that there was any mention of her at the recent World's Congress of Women, but the courage and dignity she has displayed are vastly more admirable than the mere mental capacity to take a hundred college prizes, or to qualify as a lady doctor.

Mr. Conway's lecture at South-place Chapel on the Dreyfus affair was reported at some length in the *Daily News*. After pointing out that the Imperialists had staked their hopes on the guilt of Dreyfus, also the Royalists, and the Bishops, and finally the Pope himself, Mr. Conway said that the "thinkers of France had combined their intellectual powers against the military and ecclesiastical despotism," and had defeated it. He claimed that this "ideal Revolution in France had been initiated, directed, and carried to its legal victory by Freethinkers, with few exceptions."

The Bethnal Green Branch is going to have evening as well as afternoon Sunday meetings in Victoria Park. The lecturer for this evening (July 9) at 6.30 is Mr. F. A. Davies. We hope the local Freethinkers will support the Branch in this new departure.

The National Secular Society's Annual Excursion, under the auspices of the Executive, is fixed for Sunday, August 27. A special train will run to Littlehampton, starting from London Bridge at 9.30, Victoria 9.25, New Cross 9.35, and Clapham Junction 9.39, and returning from Littlehampton at 7.15. The tickets are 3s. for adults, and 1s. 6d. for children under twelve.

The *Star* continues its gallant battle against low-flash American oils. The number of deaths from this cause in England up to June 30 was no less than sixty-three. The matter is one for legislation. It is monstrous that a Yankee millionaire should coin dollars out of murder and arson. We wish the *Star* all success in its campaign.

Mr. F. Lester, 123 Abbeyfield-road, Rotherhithe, S.E., has reprinted in leaflet form, at his own expense, the recent *Freethinker* article by Mimmermus entitled "The Gospel Writ in Steel," giving a long list of Freethinkers who suffered imprisonment at the hands of Christians during the present century. It is a capital leaflet for general distribution. The plain list of names, dates, and sentences is more eloquent than any rhetoric.

The following appeal reaches us from J. M. Headley, honorary secretary of the Freethinkers' Association, Great Yarmouth:—"We are a small body of little men who are

doing our level best to spread the doctrine of Freethought in this ancient borough. We are, therefore, deserving both sympathy and help. We have hired a small hall, which is comfortably seated, and situated in a central part of the borough. In this we hold meetings every Sunday evening. Lectures are given by some few of us, and discussion, which is publicly invited, always takes place. Two of our friends are first-class violinists, and their artistic playing is a great attraction and the source of much pleasure. We now want a good pianoforte, at which one of our friends would preside. Will any of our distant friends assist us in getting one? We begin to have a notion what our annual expenses will be; and, if some 400 Freethinkers would become honorary members of our Association, and subscribe the modest sum of 1s. per annum, we feel that success for our movement would be insured for the future. Of course, our musicians and lecturers are working simply for the love of the cause, and the latter, it must be remembered, have to prepare their essays or lectures during the hours of leisure from business. Friends from a distance will be welcome, not only to the hall, but to the rostrum."

The Annual Picnic of the Birmingham Branch took place on Sunday last. Most unfavorable weather had prevailed all the previous week, and prospects on Saturday were exceedingly gloomy; but Sunday morning opened fine, and a start was made from New-street Station at 7.30. Arriving in good time at Worcester, through its quiet streets, the party, sixty-eight in number, proceeded to the waterside, where a special steamer lay in waiting. Through charming scenery up the Severn the river trip was made, and Stourport reached at 12.30. A brief stay there, and then back to Holt Fleet, where full justice was done to a substantial repast. Here the President, Mr. J. H. Ridgway, made an appropriate speech, showing that the prospects of the Branch were full of promise if the right workers would come forward, and appealed strongly to non-members to join. Rambles were then indulged in along the beautiful lanes and about the cherry orchards, and all too soon the time came to get on board for the home journey. Birmingham was reached at 8.45, after a delightful day out. Great praise was accorded the treasurer, Mr. W. T. Pitt, who had acted as agent in advance for the comfort of the party.

The July number of the *Literary Guide* contains, amongst other interesting items, an excellent article by Herbert Flowerdew, the novelist, on "Does Christianity Give Us Holidays?" The writer concludes that the Sabbatarian dogma stands in the way of a rational plan of weekly rest for the workers.

The Auckland correspondent of the *Otago Witness*, published at Dunedin, New Zealand, refers to the sessions of the National Council of Women, and says that "at the outset the Council decided that it would not ask the blessing of the Deity on its labors." The debates showed that the Council contained Agnostics and Freethinkers. One speaker boldly declared that woman's emancipation had always been won in spite of Christianity.

At a recent meeting of the Grays School Board it transpired that a penny (catchpenny) hymn-book had been imported into the girls' school by Miss Neal. Mr. Goodwin called attention to it as an illustration of the need for purely secular education in Board schools. He moved the exclusion of these hymn-books. The motion was seconded and carried *nem. con.*

Julius Cæsar a Freethinker.

From cant of all kinds he was totally free. He was a friend of the people, but he indulged in no enthusiasm for liberty. He never dilated on the beauties of virtue, or complimented, as Cicero did, a Providence in which he did not believe. He was too sincere to stoop to unreality. He held to the facts of this life, and to his own convictions; and as he found no reason for supposing that there was a life beyond the grave, he did not pretend to expect it. He respected the religion of the Roman State as an institution established by the laws. He encouraged or left unmolested the creeds and practices of the uncounted sects or tribes who were gathered under the eagles. But his own writings contain nothing to indicate that he himself had any religious belief at all. He saw no evidence that the gods practically interfered in human affairs. He never pretended that Jupiter was on his side. He thanked his soldiers after a victory, but he did not order *Te Deums* to be sung for it.—*J. A. Froude, "Cæsar: A Sketch," p. 559.*

The Cathedral Spire.

It soars like hearts of hapless men who dare
To sue for gifts the gods refuse to allot;
Who climb for ever toward they know not where,
Baffled for ever by they know not what.

—William Watson.

A Neglected Humorist.

"Gravity is a mystery of the body invented to hide the defects of the mind."—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

It has always been a source of wonder to Rationalists how the Holy Willies of orthodoxy have ever been able to maintain, after a perusal of the Holy Bible, that their Deity was entitled to the credit of benevolence. The pious opinion really seemed in the nature of an unmerited compliment, entirely unsupported by any evidence. The grim exponents of the religion of the Man of Sorrows seldom smiled themselves, the study of the Scriptures having, apparently, a depressing effect upon them. So much so that the man in the street could tell the followers of Christ by the very cast of their countenances. Nay, more, by the expression one might tell how far the victim was suffering from the disease of religiosity. From the slight droop of the mouth, which distinguished the High Churchman, to the resemblance to a tired omnibus-horse, worn by the Methodist, one might accurately classify them.

The votaries of the religion of J. C. and Him Crucified were cankered through with austerity. Generation after generation had been stifled under a system which was utterly sunless, joyless, and, to a large extent, graceless. The results were to be seen in the dull, dismal, dreary, rectangular frequenters of the places of worship of to-day. The professional pulpit-punchers and bible-bangers were so far incapable of honest laughter that the average undertaker was a merry Andrew compared with them. In short, the religious world of to-day is simply in the meshes of devilry, darkness, and despair.

This gospel, that life is unutterably terrible, which was in reality an arraignment not merely of the Three Persons and One God, but—what was far more important—of human nature itself, finally transformed this light world of ours, for all Christians, into a darker and more terrible hell than Dante ever conceived.

All this unmerited suffering might have been avoided if the earliest commentators, the first theologians, had been able to see a joke. It is entirely owing to the mental density of these men that Christianity is a nightmare, rather than a religious system. These intellectual babes and sucklings misconceived the central idea of the Bible. They innocently took a work of humor and read it in all seriousness. We all know the fearful results, beside which a madman's dream appears as perfect sanity.

As we have said, the Bible is a work of humor. But we must discriminate. The Holy Ghost's humor is not as our humor, nor his witticisms as our witticisms. The Ghost is not so satirical as Heine, so profane as Voltaire, so ironical as Gibbon, nor so modern as Catulle Mendès. Quip, repartee, and epigrams are strangers to his pages. Maybe a ghostly humor is best suited to a book by a ghostly author. Although we cannot say that there is a laugh on every page, a smile on every line, the historic humor of the Bible will suffice. There are stories, quaint burlesques, and jokes enough to have enlightened those pious, canting, humbugging theologians. Their refusal to see his jokes must have made the Ghost laugh. He must have held his two sides, which are six, until his three heads, which are one, fairly ached from the explosion.

The proverbial Scotchman, who required a surgical operation before he could see a joke, was a rollicking humorist compared with those pietists who could read the Ghost's tall stories without moving a muscle.

As a humorist, the Holy Ghost stands vastly lower than our own Dickens, although almost as superb as a writer of fiction. The Ghost is a showman; absolutely calm and unimpassioned about his exhibits, as a showman ought to be. Like Artemus Ward, he never turns a hair. He says the funniest things in a calm, almost aggrieved manner. That distractingly funny story of *Jonah and the Whale* is the perfection of serious, unemotional joking. While reading it we fairly sympathize with the poor whale who let lodgings in his inside. The Ghost's humor is the more entertaining from the fact that it pretends to be a narrative of things that have happened. His book is a sort of comic Josephus's *History of the Jews*. Burlesque instruction and an elephantine fun make a very agreeable blending.

The story of Noah's Ark is delicious; and the adventures of the Talking Serpent in the Garden of Eden hardly less so. Daniel in the Lion's Den, the Ten Plagues, the Tower of Babel, Ezekiel's Gorgeous Banquet, are all brilliant examples of our Ghost's quality.

The latter pages show a distinct falling-off, but the difference is not immeasurable. Christ walking the waves; cursing the fig-tree; turning water into wine; feeding 5,000 people with a bath-bun and a few sardines, are, perhaps, the best of the later stories. The purse-money, in whose mouth the tribute money was found, alone deserves a paragraph. The episode of the bedevilled porkers is almost as bizarre as any story in the *Arabian Nights*.

Fed on such food, the Biblical students should, like Jeshuran, have waxed fat. There is enough in the sacred volume to wrinkle with smiles the face of a cabbage. To class such a work as sober fiction is absurd. If people would only read the book, instead of merely chattering about it, such misconstruction would be impossible. The cultured reader will complain that the specimens quoted above are examples of a very elementary humor. We must admit the justice of the strictures. But it must be borne in mind that the Bible was written many centuries ago, and by a Ghost. Further criticism is disarmed by the fact of the Ghost being the Mrs. Harris of the Christian Trinity. We must make allowances for a congenital puzzle. It will be seen that the Ghost does not go in for over-production. He stopped writing some two thousand brief summers ago. He takes care not to spoil his readers' palates by supplying them with a surplus of humor. If some other humorists would imitate his august example, both writers and readers would profit.

This theory will have its enemies—the common or garden Christians, who are stupid or nothing; and the professional gospel-grinders, whose business instincts will prevent them from admitting its truth. Nevertheless, those who have prayerfully read the foregoing will recognise that it is an honest attempt to prove that the Deity, like the Devil, is not so black as he is painted.

MIMNERMUS.

Ingersoll's Paine Oration.

(Concluded from page 427.)

In Europe, Liberty was lying chained in the Inquisition, her white bosom stained with blood. In the new world the Puritans had been hanging and burning in the name of God, and selling white Quaker children into slavery in the name of Christ, who said: "Suffer little children to come unto me."

Under such conditions progress was impossible. The Church not only is, but always has been, incapable of a forward movement. Religion always looks back. The Church has already reduced Spain to a guitar, Italy to a hand-organ, and Ireland to exile.

Someone had to sacrifice himself for the good of all. The people were in slavery; their manhood had been taken from them by pomp, pageantry, and power. Progress is born of doubt and inquiry. The Church never doubts, never inquires; to doubt is heresy, to inquire is to admit that you do not know. The Church says it does. She has got it all.

More than a century ago Catholicism, wrapped in robes red with the innocent blood of millions, holding in her frantic clutch crowns and sceptres, honors and gold, the keys of heaven and hell, trampling beneath her feet the liberties of nations, in the proud moment of almost universal dominion felt within her heartless breast the deadly dagger of Voltaire. From that blow the Catholic Church never can recover, never. Livid with hatred, she launched her eternal anathema at the great destroyer, and ignorant Protestants have echoed the curse of Rome.

In our country the Church was all-powerful; and, though divided into many sects, would instantly unite to repel a common foe. Paine struck the first grand blow.

The *Age of Reason* did more to undermine the power of the Protestant Church than all other books then known. It furnished an immense amount of food for

thought. It was written for the average mind, and is a straightforward, honest investigation of the Bible and of the Christian system. And Paine did not falter from the first page to the last. He gives you his candid thought; and thoughts, to be valuable, must be candid.

The *Age of Reason* liberalised us all. It put arguments in the mouths of the people, and it put the Church on the defensive; enabled somebody in every village to corner the parson. It made the world wiser, and made the Church better. It took power from the pulpit, and divided it among the pews.

Just in proportion as the human race has advanced, the Church has lost power; there is no exception to this rule.

No nation ever materially advanced that held strictly to the religion of its founders.

No nation ever gave itself to the control of the Church without losing its power, its honor, and its existence.

Every Church pretends to have found the truth; this is the end of progress. Why pursue that which you have caught? Why hunt that which you have found? Why investigate when you know?

Every creed is a rock in running water. Humanity sweeps by. Every creed cries to the universe, "Halt!" A creed is the ignorant past bullying the enlightened present.

The ignorant are not satisfied with what can be demonstrated. Science is too slow; they demand completeness; a fragment, a segment, is of no value to them; they demand the entire structure.

In music they want a melody with a recurring accent at measured periods. In religion they insist on immediate answers to the questions of origin and destiny. The Alpha and Omega of all things must be in the alphabet of their superstition.

A religion that cannot answer every question and guess every conundrum is worthless. They desire a kind of theological dictionary; a religious ready-reckoner, together with guide-boards at every crossing. They mistake impudence for authority, solemnity for wisdom, and bathos for inspiration. The beginning and the end are what they want. The grand flight of the eagle is nothing to them; they want the nest in which he was hatched, and the dry limb on which he roosts. Anything that can be learned is not worth knowing. The present is of no value. Happiness is not expected this side of the clouds, and can only be attained by being miserable here; not miserable for the good of others, but for the salvation of your worthless soul.

Paine denied the authority of Bibles and creeds. This was his crime, and for this the religious world shut the door in his face and emptied slops on him from the windows.

And yet I challenge the world to show that Thomas Paine ever wrote one line in favor of tyranny, one line in favor of immorality, one line against what he believed to be for the highest and best interests of mankind, one line against justice, charity, or liberty; and yet he has been pursued as though he had been a fiend from hell. His memory has been execrated as though he had murdered some Uriah for his wife, driven some Hagar into the desert to starve with his child upon her bosom; as though he had defiled his own daughters, ripped open with the sword the sweet bodies of loving and innocent women, advised one brother to assassinate another, kept a harem with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, or had persecuted Christians even unto strange cities.

Think about it. No effort has been, in any age of the world, spared to crush out opposition. The Church used painting, music, and architecture to degrade and awe mankind. But there are some men that nothing can awe. There have been through all the ages some that dared even the gods. Some proud head has always been above the waves, and in every age some Diogenes has sacrificed to the Deity. True genius never cowers, and there is always some Samson feeling for the pillars of authority.

Cathedrals and domes and chimes and chants; temples frescoed and groined and carved, and gilded with gold; altars and tapers, and paintings of Virgin and babe; censers and chalices; chasubles, patens, and albs; organs and anthems, and incense rising to the winged and

blest; maniple, amice, and stole; crosses and crosiers, tiaras and crowns; mitres and missals and masses; rosaries, relics, and robes; martyrs and saints, and windows stained as with the blood of Christ, never for one moment awed the brave, proud spirit of the Infidel. He knew that all the pomp and glitter had been purchased with liberty, that priceless jewel of the soul. In looking at the cathedral he remembered the dungeon. The music of the organ was not loud enough to drown the clank of fetters. He could not forget that the taper had lighted the fagot. He knew that the Cross adorned the hilt of the sword. And so, where others worshipped, he scorned and wept.

The investigators, the Infidels, have been the saviors of liberty, and the truth is beginning to be realised, and the truly intellectual are honoring the brave thinkers of the past.

But the Church is as unforgiving as ever, and still wonders why any Infidel can be wicked enough to endeavor to destroy her power.

I will tell the Church why.

You have imprisoned the human mind; you have been the enemy of liberty; you have burned us at the stake; you have wasted us at slow fires; you have torn our flesh with iron; you have covered us with chains; you have treated us as outcasts; you have taken our wives and children from our arms; you have confiscated our property; you have denied us the right to testify in courts; you have branded us with infamy; you have torn out our tongues; you have refused us burial. In the name of your religion you have robbed us of every right, and, after having inflicted upon us every evil that can be inflicted in this world, you have fallen on your knees and implored your God to torment us for ever in another world.

Can you wonder that we hate your doctrines, that we despise your creeds, and that we are proud to know that we are beyond your power? Do you wonder that we glory in the fact that the whole world is slowly rising into the blessed light?

Can you wonder that we point with pride to the fact that Infidelity has ever been found battling for the rights of man, for the liberty of conscience?

Can you wonder that we are proud to say that we have been the disciples of Reason, the soldiers of Freedom, and that we have kept our hands unstained with human blood?

We deny that religion is the end or object of this life. When it is so considered it becomes destructive of happiness, the real end of life. It becomes the hydra-headed monster, reaching in terrible coils from heaven, and thrusting its thousand fangs into the bleeding hearts of men. It devours their substance, builds palaces for gods, and allows his children to die in huts and hovels.

Happiness is the great end of life, and virtue is the road; and virtue is a subordination of the passions to the intellect, to act in accordance with your highest convictions. And virtue does not consist in believing, but in doing. And this is the truth that Infidels have spoken throughout all the ages. And they have handed the torch from one to the other; upon the altar of reason they have kept the sacred fire, and through the long midnight of faith they have fed the divine flame.

Infidelity is liberty. All religion is slavery. And no master can be great enough to make slavery sweet. I want to be free.

All religion is slavery. In every religion God is the slave of man, and man is the slave of God. In every religion man makes the God, and then becomes the slave of the monster he makes.

We do not want creed, we want knowledge; we want happiness.

And yet we are told by the Church that we have accomplished nothing, that we are simply tearers-down and destroyers.

Now, is it nothing to free the mind? Is it nothing to civilise mankind? Is it nothing to fill the world with light, with discovery and science? Is it nothing to dignify man and exalt the intellect? Is it nothing to grope your way into the prisons, into the cells of superstition, where the souls of men are chained to floors of stone; to greet them like a ray of light, like the song of a bird, like the murmur of the waves? Is it nothing to see the dull eyes open and grow slowly bright? Is it nothing to feel the grasp of their shrunken

hands and hear yourself thanked in a hollowed voice when you give them liberty and light?

Is it nothing to conduct souls into the blessed light of day, to let them see the happy fields and the sweet green earth, and hear the everlasting music of the waves? Is it nothing to make men wipe the dust from their swollen knees, and the tears from their furrowed cheeks?

Is it a small thing to reave the heavens of an insatiate monster, and write upon the eternal dome, glittering with stars, the word "Freedom"?

Is that a small thing? Is it a small thing to quench the flames of hell with the tears of pity; a small thing to unbind the martyr from the stake; a small thing to break all the chains, to stay the sword of the fanatic, to tear the bloody hands of superstition from the white throat of science?

Is it a small thing to make men free, to destroy the dogmas of ignorance, prejudice, and power, the poisoned fables of superstition, and to drive from the beautiful face of the earth the fiend of fear?

It does seem to me that the most zealous Christian must at times entertain some doubt as to the divine origin of his blessed religion. For 1,800 years they have been teaching that doctrine. For more than a thousand years the Church has had to a great extent the control of Christendom, and what is the result? Are the Christian nations patterns of charity and forbearance? On the contrary, the principal business of Christian nations is to destroy each other. That is the principal business. At this present moment more than five million—yes, six million—Christians are trained and drilled to murder their fellow Christians. Every nation is groaning under a vast debt incurred in carrying on war against Christians, or defending themselves from Christians. The world is covered with forts to protect those who "love their enemies" from those who "give all wrong," and every sea is covered with Christian monsters ready to blow into eternal froth annually brains; and millions on millions are expended in the effort to construct still more terrible engines of death. Industry is crippled, toil is robbed, and even beggary is taxed to defray the cost of Christian war.

Now, there must be some other way to reform the world. We have tried creed and dogma and fable, and they have all failed. There must be some other way, and, according to my judgment, nothing but scientific education, nothing but the development of the brain, can benefit mankind.

We must find out the facts in nature and live in accordance with these facts, and we will let gods take care of themselves.

We need free bodies, free minds, free labor, free thought. Free labor will give us wealth, and free thought at last will give us truth.

And we need men with courage to speak and write their real thoughts. We need have no fear of being too radical; the future will verify all grand and brave predictions. Paine was in advance of his time; but he was orthodox compared with the Infidels of to-day.

Science, the great iconoclast, has been busy since 1809, and by the highway of progress are the broken images of the past.

On every hand the people advance. The vicar of God has been pushed from the throne of the Cæsars, and upon the roofs of the Eternal City falls once more the shadow of the eagle.

All has been accomplished by the few. The men of science have explored heaven and earth, and with infinite patience have furnished the facts; the brave thinkers have used them. The gloomy caverns of superstition have been transformed into temples of thought, and the demons of the past are the angels of to-day.

Science took a handful of sand and constructed a telescope, and with it explored the starry depths of heaven. Science wrested from the gods their thunder bolts, and now the electric spark, freighted with thought and love, sweeps beneath the waves of all the seas. Science took a tear from the cheek of unpaid labor, converted it into steam, created a giant that turns with tireless arm the countless wheels of toil.

Thomas Paine was one of the intellectual heroes. His name is forever associated with the great Republic. As long as free government exists he will be remembered, admired, honored.

He lived a long, laborious, useful life. The world is better for his having lived. For the sake of truth he accepted hatred and reproach for his portion. He ate the bitter bread of sorrow. His friends were untrue to him because he was true to them, because he was true to himself. He lost the respect of what is called society, but he was fortunate enough to keep his own. His life was what the world calls a failure, and what history calls success.

If to love your fellow man more than yourself is goodness, Thomas Paine was good.

If to be in advance of your time, to be a pioneer in the direction of right, to carry the torch—if that is greatness, Thomas Paine was great.

If to avow your principles and discharge your duty in the presence of death is heroic, Thomas Paine was a hero.

At the age of seventy-three death touched his tired heart. He died in the land his genius defended, under the flag he gave to the skies. Slander cannot touch him now, hatred cannot reach him more. He sleeps in the sanctuary of the tomb, beneath the quiet of the stars.

A few more years, a few more brave men, a few more rays of intellectual light, a few more discoveries, a few more facts, and mankind will venerate the memory of him who said: "Any system of religion that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system"; "The world is my country, and to do good my religion."

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of the Monthly Executive Meeting held at the Society's offices, Thursday, June 29; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair.

There were present:—E. Bater, T. Gorniot, F. Schaller, G. J. Warren, Annie Brown, W. Heaford, T. Thurlow, E. W. Quay, W. Leat, H. Brown, B. Munton, R. P. Edwards, C. Quinlan, T. Wilmot, and the Secretary; C. Cohen being absent through illness.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed; cash statement received.

The Secretary reported upon the arrangements for the outdoor demonstrations during July and August, and it was agreed that Brockwell Park should be included in the list, subject to permission being granted by the L.C.C.

The new members were then admitted: from Battersea, 3; East London, 9; West London, 5.

The Secretary reported upon the Excursion arrangements, and Mr. W. Leat was added to the Committee.

The President then introduced the draft of procedure of the Twentieth Century Fund, as requested at the last meeting, and, after some little discussion, it was adopted, on the motion of Mr. Quay, seconded by Mr. Bater. It ran:—

"The conduct of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund shall be as follows:—

1. A subscription shall be opened, with the editor's permission, in the *Freethinker*.

2. Branches shall be invited to make special collections for the Fund.

3. Collecting-sheets shall be printed and entrusted to responsible collectors, who shall make returns to the N.S.S. Secretary.

4. All monies collected shall pass through the hands of Mr. Hartmann, the N.S.S. Treasurer.

5. Mr. Hartmann will pay over what money he holds on the 25th of each month to the Secular Society, Limited.

6. The Fund shall be all paid over to, and held by, the Secular Society, Limited."

Other minor matters of business were dealt with, and the meeting closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

Correspondence.

THE MORAL INSTRUCTION LEAGUE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir—The attention of my Executive has been directed to a paper in the *Freethinker*, for May 25, of the National Secular Society's Annual Conference at Birmingham. In this report there is a paragraph regarding the "Moral Instruction League" in which, doubtless by some printer's error, there occur the words, "the Moral Instruction League to which our Society was affiliated." The use of the past tense implies that this affiliation has ceased. But I conclude this is a mistake, because I have received no notification of the fact from the Society's secretary, who, on the contrary, called at our office in April, paid an affiliation fee, and stated, in reply to a

letter from me, that the Society still maintained its affiliation.

In regard to the other part of the paragraph which criticises the policy of the League, if there be any estrangement on the part of the Executive of the National Secular Society on the ground that the League is conducted "in the interest of the Ethical Societies," it is due to misapprehension on the part of that Executive. From the first, the Moral Instruction League put the simple educational needs and rights of childhood in the foreground, as the basis of its propaganda. It has never diverged from this position, either towards the point of view of Ethical Societies, that the good life is the true bond of religious fellowship, or towards that of Secularist Societies, which draws a sharp distinction between religious and secular. The interests it considers are solely the interests of the children. And, according to the best judgment of the Committee, it was in those interests that the following three resolutions were passed: (1) "That the Bible as a whole should not be placed in the children's hands as a reading book or text book of morals"; (2) "That the League recommends that no book at present be placed in the hands of the children as the basis of moral instruction"; (3) "That the Bible comes under the head of general literature, as a source of illustrations and maxims for moral lessons." These same resolutions were printed in the League's Report and accepted at the Annual Meeting, at which Secularists attended and made no protest. I repeat again that the point of view from which they should be judged is neither religious, anti-religious, nor merely political. No question of conciliating or alienating either one or another set of supporters is involved. The question is whether it is educationally just to deprive teacher and child of the use of one of the richest and most poetic of the world's collections of social and moral experience. The League has no need to consider the possible motives which certain sections of the community may have for including or for excluding this book.

ZONA VALLANCE, *Secretary, M.I.L.*

[The past tense, of which Miss Vallance complains, was quite correct, as the National Secular Society had been affiliated to the Moral Instruction League before the 1898 Conference. Moreover, it was appropriate on other grounds. With regard to the League's last annual meeting, it may be true that some Secularists were present, but none of them officially represented the N.S.S., which did not appoint any delegates for that occasion. For the rest, it must be said that the Ethicist majority on the M.I.L. Executive is really not justified in taking so low an estimate of the mental acumen of Secularists. Reading *between* the lines is often as instructive as reading *in* the lines, and those who watch tactics and debates are able to judge of the *intention* as well as the *meaning* of resolutions. The fact is, the Ethicists want to keep the Bible in the schools. Secularists do not. They know that the Bible is a religious book, and they say that the State should have nothing at all to do with religion. Whether the Bible, as an uninspired volume, is one of the richest collections of social and moral experience is at least open to discussion. Anyhow, it is no part of the object of the N.S.S. to promote the view advanced by the League's secretary on its behalf. Miss Vallance must pardon me, if she can, for saying that the last sentence of her letter is fatuous—like the general attitude of the Ethicists in this matter. They talk as though the immediate future lay in the hollow of their hands, and speak of the Christian Churches as "certain sections of the community." These Christian Churches are strong enough to control education, and they keep the Bible in the schools for the sake of manufacturing customers. It is idle to talk about their "possible motives." Their motives are well known. At least they are well known to Secularists, who decline to be hoodwinked.—G. W. FOOTE.]

The Augury.

[It has been noted, as a significant coincidence, that the first year of Secular propaganda in Brockwell Park marks the departure of the rooks.

"Who'll be the Parson?"
"I," said the Rook.]

THE old majestic elms like churches rear—
Bearing no fruit but coflins, and the nests
Of the black-coated rook, who year by year
Watches the husbandman, preys while he rests,
Levying tithes on all his labor gains;
Descends at meal-times, pillers at early morn,
Knowing on Sunday—when the parson reigns—
His day of privilege and feast doth dawn.

Ye grey old elms! Gone is the black North Wood;
None left to tell the tale but ye alone.
Gone are the rooks—all of the stealthy brood—
And none has missed them—troublous omens flown!
No more their caws will rasp the bending cloud,
Aweing the ignorant, as clerics do.
Men multiply; towns civilise—they're disendowed!
And then, perforce, they're disestablished too!

GEORGE WOODWARD.

The deepest controversy that lies before modern society is, Can the social union subsist without a belief in God?—*Rt. Hon. John Morley, M.P.*

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, Bertha Jeffries Dramatic Co. in "Engaged."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, F. A. Davies.

BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15 and 6.30, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss.

FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, Stanley Jones.

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What Must I Do to be Saved?"

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): Lectures every week evening at 8. Sunday, at 11.30, E. Pack; 3.30, Messrs. G. W. Foote, W. Heaford, C. Watts, A. B. Moss, and Harry Snell.

HAMMERSMITH (The Grove): 7.15, E. Pack.

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

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, S. E. Easton.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; 7, S. Jones. July 12, at 8, R. P. Edwards.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15 and 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

THE TRIANGLE (Salmon-lane, Limehouse): 11.30, W. Heaford. July 11, at 8, S. Jones.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, W. Heaford, "Some Fallacies of Theism."

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

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, F. A. Davies, "What has Jesus Done?" 6.30, F. A. Davies, "What would Jesus Do?"

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, H. Courtney, "Good and Bad Points of the Bible."

COUNTRY.

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row): 7, Violin Selections by Professors Elliott and Rae; 7.15, A. H. Smith, "The Church Crisis."

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): Annual Trip to Aldborough—leave Story-street at 8.30 by waggonettes.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Mr. Carter (President of the Leicester Trades Council), "A Few Glances at Growth."

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.

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

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members and friends will meet in front of Victoria Station at 1.30 prompt, in time for train that leaves at 1.45 for Retford, and thence will go by conveyances to Tuxford Hall.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—July 9, m., Station-road, Camberwell; a. and e., Brockwell Park.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 9, a., Demonstration in Hyde Park; e., Edmonton. 16, m., Clerkenwell; a., Demonstration in Regent's Park; e., Kilburn. 23, m., Mile End; a., Demonstration in Victoria Park. 30, probably Northampton.

R. P. EDWARDS, 52 Bramley-road, Notting-hill.—July 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 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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