

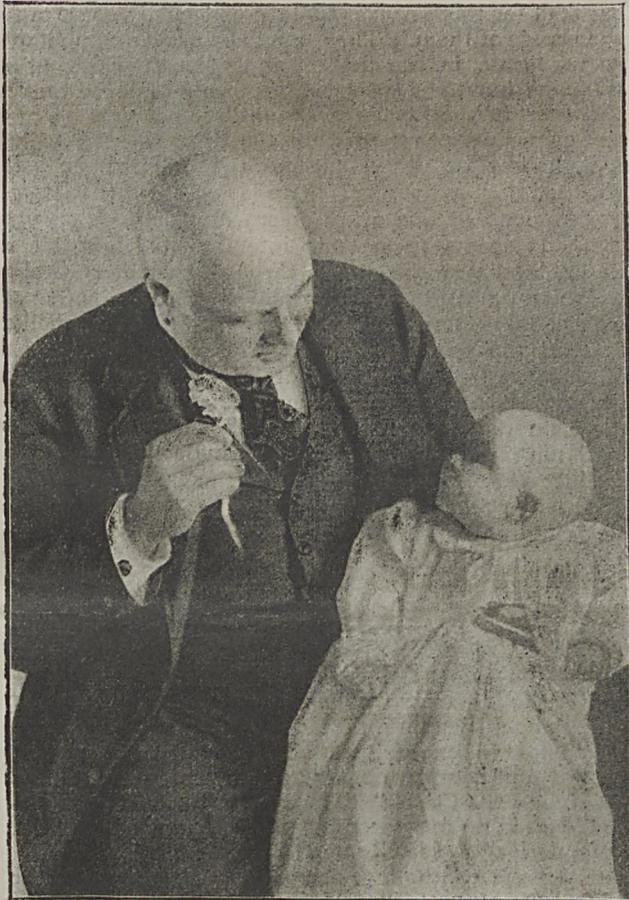
THE Freethinker

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LIFE.

BORN of love and hope, of ecstasy and pain, of agony and fear, of tears and joy—dowered with the wealth of two united hearts—held in happy arms, with lips upon life's drifted font, blue-veined and fair, where perfect peace finds perfect form—rocked by willing feet and wooed to shadowy shores of sleep by siren mother singing soft and low—looking with wonder's wide and startled eyes at common things of life and day—taught by want and wish and contact with the things that touch the dimpled flesh of babes—lured by light and flame, and charmed by color's wondrous robes—learning the use of hands and feet, and by the love of mimicry beguiled to utter speech—releasing prisoned thoughts from crabbed and curious marks on soiled and tattered leaves—puzzling the brain with crooked numbers and their changing, tangled worth—and so through years of alternating day and night, until the captive grows familiar with the chains and walls and limitations of a life.

And time runs on in sun and shade, until the one of all the world is wooed and won, and all the lore of love is taught and learned again. Again a home is built with the fair chamber wherein faint dreams, like cool and shadowy vales, divide the billowed

hours of love. Again the miracle of birth—the pain and joy, the kiss of welcome, and the cradle-song drowning the drowsy prattle of a babe.

And then the sense of obligation and of wrong—pity for those who toil and weep—tears for the imprisoned and despised—love for the generous dead, and in the heart the rapture of a high resolve.

And then ambition with its lust of pelf and place and power, longing to put upon its breast distinction's worthless badge. Then keener thoughts of men and eyes that see behind the smiling mask of craft—flattered no more by the obsequious cringe of gain and greed—knowing the uselessness of hoarded gold—of honor bought from those who charge the usury of self-respect—of power that only bends a coward's knees and forces from the lips of fear the lies of praise. Knowing at last the unstudied gesture of esteem, the reverent eyes made rich with honest thought, and holding high above all other things—high as hope's great throbbing star above the darkness of the dead—the love of wife and child and friend.

Then locks of gray, and growing love of other days and half-remembered things—holding the withered hands of those who first held his, while over dim and loving eyes death softly presses down the lids of rest. And so, locking in marriage vows his children's hands and crossing others on the breasts of peace, with daughters' babes upon his knees, the white hair mingling with the gold, he journeys on from day to day to that horizon where the dusk is waiting for the night. At last, sitting by the holy hearth of home as evening's embers change from red to gray, he falls asleep within the arms of her he worshipped and adored, feeling upon his pallid lips love's last and holiest kiss.

R. G. Ingersoll

Praying Against the Boers.

THE first Sunday in the new year was observed by a multitude of Christians in this country as a day of humiliation and prayer. They humbled themselves before God Almighty—which they never do before anyone else. There is, indeed, a peculiar arrogance about the average Christian of every nationality, but particularly about the average Christian of Great Britain. If he is a Protestant, as is most likely, he looks upon Catholics as idolators, and upon all other non-Protestants in the whole wide world as "heathen." He even tells them, in his lordly way, not what they *might* do, but what they *must* do, to obtain the smallest chance of meeting him in heaven. He sends them missionaries, some hot, some cold, and some "potted." He has the Bible translated, often with singular inaccuracy, into their languages, and forwards them copies by the million. He persuades them, much against their health, but, of course, in the interest of morality, to patronise his Manchester cottons and Bradford woollens. Altogether, he constitutes himself their Providence as far as possible, and exacts the usual tribute, with or without a compensating benefaction. And when they show any signs of independence he lets them know that he has a commission from the Lord to regulate the affairs of this planet.

Why, then, did the British Christian humble himself before God? The fact is, he wanted something, and wanted it badly. He was not making the headway he expected against the Boers in South Africa, and in the midst of this disappointment he was annoyed by foreigners calling him names and expressing a strong desire to see him get a good licking. This made him turn to his God for comfort and consolation. Now, when you turn to your God you must humble yourself. That is the very first and most indispensable condition. No deity will look at you unless you grovel in the dust. All the gods love flattery better than incense. Even the so-called Lord's Prayer, which is supposed to be the perfection of simplicity and efficiency, begins with flattery and ends with flattery. The practical petition is in the middle, like the meat between the slices of bread in a sandwich. It is no use asking a deity for anything except in that mental attitude. You must put him in a good temper, and the easiest way to do that is to tickle his vanity. Even the physical attitude of the petitioner should be sufficiently abject. In the East men prostrate themselves when they pray. In the West, where tailor's bills obtain, they effect a compromise by lowering themselves upon their knees—on a cushion.

The Nonconformists prayed at large last Sunday. They do not greatly affect set forms of wrestling with the Lord. Churchmen, however, go chiefly, although not exclusively, by the Prayer Book. In the Morning Prayer, which is used every Sunday, the clergyman says, "Give peace in our time, O Lord." And the congregation respond, "Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God." Which is surely a very back-handed compliment to the Almighty. Fancy saying to Omnipotence, "There is nobody to help us but you, so for heaven's sake don't let us get into trouble." There is a special prayer, "In time of War and Tumults," in which God is asked to deliver us from our enemies, to abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices: all of which is most appropriate to the present situation. Amongst the "Forms of Prayer to be used at Sea" there is another special prayer, calling upon God to "save us from the violence of the enemy" and to "fight for us." Amen. And then the guns begin to play.

God Almighty has been asked to prosper our arms in South Africa. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Has it come to this? Has the British Empire to apply to heaven for assistance against two small Republics? Have we not a larger army out there than our enemy has? Have we not more guns, more ammunition, and more general resources? What is the matter, then? Our soldiers are brave enough: that is incontestable. Their personal valor could hardly be excelled on this side of insanity. Do the Generals require brains? Did the great Napoleon

speaking the truth when he said the British Army consisted of lions led by asses? If that is the case, prayer will do us no good. It is idle to pray for brains. You are more likely to lose what you have than to get any more.

It must be recollected, moreover, that the Boers can pray as well as we can. Perhaps better. And they have been at it all the time. President Kruger has stolen a march upon us. He made sure of God as well as the best fighting positions; and, having all the tenacity of Jacob, he won't let God go without a terrible tussle. He will wrestle with the Lord all night until daybreak, even under the disadvantage of a dislocated leg, if it so happens, and exhaust himself and the Lord too rather than lose the divine blessing. What our praying men have to do is to coax the Almighty away from the Boers. Now to do this effectually they should go out to the front. England is too far from the scene of operations. Clerical volunteers ought to be enrolled for this service. We could easily spare a few thousands of them. They should be prayer-combatants, so to speak, in the first fighting lines; carrying no weapons but their tongues, but firmly resolved to bear the brunt of the Lord's anger until he changes his mind and comes over to the side of the British.

Somehow or other, although the Lord is being solicited for assistance, there is no sign that our government or our army places any dependence upon him. It seems to be our intention to fight all we know, and see the thing through, whether God is with us or with the other side. Perhaps, after all, we are only humbugging. Does anyone really believe that all the prayers in the world will affect the issue of this struggle? Has it not been proved a thousand times, does not everybody know, that Providence is on the side of the big battalions? And are not the Christians of this country manifest hypocrites in praying against the Boers after sending Peculiar People to prison like felons for praying for the recovery of their sick children?

G. W. FOOTE.

Christian Claims.

THE claims of the Christian Church—both Protestant and Catholic—are so preposterous, and to the general masses so misleading, that it is the duty of Freethought advocates to expose, on all suitable occasions, the absurd and deceptive character of what is termed "the religion of the Cross." The adherents of Protestantism condemn in no measured language the superstitions and mummeries of the Roman Catholic Church, and, in return, the Catholics charge the Protestants with having forsaken the "true faith," and with manifesting an inconsistency of profession unsurpassed in the annals of theological belief. Freethinkers, having no sympathy with the teachings of either party, exclaim: "A plague o' both your houses!"

While differing upon some important points of doctrine, all sects of orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics urge the following claims on behalf of their respective beliefs:—That their religion was "divine" in its origin; that it has an authority which is unique in its character; that its fundamental teachings are original; that it has been the principal cause of human progress; and that the advent of Christ has been successful in its avowed object, which was the promotion of peace, love, and harmony amongst its believers. Now, considering these pretensions have no foundation in fact, we purpose to examine them seriatim.

1. *That Christianity was divine in its origin.*—It may be necessary here to remind our readers that what is termed "Christianity" to-day differs widely from the faith known by that name in the earlier centuries. Even in the third century "Christianity," says the orthodox historian, Gregory, "no longer retained the same form it had assumed in the Primitive Church; the substance had been lost in pursuing the shadow" (*Christian Church*, vol. i., p. 379). It is really very difficult to assign any particular date to the origin of the present Christian system. If it be contended that Christianity was divine because it originated with Christ, we reply that that is simply an arbitrary assumption, inasmuch as no one has defined what the

term "divinity" really means. Before a person can reasonably ascribe anything to one given cause, he should possess some knowledge of that cause. But, so far as we are aware, no knowledge obtains as to the alleged "divine." What is its nature, and wherein does it differ from the human? Besides, there is nothing in the character of the Christian religion to justify the claim that it had a special origin. The lesson of experience is, that all religions have emanated from the human mind. Why, then, should Christianity be an exception? The elements of which it is composed are not peculiar to that religion; on the contrary, they are similar in most respects to the features belonging to other supposed supernatural faiths. Even its chief emblem, the Cross, was borrowed from pagan nations. And it is worthy of note that this symbol was not accepted by the Church until the year A.D. 680, when it "was substituted," says Professor Buchanan, "for the Lamb as the Christian emblem." The same writer observes: "It (the Cross) was never found in the catacombs of Rome. The Christians rejected the Cross, and Tertullian reproached the Pagans for their devotion to the Cross and Crucifix" (*Primitive Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 294). Nothing, in our opinion, would be more easy than to account for the introduction of Christianity by purely natural causes. Those causes may be briefly stated as follows:—The decay of the Roman Empire, the weakened condition of Paganism, the indifference of the people to all that pertained to the alleged supernatural, the existing poverty of the masses, the promises held out to converts of earthly and heavenly rewards, and the general longing then so prevalent for a change in their personal and national existence. For important facts in corroboration of these statements the reader is referred to J. Cotter Morison's *Service of Man* (pp. 174-5 and 178-9).

2. *That Christianity has a unique authority.*—The authority of Roman Catholicism is the Bible as interpreted by the Church; whilst that of Protestants is the New Testament and the teachings ascribed to Christ. We have already shown* that, even according to the statements of eminent professed Christians, the Bible is of no practical authoritative value either upon matters of doctrine or of personal conduct. As to the Catholic Church, that is composed of fallible men, who, as a rule, have not only formed their opinions upon a narrow and (now) worn-out theology, but who have ever been the most determined and persistent foes to the essentials of all secular progress. No scientist, philosopher, or social reformer would think for one moment of appealing to the Catholic Church as an authority upon any subject referring to the mundane welfare of mankind.

The Protestants are no more fortunate in putting Christ forward as an authority. Whatever position he might at one time have occupied as an authoritative teacher, he is of no use in that capacity at the present day. To attempt to emulate his conduct, or to put into practice his teachings, would be regarded not only as the height of folly, but in some cases as exceedingly criminal. This we have repeatedly demonstrated. Upon science, education, general topics of social reform, and intellectual development, he has furnished no standard to which we can wisely appeal. The only authorities of any real value to us in this practical age are cultivated reason and general experience. The injunctions attributed to Christ in the New Testament are incompatible with the requirements of modern society. They may be serviceable to the clergy in their pulpits for the purpose of the propagation of their faith, but they are devoid of any utility in the solutions of problems affecting our welfare. Hence, our laws, so far as they are progressive, are based upon principles the very antithesis to those alleged to have been propounded by Jesus of Nazareth.

3. *That the teachings of Christianity are original.*—After carefully comparing the doctrines and injunctions of the New Testament with those of pagan writers, we unhesitatingly affirm that in the Christian religion there is nothing really new. Professor Buchanan, in his *Primitive Christianity*, enumerates all the leading doctrines of Christianity, and then frankly admits that the whole of them, including the incarnation of the mediating deity in a virgin, the resurrection, the immortality of the soul,

and its final judgment, can be found in the so-called pagan faiths (vol. i., p. 134; vol. ii., p. 310). The same can be said of the moral teachings of Christianity. In fact, the Rev. Dr. George Matheson, in his lecture on "The Religions of China," page 84, candidly states: "The glory of Christian morality is that it is not original." And Mr. Moncure D. Conway, in his *Sacred Anthology*, shows that all the ethical sayings found in the New Testament had been taught before the time of Christ. Forgiveness, charity, humility, the golden rule, and love to enemies were all proclaimed and practised before his advent. Lecky tells us that in Rome a morality was taught that "has never been surpassed." J. S. Mill, in his work upon *Liberty*, also states that "what little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian." This accords with the admission of the present Archbishop of Canterbury when he tells us: "It is in the history of Rome, rather than in the Bible, that we find our models of precepts of political duty, and especially of patriotism..... To the Greeks we owe the corrective which conscience needs to borrow from nature" (*Essay on the Education of the World*).

But has it never occurred to those professed Christians who claim that the highest morality originated with Christ, that in so doing they reflect upon the character of their God? The advent of Christ is said to have taken place about two thousand years ago; what had the people done who lived prior to that period that they should be deprived of this alleged superior morality? And, further, considering that even now two-thirds of the human race have not heard of Jesus or his teachings, is it not an injustice upon the part of the "Father of all" that he should have kept such moral teachings from so many of his children? Judging from a human standpoint, we should think it is. Therefore, we conclude that this Christian claim, like many others, has no foundation in truth.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

Christian Socialism.

THERE are a great many queer things in the world, and a number of queer combination of things that are not individually very curious. But the queerest combination that it has been my lot to come across is what is known as Christian Socialism. Taken separately, one may, with a little care, attach a fairly definite meaning to either term; taken in conjunction, they mean—? By a Christian I understand one who professes to base his life on the teachings of the Old and New Testament, and who believes that there is to be found in these books all that is essential to human welfare. A Socialist I understand to be one who believes in the common ownership of all the means of production, and the collective management of society's affairs in the interests of all. It is when we come to join these two terms that confusion commences, and one feels that if social welfare is dependent upon the clear intelligence of the average individual, and the average individual is a Christian Socialist, then society is in a very bad way indeed.

What, for example, is meant by a system that combines such teachings as the right of each individual to have secured to him the opportunities of a decent, cleanly livelihood, a scheme of old-age pensions, or the support by the State of the aged and infirm, and the command to "take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or what ye shall put on," for "if God so clothes the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you"? Or what is meant by a class of people who profess to accept at one and the same time "Blessed be ye poor," and the teaching that a large part of the crime and degradation of the country can be traced directly to the prevailing social conditions? Or who preach, on the one hand, the duty of the oppressed to rise against the oppressor, and, on the other, the sublime beauties of turning one cheek when the other is smitten? Or who advocate the right

* See *Freethinker* for December 3, 10, and 17.

of the combination of workmen against employers, without finding their advice in conflict with such teachings as "Servants, be obedient to your masters with all fear and trembling, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward"? Surely a type of mind that can entertain such utterly irreconcilable teachings as these holds out little promise as material to usher in the advent of the social millennium.

What does Christian Socialism mean in the mouths of professional religionists? Often it means that "The rich should become the stewards of the poor"—a mere increase of charitable organisations; often it means little else than the repetition of such loud-sounding empty commonplaces as that we are all brethren and should love one another; but always it means that, no matter how the social cards are shuffled, the Church and the clergy are to rule society. That much is an indispensable item in all professional schemes of Christian Socialism. "You may get rid of whatever you please," say gentlemen of the Canon Scott-Holland type, "but you must not get rid of me." The clergy must be retained, or even have their numbers augmented. Well, for my part, if we are to retain all the old ecclesiastical social abuses and privileges, it matters very little whether people have a correct or incorrect idea of Christianity. My interest in fighting Christianity is that its influence forms the ground and chief support of certain serious social evils; further than that my interest in it scarcely reaches. And if some Christian Socialist will condescend to explain how it is possible to retain Christian theology without an organized priesthood, and how it is possible for an organised priesthood to exist without such a body serving as a thoroughly retrogressive agency, I shall be more than thankful.

Did not experience offer daily demonstration of the fact, it would be inconceivable that people who pride themselves on being students of social and economic questions should fail to realise that in the various Churches we have simply so many trading corporations busily engaged in pushing the sale of their wares and safeguarding their own interests. In all preaching, in all Church matters, the main question is, How will such and such a subject affect the church attendance, and ultimately the support given to the Church? And this frame of mind is far more noticeable with the dissenting bodies than with the Established Church. The result is that all educational and social questions that are taken up by the Churches are taken up because it is felt that these movements will help them, not because it is felt that the reforms ought to be obtained, and that they can help in the getting.

Take, as an illustration of this, the question of education. Now, it is, unfortunately, a plain, historic fact that education has never yet been taken up by any Church as a serious, practical business, but only as a means of advancing the interests of its own organization and injuring that of its rivals. The Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century certainly had no passion for education as such. No one could have condemned more heartily than they did the passion for peering into the mysteries of nature. But that the people should read the Bible in the vernacular was one of the many weapons to be wielded against the power of Rome, and, therefore, some measure of general education was indispensable. But here it was clearly not education as an instrument of social reform that was sought, but education as a means of combatting "The Mother of Harlots," to use the delicate language of the Protestant controversialist.

The note struck then has been maintained throughout. At the close of the last century Lancaster, the Quaker, influenced by the ideas of Republican France, and helped materially by the money of Robert Owen, the Free-thinker, opened public schools at Southwark. There is ample evidence to show that the chief motive of the Dissenters in supporting these schools was, that they helped to undermine the influence of the Established Church. From the Church of England side there came the explicit declaration that the whole reason for improving their own educational efforts was because "thousands are drawn from the Church by the attention paid to education out of the Church." From then until now the game has been kept up. Each side has used and valued education solely as a method of advancing the interests of church or chapel. And when the inefficiency and inadequacy of sectarian education led to

the State taking up the matter in 1870, it at once became the policy of the clergy of all classes to keep the Board schools as inefficient as possible, so as to run their own schools at the cheapest possible figure. Since 1870 this has been the only point on which the clergy of all denominations have agreed.

The same policy is obvious in the manipulation of charities by the Churches. It was authoritatively declared at the last Church Congress that the people of South London were too poor to become Dissenters, which was only another way of saying that it was the charities connected with the Church that kept people to it. Unfortunately, there is a large measure of truth in such statements, and what takes place in one district in relation to one Church is equally true in other places of other organisations. The plain truth, again, is that the charities are chiefly valued as means of getting people to accept the particular theology attached thereto. The competition between the different sects has gone on in this matter as in that of education, and the influence of the Churches in mentally pauperising the people by this means is not the least evil aspect of their activity.

In social reforms the lesson is quite as plain. Here the movement has usually been initiated by the stock inquiry: "Why don't the working-classes attend church?" And only when the clergy realise that there is not enough notice taken by them of questions that immediately concern the working-classes is there a broadening of the doctrines preached. The clergy are told people won't attend church because there is nothing said on the question of social reform; and the reply practically is: "Very well, we will preach on social matters, we will preach on anything, so long as it will fill the church and swell the collections." This is the ground motive for all such preaching, and the result is poor enough in all conscience.

How often does one hear from clergymen that it is the duty of wealthy people to see that the poor are provided for? and how few think of the paralysing effect on further social development such teaching has? True, the doctrine is scriptural enough. "The poor ye have always with you," said Jesus, and the ideal society of Christians, from Paul to Sheldon, has generally been that of a handful of rich men doling out relief to a society of paupers. But, personally, I am inclined to recast the message; and, instead of saying that it is the duty of the few to see that the many are provided for out of their charity, to say that it is the duty of society, as a whole, to see that social life is so organised that it shall no longer be within the power of the few to give or withhold from the people the possibilities of a decent, cleanly existence.

The plain and the essential evil of Christianity is that it is absolutely destitute of anything in the shape of a sane social teaching. It possesses a number of glittering generalities and airy abstractions, and that is all. The New Testament is absolutely silent as to the proper structure of the State; and from the first line in Matthew to the last in Revelation it would be impossible to select enough advice on which to undertake the management of a family. In social matters Christianity has originated nothing, and has never been a step in advance of existing social institutions. Dean Milman, in his *History of Latin Christianity*, admits this in the following passage. He says:—

"Christianity may exist in a certain form in a nation of savages as well as in a nation of philosophers, yet its specific character will almost entirely depend upon the character of the people who are its votaries [italics mine]. It must be considered, therefore, in constant connection with that character; it will darken with the darkness and brighten with the light of each century; in an uncongenial time it will recede so far from its essential and genuine nature, as scarcely to retain any sign of its divine original; in a congenial time it will advance with the advancement of human nature up to the utmost height of the intellectual capacity of man."

That this statement is substantially true few students of history will deny; and, in the light of the admission, where is the social value of Christianity? A religion that recedes or advances with the retrogression or development of human nature may be an index of its condition, but it can hardly be taken as a factor in its growth.

Yet it is in the light of the principle given in the

above quotation that the social aspect of Christianity is to be properly appreciated. Right through its history it has sanctified the society in which it found itself, so long as its own existence and well-being have been assured. Never has a reform been strongly urged by any of the Churches until conditions made its preaching a source of profit. That we to-day should find within the Churches a movement for utilising ideas that have been matured and propagated outside is fully in line with the past history of Christianity. The unwary may be easily caught by such tactics; the wary will read the lesson with a fuller sense of its meaning, feeling that advanced ideas are never in such danger as when their hereditary enemies profess for them a feeling of friendship.

C. COHEN.

The Conquest of Canaan.

In view of the revolution which has taken place in our ideas of Hebrew literature, it is curious to find individuals still adhering to the theory that there must be some kernel of truth in the story of the Egyptian Bondage and the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites. It is to be borne firmly in mind that these two events are narrated in the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua; and it is precisely those compositions which modern research has demonstrated to be imaginative and unhistorical. Bishop Colenso, following the lead of the Deists of the last century, definitely proved that the events detailed in these books were not only incredible, but impossible; whilst later criticism has endeavored, with considerable success, to follow out the process of the compilation of this literature, with the result of showing that it has been fabricated for the express purpose of supporting certain priestly interests and assumptions. Consequently, it is exceedingly surprising that anyone should attach the slightest historical value to these books.

But it is argued that the story of the Egyptian bondage and the conquest of Canaan was already familiar to the oldest Hebrew writers, whose compositions have come down to us, being alluded to by the eighth-century prophets, Hosea, Amos, and Micah. That, however, does not help us very much, seeing that these prophets lived seven hundred years after the alleged Canaanitish conquest. They may be witnesses for the beliefs of their own time, but we have no means of judging their competence to speak of events which happened centuries before they were born.

Finally, it is urged that these traditions are so positive and so persistent that there must necessarily be some truth at the bottom of them. But we fail entirely to see the necessity. A tradition, in the nature of things, must be a falsehood. Traditions are merely theories framed to account for matters the origin of which is unknown. If we go into the country, and see a huge stone lying about a hundred yards from a church and five miles from any other rock at all resembling it, we may consult the local tradition as to how it got there, and we shall probably be told that once upon a time the devil picked up the stone from off that hill five miles away, and flung it at the church in order to destroy it. But, his aim being bad, he missed it, and ran away, leaving the stone where we now see it. No educated person would argue that there was any kernel of truth in that tradition. It would only prove to us that the legend was invented at a period after the church was built, and at a time when people seriously believed in the personal existence of the devil. In our days the stone would be considered as an erratic block, conveyed from its original position by glacial agency; and the fact of the church being in its neighborhood would be purely accidental. In like manner, we can only be called upon to accept the Jewish legends of the conquest of Canaan when these legends can be shown to accord with the circumstances of their settlement. Otherwise, we must assume that the Hebrew tradition has been framed in support of some theory which is most probably wrong.

The story of the Egyptian Bondage may be summarily dismissed. For a hundred years the monuments of Egypt have been searched, and no trace of any Israelitish sojourn has been found upon them. Scholars have

entirely failed to trace any connection between Egyptian and Hebrew religion or culture. The Israelitish tradition does not even tell us the name of any known Egyptian monarch; for King Pharaoh is an utter stranger to the Egyptian annals; and apologists have been driven to the strangest shifts in order to justify him. The Hebrew language shows no signs of Egyptian influence, though the people who spoke it were such close neighbors of the Egyptians, and were so often drawn into the sphere of Egyptian politics. Consequently, there is absolutely nothing to support the idea that the Israelites were ever in Egypt.

On the other hand, it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the Jews from their immediate neighbors in Palestine. First of all, they spoke the Hebrew language; and we cannot suppose that the Hebrew language originated anywhere else than in Palestine. It is true that in historical times it was spoken in Cyprus and Carthage; but the Cypriotes and Carthaginians were admittedly in close social, religious, and dynastic relations with Phœnicia. Hebrew was spoken to the east of the Israelites, as we have the Moabite Stone to witness. Hebrew was spoken to the west of the Israelites, as we have the evidence of a large number of coins and inscriptions. Therefore, we can only conclude that the Israelites were of the same origin as the Moabites and the Phœnicians. If any such body as the children of Israel ever invaded Canaan, they must have been so completely absorbed by the Hebrew-speaking inhabitants as to leave no trace of a separate existence.

When an alien race invades a country and settles in it, its intrusion is accompanied by changes in the nomenclature. The Anglo-Saxon conquest may be taken as an illustration. The Romano-British names of places have almost disappeared. *Aquæ Solis* has become Bath; *Eboracum* has become York; *Camulodunum* has become Colchester; *Durovernum* has become Canterbury; and so on. In Palestine, at the present time, the nomenclature varies greatly from the ancient appellations; although, in this case, the country is regarded as a holy land, and both natives and visitors endeavor to preserve the older land marks. *El Khulil* has replaced Hebron; *Sebustiyeh*, Samaria; *Nablous*, Shechem; etc. It may, therefore, be asked what change the invasion of the Israelites made upon the map of Palestine. To this we can only answer that, as far as we can judge, it made no change whatever. At an early period the kings of Egypt endeavored to extend their sway into Asia Minor; and they engraved lists of their conquests upon their buildings. The names in these lists have been repeatedly studied, and have been shown to be the same as those employed in the days of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Further than that, a large number of cuneiform documents originating from Palestine were discovered a few years ago at Tell-el-Amarna, and these, again, still more clearly demonstrated that the towns of Canaan bore the same names before the alleged times of Moses as they did under the Hebrew monarchies. They even proved that the Israelitish "tradition" was wrong in asserting that the names of some places had varied. Thus, the Hebrew legends give the name of *Iebus* to the city afterwards known as Jerusalem; but the latter name is the only one known to the Tell-el-Amarna tablets written long before there was any king in Israel. It is, therefore, impossible to suppose that there was any violent revolution, or any great displacement of the native population in the interval.

When the Assyrians pushed their conquests towards the Mediterranean in the ninth century B.C., they found in Palestine two monarchies, one of which they styled Beth-Khumri, or Samarina, and the other Yehudah. The royal names, and other circumstances, show that these were what we call the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Thus there is historical evidence of the existence of these two Jewish kingdoms in 853 B.C.; as to the period before this date we know little or nothing. The Jewish traditions embodied in the Books of Samuel and Kings give lists of monarchs which are probably authentic, going back to Rehoboam, King of Judah, and Jeroboam, King of Israel, with whose names is connected the invasion of "Shishak," King of Egypt. This latter is no doubt a reminiscence of the Egyptian King, Sheshonk, who conquered Palestine somewhere about 950 B.C., but whose inscriptions give us no

information as to the political divisions of the country, or the names of its chiefs. Previous to Rehoboam and Jeroboam, it is alleged that Israel and Judah formed a united kingdom, ruled by a monarch bearing the divine name Solomon (which appears in the Assyrian pantheon as *Sulmannu*), who was preceded by David. This "David" is not improbably the same name as appears on the Moabite Stone as the Israelitish deity, *Dodah*. David was preceded by "Saul" (the Assyrian God, *Shaul*), who was the first Jewish monarch. It is the rule for all royal genealogies to lose themselves in the deities. The genealogies of the Saxon kings all go back to Odin, who figures only three or four generations before the conquest of Britain. So that, although there is no reason why there should not have been actual kings bearing the names of Saul, David, and Solomon, yet the mere fact of these being divine names warrants us in regarding them with suspicion. According to the Hebrew tradition, the Jews, after invading Canaan, lived for a long period in a state of anarchy, until a celebrated prophet, called Samuel, "the name of El," anointed Saul as King of the Israelites. Samuel is a legendary personage, but, prior to his time, we have pure, unmitigated myth, which cannot be accepted as giving us any clue to the origin of the Israelites.

When we leave myths and legends, therefore, and ascend to solid fact, we can only confess our ignorance of the origin of the Jewish kingdoms—an ignorance shared by the ancient Jews themselves. Light first breaks upon them in the period of the Assyrian invasions, and about a century later we have the oldest-known Hebrew books, the prophets Hosea, Micah, and Amos (which, however, are not above the suspicion of having been largely augmented at later periods), to which may be added some few parts of Isaiah. In these we find in full force the idea that the Israelites came from Egypt under the leadership of some unnamed prophet. It has already been shown, however, that this legend is totally at variance with the known facts; but it is not surprising that such a theory grew up in Palestine, because the Egyptian kings of the eighteenth century B.C. had conquered that country, and the Egyptians remained rulers for many hundreds of years. It was, therefore, perfectly natural for Palestinian tribes to consider that a real or pretended Egyptian origin ennobled them. The next development is the forgery of the Book of Deuteronomy in the reign of Josiah. This work introduces us to the prophet Moses by name; and from henceforth the legend is rapidly developed, until, in the course of time, the full narrative appears, and receives its final form in the Priestly Code some time after the Babylonian captivity. It is well recognised that the object of Deuteronomy was to centralise Jewish religion and government at Jerusalem; and, in fact, the whole tradition points in this direction. It was obviously the policy of the later kings to persuade their subjects that they were a solid and peculiar people, bound together by some past historic event; and this theory of their origin would be even more useful to the later princely high-priests who ruled over Jerusalem, and who culminated in the family of the Maccabees.

Therefore, the theory of the Egyptian bondage and the conquest of Canaan was eminently useful to the Jewish rulers and priesthood; but, though the theory was useful, it was not true, because the Jews were so closely allied in language, customs, and ritual with their immediate neighbors that they could not have come from anywhere, but must have grown up on the spot, and the permanence of the geographical names is sufficient proof that the land of Canaan had never been overrun and alienated in the style of the Hexateuchal legends.

CHILPERIC.

In our small personal affairs there is such a thing as righteous suppression of the truth—even such a thing as commendable lying. Under certain circumstances avowal of convictions is as hateful and mischievous as under most circumstances dissimulation is. But in all the large matters of the mind—in philosophy, religion, science, art, and the like—a lesser service to the race than utterance of the truth as he thinks he sees it, leaving the result to whatever powers may be, no man has a right to be content with having performed, for it is only so that truth is established.—*Ambrose Bierce*.

Acid Drops.

WILL Professor St. George Mivart be excommunicated? Already the *Tablet* has "no alternative but to regard him as an outsider and an opponent of the Catholic faith." Two or three years ago Dr. Mivart explained—much, we presume, to the satisfaction of all who are going there—that there is Happiness in Hell. It is a mistake, he said, to regard that establishment as a home of misery. Its denizens were not as happy as their more fortunate brethren in Heaven; but they were still happy in a very high degree—a much higher degree, apparently, than is ever reached in this world. Now it was not to be expected that the Catholic Church would smile upon such an opinion. It wants a hell to frighten fools with, and keep them in due subjection. Accordingly, while Dr. Mivart was not told that his opinion was heretical, he was told that it was decidedly inopportune. In other words, he was told to "shut up." And like a dutiful son of the Church he did so.

Dr. Mivart, however, will keep silence no longer. He withdraws his submission. He now declares that the Bible contains a multitude of false statements, and says it is "most shocking that such errors should be taught to children, and preached to adults, as if they were truths." Dr. Mivart denies the Creation story, and criticises adversely even the miraculous birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, he claims to be still a good member of the Holy Catholic Church. Well, that is all very pretty and proper; but what will the Pope and his Cardinals say? If they don't excommunicate Dr. Mivart, there does not seem to be any reason why the editor of the *Freethinker* should not wear a red hat.

A league has been started with the object of securing an amendment of the law regarding the licensing of entertainments by transferring the licensing powers from the County Council to a judicial body. Assuredly it is time that the London County Council was brought to its senses in this matter; but, after all, the Council is, or is supposed to be, a representative body, which could hardly be said to the same extent of a judicial authority. And the latter might be just as puritanically stupid.

Dean Hole is a sanguine man. He actually fancies that greater Sunday freedom will help to fill the churches and chapels. "If," he says, "I could get a man out of the public-house, and induce him to admire beautiful pictures, the lovely color of a butterfly's wing, or the wonderful mechanism of a shell, then I should have a much better chance of taking that man by the arm and leading him to the House of God." Well, we think Dean Hole is mistaken. We believe the general clerical instinct is sound on this point—we mean professionally. Nine out of every ten men of God feel that people will go less and less to church and chapel in proportion as they have the opportunity of recreating or improving themselves elsewhere.

We quite agree with Dean Hole, however, that "there is too much preaching in the churches." But this is only a confession that Christianity is getting played out. Jesus Christ told his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. It seems, therefore, the business of a clergyman to preach, preach, preach. When preaching isn't wanted, it is a signal for the clergyman to adopt another occupation.

Mr. Plowden, the magistrate at the Marylebone Police Court, in a recent "obscenity" case, had the common sense to point out a fact which the police overlook. Extracts were handed into court from two books sold by the defendant—Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron* and Zola's *La Terre*. "Undoubtedly," Mr. Plowden said, "they were obscene, but it would be dangerous to condemn when they had been taken from the body of a work. If other literature were to be dealt with in that way, then some of our best literature, both profane and sacred, would have to go down as obscene. Regard must be had to the scope and tendency of a book, the intention of the author, the date and circumstances under which the book was written, and the position the work had obtained since it had been written." The fact is, that the Bible could easily be proved to be an obscene book on the method of police prosecutions. Mr. Plowden evidently sees this, and his warning may have some effect on the pious bigots who appear to govern at Scotland Yard.

The police raid upon the University Press premises at Watford seems to have been completely successful. Some underling appeared at the Police Court to answer the summons that had been served upon the University Press to show cause why the books seized should not be destroyed. No defence appears to have been made. The gentleman who is said to be the University Press, or at least its controlling spirit, was on the continent—as usual. From that safe vantage-ground he sent a letter to the prosecution, in which

he stated that the seizure of Dr. Féré's book would be laughed at in Paris. No doubt. But that does not help us much in England. An order is made for the destruction of the books, and nothing can be done to prevent it, since it is impossible to help a man who will not help himself. Battles cannot be fought over a man who lies down when the enemy opens attack. All we can do is to shrug our shoulders and pass on.

Dr. Clifford and the Rev. Silas K. Hocking are loud in their denunciation of the war as being opposed to the teaching of Christ. The latter says "there are many people who think with myself that the time has come when some organised attempt should be made by those who believe in the New Testament to put a stop to the inhuman slaughter that is going on in South Africa—a slaughter that is not only a disgrace to our civilisation, but which brings our Christianity into utter contempt."

Rev. Dr. Clifford, preaching on what he called the Transvaal war, though it is all being fought in British territory, declared that "Nations should apply the ethics of Christ as men did." But this was not the opinion of the late Bishop of Peterborough. Dr. Magee not only confessed, but contended, that any society which tried to act upon the Sermon on the Mount would go to ruin in a week. We fancy he understood the case a good deal better than Dr. Clifford.

Gentlemen like Dr. Clifford always offer the "ethics of Christ" to their own countrymen. Why doesn't he offer the "ethics of Christ" to President Kruger and the Boers? It is all very well to say that England meant war, but, as a matter of fact, the Boers began it. Dr. Clifford takes full advantage of the liberty which obtains in this country, especially for Christian ministers. If he talked in this way out in the Transvaal, old rural-simplicity Kruger would soon have him under lock and key.

Just let us see for a moment how the "ethics of Christ" would work out. The Boers rush into Natal and take Dundee. Well, what is the next move—on our part? Should we oppose them? Should we defend British territory? Nothing of the kind. Christ taught that when we are smitten on one cheek we should obligingly hold up the other cheek to the smiter. Evidently, therefore, our duties as Christians, when the Boers have got possession of Dundee, is to offer them Ladysmith. When they have occupied Ladysmith, we should offer them Maritzburg; and when they have occupied Maritzburg, we should offer them Durban. After that we should offer them ships to convey them to London. Then we should invite Paul Kruger to abolish Parliament and govern us as absolute dictator. That is the logical upshot of the "ethics of Christ."

A writer in the *British Weekly*, discussing the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, says "it might be as well to inquire what light our Lord's own life casts on them." Very good. The writer then proceeds to prove by various instances that Christ failed to carry out his own precepts—particularly that of "Resist not Evil." The conclusion seems to be that, as Christ did not trouble to reduce his teaching to practice, there is no reason why we should. All that we have to do is to regard it as "paradoxical," meaning exactly the opposite of what is said, and then to pursue our own pre-determined course.

In addition to an advertisement of the *Freethinker*, the *Clarion* contains a pointed article on "Blasphemy," in which the *Morning Herald* is unmercifully chaffed on its protest against the pious messages of Boer Generals, such as that which President Kruger received from General Louis Botha announcing the Boer victory at the Tugela. "The God of our forefathers granted us a brilliant victory," it began.

The *Clarion* shows that the blasphemy is not all on the Boer side. "Our Christianity," it says, "is a lie. This was made painfully evident on Christmas Day. Never before has the contrast between profession and practice been brought so vividly before us. Blasphemy? In how many places of worship, built to the glory of God, were hymns of praise sung to the Almighty for his goodness in sending his Son, the Prince of Peace, to redeem the world and save sinners; that 'whoever believeth in him shall not perish'? In how many of the same places of worship did the same people fall on their knees and pray for the success of our arms in South Africa? Which, as the people are determined to see it through, may mean the extermination of the Boers. Blasphemy?"

The *British Weekly* says "this war has been God's way of reanimating the dying faith of the British people." How are we to reconcile that statement with the declaration of the Rev. Silas Hocking, that it is bringing Christianity into utter contempt?

Here is another good Boer story to match the one we printed in last week's "Acid Drops." A Dutch minister,

lately arrived from Holland, was rebuked by an old farmer for expressing doubts as to the reality of a personal Devil. "I can show you his portrait," said the Boer; and, taking down his family Bible, which was adorned with antique woodcuts, he turned to a picture of Old Nick, with horns and tail. "There!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "You have doubts about the existence of the Devil. There is a picture of him, and that is the Word of God."

A certain Bishop found himself in a rather compromising position in a Boer household not so long ago. Mark Twain thus tells the story, *apropos* of the fact that, in the lonely veldts, the less civilised Boers, male and female, go to bed in the fragrant clothes they have worn all day and, perhaps, every week-day for years. The Bishop was making a business progress through the tavernless veldt, and one night he stopped with a Boer. After supper he was shown to bed. He undressed, weary and worn out, and was soon sound asleep. In the night he woke up, feeling crowded and suffocated, and found the old Boer and his fat wife in bed with him, one on each side, with all their clothes on and snoring. He had to stay there and stand it—weak and suffering—until dawn, when sleep again fell upon him for an hour. Then he woke again. The Boer was gone, but the wife was still at his side.

A rather remarkable instance of larceny for religious objects has occurred in Philadelphia, where a Sunday-school teacher was charged with stealing a number of small articles from shops. Her defence was this: "I have a Sunday-school class of eight girls, and I was unable to get money to buy them Christmas presents. All the other teachers are giving their pupils presents, and I was determined to get something for mine. I didn't want to steal, but I was driven to it."

They have a ready method of bringing home parental responsibility in Russia. Two couples have been sentenced at Jurieff, in the Baltic provinces, to two months' imprisonment for "not having brought up their children in the Greek orthodox faith," and the children were handed over for education to relatives of the Established Church, or in default to the Government. There are not a few Anglican Churchmen whose burning zeal suggests that they would not be averse to some such penal provision in this country, if they could only get it.

Yarmouth churches have no qualms about receiving race-course profits, says the *Christian World*. Year by year a portion of the profits of the Yarmouth race-meeting—probably to disarm criticism—are appropriated to charities, and the Parish Church Restoration Fund has been benefited largely in this way. Recently the Race Committee sent £100 towards its new organ, to the new Seamen's Church £50, to St. Peter's Church £10, to Gorleston Parish Church £50, and to a Church institution £50. We need not be surprised: the Established Church has never been over-scrupulous as to the source whence it has received pious gifts.

Canon Scott Holland, in the *Commonwealth*, speaks very disparagingly of the alleged miracle-working at Lourdes, which, he says, appeals to our childish, baby-ignorance of all that may be going on in a world beyond our ken. He thinks it wrong to brood over the miraculous, to dwell upon it, to fix it, to give it permanent localisation and system, and to work it as a business. Upon these observations the *Christian World* inquires whether the criticism does not equally condemn the miracle-mongering of Canon Scott Holland's own "Catholicism"? What is the Anglo-Catholic faith, it asks, that "broods on, dwells on, fixes, gives permanent localisation and system, works as a business," etc., the apostolical succession, the grace of orders, the miraculous conversion of the elements, and the washing clean of a sinner by the words of priestly absolution? Are the faith-cures at Lourdes any more childish than such pretensions to the miraculous?

How is this for a piece of unctuous piety? Mr. Alexander Roger, honorary secretary of the National Protestant Federation, writes: "The selection of the Lord's Day by our Generals to attack the foe, and the deliberate shelling of their camps when engaged in worship, hoping to get a temporary advantage because of the Boers' regard for the observance of Sunday, cannot but bring upon us the displeasure of the Most High."

It seems that Dr. McGiffert, of New York, is not to be prosecuted for heresy, after all. He was politely requested to withdraw from the Church, but declined to do so, and the Americans are so sick of heresy prosecutions that they are, apparently, inclined to leave him alone.

That rising High Churchman, Mr. Athelstan Riley, has established a new Society, of which he calls himself "The Master." It is a Society which, in its aims, partakes of the modesty of its founder. It is only an "Association for Promoting the Unity of Christendom." Needless to say, it does not anticipate any immediate realisation of its object.

The unity will probably arrive about the time Christendom has ceased to exist.

The *Church Times* is very indignant at the fact that, pending the appointment of a chaplain to the Loughborough Union Workhouse, representatives of even "non-Christian sects" should be permitted to address the inmates. The selection of a Unitarian preacher to hold a service "reached the high-water mark of audacity and tyranny." How shocking!

Says the *Church Times*: "To take advantage of the helplessness and ignorance of the poor inmates of the workhouse, and to make them believe that they were celebrating the Feast of the Incarnation with a Christian service, when the acting-chaplain was one who denies the first principle of the Christian faith, was to show the most heartless contempt for charity, justice, and religion." Of course, the appointment of a Church of England chaplain would not be "taking advantage of the helplessness and ignorance of the poor inmates." All paupers are, or ought to be, members of the Established Church, and, being so, should hate Dissent like poison.

The Secretary of the Dumferline Protestant Defence Association recently attended service at the Dumferline Abbey Church to make a protest. He rose and cried out that "this performance," meaning the service, was a "revival of Paganism." The interruption created a considerable sensation, which a voluntary on the organ only partially smothered.

Canon Courtenay Moore, M.A., would apparently like to see some drastic kind of punishment visited upon clerical exponents of the Higher Criticism. He has written a letter on "The Impunity of Anglican Rationalists." Lately, it seems, he has been reading, "with painful interest," two books published during the past year—one by Canon Cheyne, and the other, a volume of sermons, by the late Dr. Benjamin Jowett. He is shocked at their "extreme Rationalism." He selects the following statement from a sermon by Dr. Jowett: "No sensible person would think nowadays of resting the evidence of Christianity on the basis of miracles; and may not this stumbling-block, which has so long almost necessarily divided the Christian world from the scientific, in the course of another generation, entirely disappear?" Dr. Cheyne's book on *The Christian Use of the Psalms* he regards as quite as bad, if not worse, in the same direction, and he promises a criticism of it in another letter, when the Rationalist Canon may expect to be chopped into mincemeat.

How these Christians love one another! A Mr. S. Courthope Bosanquet recently stated that a young friend of his had seen a donkey in procession at St. Alban's, Holborn. This was said in support of Lady Wimborne's declaration, which, a little time ago, raised so great a storm of denial and derision in the Ritualist camp. Now the *Church Times* says Mr. Bosanquet is described as a university and professional man, but it adds, if "he ever took a degree at his university, it must have given him leave to write himself down an A. S. S." Very polite—is it not?

Providence, in whom we are implored to place our trust, recently permitted an earthquake in the province of Tiflis which destroyed six villages. Up to the present five hundred dead bodies have been recovered. "They will be done."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, recently preaching in connection with an international missionary conference, said he was glad to believe that every Protestant was beginning to recognise that the command, "Go forth into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," made it incumbent on them to do all in their power to forward the work of evangelisation. The Primate might have explained, whilst he was about it, all that is conveyed by this message which is so "incumbent" upon us. The complete passage is as follows: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark xvi. 15-18).

It is true this portion of Mark is said to be an interpolation. If the Primate so regards it, how is it "incumbent" upon us, and, if it be genuine, does it not carry with it rather more in the way of promise than the most devout of believers could expect to see realised?

Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, Kentucky, has his say on the agitation against Mr. Roberts,

the member for Utah, being allowed to sit in the American Congress on account of his being a Mormon. We make the following extract: "Roberts' religion is so ridiculous that no man believing such a religion can be intellectually qualified to sit on a coroner's jury over a dead nigger, much less to go to Congress; but it is not so disgusting as the religion of Brother Billy McKinley, who believes that God had a son by another man's wife without being married to her, like old Grover Cleveland. The keeper of the harem of the Sultan of Sulu is to-day in the employ of the United States government, his salary requiring the signature of my friend McKinley, who let me out of the penitentiary; and, with this and a thousand other facts like this confronting us, I do not see how any body of any sense is going to oppose the seating of Roberts for having only three wives—only two more than McKinley and I each have—when McKinley's friend, the Sultan of Sulu, has several hundred, and McKinley's man Solomon had 700 and 300 concubines."

The Christians had an Intercession meeting in the Plymouth Guildhall. The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes was invited, but couldn't come. Sir Edward Clarke was invited, and wouldn't come. He did not share the assurance of the conveners that they were able to state "the motives which actuate the Almighty."

The Rev. William John Loftie, a Church of England clergyman, aged sixty, living in Sheffield-terrace, Kensington, has been fined £5 at the Marlborough Police Court for violating public decency with a servant-girl in Hyde Park. Such an incident raises no commotion in religious circles. But what a rumpus there would have been if the culprit had been a Secular lecturer instead of a clergyman!

Theophilus Phillips, of Middlesborough, Town Councillor and Sunday-school teacher, has been fined £5, or in default a month's imprisonment, for taking indecent liberties with a girl under twelve years of age. The defendant seems to have been a great practitioner in the art of kissing in the Sunday-school. "Salute one another with a holy kiss," said the apostle. Theophilus Phillips forgot to lay emphasis on the "holy." He laid it all on the kiss.

Mr. George Macdonald, whose bright humor lightens up the *New York Truthseeker*, waxes facetious over the British reverses in South Africa, and flatters his countrymen on having settled the Spaniard very much more efficiently. He forgets, however, to begin with, that the Spaniards can't fight like the Boers; secondly, that the Spaniards were very badly equipped, while the Boers are equipped magnificently; thirdly, that the Spaniards couldn't shoot, while the Boers are perhaps the best marksmen in the world. Finally, he forgets that Cuba is much nearer the United States than South Africa is to England. When friend George mentions the matter, it is perhaps pardonable to say that the long-distance job which America has on hand in the Philippines doesn't reflect the greatest credit on her military genius. On the whole, we fancy the South African trouble will be settled a good while before the Philippine business. After all, though, we would much rather seek other comparisons, and other emulations, between England and America.

The editor of *Reynolds's* had another pious fit last week. "England," he said, "stands revealed as the great Atheistical nation." He proceeded to say that the classes, having robbed the masses of the land, have now "cynically robbed them of God, and of reward hereafter." Well, now, that is funny! "God" is all over the shop in this begospelled country, and Kingdom-come is preached in myriads of churches and chapels, besides being openly taught in Voluntary schools, and practically taught in Board schools. It is nonsense to call England "Atheistical." There are perhaps ten thousand real Atheists in England, and they are the best workers in nearly every reform movement. Mr. Thompson should cease working this sentimental vein. He is capable of better things.

"I have noticed," said the Rev. Dr. Goodman, pausing in his discourse, "that two or three of the brethren have looked at their watches several times during the last few minutes. For fear their timepieces may not agree, I will say that the correct time is 11.45. I set my watch by the regulator at the jeweller's last night. The sermon will be over at 12.1. It would have closed promptly at 12 but for this digression. Let us proceed to consider now what the apostle meant when he says: 'I press towards the mark.'"—*Chicago Tribune*.

Mrs. Tilford: "It must have taken Daniel Webster a long time to compile the Dictionary. Don't you think so?" Tilford: "Daniel? You mean Noah, don't you?" Mrs. Tilford: "Now, don't be silly; Noah built the ark."—*Brooklyn Life*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 21, Liverpool; 28, Glasgow.
February 4, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 14, Leicester; 21 and 28, Athenæum, London. February 4, Sheffield; 11, Bolton; 18, New Brompton; 25, Glasgow; 26, 27, and 28, Glasgow districts. March 4, Dundee; 11, Huddersfield.—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.
- ESS JAY BEE.—Glad to have your congratulations on "the excellent quality" of our new year's number. We have instructed Mr. Forder to send your newsagent a contents-sheet of the *Freethinker* weekly. Will you kindly tell him so, and let us know if there should be any miscarriage? We quite understand the difficulty he has in obtaining a contents-sheet from his wholesale agent. All sorts of obstacles are put in the way of the success of this journal.
- JOSEPH COLLINSON.—We see no use in a prolonged discussion on such a point. You have had a turn at Major Warren, and he has replied. There the matter must rest. As a matter of fact, Major Warren did not say that it was *right* to flog the peccant clergyman, but simply that he felt an itching to chastise him—which is a very natural and proper feeling, although, of course, it needs regulation.
- T. PERKINS.—Hope to find room for it.
- W. COX.—Don't write notes on Lecture Notice postcards. They are liable to be overlooked.
- J. H. GILLILAND.—Inserted as desired. But is not direct Free-thought propaganda rather required in Ireland?
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks once more for your batches of cuttings.
- ALTCAR.—We dimly recollect the verse you refer to, but we have not time to hunt it up for you.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—Your acknowledgment to hand. That is sufficient. We hope you will all have a good time at the presentation to Mr. Ridgway on January 29, which, by the way, is Thomas Paine's birthday.
- L. MARSHALL.—We are always pleased to see the *Star* denouncing religious hypocrisy, only we wish its denunciations were not confined to one political direction. Nor can we quite see why it is impious to call this war "God-inspired," if by "God" is meant the God of the Bible, which is a perfect text-book of bloodshed and massacre.
- G. L. MACKENZIE.—Thanks. In our next.
- A. SIMSON.—Much obliged, but we do not think the back numbers of those journals could be disposed of in that way. Thanks for your good wishes for the new year.
- P. H. ELCHIN.—Meritorious, but hardly in our way.
- G. LANGRIDGE.—Taking all things into consideration, we are not dissatisfied with the support which has been given to the Free-thought Publishing Company, Limited. We did hope that *all* the Shares would have been taken up by the end of 1899. But the best method of judgment is by comparison. Looking back over the history of other appeals, the response to this one shows a very decided improvement. There are still some "half-hearted" people, as you say, but they will perhaps come into the active ranks later on.
- E. GWINNEL.—Your method of advertising the *Freethinker* is a good one. We shall say something more about it in our next issue.
- J. F. STOUT.—We cannot insert disguised advertisements, and we can always write our own reviews.
- H. PERCY WARD.—Thanks for your efforts to give publicity to the *Freethinker* in Birmingham. If you drop a postcard to Miss Vance, telling her how many copies you can use, she will forward you a parcel of back numbers immediately. With regard to the gentleman you mention, as he is an absolute stranger to us we can hardly say anything in his favor, although that is no reason why you should say nothing. We are pleased to hear that Miss Goyné has recommenced lecturing, and will occupy the Leicester Secular Hall on January 28. We wish her every success—as we wish you.
- THE Editor of the *Practical Confectioner and Baker* writes: "In your last issue (Dec. 31) I note the paragraph in which you fall foul of my humble personality; this, I think on reflection, is hardly fair, as, although the extract referred to appeared in the last month's issue of this journal, and the publication for which I am responsible, yet it does not necessarily follow that I endorse the sentiments therein expressed. In answer to the question at the commencement of your note, I beg to say that a trade journal should *not* advocate, support, or disagree with any religious principles whatever; neither does the journal with which I am connected. If your reviewer had taken the trouble, he would have seen that the par in question was taken with others from a Canadian exchange. As to my own innermost opinion of, or views on, religious matters in general, these are my own; but, not being afraid or ashamed of them, I may state that, were I known intimately by yourself, it would be found that there is very little difference between the editor of the *Freethinker* and yours faithfully, William White."
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Boston Investigator—People's Newspaper—Liberator—Sydney Bulletin—Isle of Man Times—Western Morning News—Ethical World—Two Worlds—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Freethought Magazine—El Libre Pensamiento—Public Opinion—Freidenker—Crescent—N. E. Daily Gazette—Torch of Reason—Secular Thought.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

OWING to the heavy pressure upon our space this week, we are obliged to hold over one of the two promised Ingersoll pictures: It will, however, appear in our next issue. It is a splendid portrait of Ingersoll taken during the last few months of his life.

There was an excellent audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Day of Humiliation and Prayer," by which the Christians in England were trying to coax God Almighty into siding with them against the Boers in South Africa. Although still bearing about the fag-end of a bad cold, and being in less good voice than usual, the lecturer thoroughly sustained the interest of the meeting. His humorous passages, which were frequent, produced much laughter; and the applause at the end was particularly enthusiastic.

Mr. C. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Jan. 14). No doubt he will have a good audience and a hearty welcome. Mr. Cohen will be followed by Mr. Watts, who is to lecture there for two successive Sundays (Jan. 21 and 28). Mr. Foote will not be at the Athenæum Hall again till the middle of February.

To-day, Sunday, January 14, Mr. Charles Watts lectures morning and evening in the Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester. We hope that, as usual, he will have good audiences.

The Birmingham Branch held its New Year's social gathering at the Exchange Restaurant on Tuesday evening, January 2. It was a most successful function. About two months ago Mr. Percy Ward started a Debating Society in connection with the Branch. This also is a success. Its meetings are held in the Assembly Room, Victoria Hotel, John Bright-street, on Tuesday evenings. Mr. Ward is now trying to form a good library for the Branch. Of course he (or Mr. Partridge, the secretary) will be happy to receive Freethought books from friends who no longer require them. This evening (January 14) Mr. Ward holds his first theological debate of any importance. He is to discuss the question, "Is there a God?" with the Rev. A. J. Dade, a Unitarian minister. No doubt he will acquit himself ably in the encounter.

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace entered his seventy-eighth year on Monday. Freethinkers will all wish him still more years of happiness and usefulness. Dr. Wallace is a man of great intellectual distinction, although he has never been able to throw off the last vestiges of the superstition of his childhood.

The Birmingham Branch has offered to supply a copy of the *Freethinker* to each of the Public Libraries in the city, but the Free Libraries Committee have "declined" the offer "with thanks." We are obliged to the Branch. We despise the Free Libraries Committee. Still, we wish them no harm; we only hope that they will some day rise to the level of common manhood. They are below it as long as they refuse fair-play to any form of opinion.

* The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner took place on Monday evening at the Holborn Restaurant. There were just ninety-nine diners, including Mr. G. W. Foote (chairman), Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. H. Snell, Mr. Victor Roger, Mr. E. Wilson, Mr. S. Hartmann, Mr. B. Hyatt, Mr. C. A. Watts, and the following ladies:—Mrs. Foote, Miss Nellie Foote, Mrs. C. Watts, Mrs. C. A. Watts, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Roger, and Miss Vance. Many other ladies and gentlemen present were known friends of the movement, and it is almost a pity we have not room for a complete list of them. The dinner, of course, was excellent; and after it there was some capital singing by Miss Alice Lovenez, Miss Jennie Atkinson, and Mr. Will Edwards, and telling recitations by Mr. Hyatt and Mrs. C. Watts. Madame Saunders presided at the piano. The speech-making was shorter than on previous occasions. Besides the chairman's address, there were only three brief speeches by Messrs. Watts, Rogers, and Cohen to the toast of "The Freethought Movement." Altogether it was a most enjoyable evening. The company broke up at half-past eleven, in the best of spirits. Unfortunately some old familiar faces were absent through illness, but they were not forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to have escaped the influenza fiend and other malignant agencies.

Bewildered Bucolics.

CHURCH, CHAPEL, AND THE WAR.

SCENE: *Turmitstone Regis, a sleepy hollow fifteen miles from anywhere.* Old JOHN MANGOLD and old MATTHEW WURZEL discovered hedging and ditching—at intervals.

OLD MATTHEW WURZEL (*judging it about time for another rest*)—I say, neighbor, there be a mighty fine fuss about this yere war?

OLD JOHN MANGOLD (*instantly like-minded as to a rest*)—That there be, friend Wurzel. The young uns seems to know arl about un. But it a kind o' puzzles me—a man at my time o' life. Bless my sister's cats' country house, if I can make out the rights and wrongs on un. Some says one thing, and some says another. Passon says as how it be a just and marcifal war.

WURZEL—And we says at Ebenezer that it be an onjust one—leastways Reverent Scowler says it be. He carls it a blood-sucking war. That he do.

MANGOLD—A blood-sucking war, be it? Well, that passes me. Howsumever, I reckon Passon knows best.

WURZEL—That for a tale, John Mangold. Passon's nowt but a mucky fool. Reverent Scowler says so. Leastways not exactly that, but tantermount. What do ee know about it, when, as you knows right well, ee let arl his hay go to rot—

MANGOLD—Well, well; I bain't agoin' to argify over un. There's Lawyer Probit now, over at th' big house—what do ee say? He's a knowin' un.

WURZEL—What do ee say? Why nuthin, to be sure, unless he's paid for un. But I tell ee what: Reverent Scowler says these yere Boers be farmers like usselves, and that its a-going right bang agen the taychin' of our Lard to go and shoot 'em with Maximums, new-fangled stuff carl'd lydhite, and sech like. Peace on yearth, and many on 'em—that's Reverent Scowler's motto. Pride, he says, goeth afore destruction, and a hearty spirit afore a fall. That's Scriptor.

MANGOLD—So it be, but Passon's chockful o' Scriptor, too. Brought loads on it out in his sarmint last Sunday. Seemed to me as we'd Bible-proof for going to war against these foreigners that's slaying our best blood. He says God and country must be our password—if I rightly recollect un. He told us arl to stand up for country, and sent Mother Thatchem outer church a-crying 'cause her boy is gone to the war. Passon goes in mad-hot for peace on yearth, same as you at Ebenezer. He lays it down that it's to be goodwill to all men. I don't know whether he said "and wimmin." My memory rayther fails me now betimes.

WURZEL—But how can it be peace on yearth when it's arl war? Answer me that, John Mangold. Bain't we a-calling a judgment down on us, same as Reverent Scowler says a man was struck stone deaf through hollering at the Almighty?

MANGOLD—Good Lard! did un say so? What things do happen nowadays. They didn't use ter in *my* young days. But here's somebody comin' along the road. Danged if it bissent young Tom Gosling! Now, there's a knowin' un for you. *He'd* soon put us to rights, if so be we asked un.

WURZEL—Yes, he's had some larning. Went up to Lunnon to see life. Took £5 with him, and didn't he make it fly! O lor', the tales he do tell. (*Cacchinates feebly.*)

MANGOLD—Let's put it to un which on us is right in this yere argyment. (*TOM GOSLING approaches.*) 'Marnin', Tom. The very man, as I'm a livin' sinner. We wants you, Tom, to be an empire atween us.

TOM GOSLING—What about? Sharp's the word. I'm off to get a noospaper. Must know the latest from the front. Jack Hodge 'as got one—posted straight to him from Lunnon a week ago.

MANGOLD—Well, we wants to know the rights of this war, and if so be as it's against the will o' the Lard.

TOM GOSLING—One pint at a time, gennelmen, and I'll serve you quicker'n in a cook-shop. You wish to know the rights o' the war? Very well, then, *himprimis*, as they say in Parlymint—

MANGOLD (*sotto voce*)—My eye! we're goin' to have it now. (*Nudges WURZEL.*)

TOM GOSLING (*clearing his throat*)—You've got, *himprimis*, to consider the ulmitatum.

MANGOLD—The ulmitatum! What's that, Tom?

T. G.—Why, you old hignoramus, the ulmitatum was the finality of the Boers; the Boers gave us their finality, if you understand me; 'ostilities hensued, and now, of course, we've to consider the *casus belly*. But if you ask me—(*gravely*)—what I'm afraid of is that the Russian bear will step in!

MANGOLD (*staggered*)—D'ye raly think he will, Tom?

T. G. (*solemnly*)—My wust fears is as 'ow he will. 'Wever, I'm off. (*Hurries off.*)

WURZEL (*shouting after him*)—But, Tom, what about the Lard?

T. G.—Can't stop.

WURZEL (*disconsolately*)—There he goes, and we ain't got a word out of un about Peace on yearth, and the tayching of our Lard and Savior.

MANGOLD (*reflectively*)—We bain't much forrader, be us?

WURZEL—No; hare-brained young raskil. That lad's too larned for his age. Hope no harm ull happen him. They sort mainly come to the bad.

MANGOLD (*despairingly*)—I *do* wish Passon was here. He'd put it to rights afore you could say Jack Robisson.

WURZEL—Then here he be—a-coming across the meadow. Tark of the Devil—

MANGOLD (*shocked*)—S-sh! Mind yer manners. You bain't no parlor company, Matthew Wurzel, with your Methody skismatics.

WURZEL—Nayther be you, John Mangold, if it comes to that. (*PARSON approaches.*)

PARSON—Good morning, my friends.

MANGOLD and WURZEL—Good marnin', sir.

PARSON—You seemed to be having a little friendly disputation.

MANGOLD—Not 'zackly that, sir. We was only having a argyfication—if you understands me, sir.

PARSON—And what about, may I ask? Is it anythin' that I can assist you in?

MANGOLD—Neighbor Wurzel, you'd best put it to Passon. You've more gift o' the gab than I have—at my time o' life.

WURZEL—Nay, nay. (*They discuss the delicate point for several minutes.*)

WURZEL (*eventually*)—We be plain, taychable old fellers, and 'ud like to know whether this yere war be right or wrong, and if so be it is accordin' to the will o' the Lard. Likewise, if it be, we 'ud like to be made acquaint with the meanin' of "Peace on yearth," when it's arl war. Reverent Scowler—beggin' your parding for mentionin' of him—says it's all agen the Sarmint on the Mount-top.

PARSON (*somewhat puzzled*)—Ahem! That is a very wide and difficult question you ask me. I can scarcely deal with it here and now. It is one that I am glad, of course, to find you take so deep an interest in. But I have already alluded to it in my recent sermons. Suppose, now, as an answer to your present questions, I promise you to refer to the subject in my next Sunday's sermon. Will that do?

MANGOLD—If so be as you thinks proper, sir.

PARSON—Very well, my good friends, come and listen. (*Walks away—rather glad to escape.*) (*Muses.*) Now I wonder what I *can* say that would satisfy, not these poor men, but some unkindly critical hearer. Am I quite satisfied myself that there is not at least an apparent inconsistency between the teachings of Christ and the prosecution of this, or, indeed, any war? Is the Sermon on the Mount a dead letter, or are the Quakers the only consistent Christians? Common sense teaches us that, if we in Great Britain were all Quakers, there would speedily be an end to our independent life as a nation. Upon my word, the open unbelievers in Christ seem to have the freest hand just now. Of course, there *must* be some solution. (*Goes home to re-study certain portions of the Gospel.*)

WURZEL—You see, neighbor Mangold, we bain't any forrerder now.

MANGOLD—Nayther am we, neighbor. Let's go and have a pint o' yale.

WURZEL—Arl right. Drat it, this argifying be dry work.

MANGOLD—So it be; but ain't us been a-going it to to-day—for two old fellers; a-debatin' and a-discussin' to that there degree that I'm danged if Parlymint bain't a fool to it. (*They wamble off.*) FRANCIS NEALE.

The Corn Liar.

OLD Thompson stole the widow's cow,
And died that very day;
But he is up in heaven now—
"It's very strange," you'll say.
But when he reached the pearly gate,
He had this tale to tell:
"My sight was poor, and it was late—
I couldn't see so well—"
"All right, my son," St Peter said,
"Step in and hunt a crown;
I'll see the widow when she's dead—
But here comes Mr. Brown!"
Now, Brown had robbed a pirate's bank—
Eight thousand was the haul—
But when he joined the "silent rank,"
He wasn't lost at all.
"I wanted money," he explained,
"For I was deep in debt;
I knew my father would be pained
To know the truth, and yet—"
"If that is all," remarked the saint,
"Pass in and up the stair;
No one will ever file complaint—
I challenge—who goes there?"
"Tis I," said Smith, clean out of breath.
"I hope I'm not too late—
I guess you've heard about my death.
Just open up the gate.
I'm mighty glad to get a rest,
Although a worker born.
I am from Kansas and the West,
Where I've been husking corn—"
"Get out, you liar!" Peter cried;
"We have no room for such.
Dear me!" he muttered, half aside,
"Those fellows beat the Dutch!"

HORTON HEADLIGHT.

Obituary.

I DEEPLY regret to record that our President, Mr. J. J. Taylor, died of consumption on Sunday, the 24th ult., aged fifty-five. Conscious to the last, he died as he lived, a firm and consistent Secularist. I was with him a few hours before his death, and he talked to me quite calmly and philosophically of his approaching end, and arranged with me matters connected with his will and funeral. Mr. Taylor was a fearless and most earnest worker in the Freethought ranks. For fifteen years he was President of our Society, and, whether on the platform as a lecturer or play-actor or in the detail organisation of our work, he brought with him an energy and wholeheartedness which was contagious and inspiring. As a local Radical politician, our late President was well known, and, being an effective platform speaker, his services were much sought after; but our Society always had the first claim upon him, and was his first consideration. His life in the family circle, in Freethought, and in the wider area of human progress, was one of continual self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. He was a true husband, and the kindest of fathers. It was in the home and around the fireside that his kindness, thoughtfulness, and consideration for those dependent upon him showed how truly he had learnt the lesson of Secularism, that the highest and noblest happiness is in ministering to the happiness and well-being of others. I need hardly say that he wished for a Secular funeral, and, at the express wish of his family, the veteran Vice-president of the N. S. S., Mr. Charles Watts, read the local funeral service in the chapel of the Chatham Cemetery on Saturday last over the remains of our deceased friend. There was a large gathering of our members and sympathisers, and Mr. Watts read the burial service most eloquently and sympathetically, those present plainly showing how keenly they felt the death of such a dear friend and earnest co-worker. Also, at the express wish of his wife and children, the undersigned spoke a few words in the presence of the dead, as representing the Secular Society, but labored under such strong emotions which prevented any lengthy reference to the deceased and his life and work as a Freethinker. A "Memorial Service" was held in the Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton, on Sunday evening, which was a grand success, consisting of high-class instrumental music, amongst which was the "Dead March in Saul." Three secular hymns were sung, the audience upstanding and joining in the singing. Short addresses were given by Messrs. Hill, J. T. Swan, Bordman, and the undersigned. "Auld Lang Syne," played very softly, concluded a splendid service, which had a visible effect upon the large audience present. Mr. J. J. Taylor was a valiant member of the Freethought ranks, though perhaps not widely known amongst Freethinkers, yet in the ranks of the working Freethinkers he did great service. Freethought is richer and nobler by his life, but, alas, is also the poorer by his death.—
W. B. THOMPSON.

The Ingersolls' Beliefs.

INEFFECTUAL EFFORTS MADE BY THE BELIEVERS OF ALL KINDS OF RELIGION TO CONVERT THE COLONEL'S FAMILY.

WHEN Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll died, hundreds of persons throughout the country asked a question which clearly showed that they had no conception of the real state of affairs in the Ingersoll household. It was: "Is Mrs. Ingersoll really an Agnostic also?" or "Do his wife and family share his views? Will they not change now?" Ever since Colonel Ingersoll's death letters have poured in from all parts of the earth from people who write to inquire concerning the religious faith of the family, and to urge upon them the commonly-accepted beliefs of the Christian world—beliefs long rejected by every one of Colonel Ingersoll's family, including his widow, his daughters, Mrs. Brown, and Miss Maud Ingersoll, his brother-in-law, Mr. Farrell, and his son-in-law, Walston Brown. How many thousands of these letters, tracts, and relics have arrived it is impossible to estimate. Here are some extracts from the letters:—

"Are you converted now?"

"Do you now see the folly of your late husband's Agnosticism?"

"Although your husband is now in hell, there is yet time for you to escape from the wrath to come. Renounce his pernicious doctrine before it is for ever too late."

"You are now punished for being the wife of an unbeliever. He must suffer eternal damnation for the doctrines he preached, and you will endure the same fate unless you accept the Bible, and turn away from the damnable theory of Ingersollism."

Thousands upon thousands of tracts have come in. A few copies taken at random are entitled: *God's Word to the Bereaved Unbeliever; The Fate of the Damned; A Thousand Years in Hell; Where will you Spend Eternity? Finger-Posts to Heaven; The Unbeliever's Deathbed; Ingersollism a Fraud; What is the Soul? What Say the Scriptures about Hell? To-morrow in Hell; Hope for the Infidel; Come to Jesus; Why Ingersoll was Wrong; The Plan of the Ages; Why Immortality is True; The Fallacies of the Sceptic.*

Catholics have sent bits of relics, scapulars, and other articles. Spiritualists send assurances that they have received messages sent by Colonel Ingersoll from the spirit world. They ask for a sitting. Few of these letters are answered at all.

A comparatively small proportion of the letters come from people who, in their own way, attempt to comfort the family. One was written by a woman of Atlanta, Ga., and part of it is as follows:—

MY DEAR MRS. INGERSOLL,—The cry of your grief-stricken heart has come to me, and I desire, oh, so much, to contribute my grain of comfort. Dear one, can you not believe that your beloved is still with you, at your side, a constant though silent companion? Do take this comfort to your heart. You who knew the breadth of soul, the largeness of heart, the noble nature of your husband so much more intimately than anyone else could, can you not believe that these graces of heart and life were but the manifestation of the loving Father within him? Can you not believe, with me, that this same loving Father welcomed his son, running to meet him, falling upon his neck, kissing him, and crying: "This is my son, Robert, who has not recognised me these many years, but whom I have been loving all the time. This my son, who was dead but is alive again, has come back to his Father's house." And there was joy in heaven! Take heart, dear bereaved one. Take to yourself this assurance, this hope, this comfort offered you from the fullness of a loving, sympathetic heart. He may not return to you, but you shall go to him.

The amount of illiteracy in the letters is astonishing. One reads:—

MIS MAUD INGERSOLL,—Dear Mad: i inclose you a tract, what is the Soal, and hope reading same may Convert you from the evil of your Ways. hope you will write me your Opinion of it.

The avalanche which has poured in upon the family has taxed their utmost resources to sort out what little wheat there was from the chaff, and to send replies to all who deserved it. So far as has been possible, they have sent courteous replies to all really sympathetic and sensible letters. Three large drawers have now been set aside for the reception of future correspondence, and they are respectively labelled, "Well-meaning," "Spiritualistic," and "Idiotic."

Most of the writers seem to doubt Mrs. Ingersoll's Agnosticism. She could scarcely hold other beliefs. Sarah Buckman Parker, her grandmother, was the wife of a wealthy shipowner of Boston, and after his death she, with two sons, George and Benjamin, crossed the country, and in 1836 settled in Central Illinois. Here her home was situated in the centre of a triangle, having at its angles Springfield, Bloomington, and Peoria. Here the family flourished, and exercised a decided influence on all educational, political, and business interests of the community. This influence was exerted chiefly by Mrs. Parker, who was a woman of unusual intellectual qualities and fond of study. In her library were more books than usually fell to the lot of any save a minister or a lawyer in those days. Her taste ran to a study of the religions and creeds of the world, and amongst her favorite books were the Bible, the Koran, the Vedas, and the works of Swedenborg, Hume, Humboldt, Volney, Voltaire, Gibbon,

Kant, and Paine. She arrived at that stage where she believed only in the revelations of science. To her sons she taught her beliefs, and they followed in her footsteps, for to them she was ever an oracle; whilst the bond of affection between them was of that close and deep-seated nature which is characteristic of the Ingersoll and Parker families on both sides for many generations back.

The Parker home naturally became a central point of meeting for well-known men of the time. Three of the best known and most welcome were Abraham Lincoln, of Springfield; David Davis, afterwards Senator, of Bloomington; and Leonard Swett, of Chicago. The three men were all intimate friends, and very fond of one another; but the fact that they lived at widely-different places, and that travel was not then so easy as now, led them frequently to agree on some place of common advantage. "We'll meet at Mrs. Parker's," was always satisfactory to all, and so they did, and more than one Western minister had the fortune to do his best measuring arguments with the four; for Mrs. Parker's roof sheltered many a one, to whom she extended every courtesy that the most orthodox could have done; nor was any minister ever seated at her table without being asked to say grace.

Into this brilliant circle Robert G. Ingersoll entered about 1858, and met Eva Parker, daughter of Benjamin Parker, with whom he at once fell in love, and from the hour they met until the day of his death the harmony in every respect between them was perfect. Miss Parker was already an Agnostic.

This group continued unbroken up to the time of Mrs. Parker's death. She departed this life at an advanced age, ripe with the honors of a well-spent existence and undisturbed in her Atheistic belief. From her had radiated an influence which may be clearly traced at the present day. There are now living of her direct descendants, who have reached mature age, fourteen, all of whom are Atheists or Agnostics. There is not one believer in the Christian religion amongst them.

George Reno, great-grandson of Mrs. Parker, who tells this story of his ancestor, says: "One thing is certain; and that is, the death-beds of Agnostics, so far as my family is concerned, are far from being the fearful things usually pictured. Both my grandfather and his brother, Mrs. Ingersoll's father, lived to be old men, full of vigor, and possessing all their faculties in a remarkable degree to an advanced age. They died the most peaceful and happy deaths, so easily, that no one knew the exact moment when they passed away, and both of them remained firm in their Agnosticism to the last moment. They were fairly adored by the people of Illinois in the neighborhood where they had lived and where they did so much to benefit the country, and they were mourned as but few men are in a community."

—*New York Sun.*

Moral Instruction in Board Schools.

In the *Freethinker* for November 19 an article appeared entitled "Should Ethics be Taught in Board Schools?" This article, by Dr. Henry Smith, fairly sums up the old-fashioned purely individualistic attitude in regard to religious and moral education. But there is another possible approach to these questions which deserves consideration.

I call Dr. Smith's view old-fashioned, because it accords with the slowly-dying propensity to regard children as the properties of adults. His article is based, not on the rights of childhood and the necessities of developing mankind, but on a tacit supposition that facts of parenthood and money payments of adult ratepayers purchase a right to dominate the life of the growing generation. Apparently the valid objection he sees to theologic teaching is just that some ratepayers or parents regard it as false and pernicious. Now, this may be an argument which we are justified in addressing to those who *can* see no deeper; but it is not the central one, or the one for Freethinkers. The child is itself a citizen. Arguments concerning its education should be based on its educational rights. On this basis, the valid objection to theology is that it violates the child's mental and moral powers by denying its freedom to use them in particular directions. Theology is a professedly *arbitrary* and a professedly *final* selection between several theories of the universe held by thinkers recognised as experts. In being arbitrary and final it contradicts the acknowledged social purpose of education, which is the opening of all possible avenues of mental development. The ideal educational right of each child is not only a right to all such fact as this mental development will enable it to test; it is also a right to the mental culture by which facts classified as knowledge have been already gathered and already tested. Complete education demands an account of *all* the explanations of the universe, along with knowledge of the mental processes by which they have been reached. To educate is to draw out, to unfold. It is a wrong to the child to start its mental career by *deliberately* producing a sense of impotency in regard to one branch of human thought. Yet this is what is done by the *exclusive* supernatural claims of the present Bible teaching. Nevertheless, impartial consideration for the child's

mental rights demands that, at the appropriate period of its development, it be informed of all the supernatural as well as natural explanations of man's origin and destiny. The period must, however, be determined, not by the wishes of Christian or any other grown folk, but by observations of psychological and educational experts on the *order* of its mental growth. Religious and theological knowledge must be no exception to the *ordinary* educational procedure. This begins with what is easily exemplified to the senses, and only slowly leads up to what is abstract, and involves trains of thought and contrasted experiences impossible until after some time has been passed in the world. The child begins mathematics with addition. We should regard a teacher as incompetent if he started by talking about the symbols and abstract reasonings of an algebraical problem. If consideration for the *nature* of childhood demands this order in an exact study, the same consideration demands it with tenfold force in studies where grown folk and experts do not agree.

What I have said in regard to theology is equally applicable to moral instruction. Dr. Smith is concerned because some moralists are utilitarians, some intuitionists, etc. On his adult political basis how are we to select between moral theories? I answer, if you regard the child as having rights, there can be no exclusive selection until one of these explanations of moral experience has convinced opponents. We should explain the simplest first, perhaps; but at the appropriate period of mental development we must explain them all; and if the whole moral instruction has been properly calculated to call out the child's critical judgment, it will choose wisely for itself. Non-theological moral instruction must be given because the child has a primary right to the whole body of social experience which it can test; but along with this must go culture of the ability to test and to add to moral experience. The grounds on which we condemn moral teaching based on a divine book are the very grounds on which non-theological moral instruction is recommended. The one sets an *arbitrary* limit to the power of testing. This is a wrong towards the helpless child. The other appeals perpetually to the child's own judgment and critical observation of *real* life, and makes a point of *calling out* its moral powers.

Dr. Smith wants to know what is the ultimate moral authority to set before the child. I reply that we shall not make any arbitrary choice between philosophical accounts of the *origin* of the moral authority so long as that is disputed by experts. We shall do as we do in cultivating the sense of beauty—demonstrate that he has such a sense in him. Any teacher can do this. He can point to infantile life experiments, from the erection of a house of cards up to the child's attempt to co-operate for enjoyment in games with his schoolmates as illustrating right and wrong ways of acting. The child *himself* tests this. Right and wrong is as obviously a mental discrimination as sweet and bitter. Some proclivity to seek right ways of living is a part of sentient intelligent nature. But it is often misguided and weak in the individual. Here again, however, the child has the same educational rights in matters of morals that it has, let us say, in matters of hygiene. We should not dream of hesitating to bath the workhouse baby because there may be still some dirty ratepayers or parents who believe baths kill people. We just have it washed, and discipline it to wash itself, because cleanliness has been generally tested and proved good for human beings. In similar fashion, the State says, at first authoritatively, to the Board-school child, "This is right," "That is wrong," in reference to such moral details as order, honesty, etc.

It does this, firstly, because *all* corporate life, the school itself, and the child's very right to food and knowledge, is based upon a body of moral experience which the community *recognises* to be valid. It does it, secondly, because such a method of instruction has been found to be the earliest possible mode of communicating the community's experience; but it is exactly when moral education stops here at *outward authority*, and does not blossom into such moral instruction as the Moral Instruction League advocates, that the conscientious rights of minorities in regard to details of right and wrong are neglected. To discover the relation between education and minority opinions, we need to penetrate below actual differences of opinion separating minorities from the community as a whole. We shall then note that the differences are divisible into progressive and retrogressive. We shall also see that the sources of conscientious differences, whether in morals or other things, are accurate or inaccurate observation of life, and logical or illogical reflection upon this observation. If we deliberately cultivate the child's own will to be conscientious, and to observe widely and accurately, and if we train its critical and constructive reason, we are guarding both the liberty of the child and the power of the progressive minority to convince its judgment at the period of maturity. A retrogressive minority has no rights as against the child's development. Moral instruction will guard the child's rights, and will advance the social ends of progressive minorities, if it be systematic in two ways. It must be graded to suit particular stages of mental development, and it must be scientific in the sense of using human reason and observation of concrete fact as its method. It must also provide for the element of conscientiousness by

quickening the child's own desire to practise what its judgment learns to approve (in scientific language, to perform actual experiments in living). As distinguished from moral discipline, its purpose is gradually to teach the child to select for itself, and to assimilate all the best racial experience in conduct. The fact that good men still differ as to details of right and wrong is the very reason why it is so necessary.

ZONA VALLANCE.

A New Reform Movement.

GROWING out of the indignation felt at the manner in which the London County Council have dealt with the licensing of theatres and concert halls, a well-attended meeting was held at the Hotel Metropole on Saturday afternoon (January 6), Mr. Mark M. Judge in the chair. The chairman read a number of letters from friends unable to be present, including Mr. Herbert Spencer, Sir Henry Thompson, Sir John Whittaker Ellis, Bt., Mr. W. Chance, and Mr. Briton Riviere, R.A.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, Vice-President of the Sunday Society, in a letter to Mr. Mark Judge under date January 2, 1900, after referring to other matters he is interested in, says: "I am now nearly eighty, and it is more and more clear to me that I must cut myself off from these various distractions as much as possible, since I have still something I want to do; and, thinking this, I decide that it will be best for me to decline taking any part in this League for licensing reform, even in the position of Vice-President. Your letter shows me that I should have to consider various proposals, and should have to express my opinion, and this would entail thought and correspondence. If I did not go thus far into the matter, then the result would be that I should find myself committed by my position of Vice-President to sundry proposals and actions, some of which I should probably disapprove. I wish you success in your efforts for reform, which is doubtless needed; but please excuse me from taking part."

Sir Henry Thompson, past-president of the Sunday Society, writes: "I think it would be desirable that the power of licensing should be entrusted to a judicial body; but, owing to my age and the absolute necessity for declining any fresh engagements, I should prefer to be excused from taking any part in the proposed movement."

Sir John Whittaker Ellis, Bt., says: "I fully concur with you that, if a new principle is to be allowed to arise in the regulation of public entertainments on Sundays, it would be well that it should be organised in a proper manner; but I am sorry to say that for myself I have so many engagements that I could not, I fear, give attention to the question, and I should not like to be concerned in it without being able to give it the requisite consideration."

Mr. W. Chance says: "I am sorry I cannot attend the meeting, but I shall be glad to support the proposed new League. I agree with you that the action of the County Council and the present state of the law on the subject are most injurious to the general welfare of the community."

Mr. Briton Riviere, R.A., writes: "In reply to your letter on the Entertainment Reform League, I beg to say that generally I am quite in agreement with the proposed scheme, and think that any change which would take the granting of licenses out of the hands of the County Council and place it with a 'judicial' body would be an unmixed good."

Many other letters approving the formation of the League have been received, but the writers were present, or their names appear in the third resolution.

On the motion of Mr. Henry Wilson, M.A., seconded by Mr. Charles Braden, it was unanimously resolved: "That an organisation (to consist of the persons present, with others who have given their assent or who may hereafter do so and subscribe to its funds) be now formed, to be called The Entertainment Reform League; to obtain an amendment of the Law regarding the Licensing of Theatres and Concert Halls, and the transfer of licensing powers from the County Council to a judicial body."

A resolution, providing for the constitution of the new League, was carried on the motion of Mr. J. H. Levy, and seconded by Mr. Hasler Thorn.

The following officers were then elected:—Vice-Presidents: Sir W. Martin Conway, M.A., Sydney Grundy, W. Holman Hunt, Jonathan Hutchinson, F.R.S., Henry Arthur Jones, Rudolf Lehmann, John MacWhirter, R.A., Admiral Frederick A. Maxse, Sir C. Hubert H. Parry, M.A., Arthur W. Pinero, Dr. G. V. Poore, Professor Medical Jurisprudence, U.C., Lond.; Sir William B. Richmond, R.A., Professor Charles Villiers Stanford, M.A. Committee: Mark H. Judge, *Chairman*, 7 Pall Mall; George Anderson, Charles B. Braden, James Britten, George Dolman, Horace B. Lakeman, J. H. Levy, H. O. Newland, Julian Roney, Miss Evereld Simpson, John Smurthwaite, A. G. Hasler Thorn, Henry Wilson, M.A.

"Do you understand the nature of an oath?" asked the judge. "I should think I ought to," said the nervous little man. "I've been putting up stovepipes for my wife all the morning."

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices, 377 Strand, W.C., on Thursday, January 4, 1900; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair.

There were present:—Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, W. Heaford, S. Hartmann, W. Leat, J. Neate, C. Quinton, V. Roger, T. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, C. Watts, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed; cash statement for the month received and adopted.

It was resolved that the date of the Annual Excursion, and, if possible, the destination, should be fixed at the next meeting, so as to give all London Branches an opportunity of joining it.

Many members being absent in consequence of the holiday season, only formal business was transacted, and the meeting adjourned until January 25.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

Correspondence.

THE BEDBOROUGH PROSECUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The reference to myself in "Acid Drops" in your current issue (p. 6, par. 2) contains an insinuation of a very unpleasant nature, which I regret to see and can hardly pass over. It is ungenerous, unjustifiable, and entirely without foundation.

My position in the matter was perfectly simple and straightforward. I made no secret of it; and I was, and am, quite prepared to meet any attendant responsibility. My first knowledge of the proceedings was obtained from a newspaper report during a Whitsuntide holiday in the country; and I came back to London fully expecting to be attacked, and ready to defend myself—to which end I at once consulted my solicitor. Why I was not called upon I cannot say; in fact, there is no doubt that your knowledge as to the conduct of the prosecution is at least equal to mine.

I may add that the book was printed in the ordinary way of business, and after competitive estimating. Your reference to "profit" is to me almost ludicrous, in view of the fact that I had difficulty in obtaining any payment whatever, and that the final settlement was only forthcoming a few months back after prolonged legal proceedings.

A. BONNER.

[It is a waste of time to discuss adjectives and adverbs. We, therefore, pass by those in Mr. Bonner's letter. Whether what we wrote conveys an "insinuation" depends on how you take it. We simply abide by our exact words, which were all contained in three lines. The word "profit" was used in its common trade meaning. Mr. Bonner's difficulties in obtaining payment from his customers have nothing to do with the matter. When he printed Dr. Ellis's book for the University Press he *expected* to be paid. He printed it in the ordinary way of business, for the sake of the printer's profit. That is all we meant, and all we can reasonably be supposed to mean. And it was enough to constitute Mr. Bonner at least as great a sinner as Mr. Bedborough, if there was any sin at all in the case. But the police did not molest him; we believe they did not so much as mention his name. Now this was very peculiar, and it excited much private comment. What was the reason of it? Many persons asked; and we are astonished to learn that no whisper of it reached Mr. Bonner's ears. He ought to be grateful to us for affording him the opportunity of declaring his ignorance on this point. The "mysterious reason" still remains mysterious. It ranks with the other mysteries of that extraordinary prosecution. Detective Sweeney could easily enlighten us, but, of course, he won't. It is pretty certain, however, that he must often have smiled to himself while the Bedborough case was proceeding. Perhaps he sometimes smiles even now.—EDITOR.]

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- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one or our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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, C. Cohen, "The Other Side of Religion."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, J. W. White's Dramatic Co. in "Flies in the Web."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Mr. Calvert, "Religious Symbolism."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road): 8, J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11, Discussion, opened by Mr. Olias Hooper; 7, Mr. Herbert Burrows, "The Ethical New Year."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Discussion Meeting—"Has Democracy Proved a Failure?"

COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): 3.45, W. M. Knox, "Ingersoll: Orator and Teacher."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 11, H. Percy Ward, "Morality without a God"; 7, Debate: Rev. Arthur J. Dade and Mr. Ward, subject, "Is there a God?"

DERBY (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, Half-yearly meeting and balance-sheet.

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, J. D. Crawford, M.A., "Faith and Freethought."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. Chalmers, "Buddha"; 6.30, A. G. Nostik, "The Marvels of Microscopic Life." With lantern illustrations.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): C. Watts—11, "Can a Scientist be a Christian?" 6.30, "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, B.Sc., will lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): J. M. Robertson—3, "Cromwell and Imperialism"; 7, "Christianity and Character." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner—3, "Sunday" 7, "Providence and Progress." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 6.30, J. Clare, "Robespierre."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—January 14, Athenæum, Tottenham Court-road; 21, Camberwell; 28, Dundee. February 4, Glasgow.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—January 14, Birmingham.

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