

THE

Freethinker

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God Save France.

An English clergyman says that the Christians of this country should unite in prayer to God for the conversion of France. He does not say conversion to *what*. If he means conversion to Christianity, we beg to tell him that this process has for some years been going on, and that it is precisely the cause of all the trouble in that distracted nation. God, if there be a God, might well exert himself to save France, but he will never do it through the Christian superstition. Whenever France has been making real progress she has been governed by Freethinkers. Whenever she has fallen a victim to Reaction her affairs have been in the hands of Christians. Nothing is plainer than that the whole Dreyfus battle, apart from the sad fate of one tortured man, has been a struggle between the forces of reason and the forces of faith. On one side are the Church and the Church-inspired Army; on the other side are avowed Freethinkers and sterling Republicans. The Generals—Mercier, Gonse, Boisdeffre, Roget, and the rest of them, and even Esterhazy and Du Paty de Clam, are devout Catholics. So are the journalists, like Drumont, who wield their pens in the cause of injustice and oppression. The leaders of the other side, the side of truth, justice, and freedom, are principally Freethinkers. There are some Protestants, like Préssensé, who have fought valiantly against the hosts of darkness. But the chief honors of the war go to Freethinkers like Zola, Clémenceau, Gohier, Guyot, Mirabeau, and Picquart. It was foolishly given out that Picquart—the Bayard who sacrificed everything for an act of justice to a man he did not even know—was a Catholic. True, he was brought up as a Catholic, but he became a Freethinker. This is now admitted even by Cardinal Vaughan. An evidently well-informed correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, signing himself "Anglo-Agnostic Colonel Picquart." We gathered that Picquart was a Freethinker by the books he had read when he was thrown into prison—the works of Mill, Darwin, and Spencer. But we are glad to be assured of the fact. For we look upon Picquart as typifying what is finest in French character—a French logic; chivalrous instinct, and imperturbable courage. If ever France is involved in another death-struggle, it will be the Picquarts, not the Merciers, who will save her flag from dishonor.

"Anglo-Parisian" points out the great increase in ecclesiastical schools in France. Priestcraft is applying all its powers to the task of capturing the educational machinery. Already it controls the institutions in which the officers of the French army are trained. By getting rid of Dreyfus the clerical party got rid of the first Jew who found his way on to the General Staff. Picquart's case was partly that he was a Freethinker. All heretics were to be systematically weeded out from the higher grades of the army, and when none remained left the time would be ripe for using the sword of France against the Republic. Nor is this danger ended by the liberation of Dreyfus. Priestcraft and contempt of the whole civilised world. Indeed, the Dreyfus affair is but one incident, after all, in a great and consistent, in which the ideas of the Revolution are opposed to the ideas of Absolutism. It is the Republic against

Monarchy and Imperialism, and Freethought against Catholicism. And the opposition will continue, and produce many striking scenes in France before peace is possible.

Freethinkers were in the ascendant in Gambetta's time. The Church was kept in its place, national education was established and freed from priestly control, and the unauthorised Religious Orders, including the Jesuits, were expelled from France. They crept back, however, in spite of the law, under President Carnot; and now they are numerous, grasping, and insolent. On the eve of the Revolution there were only 40,000 monks in France; there are 200,000 to-day, and they own £400,000,000 worth of property. And what is the result of the presence of this horde of conspirators against French civilisation? Let us hear M. Gohier:—

"We see our great cities, which once were Voltarian and Radical, commanded by fanatical memorials and basilicas of the Sacred Heart. We are stupified to find that our Education is saturated with Clericalism, that the *bourgeoisie* has become clerical, while half the people have relapsed into fetish worship. They believe in miracles, in holy wells, in relics of old monks, and are ready to murder infidels and heretics in order to gain Indulgences."

M. Gohier's sad confession is that the Clericals have "acquired control of our national policy, our industrial interests, and our armed forces." And this has been done by slow and stealthy steps, by dominating the education of the higher classes, and by debauching the minds of the lower classes with the grossest superstition. Yes, it is once more the case, as it was when Gambetta led that splendid fight against Reaction, that Clericalism is the Enemy. The triumph of Clericalism is the real secret of the present trouble. Zola saw this clearly and stated it plainly in his first open letter "To France." "Some," he said, "have the effrontery to deny this clerical reaction; but it is everywhere, it is patent in politics, in art, in the press, and in the street." Zola added that the Clerical policy was obvious to anyone gifted with common sagacity. The Church had done its utmost to capture the masses by attractive services, by multiplying Catholic workmen's associations, and by organising great pilgrimages. Still, it was admitted that faith was languishing. What was to be done then? Would it not be a beginning of faith to inoculate the French people with the poison of religious bigotry? Make them shout "Down with the Jews!" "Death to the Jews!" and they might go on to cry "Death to the Protestants." Zola ended with the sarcasm that, when the French people were drunk with injected bigotry, the Church would easily triumph, for "doubtless God would do the rest."

English Christians need not, therefore, pray for the conversion of France. We repeat that the process has been going on too rapidly. France is becoming too Christian. She has been swept by a great wave of reaction; and every other form of reaction—political, social, philosophical, or artistic—originates in religious reaction. Religion is utterly powerless now, whatever it may have been in the past, to promote human progress. It is only powerful to hinder, retard, and throw back. Everywhere it is the real enemy of civilisation; and, where it cannot work with effect in the open, it works more disastrously in secret. What is wanted, then, is not the conversion of France, but the de-conversion of France. She is suffering from a very bad attack of Christianity, and more Christianity would only aggravate her complaint.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Triumph of Science.

AMONG the many eloquent and pertinent tributes given by the late Colonel Ingersoll, the one to science is of special interest to us. In his unique style, he said:—

"Science, thou art the great magician! Thou alone performest the true miracles. Thou alone workest the real wonders. Fire is thy servant, lightning is thy messenger. The waves obey thee, and thou knowest the circuits of the mind. Thou gavest man the plough, the reaper, and the loom—thou hast fed and clothed the world! Thou art the great physician! Thy touch hath given sight. Thou hast made the lame to leap, the dumb to speak, and in the pallid cheek thy hand hath set the rose of health. 'Thou hast given thy beloved sleep'—a sleep that wraps in happy dreams the throbbing nerves of pain. Thou art the perpetual providence of man. There is this difference between science and theology—science is modest and merciful, while theology is arrogant and cruel. The hope of science is the perfection of the human race. The hope of theology is the salvation of a few, and the damnation of almost everybody."

These are not mere idle words; they echo great and important truths. On reading them we are reminded of the potency of those natural forces upon which Secularists rely to achieve human progress. With them, as it has been frequently stated, science is the providence of man. It is, therefore, to us a supreme pleasure to note that, at the recent meeting of the British Association at Dover, Sir Michael Foster, the newly-elected President, spoke so firmly and hopefully of the many triumphs of science during the present century. He pointed out with great lucidity that many scientific truths which, a hundred years ago, were hardly recognised, except by a very few inquiring minds, are now understood and appreciated; and, further, they enter "largely into the every-day talk and thoughts of educated people." Having indicated the rapid advancement made, within the period named, in chemistry, biology, and other sciences, he referred as follows to the progress of geology:—

"In 1799 the science of geology, as we now know it, was struggling into birth. There had been from of old cosmogonies, theories as to how the world had taken shape out of primeval chaos. In that fresh spirit which marked the zealous search after natural knowledge pursued in the middle and latter part of the seventeenth century, the brilliant Stenson in Italy, and Hooke in our own country, had laid hold of some of the problems presented by fossil remains; and Woodward, with others, had labored in the same field. In the eighteenth century, especially in its latter half, men's minds were busy about the physical agencies determining or modifying the features of the earth's crust; water and fire, subsidence from a primeval ocean, and transformation by outbursts of the central heat, Neptune and Pluto, were being appealed to, by Werner on the one hand, and by Desmarest on the other, in explanation of the earth's phenomena. The way was being prepared, theories and views were abundant, and many sound observations had been made; and yet the science of geology, properly so-called, the exact and proved knowledge of the successive phases of the world's life, may be said to date from the closing years of the eighteenth century. In 1783 James Hutton put forward in a brief memoir his *Theory of the Earth*, which, in 1795, two years before his death, he expanded into a book; but his ideas failed to lay hold of men's minds until the century had passed away, when, in 1802, they found an able expositor in John Playfair. The very same year that Hutton published his theory Cuvier came to Paris, and almost forthwith began, with Brongniart, his immortal researches into the fossils of Paris and its neighborhood. And four years later, in the year 1799 itself, William Smith's tabular list of strata and fossils saw the light. It is, I believe, not too much to say that out of these geology, as we now know it, sprang. It was thus in the closing years of the eighteenth century that was begun the work which the nineteenth century has carried forward to such great results. But at that time only the select few had grasped the truth, and even they only the beginning of it. Outside a narrow circle the thoughts, even of the educated, about the history of the globe were bounded by the story of the Deluge—though the story was often told in a strange fashion, or were guided by fantastic views of the plastic forces of a sportive nature."

These, with many other facts, were set forth—not, be it remembered, by any Christian organisation, but by members of a scientific Association, who, ignoring all theological considerations, show to the world that

"not only has natural knowledge been increased, but men have run to and fro, spreading the truth as they go." This is full of interest to those who take a Secular view of the progress and possible future of civilised life among mankind. It shows the strength of mind resulting from the adoption of a scientific method of inquiry, in contrast with one resting upon what Sir Michael terms "the shifting sands of opinions and fancies of the day." It is certainly remarkable that most of the discoveries in science have borne fruit only between the years 1799 and 1899. Before the first-named date there was no lack of Christian profession, but the mighty forces which are now utilised by man lay hidden in Nature, which he was either practically unacquainted with or had no desire to investigate. What did Christianity do for the material benefit of the people during these many unproductive ages? From a scientific standpoint, really nothing. Theological agencies abounded; they were the giants which men feared, and which the priests declared to be sacred, and deserving of absolute belief and reverence. Let those who boast of the achievements of Christianity give proof, if they can, of what it has done for the progress of science. We urge, and are prepared to demonstrate the fact, that the alleged followers of Christ have been the most persistent opponents of all scientific truth. The British Association, in its nearly seventy years of existence (it originated in 1831), has proved itself the true savior of man. In that brief period it has striven, and that successfully, to accomplish for human happiness what Christianity has not even attempted to do in eighteen hundred years. On the contrary, it has used its power to crush the efforts of those pioneers of scientific progress to whom we are indebted for the knowledge we possess of those natural laws upon which obedience to which health and national prosperity depend.

One of the most useful points in Sir Michael Foster's address is that wherein he shows that the advantages of science are not confined to any one aspect of existence; but, if properly applied, its influence for good can be felt in every department of life. Science has its moral as well as its physical force. Its potency is as beneficial in regulating personal conduct as it is serviceable in aiding the solutions of the general problems that confront us. Sir Michael observes:—

"If there be any truth in what I have been urging, the pursuit of scientific inquiry is itself a training of special potency, giving strength to the feeble and keeping in the path those who are inclined to stray, it is obvious that the material gains of science, great as they may be, do not make up all the good which science brings, or may bring, to man. We especially, perhaps, in these later days, through the rapid development of the physical sciences, are too apt to dwell on the material gains alone. Man does not live by bread alone, and science brings him more than bread. It is a great thing to make two blades of grass grow where before one alone grew; but it is no less great a thing to help a man to come to a just conclusion on the questions with which he has to deal. We may claim for science that, while she is doing the work she may be so used as to do the other also. The distinction that science is organised common sense may be read in meaning that the common problems of life, which common people have to solve, are to be solved by the same methods by which the man of science solves his special problems. It follows that the training which does so much for him may be looked to as promising to do much for them."

With this we entirely agree, for the man who addresses the scientific method in his private life, in his business, and in his general studies, is far more likely to be successful than if he acted without judicious thought and careful discrimination.

The future of science is as promising as its progress in the present century has been remarkable. True, some persons, judging from the past, and contemplating the indifference manifested towards scientific subjects by a section of the community at the present time, are inclined to despair, and to imagine that the future of science will not be the proud conqueror that many of us believe. The President of the British Association, evidently has no such gloomy forebodings, for, referring to the coming status of science, he remarks:—"If she which she has done is but the earnest of that which she shall do, such men may pluck up courage and gather strength by laying hold of her garment. We mean of

science, at least, need not share their views or their fears. Our feet are set, not on the shifting sands of the opinions and of the fancies of the day, but on a solid foundation of verified truth, which, by the labors of each succeeding age, is made broader and more firm. To us the past is a thing to look back upon, not with regret, not as something which has been lost never to be regained, but with content, as something whose influence is with us still, helping us on our further way. With us, indeed, the past points, not to itself, but to the future; the Golden Age is in front of us, not behind us; that which we do know is a lamp whose brightest beams are shed into the unknown before us, showing us how much there is in front, and lighting up the way to reach it."

We strongly advise our readers to carefully study the report of the late proceedings of the British Association, and particularly the addresses of the President and Sir Archibald Geikie, which appeared in the *Times*, the *Standard*, and the *Daily News* of September 14 and 18. It will be interesting to read what orthodox writers have to say in reply to the facts there given, which deal a severe blow to their faith. Science was shown to be the true providence of man, and that during the ages of faith it was entirely ignored. The one supreme requirement insisted upon was the brotherhood of science and the elevation of knowledge. Sir Archibald Geikie thoroughly destroyed the value of the Bible account of the creation by stating that, according to the teachings of science, one hundred millions of years were required for the history which is registered in the stratified crust of the earth.

Thus we see, as time rolls on, that knowledge is acquired, and that the discovered facts of the present explode the superstition of the past. We hope that men and women will resolve, and put their resolutions into force, to inquire and investigate in a scientific spirit. To form an unbiassed judgment, and to act only on verified truth, is the province of reason, and the true method for all who desire to obtain the highest possible satisfaction obtainable by rational beings.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Church Congress.

This immensely important annual event in connection with the Church "as by law established" is close upon us.

Still, the metropolis, in which this year it will take place, moves steadily on in its accustomed course. Apart from preliminary announcements, relegated by most of the newspapers to the columns of minor intelligence, there are no present indications that London is deeply or extensively concerned. Dreyfus and the Transvaal have occupied its attention, and afforded some material for the Congress to discourse upon in defence of the idea of a Personal Moral Governor of the universe.

But in regard to the approaching assembly of State Church representatives the attitude of the Great City has been so far one of supreme indifference. Whether the metropolis will wake up to the importance of the occasion a little later on remains to be seen. Elaborate arrangements have been made for a large attendance from the provinces, and we have been informed from time to time in little news "pars." of the thousands of tickets for admission to the Albert Hall that have been applied for and issued. Whatever the number, we may be quite sure that neither the Archbishop of Canterbury nor the Bishop of London, backed up by a whole army of Church dignitaries, will be able to draw such a crowded and delighted audience as that which has in the same hall listened in rapture to Patti. Nor is the attendance likely to equal that which was drawn at Olympia at a similar period by Barnum and Bailey's Show, or may be at any time be commanded by a Championship Football Match.

Already it is beginning to be felt in Church circles that the Congress is likely to be "lost in London." Whether, in previous years, it has met in a provincial city, it has risen to the dignity of a notable event; in London, with its multitudinous interests, it will sink to a mere incident. The crowds of white-chokered visitors, who, with their following of wives, sisters, cousins, and aunts,

set a country centre agog, will be swallowed in the great maw of the metropolis. The attendants at the forthcoming Congress may certainly come and go with the assurance, if it is any comfort to them, that multitudes of London people will not have been aware, nor have cared to be informed, that any such Congress has been held in their midst.

And why should there be any exceptional interest manifested in reference to such a gathering? It will be organised and held by a Church which calls itself the "Church of England," but has no real and defensible claim to the title, whatever the law, in its absurdity, may allow. Obviously the Church of England is a wider association than is represented by the sections denominated High, Low, and Broad. The arrogant assumption that these, and these alone, constitute the Church of England is an insult to the Nonconformist bodies, who ought long ago to have resented it by disestablishment and disendowment. Why they are so impotent and inert is one of the mysteries of the century. The feeble attempts at rectification hitherto made in England and Wales are contemptible in the extreme, especially when there is taken into view the large and ever-increasing force of Rationalist opinion, which is ready to support any well-devised and well-timed attack.

For the present, we must put up with the so-called "Church of England," which is only a Church *in* England, and London will have to endure or to ignore all the parsonic verbosity and ineffable humbug of the Church Congress meetings. The programme has been issued, and a glance is sufficient to show that, in the main, it has been framed on the old familiar lines. There will be the usual papers read and speeches made on well-worn subjects, introduced under slightly altered and modernised titles. There will be the usual attempts to deal with forms of scepticism by speakers who may be expected to display the usual want of acquaintance with their subject, and to indulge in the usual valorous, though vain, fighting of the air. There will be a few social topics introduced, but probably, as on previous occasions, simply as pegs for doctrinal discourses. There will be the usual opportunity presented or created for a battle royal between the Ritualist and Protestant factions, when all other sections of the Congress will be immediately deserted for the sweet relish of internecine war. And there will be open meetings, at which the humbler classes will be plainly told of their manifold sins, and warned of the consequences of irregular attendance at church, and of a want of proper respect towards their betters. All this we may safely predict from the subjects set down, the names of the speakers, and the invariable experience of former Congresses.

One new feature, or rather a development of a previously exhibited tendency, is an endeavor to conciliate and muzzle Nonconformists. We do sincerely hope that this effort will prove a conspicuous failure. We desire it for the sake of Dissenters themselves, who ought to be keen-sighted enough to perceive the object, and spirited enough to decline the invitation to surrender even a particle of their independence. The Dean of Canterbury is announced to introduce at one of the sectional meetings the subject of "The Possibilities of a Better Understanding between the Church and Nonconformity in the Future." What are the possibilities thus delicately indicated? There is the possibility on the side of Dissent that, for the sake of the common Christianity, it may give up some part of that to which it owes its existence and present vitality; that it may soften its antagonism to State ecclesiasticism, and look with more lenient eyes on sacerdotal usurpation and injustice. There is, however, not the least possibility that the Church will make any sacrifice in return beyond a mere formal extension of the hand of fellowship—a condescension there is every reason to regard with suspicion. If the Dean of Canterbury were to express a willingness on the part of the Church to abandon its present false and indefensible position, to place itself by disestablishment and disendowment on a platform of equality with Nonconformity, there might be grounds for believing in his sincerity. But, of course, that is far from any intention he is likely to entertain. The move towards Nonconformity is to strengthen that position by hoodwinking and disarming the enemy. Some Nonconformists, it is regrettable to observe, have

been so far cajoled that they propose to hold, outside the Congress meetings proper, a series of united meetings of Churchmen and Nonconformists. At one of these the Bishop of Hereford is announced to preside, and the subject to be discussed is "The Divisions of English Christianity."

That is a very interesting topic, and, if fully dealt with, might absorb a whole week. One point that specially requires consideration is how, in the face of these divisions, can it be pretended that Christianity is of divine origin? What can be thought of a deity who should throw such an apple of discord amongst his creatures, and, in pretending to reveal his will, do so in such a way that a thousand and one sects spring up, all interpreting it differently, and with no possibility of ever arriving at an agreement? If the Bishop of Hereford and the other speakers at the united meetings will address themselves to that point, they will be employing their time on a more important subject than many that are set down in the Congress programme. And they may be recommended beforehand not to found an explanation on analogous results in the case of human systems and theories, but to remember that the origin of Christianity is alleged to be divine. FRANCIS NEALE.

Christianity's Future.

IN relation to unbelief, the Christian world alternates between two mutually destructive positions. One moment the cry is that scepticism is so strong that it will require all the energies of the faithful to protect the Church; the next that unbelief is so generally discredited that it may be fitly passed over in contemptuous silence. When the appeal for funds is being made, the magnitude of the forces that have to be met is the theme dwelt on; when once the funds are forthcoming, and the Christian paladin meets the champions of unbelief, there is an equally emphatic assertion that Freethought is but a bubble needing only a pin's prick to dissipate it into thin air.

An illustration of the first attitude is to be found in an article in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, by the Rev. Dr. Percival, presbyter of the diocese of Pennsylvania, U.S.A., on "The Future of the Christian Religion." Christian as he is, Dr. Percival can find little comfort in the present position of religious affairs. Like the famous essay on snakes in Ireland, his practical answer to the question of the future of Christianity is of a strongly negative character; and, after taking "a careful view of the state of Christianity, three things seem to be absolutely certain:— 1. That among civilised nations the form of Christianity nourished by Rome, which is ordinarily called 'Popery,' is making no headway. 2. That the distinctive doctrines of every Protestant reformer are being more and more universally rejected. 3. That there is in all Protestant Christendom (the Anglican Church being, perhaps improperly, included in that category) a distinct movement towards Catholicism, and a most evident desire for ceremonialism."

The first proposition does not seem to me to be nearly so certain as Dr. Percival assumes. Of course, in relation to Freethought, Roman Catholicism does not, and cannot, make headway. If Rome does not secure a man before he becomes a Freethinker, there is small chance of her doing so afterwards. But, in relation to the remainder of the Christian world, Rome does appear to be making some headway. Figures are difficult to get upon the subject, and Church attendances supply only a rough method of calculation; but, in default of a better, one may fall back upon this as supplying some sort of a guide.

Some time ago the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* compiled a return of the people in church in Newcastle and Gateshead on particular Sundays in 1851, 1881, and 1896. The figures were highly instructive. In the first place, it was found that the church attendance in Newcastle, which had formed twenty-one per cent. of the population in 1851, had in 1896 dropped to thirteen per cent., while in Gateshead the percentage had fallen from thirteen to seven. All the dissenting Churches showed a marked decrease in attendance, but the main

interest lay in the following figures. In 1881 the figures for Gateshead and Newcastle were: Protestant bodies, 18,434; Catholics, 3,845. In 1896 the figures were: Protestants, 18,134; Catholics, 9,400. So that, while the Catholics showed an increase of 5,555, the Protestants showed a decrease in the same period of 300, to say nothing of the increase of population during the fifteen years, which would make the relative decrease much heavier.

I do not pretend that figures compiled in this manner can lay claim to mathematical accuracy; but, taking them in conjunction with numerous other circumstances, there seems only one conclusion to be drawn from them, and that is the absolute powerlessness of Protestantism to check the advance of the Roman Church.

But I am not so much concerned with disproving Dr. Percival's first proposition as I am with emphasising the consideration, that as there is a universal lament from the Churches as to the large number of "backsliders," and as not even the Roman Catholic Church is keeping pace with the growth of population, there must be, year after year, large accessions to the ranks of unbelief; and this, while impressing upon us the need for better organisation on our part, is quite sufficient to justify the writer's pessimistic tone. From our point of view, it is cheerful to read that in France, Belgium, Italy, and Spain "the vast number of men in each of these countries who are not only not practising Catholics, but who are entirely hostile to Christianity in any form, is positively appalling." One can only hope that this "positively appalling" situation is not exaggerated, and that the recent exposure of Church tactics in France may bring more people to the same frame of mind.

Nor does the rev. gentleman find the outlook more hopeful in Protestant countries. "Where," he asks dolefully, "are those who believe, as Luther taught it, that doctrine of imputed righteousness which he called 'justification by faith alone'? The doctrine is extinct. What person, calling himself a follower of Luther, would dream of advising a penitent to sin all the more in the name of Christ, because 'where sin abounded there did grace much more abound'? Who to-day believes the doctrines of Calvin on reprobation, etc.? All that remains of Puritanism is a 'pale, emasculated, swiftly-dying Sabbatarianism'..... Who to-day holds fast by the Westminster Confession, or by the Anglican Confession, or by the Book of Concord? Who but a handful among old-fashioned Tractarians considers himself bound to accept the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England?..... It is not too much to say, then, that Protestantism, as a system of positive religion, is dying out, and that its professors are for the most part able to continue in its ministry only through some device of casuistry, which in any other matter would be considered by themselves, as it is in their case by almost everyone except themselves, dishonest and dishonorable."

With the last clause large numbers of people, who are not clergymen, will agree. One can hardly use too strong language concerning the spectacle of an army of men who set themselves up as the nation's moral guides, and, at the same time, lend their best energies to either checking the process of inquiry in religious matters, or placing upon a number of ancient writings an interpretation clearly at variance with their plainest meaning. Nor can one regard with equanimity the picture of the clergy of Great Britain impressing upon children, through the medium of public schools, views of religion that a large number of them in both pulpit and publications denounce as unsound, and even immoral.

But the evil is really much deeper than Dr. Percival imagines. Not only is there a growing feeling of dissatisfaction with the organised forms of Christianity, but there is a growing dislike to the very ideas upon which Christianity is based. After all, there is much wisdom in the old Rabbinical formula, that when men break down the fence surrounding the law they will ere long attack the law itself. The decay of any institution does not commence from the outside, but from within; and it is a fair assumption that, if the world is losing respect for the forms of Christianity, it is because it perceives the falsity of the ideas upon which such forms are based.

Any honest form of Christianity must embrace, at least, four points. First, a belief in the sacred and trustworthy character of the Bible; secondly, the existence of God; third, the divinity and atonement of Jesus; and, fourth, a future state of rewards and punishments. And how does the world—even the religious portion of it—stand to-day in relation to these beliefs? So far as the Bible is concerned, its character as an authority on either history, science, or ethics is almost entirely gone. No one dreams nowadays of quoting it as an authority upon any subject under the sun—no one, that is, who has any reputation for either sanity or scholarship. It is, indeed, almost laughable to see the manner in which prominent clerics like Farrar, or Driver, or Davidson, or Cheyne, tear to pieces the book upon which they profess to stand, and who even then are only giving the British public teachings that in Germany are a quarter of a century old.

And the clergy are almost equally chary of dwelling upon the divinity of Jesus. It is not Jesus the God incarnate that is preached from the majority of pulpits, but Jesus the social reformer—a kind of glorified Keir Hardie born out of due time. Comparative mythology has gone far towards knocking the bottom out of such ideas as virgin births, crucified saviors, or atoning blood, just as the process of social development is banishing hell from the minds of civilised people, and thus removing the only reason for the existence of heaven.

Of the whole set of ideas upon which Christianity is built, the belief in God is the only one that still has any attraction for the modern mind. And even here there is a visible weakening. The study of the psychology and sociology of savage life gives us the clue to the origin of the belief in God, as it does to the origin of other religious doctrines. In the dream-world of primitive man, and in the state of original ignorance that gave to each agent in the universe life and intelligence, we can see growing up the fear-fashioned gods that have weighed so heavily upon the human race. The world no longer stands in worshipping awe before the idea of God. Instead, it examines it, discovers its history, analyses its constitution, and in the end places it in its appropriate niche in that temple of psychological fossils erected by the science of comparative mythology.

Of course, Christianity may still carry on a parasitic existence long after its intellectual life has departed. A creed that represents in itself a powerful vested interest, and which also stands as the bulwark of other vested interests, does not usually die in a hurry. Position, wealth, are powerful arguments to many minds, at whose portals reason knocks in vain for admittance. Religions die slowly, but still they die; and in the apologetic processes at work to-day one discerns the dying struggles of a creed that seeks to perpetuate its existence by the same species of dishonesty that has characterised its whole career.

C. COHEN.

Acid Drops.

The rowdyism in Trafalgar-square last Sunday would probably have culminated in murder had it not been for the restraining influence of hundreds of policemen. The speakers were pelted not only with apples, pears, and tomatoes, but also with open pocket-knives. This is an ugly new feature of English political meetings. We have had lists before, but we never expected to have knives. One of these missiles was eight inches long. It whizzed past the head of one of the speakers. Two inches nearer, it might have caused a very nasty wound. Let us hope that, as this is the first, so it will be the last. Mr. Hyndman and the rest of the speakers may have their freedom to be heard. It is sad to see men waving the Union Jack and acting like wild beasts, and fancying all the time that they are upholding the honor of England. On the other hand, we must say that it was an extremely ill-advised proceeding to burn a certain evening paper on one of the platforms. Such a proceeding was an obvious provocation, and a very foolish one, especially when feeling was running so high.

Interfering with other people's meetings is a form of sport which is not at all popular in America, and the fact is very noticeable to the Americans. However fierce party passion

may be, the different sides respect each other's right of public assembly. Political partisans demonstrate round their own platform, not round the platform of their opponents. And this is as it should be. For the life of us, we never could understand why a sane man should go and howl at an opposition meeting, instead of going to cheer at a meeting of his own party.

"Three Cheers for God," cried a hostile auditor when Mr. Hyndman rose to speak. We presume he was not cheering the speaker, but the Deity. It must be very gratifying to the Almighty to know he has that man's applause. We have heard a Christian Evidence speaker call for "Three Cheers for Jesus Christ," though the invitation fell flat; but "Three Cheers for God" takes the cake. There is a certain genius, so to speak, in religious imbecility; or, perhaps, we should say that there is a certain distinction in being the greatest fool in the company.

"Captain Dreyfus," says M. Huret of the *Figaro*, "told us of his five years' Calvary in striking words; it was so frightful that I shall not attempt to repeat what he said." The story of that unhappy man's sufferings appears to have been told but partially. The rest of it is even too much for the nerves of a professional journalist. Well, if what is held back is worse than what has been disclosed, language would have to invent a new word for its infamy. And only to think that this poor, helpless (and, as we all know now, innocent) prisoner was tortured day after day, month after month, and year after year, by men who profess and call themselves Christians; men who take the name of God, and the name of Christ, freely upon their lips, and spit scorn at Jews and heretics!

La Croix (The Cross) is a French Roman Catholic organ, owned by the Fathers of the Assumption. All through the later stages of the Dreyfus affair it pursued that victim of injustice with terrible and reckless malignity, sticking at nothing in the way of falsehood and abuse. Since the liberation of Dreyfus it has actually come out with another bouncing lie that caps all its predecessors. It declares that the friends of Dreyfus are afraid to take any further action because they are threatened with the production of a photograph of the *original bordereau*, upon which was an annotation in Emperor William's own handwriting, signed "Wilhelm," and mentioning "cette canaille de Dreyfus." The secret dossier is known to contain a number of forgeries pretending to be letters between Dreyfus and the Emperor. That they are forgeries goes without saying, and all respectable Frenchmen are ashamed of them. But the *Croix* is ashamed of nothing; indeed, it hardly knows the difference between falsehood and truth.

The London correspondent of *La Croix* has been trying to make out that it is a perfectly reputable journal, characterised by the best of good manners, and quite incapable of stooping to meanness and falsehood. By way of reply to him, a correspondent of the *Times* quotes a passage from a London letter which appeared in *La Croix* on September 8. Referring to the "Dreyfus syndicate" bogie, this letter said: "It is not the English press, at any rate, that has the right to deny its existence, for the greater part of its organs were bought by the syndicate before those of the continent." Such is the malicious nonsense with which French Catholics are stuffed! No explanation is offered as to how the friends of Dreyfus obtained the colossal fund to purchase nearly all the journals in the civilised world.

Who are the gentlemen that advertise themselves as a Committee to arrange for a dinner at the Hotel Cecil in honor of the liberation of Captain Dreyfus? One reads their announcements, but does not see their names. One wonders, therefore, whether they are irresponsible busybodies or really representative persons. The function itself seems to us rather odd. There might as well have been a public dinner to celebrate the Resurrection.

Dr. Grieg, the famous Norwegian composer, would have gone to Paris to superintend the production of some of his music, but the Dreyfus affair has so alienated him from France that he will not go. Writing to M. Colonne, who invited him to come to Paris during the winter, he says: "While thanking you a thousand times for your offer, I feel obliged, to my great regret, to tell you that I cannot possibly just now set foot in France on account of the Dreyfus affair. Like all foreigners, I am too shocked to see how in your country justice is trodden down to feel willing to appear before a French public." This feeling on Dr. Grieg's part is quite natural, but we hope he will think better of his resolution. There are a great many worthy people still left in France, and even in Paris; and they ought not to be boycotted because France also (like other countries) contains a lot of scoundrels.

Dr. Matheçon is engaged on a new book entitled *Portraits*

of *Christ*. Dr. Matheson is blind. But that doesn't matter. A blind man can write fiction as well as a man with two good eyes.

The Catholic Church boasts of many historic saints, a lot of whom never lived at all except in the world of imagination. Most of them were dirty and verminous degenerates; and a few were decent persons who fell into bad company. All of them were more or less miraculous, but perhaps the *most* miraculous was St. John Joseph of the Cross, who was canonised on May 26, 1839. According to an account of this saint, and others canonised at the same time, written by Cardinal Wiseman, and published in 1846, holy John Joseph was a remarkably abstinent gentleman. "For the last thirty years of his life," we are told, "he entirely overcame the most insatiable of wants, thirst, absolutely abstaining not merely from wine and water, but from every liquid whatsoever." What a magnificent lie! St. John Joseph beats Jesus Christ hollow. Forty days' fasting from solid food has been excelled in our own time by Succi. It is nothing to going without liquids for thirty years. The wonder is that the old fellow ever died at all.

Let us offer our heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Humphry Ward. Her well-meant endeavor to unite the Churches on a Unitarian basis has met with general disapproval. A theological raiment of fig-leaf dimensions was bound to prove unsatisfactory to the religious Mrs. Grundy. The clothing is too diaphanous. The *Family Churchman* is shocked. It scolds the proposal as preposterous. And the general conclusion seems to be that the Churches prefer to stick to their old clo', rotten and ragged as they may be.

Canon Fleming wants £50,000 for the York Cathedral Fabric Fund. There has already been collected £13,000. "It seems a large sum to ask," observes a religious journal, reflectively, "but then who would like to see these dear old buildings fall into ruin?" Certainly not Freethinkers. By all means, let them stand. It is not the edifices, but the teachings therein, that we hope in time to demolish. Many cathedrals have in themselves an interest and beauty which are sadly lacking in the uses to which the structures are at present devoted.

Now we know why there has been a certain feeling of "goneness," a sort of sinking in the metropolitan stomach. Dr. Parker has been away for two months. Happily he has now returned, and we shall be no longer without spiritual vitality and excitation. He has been discoursing on "man's insignificance," which is very modest of him, when he must have known how much he has been missed. "Man," he says, "talks loftily of the inferior animals, but he cannot soar like the eagle." True; but he can get up a great deal higher in a balloon, and some day, if he attends the City Temple regularly, and does everything Dr. Parker tells him, he may even rise up into heaven.

The great autumnal gathering of the Pentecostal League has been arranged for November 10. It has been fixed for that day, says Reader Harris, to accommodate people who come up by trips for the Lord Mayor's Show. Folks who can survive the one event can surely stand the other. If Reader Harris were half a showman, he would try and work the Pentecostal League into the procession, say in the shape of a symbolic car of "The Tongues of Fire."

The Society of Friends, who recently held a meeting in Birmingham, have come under the censure of a writer in the *Christian*. He complains that there was a disposition on the part of some of the leading speakers to reject or explain away certain Biblical statements. One of the speakers suggested that the command to baptise in Matthew xxviii. 19 was "probably not genuine." Another speaker suggested that 1 Corinthians xi. 23-24 was a mistake, being probably only a "fancy derived from a dream."

Further, we learn that the learned Professor Rendel Harris said there were two opposite sets of people, one of which held that there were only four gospels of the Bible, and the other that the four were only a survival of an almost infinite number which had been written. The reasonable critic would, he thought, be found "between these two extremes." The correspondent of the *Christian* may well feel disturbed. To reject portions of the received gospels must be had enough in the orthodox view, but to bring in one or more of the apocryphal gospels must be terrible indeed.

Tickets for paradise, says the *Commercial Intelligence*, have been recently sold by a swindler to rural Cossacks, who are very religious and very simple. Several of these tickets which were marked "first row" sold at twenty-five roubles, back seats fetching considerably less. There is nothing so very

extraordinary in this, after all. The whole Christian Church, especially the Romish section, is engaged in much the same kind of trade or imposition, though not quite in so barefaced a fashion.

Lord George Hamilton, replying to a complaint that insufficient facilities for worship are provided for Presbyterians in India, says that Episcopalians constitute some sixty-eight per cent. of the British soldiers stationed in India, whilst the Presbyterians only amount to eight per cent. That, however, is hardly a fair statement. There may be sixty-eight per cent. of *nominal* Episcopalians, but, as Lord George very well knows, every soldier who has no special leaning to any particular Church—and these constitute a large proportion of the recruits—is at once put down as of the Church of England. In this way the Established Church may make a show of military adherents, but it is only an empty display.

People who are influenced by the example of royalty will be interested in learning from the *Whitchell Review* that the lawn tennis court at Balmoral is generally used on Sunday mornings after church by members of the house party staying with the Queen. The Queen feels that her guests' duty is performed if they attend Divine service on Sundays. She draws the line at cards, though the Duchess of York is very fond of a game of cribbage on Sundays as well as on weekdays. Music is not forbidden on the Sabbath in any of the Queen's palaces. It is in the people's palaces that it must be put down.

The watchful care of the Lord over earthly affairs, and his own tabernacles, has found another exemplification. The Church of San Francisco at Lima, which was founded by Pizarro in 1536, has been completely destroyed by fire.

"Providence" in Russian Poland. A lamp upset in a synagogue caused a panic, and thirty-two women and children were crushed to death.

More Providence! A hurricane swept Bermuda, the damage being estimated at £500,000. Disastrous floods have occurred in Germany and Austria. A bridge and ten persons were carried away. Meanwhile sparrows are being carefully noted in their fall.

The troubles of plague and famine in India are now satisfactorily accounted for. A correspondent of the *Record* says they are due to Ritualism! Under the heading of "Ritualism in India," he writes: "It is within the power of the Government of India by a mere stroke of the pen to rid the land of this plague [Ritualism]. Yet it stirs not a finger. So God sends the pestilence and famine to trouble it. When the judgments of God are in the land, then will people begin to seek for causes. Will not someone in authority intervene to put an end to the present state of things ere God sends more judgment?"

The *Church Gazette* quotes this piece of pious imbecility and observes: "We entirely object, as we hoped the *Record* would, to this practice of attributing definite judgments to special causes, involving an interference with the order of nature, and amounting to nothing short of the miraculous."

"We are shocked beyond expression," says the *Methodist Times*, "at this fearful revelation." What is the terrible disclosure? Nothing more than that someone signing himself "Evangelist" has written to the *Methodist Times* complaining that certain of the prescribed lessons read during service from the Old Testament are neither comforting, edifying, inspiring, nor any aid whatever to spiritual worship.

Says the *Methodist Times*: "The most reckless Atheist agitator in Hyde Park never said anything more impertinent or more blasphemous about the Word of God." Well, if that be the case, the "reckless Atheist agitator" has very little to answer for. He and this "Evangelist" and every decent-minded person must agree that to publicly read meaningless portions of the Old Testament is little short of an outrage which none but filthy sky-pilots would be guilty.

In a recently published work, Mr. A. Taylor Innes has undertaken to describe the legal aspects of the trial of Christ. But, says the *Literary World*, "it is not a completely satisfying, and consistent account of what took place during that most mournful night and day of the world's history. Why? Let the *Literary World* answer. "Because the materials do not exist, and, therefore, neither Mr. Taylor Innes nor anyone else could give it to us." Truly a curious state of things in regard to the great event upon which the salvation of the whole of mankind is said to rest. Now, therefore, we place on record full information about all notable culprits who are condemned, even to the detail of what they have done.

breakfast. The gospels are a long way behind modern newspapers.

Rashly importunate for the joys of heaven, the sexton of the parish church of Eastington, East Durham, has hanged himself in the church steeple. Two youthful choristers of a Bristol church will for five years sing to the praise and glory of God in a reformatory. Their fall from grace took the form of burglary. It is still open to them to make one other attempt. They may try to "crack" the mansions in the skies.

A rector's only son committed suicide near Basingstoke. The rector and his wife recently lost their only daughter. At Kingston a man got out of bed in the night, offered prayer in the presence of his wife, sang two hymns, and then jumped through the window, death being instantaneous.

"Hoping to meet you in heaven," said George Watkins in a letter to his employer, shortly before committing suicide by throwing himself under a train on the London District Railway. We presume his employer is in no hurry for the meeting.

More "Providence." Mary Ann Davis, of 9 Gascony-avenue, Kilburn, was found dead at her bedside. She was in her nightdress, and kneeling in the act of prayer.

The *East Anglican Daily Times* tells the following story of the early scruples of Lord Aberdeen. One day, whilst a scholar at a private school in Surrey, he came to one of the masters, and asked whether it was really right for him to do as the other boys did, and oil his cricket bat on Sunday. "I should think so," replied the master appealed to; "but have you not asked Mr. —, your form master?" "Oh, I've asked him," replied the young Gordon, with tears of anxiety in his eyes, "and he says it is all right if one does it in a reverent and humble spirit."

The Rev. H. G. Rosedale, in a recently-published sermon, indulged in the following senseless diatribe: "The sceptic, David Hume, predicted that the religion of Christ would soon cease. Voltaire sneered at the Cross, etc. The vulgar Tom Paine wrote his *Age of Reason* to demolish the stronghold of our faith. Theodore Parker said he would go through New England and tear up Christianity by the roots. But where are Hume, Voltaire, Tom Paine, and Parker? Many years already in their graves. And where is the simple faith they thought to strike down at a blow?"

This mad-headed cleric has now been taken to task by Mr. W. E. Mellone, of Warrenpoint, Ireland, who, in a temperately written letter in the *Church Gazette*, deals with the above indiscriminate classification and the absurd question that is asked. In regard to Hume, he observes that that philosopher, as Mr. Rosedale reminds us, is dead; "but who will say that Agnosticism is dead? Might not an anti-Christian lecturer say: 'Where are Reid and other opponents of Hume? Many years in their graves, but the simple nescience they thought to strike down is everywhere spreading and growing and working.'"

Lord Lorne, in his address to the Health Congress, inquired what was the science which made the Egyptian priests declare that three out of the wonders shown to them as miracles by Moses were nothing new, but things that they themselves could do. There may, as he suggests, be lost secrets of Egyptian magic; but before speculating on the inferences to be drawn from the spiritual account it is necessary to be assured that the story is true. Anyway, the ready admission that the Egyptian priests could do so much very largely discredits the "marvels of the leader chosen of God for his people."

The funeral of General Brault on Monday was made the occasion of another demonstration "in honor" of the Army. Saint Clement's Church was filled with military men, and the service outside was prodigious. Short speeches were made by Gallifet, the War Minister, said: "Gentlemen, Brault was my companion in arms; he was often my fellow-worker; he was always my friend. God has taken from us this good man, who sacrificed to his country his ease, his health, his life. Let us console ourselves with the reflection that the Christian soldier has received his reward in a better world." The *Daily News* says: "If Father Dulac is not satisfied, he will be hard to please. As long as I remember, but two War Ministers have publicly uttered the name of God and avowed belief in another world. One was M. de Freycinet."

The *Sentinel*, Wood Green and Southgate, prints a letter from a "Congregationalist," who has been for nearly twenty

years identified with Sunday-school and Mission work. This gentleman says: "It is from *inside* the Christian Church I am writing, and I feel ashamed as I look around to see that the van of Progress is not being led by the followers of Jesus, but by Agnostics and avowed unbelievers in Christianity." Going into Finsbury Park, he says, he heard a Christian Evidence lecturer engaged in denouncing two dead men—Charles Bradlaugh and Colonel Ingersoll. "Charles Bradlaugh's work on behalf of the toilers," he remarks, "is well known; and Colonel Ingersoll was pleading for the oppressed slaves of the Southern States when almost all of the Churches were excusing with texts from the Bible the morality of slavery."

Mr. J. K. Sykes contributes to the *Southend Echo* a letter against the ridiculous, and even disgusting, practice of holding what are called Pleasant Sunday Afternoons for "men only." He advises men who go to these pious entertainments to take their wives, sisters, or daughters, and, if these ladies are refused admittance, to turn away from the doors and take them for a nice walk. Perhaps it would be just as well to take them for a nice walk without troubling the "men only" entertainers at all.

The *Peterhead Sentinel* is remarkably liberal in theology for such a far-northern journal. In an article on the Rev. Mr. Webster's pamphlet on *Ingersoll Impugned*, it takes exception to this gentleman's remark that rational theologians must give no countenance to the "jester." When the preacher says that "There is respect due to the most hideous idol ever made by human hands," our contemporary observes that "This is simply the apology of one 'medicine-man' for the stock-in-trade of another."

Sam Jones, the Yankee revivalist, writes an article in the *New York Journal* on "Immortality is a Fact." Sam says so, and that ought to settle it. This gentleman exclaims that he does not believe that man came from monkeys and tadpoles—as though Darwin taught so. Presumably the reverend Sam believes that man came from mud, in the vicinity of the Garden of Eden. Sam's conclusion is that he would "rather go to hell than go nowhere and be nothing." When he has been in hell five minutes he may alter his mind.

"Do parsons preach from notes, for notes, or would they preach at all if they had no notes?" This question is dealt with by "Uncle Sam" in the *Maldon Gazette*. The article is very outspoken for a bucolic journal. "Nothing personal is intended," the writer says, but he hits hard at the dear clergy.

The Birmingham School Board is getting too nice for anything. Its powers of discrimination are really marvellous. It allows the Labor Church to sell literature at Board school meetings, but will not allow the Social Democratic Federation to do so, although the literature in both cases is Socialist. This wonderful distinction is worthy of the Board that denies the use of school-rooms to Secularists, after libelling them on the authority of a cowardly anonymous letter-writer.

"Christianised Freethought" is one of those things which, as Lord Dundreary says, no fellow can understand. However, it was the subject of a sermon by the Rev. J. J. Fitch, Baptist, at Southport. In the course of his sermon, which did not amount to much, the reverend gentleman deplored the misspent life of Colonel Ingersoll, and remarked that he went down to the grave "unwept, unhonored, and unsung." Well now, that is rich, considering the Ingersoll memorial meetings that have been held in America and the innumerable tributes to Ingersoll that have been published in American newspapers and magazines. Mr. Fitch's idea of accuracy, however, is perhaps what is to be expected in a man who has been trained in the gospel school.

Priestcraft.

BEFORE the great procession of Humanity go the priests. "Hush!" they cry, "the hedges are full of devils. Softly, gently, beloved! Do not rush into unspeakable danger. We will bear the brunt of it, out of our fatherly affection for you. See, we stand in front, on the perilous edge of battle. We dare the demons who lie in wait to catch your immortal souls. We beat the bushes, and dislodge them from their hiding-places; strong not in our own strength, but in the grace of God. Did you not see them? Did you not perceive the flutter of their black wings? Did you not smell their sulphurous taint? Beloved, the road is now clear, the hedges are safe. Forward then! But forget not our loyal services. Remember, beloved, that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and —shell out!"—G. W. Foote, "*Flowers of Freethought*."

Special.

The New Company.

THE Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, is now fairly launched. Everything was ready for Registration when I left London for the North, on September 9, and on the following Tuesday the Registration was duly effected at Somerset House by Mr. Thomas Harper, of the firm of Messrs. Harper & Battcock, solicitors, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C. This gentleman did legal work during many years for the late Charles Bradlaugh; he assisted me legally in devising the Secular Society, Limited; and I take this opportunity of saying that if any reader of these lines should at any time require legal assistance, and would wish to place his business in the hands of a most competent, painstaking, and honorable solicitor, he need not search about for one, but just go straight to Mr. Harper.

All the non-legal labor and trouble of this project has, of course, devolved upon me, even down to the smallest details. This has been very wearying on the top of my heavy ordinary duties. However, I have got through it—I always do get through somehow—and the Prospectus of the new Company is now in the hands of the Freethought public. A copy has been sent by post to all those who promised support beforehand; a copy is also inserted in every number of this week's issue of the *Freethinker*. With the Prospectus is a form of Application for Shares. This will have to be filled in by *all* who are taking Shares, as the previous form filled in with *promises* of support was a friendly, and not a legal, document. I hope these forms of Application for Shares will be filled in promptly and extensively, and posted back to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at the Company's temporary office, 377 Strand, London, W.C.

In addition to those who have already signified their intention of taking so many shares, I know that there are many well-wishers who were waiting until the project became a palpable reality. Well, they need not wait any longer. The projected Company is now a fact, a legal fact, a commercial fact, as well as a fact of the highest importance to the future of our movement. Gradually, but surely, we shall pass, by means of such agencies, from the old hand-to-mouth policy to a policy of strong and stable organisation. And every Freethinker worthy of the name will contribute something towards this happy progress. Some can do much, others little; but if all do what they can this new Company, at any rate, will soon be a glorious success. Personally, I believe that the nominal capital of £5,000, with which we start, will have to be doubled before very long; because I believe that the Company's business may be greatly developed in the near future, with reasonable profit to the shareholders, and immense benefit to the propaganda of Freethought.

It was promised at the outset that not more than 10s. on each £1 share would be called up during the present year, and this promise is redeemed in the Prospectus. No one is bound to pay more than 2s. 6d. per share on application, 5s. on allotment, and 2s. 6d. on December 31. It is to be hoped, however, that those who apply for very few shares, or only one share, will pay in full immediately. They can do so under the Articles. Some larger shareholders, perhaps—as this is not *merely* a commercial enterprise—will also feel disposed to pay in full, thus covering their liability at once, and assisting the Company to begin active operations without delay.

On the point of *liability*, I may emphasise the fact

that shareholders are responsible for nothing but the number of shares they subscribe. If a man (or woman) takes (say) ten shares, he is liable for £10, and nothing more; and when he has paid the £10 his liability ceases under *all* circumstances.

For the information of the public I am addressing, I may state that the Company's capital of £5,000 will consist of Ordinary Share and Deferred Shares. The latter number 1,000, and I subscribe them all myself, out of the purchase money. They bear no dividend until other Shares receive at least five per cent.; so that I must make the Company's business pay before these Shares can yield me anything. The Ordinary Shares offered for general subscription number 4,000. With respect to these I have received promises from intending shareholders to the extent of 2,400. Of the total 5,000 Shares, therefore, only 1,600 are now awaiting subscription. All of them *may* be taken up within a week or two; in *any* case, I venture to think they will all be taken up by Christmas.

I do not know that it is really incumbent upon me to say anything about the terms of purchase, but I will offer a few observations. The purchase money, subject to any slight modification that may be agreed to before changing possession, is fixed at £2,000. But one-half of this amount is to be sunk in my 1,000 Deferred Shares, which will hardly be marketable, and which will never cost the shareholders anything, since all other Shares will receive a dividend before mine. The actual, positive purchase money is the other £1,000, the payment of which is distributed over a considerable period of time, so that the Company's capital will only be lightly drawn upon at the beginning. For this £1,000 (really) I transfer to the Company the copyright of the *Freethinker* and all my very large stock of books and pamphlets. Frankly, I would not think of selling at this price if I were not going to work with the Company myself. It barely represents the existing lien upon my publishing business, which must be satisfied in transferring the assets. Indeed, I make a present sacrifice in the interest of the *Freethinker*, in the interest of the movement, and, perhaps, ultimately in my own interest too; for capital is wanted for the paper and the publishing, and this seems the most business-like and satisfactory way of obtaining it. Otherwise I should naturally be reluctant to part with my absolute legal control over the *Freethinker*. I sank many hundreds of pounds in maintaining it; I have put the work of nineteen of the best years of my life into it; moreover, I put into it one whole year of my life, day and night, when I was imprisoned for it in 1883. Yes, there is more than mere money sunk in those big volumes of the *Freethinker* standing on the shelf in my editorial room. I feel for it as a mother feels for a darling child who has only lived through her sleepless care and constant self-denial. It is a consolation, however, to reflect that I shall continue to watch over my offspring. I am binding myself by legal agreement to edit the *Freethinker*, and act as managing Director to the Company, for a number of years. There will be no solution of continuity. The Company, in acquiring the *Freethinker* and the publishing business, acquires me too—if I may put it in that way; and perhaps I may be pardoned if I say—speaking personally and plainly for once—that I am possibly not the least valuable of the Company's assets. Shareholders will invest in the paper and in the publishing business, and also in me—with legal security. And if I die or fall by the way, the Company will be able to do what might be impossible to an individual; it will be able, with the aid of my colleagues, to keep the *Freethinker* going as the organ of our movement.

G. W. FOOTER.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 1, Athenæum Hall, London; 7.30, "Boers and Britishers: Another Christian Quarrel."
 October 8, Leicester; 15, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 1, Sheffield; 8 and 15, Athenæum Hall, London; 22, Hull, November 12, Liverpool; 19, Camberwell. December 10 and 17, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. NELSON.—The Sheffield lecture-notice did not arrive last week until Wednesday—too late.

R. AXELLY.—Shall be attended to.

JAMES NEATE (Bethnal Green Branch) reports that Mr. Heaford had a most successful meeting in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon. It was announced at this meeting that, if the County Council did not soon take action with regard to the sale of literature at Mr. Cohen's late meeting, the Branch would take to selling the *Freethinker*, etc., again.

THE Plymouth Branch secretary asks us to announce that a meeting will be held this evening (Oct. 1) at 7.30 at the Social Democratic Club. All members are requested to attend.

S. FRANKLIN.—We have by no means forgotten the subject. When the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, is in thorough working order, and clearly successful, as we are confident it will be, we intend to tackle the problem of Headquarters for the Freethought party in London. We have our eye upon a suitable spot—indeed, a most suitable spot; and we have a strong impression that, if we live and keep our health, we shall be able to realise our design in this direction. Should we succeed in this third effort—after establishing the Secular Society, Limited, and the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited—we shall feel that we have fairly redeemed the promise we made when Charles Bradlaugh passed us over the President's hammer.

G. BARTRAM.—See paragraph.

W. LEADER, taking two shares in the new Company, wishes he could take a hundred times as many, and hopes some wealthy enemy of superstition will come along and take a thousand or two. This correspondent thinks, and rightly enough, that if we only commanded one year's salary of the Archbishop of Canterbury it would make a very great difference to the progress of Freethought.

LOWELL.—Thanks for the cuttings. The Christian Evidence speaker who saw icebergs in the Bay of Biscay is well called "Green."

I. PARKINSON.—Scarcely up to our publication level.

I. B. TRENCHARD.—Mirabaud's (*D'Holbach's System of Nature*) is a powerful work, but too diffuse and declamatory for present-day taste. Brought into half its original dimensions, it would be much more useful.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Pleased to hear that you enrolled eight new members at Mr. Watts's lectures on Sunday; also that you were all surprised to see him in such good form.

LOUIS LEVINE.—Thanks, and again thanks. Your leaflets must be doing a lot of good. Glad to find you are able to put our own writings under contribution.

C. J. PEACOCK, applying for 100 shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, says that absence from home has prevented him from learning of the enterprise until now. He hopes most sincerely that "The Freethought Flag will be kept flying." Well, to use an Americanism, which is good old English too, we guess it will.

LETTERS RECEIVED.—Public Opinion—Sydney Bulletin—People's Times—Ethical World—Southend Echo—Isle of Man Times—De Vrije Gedachte—Southport Visitor—Progressive Trade—Truthseeker (New York)—Crescent—Blue Grass Torch of Reason—Peterhead Sentinel—Two Worlds—New Century—Boston Investigator—Freidenker—Daylight—Secular Thought—Gray's Gazette—Daily Chronicle—Sentinel—West Ham Herald—West Ham Citizen—Maldon Gazette—Birmingham Daily Mail.

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

Being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription expires, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

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

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Sugar Plums.

In spite of the rain, there was a crowded audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "After the Dreyfus Affair." Being in good form, and having a great deal of ground to cover, he spoke for a long time, but the interest of the meeting was thoroughly sustained until the end; and the peroration, in which hope for the future of France was expressed, was enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Harry Brown acted as chairman.

Mr. Foote occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (Oct. 1). His subject will be "Boers and Britishers: Another Christian Quarrel"—a subject of peculiar interest so soon after the Czar's Love Feast at the Hague.

Last Sunday Mr. Charles Watts lectured twice in the Assembly Rooms, Birmingham, to excellent audiences. There was a capital gathering in the morning, and at night the place was crowded, all standing room being occupied. Mr. Watts received a most hearty reception, and his lectures were enthusiastically applauded. A public request was made that the one on "Dreyfus and the Shame of France" should be printed in pamphlet form. Mr. Ridgway presided on both occasions. Good business was done at the bookstall, every copy of the *Freethinker* on sale being disposed of.

To-day (Sunday, October 1) Mr. Watts lectures afternoon and evening in the Hall of Science, Rockingham-street, Sheffield. In the afternoon he will speak by request on Dreyfus, and in the evening on the late Colonel Ingersoll. These are attractive subjects, and should draw large audiences.

Mr. Cohen lectures for the Newcastle Branch on Sunday (October 8) in the Co-operative Hall, Whitehall-road, Gateshead, at 11, 3, and 7 o'clock. Local friends should do their best to secure good meetings.

Amongst the wreaths for M. Scheurer-Kestner's coffin was one accompanied by a card bearing this inscription: "To Scheurer-Kestner, with infinite gratitude.—Alfred Dreyfus." The dead man thus pathetically thanked was a quiet, stubborn hero in his way. When he discovered that Dreyfus was innocent, he begged the Generals themselves to undo the frightful mistake they had committed; and when he found that they were resolved to perpetuate the injustice, he set to work on his own account. He incurred terrible odium, and lost his vice-presidency of the Senate; but he never wavered, and it was one of the ironies of fate that this invincibly honest man should be stricken down with typhoid fever directly after the Rennes court-martial, and should die just a few hours before Dreyfus was "pardoned," without knowing of the great measure of success to which he had so powerfully contributed, and for which he had made so many sacrifices.

M. Scheurer-Kestner's funeral took place on Monday. Wreaths were sent by a large number of progressive Societies, and addresses were delivered by M. Brisson, M. Ranc, and other tried Republicans. M. Brisson's speech was much cheered. When loud cries were uttered of "Vive la République!" he said: "Yes, my friends, let us love the Republic, but let us not cease to defend it." Colonel Picquart was amongst the mourners, and there were many cries of "Vive Picquart!"

A correspondent of the *Spectator* draws attention to the noble stand made by Voltaire in the "Affaire Calas," and the parallelisms to the "Affaire Dreyfus," which appear in Voltaire's correspondence on the subject, notably his letters to Madame Calas and M. Damilaville. He suggests that a portion of Voltaire's letter to the Comte D'Argental might be particularly unpleasant reading to Generals Mercier and Gonse. The whole of Voltaire's correspondence in the Calas case appears in vol. xxx. of his collected works.

It is a great mistake to suppose that the whole French nation is opposed to justice in the Dreyfus affair. The Municipal Council of Ledignan, for instance, after christening a new thoroughfare the Rue Picquart, has resolved, with only one dissentient vote, that the Rue de la République shall henceforth be called "Rue Alfred Dreyfus."

Cardinal Vaughan tried to make out that Colonel Picquart was a Catholic, but his reverence—or what the deuce do they call him?—had to admit his "mistake." Mr. L. Von Glehn, writing to the *Times* from the Merchant Taylors' School, under date of September 20, said: "Allow me, from first-hand evidence, to correct an error in Cardinal Vaughan's letter published in your columns on Monday. An acquaintance of Colonel Picquart and one in a position to know assures me

that the Colonel, though now a Freethinker, is a Roman Catholic born and bred."

Mr. Dan R. Sheen, Mayor of Peoria, being written to by Mr. William Lynch, who wanted "any information you may have at hand in regard to the dispensation of charities by the late Colonel Ingersoll," replied as follows:—"If I understand your inquiry, it is: What charities did Colonel Ingersoll bestow in his lifetime? No record of that, I presume, has been kept. Ingersoll was so much unlike the average orthodox Christian that he did not let his left hand know what his right hand was doing. He was always giving unostentatiously, and in a manner that the recipient would not feel that he was receiving charity; and often no one but the one who received and the one who gave knew of the gift or its amount. I was in a position to know that the great Agnostic followed the command, 'Give to him that asketh, and of him that would borrow turn thou not away.' This fact caused our mayor to refer your letter to me to answer. Wherever Ingersoll went his charities were co-extensive with his purse and the demands of the poor. His charities, if given otherwise, would have secured his name upon many a marble slab.—DAN. R. SHEEN."

Edgar W. Howe, the editor of the Atchison (Kan.) *Globe*, whose philosophy is quoted all over the country, and who ranks among the first novelists of the day, pays the following tribute to Colonel Ingersoll: "The death of Robert G. Ingersoll removes one of America's greatest citizens. It is not popular to admire Ingersoll, but his brilliancy, his integrity and patriotism, cannot be doubted. Had not Ingersoll been frank enough to express his opinions on religion, he would have been President of the United States. Hypocrisy in religion pays. Only one quarter of the people are connected with the Churches, but they run the country. Tom Paine made the same mistake. Benjamin Franklin believed as Paine did, but was too wise to discuss religion. As a result Franklin is venerated, while Paine is cursed and despised. Intellectually Franklin was not the equal of Paine. He was not his equal as a patriot, nor was Franklin more honest than Paine. But Ingersoll will not be execrated as Paine was, owing to the gradual change in public sentiment. Ingersoll will be openly admired by millions, and his punishment was never as severe as Paine's. There will come a time when public men may speak their honest convictions on religion without being maligned by the ignorant and superstitious, but not yet. Keep your mouth shut about religion this year, anyway."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Reviewing *Light from the East; or, the Witness of the Monuments*, by the Rev. C. J. Ball, the *Daily News* points out that the "Chaldean story of the Deluge was written on tablets during the great literary period of 2200-1800 B.C., and was, with other stories, popular for ages before it was committed to writing." "The Chaldean story," our contemporary adds, "is much more detailed and picturesque than the story in Genesis. It contains a first-rate description of a tropical rainstorm. The dove incident appears in both narratives—which are to each other as substance and shadow." That is to say, the Chaldean story is the substance, and the Hebrew story is the shadow.

The Birmingham Branch sends us a copy of its annual report and balance-sheet. The report is short, sharp, practical, and exultant. The balance-sheet is a healthy document, showing a considerable expenditure, and an increased balance in hand of £49 14s. 6d. Reference is made to Mr. H. Percy Ward's appointment as Lecturer and Organiser, which we hope will prove a great success.

Mr. A. H. Smith contributes a long and admirable letter to the *Yarmouth Mercury* in reply to the Rev. Mr. Spooner, who, we understand, retires from the contest—not with the honors of war.

The West Ham N.S.S. Branch continues to "trouble" the Town Council. Its latest move is a protest against the action of the Guardians in providing paid spiritual services for the inmates of the workhouse. Seeing that churches and chapels bore no part of the burden of local rates, the Branch thought that "spiritual guides" should be willing to "give God's poor gratuitous service." A letter containing these wicked sentiments was read out to the Council. One reverend gentleman wanted to burke it, but by seventeen votes to two it was decided that the letter should be read right through. When it was ended, the Rev. Tom Warren, who seems a bit of a *farceur*, waxed indignant, and declared that the clergy paid rates like other citizens—which they do, but their gospel-shops don't. Thereupon a rival man of God, in the Dissenting line, exclaimed that Mr. Warren's chapel didn't "pay a farthing." Altogether it was a pretty and amusing scene, and we congratulate the West Ham Branch on its interesting enterprise.

Mr. William Birch, of Liverpool, a member of the N.S.S., died on August 5, and by his will he leaves the residue of his

estate, after the payment of debts and legacies, to the Secular Society, Limited. Notification of this has been made by the solicitors who are acting for the executors. Some months before his death Mr. Birch intimated in conversation that the residue of his estate might be worth about £1,000. How much it will actually amount to remains to be seen.

By a previous will Mr. Birch had arranged to leave a handsome legacy to Mr. Foote, and another, as we understood, to Mr. Watts. His last will was altered in the interest of the Secular Society, Limited, in whose future he had great belief. What individuals lose the Society (we hope) will gain. This should be an object-lesson to all Freethinkers who can bequeath something to the movement. By willing money to the Secular Society, Limited, they can help forward the cause with absolute legal security.

Jesus Christ and Mrs. Grundy.

A TALE is told of a plaster-cast dealer who slipped on a piece of orange-peel whilst crossing Westminster Bridge. Much damage was done to his stock-in-trade, and a seven-and-sixpenny representation of Our Blessed Savior had its arm broken. The itinerant merchant bewailed his loss loudly, and a sympathetic crowd collected. At length, moved by his lamentations, a sailor stepped forward and told the unfortunate man not to worry. "Say, guv'nor," he wound up, "why don't you knock his eye out and call 'im Nelson?" This is, of course, very shocking, but we intend in this article to "go one better" (or worse), as the phrase has it. We intend to show that the Eminent Party already referred to was, from the point of view of Mrs. Grundy and the Primrose League, a Holy Terror!

We have, it is needless to remind our readers, no axes to grind in this matter. We know that more able writers than ourselves have contended that Our Dear Carpenter was ("Angels and ministers of grace defend us!") insane! Some have even dared to suggest that he never existed at all, that he is as mythical as *Ally Sloper* or *Sairey Gamp's* friend, Mrs. Harris. We have a reason for broaching this subject. Our Christian friend, the enemy, continually publishes unpleasant "truths" about eminent Freethinkers. Smith, who knew less of music than a stalactite, it is alleged, died singing "Rock of Ages"; Brown, it is said, deserted a large wife and a larger family, that never existed; Jones "ratted"; Robinson committed the unpardonable offence of having a "slavey" to assist his wife in her domestic work; and so on and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity, which thinketh evil of all men. Possibly these imaginative alarms and excursions are a diversion to men eternally discussing such momentous questions as whether the climate of Hades is tropical or arctic, or the equally important subject of St. Paul's vaccination, or whether the Son of Man used a pocket-handkerchief. In the present essay we have merely attempted, for once in a way, to return the compliment. This ought not to prove unacceptable to the meek and lowly followers of J. Christ and Him Crucified. We are not asking on this occasion for their "check," although we get plenty of it without money and without price. We merely request them to take our modest Roland for their very numerous and insulting *Olivers*.

But *revenons*—not to our "muttons," but to the Lamb (with a capital L). We propose (D.V.) to examine calmly, seriously, and dispassionately the Divine Sheep's conduct under the microscope of respectability. Which inquiry is not to be taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, but reverently and soberly. In the first place, one feels a shock to one's nerves on finding that Master Christ, although claiming royal descent, was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth—not even a German silver spoon! He was merely the alleged son of a carpenter, which is dreadful; and he was born in a stable, which is a thousand times worse. The sinister is almost a criminal offence in the case of poor people. It is quite a different matter when royalty, gilded hand shoves by legitimacy. Then, he was not well bred, which is hardly to be wondered at. He "sauced" his ma at a very early age, and disputed with "the doctors," whoever they were. If we understand anything about medical men, the son of Mary probably

finished this dialectical encounter face downwards, whilst one of the M.D.'s administered massage, or the recipe of the Royal Solomon. If so, he did not have the treatment repeated often enough. By the time he had reached man's estate he was a controversial Hooligan. He could, then, to use the expressive *simile* of St. Paul, argue the hind leg off a Jerusalem donkey, the dullest and most obstinate specimen of an ignoble race.

Furthermore, he was very prejudiced. He had the disease as badly as Dr. Samuel Johnson or Henri Rochefort. His resemblance to the latter gent is more complete, on account of his being so bitter an anti-Semite. The Ever-Blessed Wielder of the Jack-Plane fairly wiped the floor with the followers of Moses. And then he used such awful language! As a linguist, he again challenges the one-time editor of *La Lanterne*. Faugh! His utterances were powerful enough to blanch the face of Private Thomas Atkins; comprehensive enough to paralyse a Billingsgate fish-porter. People who had the honor to disagree with his Holiness were "vipers," "whitewashed sepulchres," "devils," and "dogs"—to mention but a few oratorical jewels. And he possessed a fearful temper. Oh dear! oh dear! He would never have been fitted for a "tea-fight" at our chapel, or a lawn-tennis party in suburbia. The way he charged those "outside brokers" in the Temple amply proves how hot-headed he was. His cutting treatment of the poor, dear fig-tree shows that he was as reckless as an Ulsterman trailing his coat, to use a tailor-made expression. If these 'Ebrew Financiers had been men of *mettle*, as well as men of *metal* (shekels), we should have had a much-needed touch of excitement in the somewhat prosy Gospels. If Our Lord had but "put up his dukes," or "slogged" the other gentleman's features! With tears in his pen, the Holy Ghost might have had to recall how that the "Man of Sorrows" retired from the unequal contest with his august and gory nose twisted under his left ear. But Our Dear Carpenter was not to be the Champion Heavy-weight of Judea. Pity 'tis, 'tis true. He missed a glorious opportunity. Gibbon might have described how he used the cestus in the Coliseum, amid tornadoes of applause. But Fate willed otherwise. As it was, his end was more ignominious and more painful than if he had died "to make a Roman holiday." His end was anything but peace—more like Charles Peace! How Mrs. Grundy can ever take this criminal to her pure and untainted bosom without breaking her stays passes our comprehension.

It has been remarked that a man is known by the company he keeps. Christ's male associates were anything but "twelve good men and true," despite the efforts of generations of apologists. He himself called one of them "a devil," and he knew sometimes what he was talking about. He mixed with "publicans"; but this need not concern us. Are not these tradesmen the backbone of the great Conservative party? He also was seen with "sinners," including Miss Marie Magdalen, whose reputation was somewhat fly-blown. So much so, indeed, that we often wonder how on earth the "Virgin" Mary behaved when Christ used to bring Marie home to tea. But, as the Prayer-book sagely reminds us, we are all "miserable sinners," including Our Sovereign Lady, the Prince, her son, the Dook of Argyle, the Most Noble the Marquis of Salisbury, our bellicose Colonial Secretary, and the Rev. Lloyd Engström.

What is really worse is, that "the Lord," as he is called, was not a teetotaler. On the contrary, he even encouraged people to get drunk. He had no more respect for private property than Mister Jack Sheppard, of indifferent memory. For a time he was an unqualified medical man, and, to heap horrors upon horrors' head, he even worked at his reputed father's trade! Bumbledom will be surprised and shocked to hear that he was indifferent as to paying taxes. Had it not been for that bloater most considerably swallowed, or had his hair cut, long sausage-curls being a marketable article. It was a narrow escape. If that faithful fish had been bilious, the King of Kings might have been summoned for the poor-rate or income-tax. Moreover, there is grave suspicion that Mister Christ was a gambler. That anecdote about the coin, and the question, "Whose superscription is this?" looks very like a game of pitch-and-toss, or something equally shocking.

A much more serious matter, however, is that J. C.'s views on sociology too closely approximated to Anarchism. The topsy-turvy ideas he had about the distribution of wealth, his panegyric of poverty, his denunciation of riches, all have a flavor about them. Frankly, he was too dangerous a character to ever win the real approval of Conservatives, who agree with the eminent Dr. Pangloss that this is the best of all possible worlds. But the last straw, the thing that finally places the Prophet of Nazareth beyond the pale of gentility, is that he did not respect the sky-pilots of his time. He cared no more for ecclesiastical authority than a tape-worm. The Code of Moses was not good enough for his "lordship." He had the audacity to regard it as outworn, and the impudence to foist some ideas of his own on his audiences, in direct antagonism to the commandments held sacred by the Jews. Small wonder that he finally "left his country for his country's good," condemned as a blasphemer, executed as a traitor. Surely he was never a fit patron for our young men's and women's Christian associations.

Judged by the ethics of civilisation, his life was a ghastly failure. He never put money in his purse. The founder of the original Salvation Army lived and died a pauper, which every true Conservative regards as the most abandoned thing on this planet. The Army and the proprietor were sold together for thirty shillings. Bah! Why was not Mister "General" Booth born two thousand years earlier? The associates of such a person, as might be expected, were fishermen and ne'er-do-wells, the commonest of the common people. In truth, they were so far lost to every sense of decency that they never heard of a stove-pipe hat—that badge of respectability. Nay, more, painful as it is to us to mention such a thing, we believe we are justified in asserting that the whole gang never saw a pair of trousers. There are thousands of pictures of these persons, and they are invariably as innocent of that indispensable article of attire as Gold Coast niggers.

Truly, it is sufficient to make an oyster guffaw to think that the foundation stone of that most aristocratic religion was a seditious blasphemer—an executed criminal. God knows there are enough plaster-saints in the Christian calendar; but certainly its founder is not included in the list.

Mr. J. Christ made such a mess of his first appearance at the wicket in the cricket match of human life that it is surprising to reflect that some of his followers expect him to have a second innings. He made a duck's egg two millenniums ago; can he carry his bat on a second chance? Unless he has, in the meantime, got hold of the Grace of Gloucester, not the Grace of Gawd (that's no good), we fear that we must respond in the negative.

The chances are that our transcendental carpenter would, unless financed, naturally and inevitably gravitate to the workhouse. Or, more dreadful still, the probability is that the clergy would kill him. If he, really, like the great and only Julius Cæsar, came, saw, and conquered, the Black Army would find their occupation gone. He once died "on the cross," they would find themselves unable any longer to live on it. Unless someone invented a new superstition, they would all be reduced to beggary. Think of the horrid position, dear reader. The Archhumbugs of Canterbury and York, and those perfumed darlings, the bishops, soliciting our ha'pence on the kerb-stone. His Oiliness the Pope and Monseigneurs the Cardinals appealing for charity. Millions of professional soul-savers swelling the ranks of the unemployed. The times would, indeed, be out of joint, and so would the noses of the clergy. Perish the horrible thought! We have seen how, judged from the Primrose League standpoint, the Second Person of the Trinity is a humbug. He has, it is true, been called "the Lord"; but we are not to be deceived by the bogus designation. It is simply trifling with the peerage. A Lord, forsooth! Avaunt and quit our sight. Your banking account is non-existent; you wore thorns instead of strawberry leaves; your associates were such that we hope we shall never bump against such pauperised paragons. What has respectability to do with thee, Mister Jesus Christ, sometime carpenter and joiner of Nazareth?

Fortunately, Society (with a big S) is too firmly anchored in England to be washed away by the paltry spray of your sentimentalism. Here, thanks be to God,

religion is a plaything, not a reality; an organised hypocrisy worked in the interests of the governing classes. Herein lies our salvation. Under the sceptres of Buddha, Confucius, Laotse, Mahomet, or even Mumbo Jumbo, precept is united with practice. *Nous avons changé tout cela!* Here we lightly tread the Primrose Path—the Primrose League Path. Throughout Christendom we defy anyone to find a Christian. There never was, is not now, nor ever will be, world without end, such a thing—outside of the asylums for idiots. But in the interests of the young person it is becoming increasingly necessary to make a few alterations in our religion. For it to continue to be of service any longer as a moral police force, it must be made, like Cæsar's wife, above criticism. The steam-roller of Rationalism has already squashed the life out of Jehovah; we have shown his son to be a scallywag; the ghostly remainder is altogether impossible. That *cause célèbre*, Joseph *versus* Joseph *versus* the Trinity, Limited, has settled his pretensions for ever. Who will fill the vacancy? After prayerful consideration, we solemnly think our scholarly friend Mr. Satan is, to use a vulgarism, "the dark horse." We shall, seriously, put our money on him. It is a thousand to one chance. Through all his vicissitudes, and they have been many, he has always been a gentleman. Which is more than can be said for any of the others. Amen, so mote it be!

MIMNERMUS.

Twice Told Tales.

(Concluded from page 621.)

A SON PROMISED TO SARAH.

"And Elohim said unto Abraham, As for Sarah thy wife.....I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?..... And Elohim said, Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name Isaac" (Gen. xvii. 15-19).

The name "Isaac" signifies "laughter," or "he laughs"; consequently a story had to be invented to account for the name. One prettily-concocted fiction would have sufficed; but we have two: the first by the priestly writer, the second by the Yahvist. According to the first story, it was Abraham who laughed; according to the second, it was Sarah—the laughing being on two different occasions. We may, of course, be told that both narratives are historical; but this is very unlikely, indeed. For, assuming the promise of a son in the first account to be true, Abraham, upon reaching home, would have immediately acquainted his wife with the honor which awaited her, and Sarah would have lived in daily expectation of the fulfilment of the promise. Hence, no repetition of the prediction could cause her the least astonishment. But, in the second account, the promise of a son comes upon Sarah as a surprise; such an unlikely event had never once entered her mind. Clearly, she hears the promise for the first time. Further, the god himself, in this second story, speaks as if he were telling Abraham something that would astonish him, and which that patriarch had never heard before. Of course, when we know that the narratives were from the pens of two different writers, and were written to account for the name "Isaac," all mystery vanishes.

ABIMELECH'S COVENANT: THE NAMING OF BEERSHEBA.

"And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol the captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, Elohim is with thee in all that thou doest: now therefore swear unto me here by Elohim

"Then Abimelech went to him [*i.e.*, Isaac] from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his host.And they said, We saw plainly that Yahveh was with thee: and we said, Let

that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me.....What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? And he said, These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that it may be a witness unto me that I have digged this well. *Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba*; because there they swear both of them" (Gen. xxi. 22-31).

there now be an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good.....And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servant came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: *therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba* unto this day" (Gen. xxvi. 26-33).

In the foregoing paragraphs we have two accounts of the making of a covenant by Abimelech, King of Gerar, and also two accounts of the naming of Beersheba—the two events in each case taking place on the same day. The name "Beer-sheba" signifies "the well of the oath"; consequently, in each narrative we have the digging a well and the taking an oath. In one version of the story Abimelech makes a league with Abraham; in the other, he makes a covenant with Isaac. The result in each case is the naming of Beersheba; we have thus two accounts of the origin of that name. According to the first, the place was so named by Abraham when Isaac was a child, only just weaned; according to the second, it received its name from Isaac when that patriarch was nearly a hundred years old. In each case one of the parties to the covenant was Abimelech, King of Gerar, and in each case that king took with him Phicol, the captain of his army, as a witness. It will thus be seen that in Abimelech and his general we have two notable instances of longevity—the one being king, and the other chief captain, for about a century. It need scarcely be said that one story was copied from, or was suggested by, the other. This must be obvious to every reader.

THE NAMING OF BETHEL.

"And Jacob lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night.....And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.....And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said: Surely Yahveh is in this place.....And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. *And he called the name of that place Bethel*" (Gen. xxviii. 11-19).

"And Elohim appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him.....And Elohim went up from him in the place where he spake with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he spake with him, a pillar of stone: and he poured out a drink offering thereon, and poured oil thereon. *And Jacob called the name of the place where Elohim spake with him Bethel*" (Gen. xxxv. 9, 13-15).

Here we have two accounts of the naming of Bethel, or rather of the changing the name "Luz" into Bethel, for the Jehovistic writer adds: "But the name of the city was Luz at the first." Both accounts are, of course, fictitious; for, setting aside the fact that the Hebrew patriarch Jacob is a purely mythical personage, it goes without saying that no stranger or sojourner in Canaan could have power to change the name of any place in that country, more especially the name of a city. We also find from Joshua xvi. 2 that Luz and Bethel were separate places. The name Bethel means "house of God"; it is therefore easy to see that the stories were invented to account for the name. In the first narrative, we are told that the name "Bethel" was given when Jacob was unmarried and was on his way to his uncle Laban's; in the second, the place is said to have been named "Bethel" some twenty years later, when that patriarch returned with wives, children, and great possessions. According to the first account, the mythical Jacob called the place "the house of God" because of a dream he had there of angels standing on the top of it; according to the second there Elohim named it "the house of God" because there Elohim appeared to him and blessed him, and conversed with him face to face. The fictitious character of the narratives is thus placed beyond the possibility of doubt. If we turn now to the cuneiform inscriptions, we shall find further confirmation of the fabulous nature of the

Hebrew story. It was a custom amongst the ancient Assyrians to set up stone pillars, and to pour oil and wine upon them. These they called "bethels"—"houses of god." It was not the *place* that was so named, but the *pillar* itself. With this fact the Hebrew writers were unacquainted, and so they represented their legendary ancestor as giving the name "bethel" to a city, and not to the pillar set up.

JACOB'S NAME CHANGED TO "ISRAEL."

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.....And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. xxxii. 24-28).

"So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan (the same as Bethel), he and all the people that were with him.....And Elohim appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Padan-aram, and blessed him. And Elohim said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: *thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name; and he called his name Israel*" (Gen. xxxv. 6, 9, 10).

Here, again, we have two accounts of the giving of a new name—in this case, by the Hebrew deity himself—and, as might be expected, one story conflicts with the other. In one version Jacob's name is said to have been changed near the river Jabbock, on the eastern side of Jordan, as the result of a wrestling match between that patriarch and the god Yahveh or some other heavenly being. In the second version the new name is represented as given some years later, at Luz in Palestine after Jacob had been blessed by Elohim. In one account that wily patriarch received the name "Israel" more than twenty years after he had changed the name Luz to Bethel; in the other, he was named "Israel" on the very same day. In each case the name was given for the first, and only, time.

Looking, now, at all the examples of twice-told tales in the book of Genesis, it must be evident, even to the most uncritical, that the two sets of narratives—which, as we have seen, are in nearly every case mutually contradictory—could not have been composed by one and the same writer, whether Moses or any other alleged Jewish historian.

ABRACADABRA.

Rev. Dr. Field's Tribute to Ingersoll.

The *North American Review* (September) reprints Ingersoll's reply to the Rev. Henry M. Field, D.D., which appeared in its pages in November, 1877, and follows it up with an article by Dr. Field on "The Influence of Ingersoll." What the Reverend gentleman has to say about the transient effect of Ingersoll's propaganda of Freethought is of trifling importance, for he speaks as a Christian, and speaks professionally; but his tribute to Ingersoll as a man and an orator is very interesting. We make the following extracts for our readers:

"The more I became acquainted with Ingersoll, the more I was interested in his personality. He was not as other men are. The typical American is a bundle of nerves, which shows itself in his quick step, in the flash of his eye, and the gesture of his hand. When Thackeray was in New York, he would sometimes take his stand at the corner of a street to watch a man of stalwart frame walk slowly by, he would have said, 'There goes an Englishman!' In all the years that I have known Ingersoll I never saw him in a hurry. The crowd might rush by, but he never quickened his pace, but walked slowly, as if in deep thought. When I met him in Broadway he was always ready to stop under an awning, or by a friendly hand to discuss the questions of the day. If all the wisdom that might have been preserved, possibly like the autumn leaves! The two gods that Americans worship are time and money. Ingersoll cared for neither. Money had no attraction for one who knew of his affairs perhaps even better than Ingersoll himself, that his income from his practice at the law was a pile of letters on his desk from poor clerks who were miserably paid, and young women who could not find any support. To such appeals he responded so bountifully that they came faster and faster. His friends warned him against the impositions that were practised upon him,

and told him that he ought to have a bureau of inquiry; but he answered that he had rather be cheated a dozen times than leave one poor girl to suffer, and perhaps to die!

"This lavish giving came partly from a feeling that one-half of mankind did not get their share of the good things of this life, so that he looked with an eye of pity, not only upon the poor and suffering, but upon those who had been driven to crime! One morning I met him in Gramercy Park, and told him that I was bound to Sing Sing, to which I had been invited by the warden—not to preach to the prisoners, but to tell them the story of my journey around the world, which might divert their thoughts from their own dreary loneliness. But, to my surprise, the very mention of our 'Bastille' brought to his mind the condition of human beings shut out from the light of sun and moon and stars, and the faces of all those who loved them, till it overpowered him, and he was ready to pronounce an anathema upon the 'tomb' in which men were buried alive. 'Nothing on earth,' he said, 'would induce me to go down those hard and stony steps, and through those iron gates, that are to me like the gates of hell!' It was in vain to tell him of the crimes that these men had committed, their robberies and their murders. 'But,' he answered, 'put yourself in their place. If you had been exposed to their temptations, you might have done the same!' I was quite overpowered by this burst of feeling, and could but think that, if he had the power, he would, indeed, have ordered the prison gates to be swung open, never to be shut again!"

"And now, perhaps, I shall give a fresh interest to my story if I put a new figure on the stage; not another man, but the same man in another character. Though Robert Ingersoll was a captivating talker, he was far more than that; he was one of the greatest orators that our country ever produced. It was not by the fireside, but on the platform, facing thousands of men, that he showed all his power. I once asked Mr. Godkin, the editor of the *Evening Post*, if he had ever heard Ingersoll? He said 'but once.' It was in the old Academy of Music, and the pressure was so great that the police had to make a passage to the front of the platform. The hour to begin was eight o'clock. Ingersoll rose on the minute, and spoke till eleven, and not a man moved! For three hours he held that vast audience in the hollow of his hand! No wonder that the eager multitude were swept away by him as the forest is swept by the wind. He was born to be an orator. His very physique marked him as one not to be daunted by any presence, by many or by few. He had a frame of iron, and when he strode upon the stage he was the ideal of a warrior standing on his castle walls,

'Four square to all the winds that blew.'

"His intonations were varied—now soft and gentle, as if he were in conversation, with many a bit of pleasantry; then, straightening himself up to his full height, he gave such a burst that the thousands who heard him trembled at the thunder of his voice. Such rhetorical effects are like great symphonies, which ring through the arches of cathedrals, or, rather, like the sound of distant thunder, coming nearer and nearer, till there is one last tremendous peal, that rolls majestically away. The tradition of such marvellous eloquence will live as long as this generation."

Men and Leaves.

If ever, in autumn, a pensiveness falls upon us as the leaves drift by in their fading, may we not wisely look up in hope to their mighty monuments? Behold how fair, how far prolonged, in arch and aisle, the avenues of the valleys; the fringes of the hills! So stately—so eternal; the joy of man, the comfort of all living creatures, the glory of the earth—they are but the monuments of those poor leaves that flit faintly past us to die. Let them not pass, without our understanding their last counsel and example: that we also, careless of monument by the grave, may build it in the world—monument by which men may be taught to remember, not where we died, but where we lived—*John Ruskin*.

The bright boy of fiction is playing with his Noah's Ark. "What are these two chips of wood?" asks the bright boy's father. It is necessary for the bright boy of fiction to have a father, you know; there has to be somebody to draw him out. "Them," replied the bright boy, without hesitation, "is the microbes." Of course, if we think a minute, we perceive that there must have been a pair of microbes on the Ark.—*Detroit Journal*.

It is narrated that a New England preacher the other day was horrified during his sermon by discovering his son in the gallery pelting his hearers in the pews with peanuts. But while the good man was preparing a frown of reproof, the young hopeful cried out: "You tend to your preaching, daddy; I'll keep 'em awake."

"My old aunt holds it to be wicked for a minister to joke." "I dunno whether it could quite be called wicked, but generally it is awful painful."—*Indianapolis Journal*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Boers and Britishers."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A Concert.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, Mr. Newcombe, "The Ethics of Enjoyment."
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 12, Business Meeting at Bradlaugh Club.
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Three Great Phases of Western Religion—(1) The Catholic."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Graham Wallas, "The Effect of the Empire on England."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, E. Pack, "The God of Battle and the Prince of Peace."
BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "The Religion of Secularism."
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, E. Pack, "The God of Battles."
S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): 11.15, A lecture. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, A lecture.
STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, F. A. Davies.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, F. A. Davies.
WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "God so Loved the World."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, A. Scrimshire, Recital—Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School. 11.30, Percy Ward, "Some Social Evils of the Age"; 7, "Man's Reason and God's Revelation."
EDINBURGH (Moulders' Arms, 105 High-street): 7, Mr. Bayliffe, "Evolution or Special Creation: Which?"
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen—11, "The Beginnings of Christianity"; 2.30, "The Dying of Death"; 6.30, "The Origin of God."
HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, G. E. C. Naewiger, "Ingersoll: Poet."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): Touzeau Parris—11, "Science and Theology: Why Antagonistic"; 6.30, "Job's Perplexity, or the Failure of Providence."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Bergmann, B.Sc., "What is Conscience?"
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, W. Simpson, "Toryism and State Socialism."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): C. Watts—3, "Dreyfus and the Shame of France"; 7, "Colonel Ingersoll: As I Knew Him." Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Royal Assembly Hall, Mile End-road): 7, Business Meeting, etc.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 1, Glasgow.

R. P. EDWARDS, 9 Caxton-road, Shepherd's Bush.—October 1, m., Station-road, Camberwell.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—October 1, New Brompton. 8, Liverpool. 15, Birmingham. 22, Leicester. 29, Huddersfield. November 5, Birmingham. 12 and 19, Manchester. 26, Birmingham. December 17, Birmingham.

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