

# THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

## A Blackguard Bishop.

This title is alliterative, but we have not selected it entirely on that account. It is a just description of the Bishop of Coventry. This right reverend Father-in-God has been airing his bigotry on the Birmingham School Board, and we devote this article to an exposure of his blackguardism. No doubt this is a strong expression, but we believe it will be amply justified before we have done.

But before dealing with that matter we desire to ask why clergymen should be allowed to sit on School Boards at all? Would it not be just and reasonable to exclude them from all such public positions? We believe they are exempted from serving on juries, and they are not expected to risk their lives in defending their country even against invasion. Their duties are supposed to be *spiritual*. Very well then; let this be distinctly understood and acted upon. Let them be confined to the church and the pulpit. Let them preach and save souls, if they can; let them perform parochial duties, visiting the women, for instance, when the men are away; let them mumble their shibboleths by the bedside of the sick and the dying, who may need such "consolations"; but, in the name of common sense, keep them off from the serious and practical business of the world. Did not Sidney Smith, who knew the clerical profession, for he belonged to it, say that there were three sexes—men, women, and clergymen? On this threefold division of human beings, if the home is for women, and the affairs of the outside world are for men—allowing for exceptions—surely there is nothing left for clergymen but religion. It is their special business to look after the affairs of the next world, and they should be bound to it with the greatest strictness. Above all, as they rule in the myriads of churches and chapels, they should be rigorously shut out from the schools, and, of course, from the School Boards where the policy and the details of so many thousands of elementary schools are decided.

After this little digression we return to the Bishop of Coventry. Being a member—as we say he ought not to be—of the Birmingham School Board, he took the opportunity, about a year ago, of speaking lies and libels about the local Branch of the National Secular Society. Opposition was raised by a few anonymous bigots to the use of a Board-school by the Branch for Sunday lectures. The matter came before the Board, and on the strength of the sneaking false testimony of these anonymous bigots the Branch was deprived of the use of the Bristol-street Board-school for a period of twelve months. The Secular Committee denied the allegations against them, and asked to be confronted with their accusers; but their demand was refused, and they were "punished" in defiance of the essential spirit of all civilised jurisprudence. This was delightful to the taste and temper of the foul-tongued Bishop of Coventry, whose gratuitously insulting language almost called for an answer with a horsewhip.

However, the period of ostracism has elapsed, and the matter came up again on the School Board, with the result that the Secularists have the use of the Board-school restored to them, but with a proviso that literature is not to be sold or distributed at their meetings; which is a condition that we hardly think they should accept, unless it applies impartially to *all* meetings in such buildings. Even this decision was not arrived at without a warm debate, in which the Bishop of Coventry once more figured as the protagonist of orthodox bigotry. Only the previous Sunday he had been preaching a rather maudlin sermon on the late John Ruskin, winding up with some cant about the "love of brotherhood." But when he had to deal, only a few days later, with the Secularists, who honestly, and at some cost to themselves, reject and oppose the religion which he teaches, and by which he gets his very comfortable living, he threw his "brotherhood" to the winds and went for these heretics tooth and nail. His lordship, if that is a correct description, thought it necessary to deliver a diatribe against Secularism, as though its philosophical truth or falsehood had anything to do with the question before the Board. He urged that Secularism meant "animalism," and "animalism meant a result disastrous to morals." This is his polite way of stating that Secularists believe man to be a risen animal, instead of a fallen angel; an opinion which was entertained by Shakespeare, who called the noblest man he could picture "the paragon of animals," nearly three hundred years before Darwin came to prove it scientifically. The doctrine that man is the highest of animals is not, however, the same thing as "animalism," and his lordship knows it, unless he is an inexcusable and ridiculous ignoramus. Secularists do not acknowledge the dominion of mere bodily appetites. They believe in reason, conscience, and personal, domestic, and social morality quite as much as Christians, and perhaps a little more so, since they do not take advantage of the Christian juggle about repentance and forgiveness of sins. His lordship admitted that "Secularists no doubt were conscientious," but he added that "the more conscientious they were the more harm they did." This is true enough from *his* point of view. But he forgets that the same thing is true of Christians from the Secularist point of view. It was from this point of view that Gibbon penned his stinging epigram, that to a philosophic eye the virtues of the clergy were more dangerous than their vices. Still, it would not occur to a Secularist to deny the common rights of citizenship to Christians, first on the ground that they were wrong, and secondly on the ground that they were conscientious. Such imbecile bigotry may well be left to bishops. Finally, his lordship compared Secularists to burglars, and asked whether the schools should be let for instruction in the art of house-breaking. Now the man who talks in this way is not really arguing. He is simply playing the fool and the blackguard. So at this point we leave the Bishop of Coventry to the judgment of honorable men.

G. W. FOOTE.



## Basis of Christianity.

It is the boast of Christian exponents that Christ was unique in teaching love in its most comprehensive sense; and that, in fact, this "ennobling passion" constitutes the very basis of his system. A candid appeal to history and to the New Testament will prove that both of these assumptions are erroneous. The great principle of love was taught and practised in its highest form long before the dawn of Christianity. "Love," says the profound teacher of the Academy, "is peace and goodwill among men, calm upon the waters, repose and stillness in the storm, and balm of sleep in sadness." Even forgiveness of enemies was a prominent teaching of Pagan philosophers. Confucius, 500 years before Christ, taught, "Desire not the death of thine enemy." "Acknowledge thy benefits by the return of other benefits, but never revenge injuries." "We may have an aversion to an enemy without desiring revenge." Pythagoras also wrote: "Let men revenge themselves on their enemies only by laboring to convert them into friends." Thus it will be seen that it was not reserved for Christ to introduce into the world that love which Colonel Ingersoll regarded as "the magician, the enchanter that changes worthless things to joy and makes right royal kings and queens from common clay. It is the perfume of that wondrous flower, the heart; and without that sacred passion, that divine swoon, we are less than beasts; with it, earth is heaven, and we are gods."

But is it a fact that the basis of Christianity is love? We think not, for the very opposite passion pervades the teachings of the New Testament, and manifests itself throughout the history of those who professed to obey its injunctions. In his work upon "Liberty" John Stuart Mill wrote of the followers of Christ thus: "When their enemies said, 'See how these Christians love one another' (a remark not likely to be made by anybody now), they assuredly had a much livelier feeling of the meaning of their creed than they have had ever since. And to this cause, probably, it is chiefly owing that Christianity now makes so little progress in extending its domain, and, after eighteen centuries, is still nearly confined to Europeans and the descendants of Europeans." True, it is reported that Christ said, "Love one another"; but, as we shall presently see, he failed to practise his own injunction. It is also alleged that he stated that God his Father "so loved the world" that he gave his son to be crucified for "sins" which he had never committed. This was the kind of love that prompted the same Father to create man so imperfectly that he became hopelessly corrupt almost immediately, and caused the human race to be so contaminated with his wickedness that this "God of love" exclaimed: "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. . . . And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth; and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." It was this "God of love" that provided a scheme of salvation by which only a "few" were to be saved, and it was this same God who sent strong delusions so that certain of his children "should believe a lie, that they all might be damned." It was still this "God of love" whose plan of redemption made it necessary for all those who desired to be saved to go to Christ; but, said Jesus, "No man can come to me, except the Father which have sent me draw him" (John vi. 44). Now, if the Father draw us we must go, yet if he do not draw us we are to be exposed to eternal torments in some future world. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1-8-9).

Let us now inquire into the origin and meaning of the phrase, "Love one another." It occurs in the Gospel of St. John (chap. xiii.), where Jesus is reported as having addressed his disciples as "little children,"

thus: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It appears to us that this commandment was intended only for his disciples to whom Jesus was then speaking, as he told them, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." It is evident, however, that this was no "new commandment," for Christ himself refers to the Old Testament, where it is said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. v. 43). But, taking the injunction as it stands, it is very much discounted by another of Christ's discourses upon the same subject, where he states: "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them" (Luke vi. 32). Thus, if the "new commandment" be accepted, it only places those who adopt it upon a level with "sinners." Where is the novelty in this? Besides, it should be noted that the distinguishing mark of discipleship is quite different as given in another chapter of the same gospel. There it is clearly stated: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). This confirms our contention that Christ's command to love one another was intended only for his disciples. If this is denied, we refer to the mission of Christ as set forth by himself. "Think not," said he, "I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. x. 34, 35, and 36). Unfortunately, it is too true that Christ's mission in this respect has not been a failure, for wherever it has been introduced it has caused strife and divisions to obtain. It did much to destroy the civilisation that existed in the Roman Empire, and it has divided countless families in the English nation, producing the sacrifice of connubial ties and the loss of lives and of domestic happiness. Reade, in his *Martyrdom of Man*, writes: "Shortly after the establishment of Christianity as a State religion, there was uproar and dissension in every city of the empire, then savage persecutions, bloody wars, until a Pagan historian could observe to the polished and intellectual coterie for whom alone he wrote, that now the hatred of the Christians against one another surpassed the fury of savage beasts against man." If the doctrine of love between man and man had progressed under the influence of Christianity, as much as strife and disunion have extended among the Churches, it would have been sufficient to have silenced those who urge that love has not been the characteristic of the Christian faith.

In the face of the teachings ascribed to Christ, it seems to us the height of absurdity to claim that he taught love as the basis of universal conduct. For in sending out his twelve apostles, including Peter who denied him, and Judas who betrayed him, Jesus commanded them saying: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now, as the name Gentiles represented the majority of those then living, who were outside the "house of Israel," we may judge how far Christ intended love to be universally enjoined. Moreover, the "lost sheep," as we have shown, had been already taught the doctrine of "love to God and love to man" by their ancient prophets, and, therefore, to them, at least Christ's commandment was not new. And then mark the method Jesus recommended to be adopted by the disciples whom he started on their work of propaganda. "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matthew x.). Now, when we bear in mind that to shake off the dust from the feet was a Jewish mode of showing hatred and contempt (see Light's *Travels in Egypt*, and Acts xxii. 23), we can imagine the loving tendency of Christ's advice. Here we have the threatening that those who did not accept what the disciples taught were to receive greater



punishment than that to be dealt out to a people who are said to have been thoroughly corrupt and hopelessly depraved. Need we marvel that in the name of Christ his followers have perpetrated the most inhuman cruelties upon heretics? It may be Christian love, but, from a Secular view, it is a manifestation of the worst form of hate.

We will now glance at the manner in which Christ exemplified love in his personal conduct. In Matthew xv. we read that a woman cried unto him, saying: "Lord help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." She was not of the House of Israel, and, therefore, he had but little love for her. This is indicative of the narrow and exclusive spirit which Jesus so frequently exhibited. To gain a favor from him it was necessary to avow belief in his teachings. Hence he proclaimed: "Who-soever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew x. 33). This is an avowal of petty revenge, not that magnanimity of mind which should predominate in a loving nature. There is certainly but little love in the expression, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers," and still less in the declaration, "He that believeth not shall be damned"; and, finally, in his pronouncement at the judgment day: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

We trust enough has been said here to show that Christianity is not based on love. Its real basis is fear, credulity, and superstition. It has been supported by bigotry and priestly intolerance, and it is maintained to-day by indifference and an undignified pandering to fashion and to an emotional popular opinion.

CHARLES WATTS.

## Professor Mivart and Christianity.

(Concluded from page 53.)

THE second illustration from Professor Mivart's essay, in support of the point mentioned in my last article, is concerned with the growth of a healthy feeling concerning matters of belief. There has grown up, he says, an "ethical intuition, which, so far as I know, has only acquired distinct and widespread appreciation in modern times.....of our moral responsibility not to prostitute the noble faculty of reason by giving assent to propositions which are not supported by adequate evidence." Well, so far both the growth of this feeling, and the recognition of it as good by many "devout Catholics," are in every way to be commended; but again I have to raise a protest against the implied assumption that in some mysterious manner this beneficial change has been brought about by the growth of a more Christian feeling, or by a truer appreciation of the nature of Christianity. This is very far from being the case. Indeed, what I have said concerning the influence of Christianity on the question of kindness to animals applies in an even stronger measure to this particular subject. Christianity did not positively teach cruelty to animals; it simply ignored the whole question as having no place in the circle of duties; but, in the matter of "the noble faculty of reason," it did by every means in its power, and so long as it had power, systematically condemn free criticism and the demand for adequate evidence in support of its teaching. It knew no higher virtue than blind, unquestioning faith; it recognised no deeper iniquity than free, independent inquiry, and the refusal to believe where adequate evidence was not forthcoming.

In the New Testament the appeals to the "noble faculty of reason" are chiefly conspicuous by their absence. The ethics of the intellect are entirely absent from the alleged teachings of Jesus. Nowhere does he inculcate the supreme duty of truth-speaking, or "of our moral responsibility (to refuse) assent to propositions which are not supported by adequate evidence." The unquestioning faith of the child was to him the highest type of excellence. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet hath believed" was his emphatic declaration—one that every generation of Christians has emphasised, often enforcing it by the sword or the

stake. It is not, therefore, to Christianity that Professor Mivart has to look for this "ethical intuition." Its most prominent teachers have always been outside the Christian ranks. If one had to select the chief teacher of the present century who has done more, probably, than any other to win recognition for this principle, the choice would undoubtedly fall upon John Stuart Mill, the son of an Atheist, and one who was educated and lived without the slightest particle of Christian conviction.

Professor Mivart thinks it is a sign of advance that "respect for the opinions of others is a sentiment which is become deeply rooted in the English mind"; and, referring to some priest who had recently left the Roman Catholic Church, he quotes with approval a friend who remarked: "How changed are the ideas of us Catholics from what they were centuries ago! There is not one of us who would wish to see him burnt." Now I, as an Atheist, do regard such a condition of public opinion as an advance; but is it so certain that, from a religious standpoint, such a state of things is a sign of improvement? To me the inference would seem to be the other way round.

As a purely historic phenomenon, the most fervent believers have usually been the best haters, the most religious ages the most intolerant. Certainly there could have been no better haters for difference of opinion than the primitive Christians were. Lecky places their extreme intolerance as one of the chief causes that excited the Roman people against them; and when we bear in mind that St. Augustine's mother refused to eat at the same table with her unbelieving son, and was only induced to do so by receiving a special revelation to that effect, we can well credit the antagonism that may have been excited by conduct of which this was a single specimen. Of the intolerance of after generations of Christians it is needless to speak. This is admitted by all, whatever may be the value of the apologies offered in extenuation.

But while it has always been the aim of Secularism to encourage an all-round toleration of diverse opinions, it is clear to me that this can only be gained by the weakening of people's religious opinions. If it were certain that God really existed, that on the other side of the grave there existed an eternal heaven and an endless hell, that men would certainly be consigned to one or the other as a result of their opinions on religion, and that without religious beliefs, personal or social, morality would be an impossibility, then it seems to me that every reason that holds good for suppressing, say, a society for the advocacy of wholesale murder or theft must also hold good for suppressing the Atheist or the unbeliever as a centre of social danger and demoralisation. Granting the truth of Christianity, persecution becomes the most sacred of duties, the unbeliever the greatest of evil-doers. The Christian could only begin to tolerate the rejection of his beliefs when he himself thought less of their accuracy and importance. In this matter the Roman Church has always occupied a logical attitude in treating heresy as not only a religious but also as a social offence, to be fought with exactly the same weapons that were used against any other force that threatened social welfare. The growth of toleration, then, is only the reverse side of the weakening of the sense of the importance of religious beliefs. It is a dim appreciation of the truth that whether a man believes in the existence of God or of a future life or not matters little; he may get on very well without them, and society will be none the worse for their absence.

Professor Mivart would doubtless agree with those theologians who describe all such changes as take place in religious beliefs as due to "religious evolution." Rightly enough, he tells us that growth is change. An individual, a community, an institution, must be constantly modifying its teaching or its conduct, if it would live. To cease to change is to cease to live. This is true enough and trite enough to modern ears; but is it quite as applicable to Christianity as the writer imagines? If Christianity is to be taken on exactly the same level as any other institution, then the principle of perpetual modification must be allowed. But this much is allowed neither by Christians now living, nor by Christians that have lived. Christianity is based upon ideas that are the very negation of this principle. It claims to have the whole and sole message for human



welfare. As Dr. Mivart points out, the doctrine that there was no salvation outside the Church was once universally accepted. But, as he does not note, this doctrine was a rigorously logical deduction from the New Testament itself. Consequently, the dropping of this teaching by Catholics is not a *modification* of a principle, it is an entire rejection of it. And so it will be found all round; there is not a modification of Christian teaching, in the sense that such a statement as "act courageously" is modified in practice by particular circumstances; there is an entire rejection of one set of teachings and the substitution of an entirely different class. We have not modified "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," or the belief in hell, or the geocentric system in astronomy; we have simply rejected them altogether; and to represent these wholesale rejections as an illustration of modification is an abuse of scientific language.

Let us look a little closer at this supposed "evolution of religion." From one point of view it is a fact. There is an evolution of religion, just as there is an evolution of slavery—that is, just as slavery represents a phase through which the social organism passes, so religion represents an intellectual condition through which the individual passes, the individual getting less religious, just as society gets a greater measure of freedom during its development. But there is not an evolution *in* religion in the same sense that there is an evolution in morals; man does not become more attached to religious beliefs, he simply learns to do without them.

Man begins with a feeling, with a belief, that his gods are very real existences, capable of being known as well and as intimately as he knows his fellow tribesmen; of being won over by the same methods, flattered by the same flatteries, bribed by the same bribes, and gratified by the same pleasures. So long as this state of things continues, religion may be said to be living and active. It is based on a definite idea, and it aims at a definite result. Now, if all further growth consisted in a development of this knowledge of and intimacy with the gods, then one could appreciate much of what we hear concerning growth in religion. But exactly the reverse takes place. Each generation modifies or discards the religious beliefs of its fore-runners. The growth of knowledge not only shows that the earlier conceptions of God were self-contradictory; it also shows that less knowledge concerning God is possible than was formerly imagined, until a stage is finally reached when even religious teachers assert that *no knowledge* of God is possible; all that we can have is certain dim apprehensions concerning him, but all definite knowledge is out of the question. And this is what is called, with unconscious humor, "development in religion."

Conceive a parallel case. A man commences to study a particular tribe of people. He begins by believing he knows all about them. Year by year he discovers that he knows less, until he finds it is impossible for him to know anything at all about them. Finally, someone asks him how he is getting on at his task. "Capitally," he replies; "I began by thinking I knew everything about it, I proceeded by finding out that I knew nothing, and I have finished by giving up all hope of ever knowing anything: I am developing rapidly." Well, that is the precise position of the religious world. Its so-called development really consists in a series of discoveries that it knows nothing of which it has professed to know everything, with the crowning discovery that knowledge on the subject is unattainable. Man's development in relation to religion is like a youngster's development in relation to his pants. He grows *in* them, but at the same time he grows *out* of them. And in the same way, while religious beliefs have been with man during the whole of his history, they steadily assume a more attenuated character. He develops to a point whence he is in a position to estimate both their nature and their value, to realise that he can get on very well without them, and to definitely dissociate them from those ethical and social rules that have given religion a borrowed and fictitious value.

Professor Mivart declares that the attitude of Catholics to the Church should be expressed in the following sentence:—

"You have blundered once, and we can never trust you again in any scientific matter—whether it be astronomy,

biology, political economy, history, biblical criticism, or ecclesiology. You may be right in your dicta, but also you may be wrong. The only authority in science is the authority of those who have studied the matter, and are 'men who know.'"

Well, with this advice all Rationalists will agree. Only one would like some answer to the question: "What place can revelation or inspiration have in a Church whose only function is to hobble behind scientific men and re-echo their teaching, and what function does such a Church fulfil that cannot be as well or better performed by the non-religious scientific teacher?" When Christians unite in taking up the attitude outlined in the above quotation, there will be no need to impress such advice on the Churches; they will have ceased to exist.

C. COHEN.

### Clerical Ostriches.

THE ostrich is credited with the fatuous policy, when pursued, of burying its head in the sand, and imagining that it has thereby escaped the enemy. The fact that its body remains exposed to assault does not seem to enter into its calculation. Its head being safe, it has no care for its hind-quarters. In the ecclesiastical world we find many prototypes of the foolish bird. Clerical ostriches abound, and especially are they numerous in rural parishes.

They are not so careless or so guileless as to be absolutely unaware of the danger with which they are threatened. They have some faint perception that there is peril in the air—that they are threatened not simply by Dissent and Romanism, but by a far stronger foe—the new Rationalist criticism which has developed still bolder destructive tendencies of late. But they exhibit no adequate concern. They pretend to ignore it, to pass it by with a casual remark, to imagine that it is something by which they will never be affected, and, therefore, something about which they have no special need to trouble. By silence or simulated indifference, they metaphorically bury their heads in the sand, and, with a foolish sense of security, they await results.

As there are people who are too idle or too old to learn, so there are clerics who, from incapacity or sheer laziness, seem to be in a blissful state of semi-ignorance as to what is going on in the great world around them. They have never in their lives troubled to inquire whether the faith they profess and teach is true—that is, they have never examined it in the light of doubt or denial. They have, from their childhood, taken it on trust, and they hold it in their maturity and old age—childishly. What to them is this New Criticism of which they hear? Nothing. They do not wish to be disturbed in their old faith in Bible authenticity and credibility. And they are quite certain that they do not propose to shake, in ever so small a degree, the belief of their flocks. So they think the best answer to the questions raised by the New Criticism is not to consider them at all, and to dissuade other people from doing so. There is no difficulty, on their part, in finding excuses for the inertness and cowardice of that course. In their judgment it is sufficient to say that such speculations and research are at best unprofitable as tending in no way to salvation, and that with unstable, ill-trained, and ill-stocked minds, whereby they mentally picture many of their flocks, such criticism with its methods and results might lead to doubt or disbelief.

In a word, they don't care to "unsettle" themselves or others. That might be very well if they had control of the situation. But they have not. The "unsettling" may come from without, for there are intellectual forces and distributors of knowledge constantly at work, whether the inactive cleric likes it or not. They do not even pay him the compliment of inquiring whether it is agreeable to him that certain information should be disseminated. They go on with their task of enlightenment, penetrating even into his fold. And so it happens that while the shepherd sleeps, or wilfully shuts his eyes, the flock are by books, magazines, common talk, and the like, acquiring much-needed light and rapidly dismissing old delusions.

These clerical ostriches might be pertinently asked one question: Are they quite so sure that they would "unsettle" any considerable number of their people if



they were to boldly ascertain and proclaim that which is now placed beyond dispute? Does it ever occur to them that after making, with much previous meditation and prayer, these supposed-to-be-painful revelations, many of their better-informed parishioners might simply remark: "We knew it all before." If we may be permitted to mention, in connection with such a semi-sacred subject, a novel by Zola, we might point to a parallel in the great surprise that was sprung on the good Monsieur and Madame Charles, when their daughter Elodie, whom they had brought up in a secluded life with the Sisters of the Visitation, and whom they fondly imagined to be in perfect ignorance of the world, suddenly disclosed her perfect acquaintance with the kind of house from which they had derived their little fortune.

The world is moving on, though these clerics choose to stand still. It is useless to endeavor to hide vital and important facts, though they seem to be—and probably are—inimical to faith such as that which our forefathers held in respect to the Bible and the authority of the Church. No wonder that so great an antipathy is exhibited by the cultured classes to so-called "public-worship," and that that conformity to conventionalism is largely left to the women-folk. Many sermons are delivered that seem to suggest that the one man in the whole building who knows least about the subject is the occupant of the pulpit.

Signs are not wanting that the Church is waking up to her duty, however unpleasant the duty may be. It is, no doubt, a distasteful, not to say a distressing, task to undo so much that has been previously done; to abandon old beliefs which once were cherished as everlastingly-established certainties; to remove stones which were formerly regarded as part of the very foundation of the fabric. But the work has to be done, and the clergy will find that nothing is to be gained by shirking the obligation which rests upon them.

FRANCIS NEALE.

### "Taking Themselves too Seriously."

THE gentlemen in black—no less than the "gentlemen in khaki"—have raised a good many questions by their conduct over the Transvaal war. Of course it goes without saying that the vast bulk of them have been blessing the enterprise, and all the British tub-thumpers and Bible-boomers have been calling on us to behold with horror the awful hypocrisy of the psalm-singing humbug, Kruger—in itself an interesting psychological revelation. Kruger, it seems, has the audacity to work the Scripture-racket too. And, just as it has been said that the purpose of the Cosmos is popularly supposed to be identified with victory for the British arms, so God Almighty is supposed to be a British Jingo on whose friendship no one else has any claim. The whole episode furnishes a good many lessons—sociological as well as theological—to those who will learn.

But one rather interesting sidelight has been thrown on the theological mind by Cardinal Vaughan's case. This prelate recently circulated through his churches a Jingo tract in the form of a pastoral letter, arguing the case for the war, and asking prayers for British success:—

"In addition to prayers for the dead we should now offer public and united supplications for our army, officers, and men, and for speedy success to the British arms."

It is, of course, a subsidiary matter that most of the arguments in this document were faulty, and many of the statements demonstrably false. Cardinal Vaughan was doubtless mainly anxious to show that Catholics could be as big Big-Englanders as any other class. As justifying the appeal for prayer, the Cardinal also put forward the following consideration:—

"This Empire has been raised up by the same Providence that called the Roman Empire into existence; and, as God used the one towards the attainment of his own divine purposes of mercy, so does He seem to be using the other."\*

\* On this paragraph one is inclined to ask Cardinal Vaughan whether Providence also "raised up" the Russian Empire and the Napoleonic Empire and the German Empire and the Ottoman

To the ordinary observer this does not seem a bad second to old Kruger, who, of course, on his side, is satisfied that the Boers are "God's instruments." The Cardinal is satisfied that God made the British—and doubtless the Devil made the Boers; whilst the British are obviously achieving God's "divine purposes of mercy" with lyddite shells and bayonet charges. Such is the political philosophy of the theologian on all sides.

The Rev. Dr. Barry, however, differs with the Cardinal. Dr. Barry is a Catholic priest who occasionally writes novels—novels which, by the way, obtain an amount of praise in literary circles that seems, to an unprofessional reader, somewhat out of proportion to their merits. Nevertheless, Dr. Barry is a gentleman of some culture, and he wrote as follows to a Catholic paper in reference to Cardinal Vaughan's appeal:—

"I do not understand why private persons, even if they happen to be priests in charge of missions, should be called upon either to express an opinion regarding the justice of this unhappy war in South Africa, or to pray for the triumph of the British arms. I must frankly declare that I shall do neither. To me it seems that for an individual, ignorant of the state of the case and dependent wholly on newspapers, to decide between the parties at issue would be little less than insane. And if I do not know—as I, for one, certainly do not—which of these parties is in the right, I am scarcely in a position to call on the Supreme Judge, as if I did know, and implore Him to give England the victory. I can pray for peace, and I do so. I can ask that all suffering may be spared which is not requisite to teach men a lesson, to correct or to warn them against the vices now rampant amongst us of money-worship and luxurions self-seeking. I can pray heartily in the only fit language: 'God defend the right.' But as a Christian, a Catholic, and a priest, how shall I take upon myself the burden of dictating to the Almighty what issue He shall give to a combat like this? I do not understand the patriotism which makes to itself a national god—English, Dutch, or African; and accordingly I decline to lay upon the altar my personal prejudices in the shape of a petition for victory to the side where birth or position happens to have placed me."

This is sufficiently stinging from a Catholic clergyman about a proposal officially put forward by the head of his Church. Between Professor Mivart on the one hand, and Father Barry on the other, "Catholic continuity" is decidedly becoming an interesting spectacle. And though there is an undertone of disingenuousness in Father Barry's statement, since there is no reason to suppose he is so *very* ignorant as to the issues raised by the war, yet the note struck by him is much more lofty than that of the Cardinal. But the comment of the *Tablet* on Father Barry's letter is instructive, and is the point to which we are leading. The *Tablet*, of course, as is known, is Cardinal Vaughan's organ, and in its issue of January 13 the following paragraph was published amongst the editorial notes:—

"A correspondent writes: 'The Rev. Dr. Barry has written a letter to one of your contemporaries in which he announces that he refuses to pray for the success of this country in the present war. He explains that he will not pray for either side, because he is not acquainted with the merits of the quarrel..... Surely the rev. gentleman takes himself a little too seriously. I sometimes pray that Dr. Barry's next novel may be more entertaining than the last, but it has never occurred to me to think that I was thereby 'dictating to the Almighty.'"

Whoever the prominent "correspondent" of the *Tablet* may be, he evidently intended the foregoing for a piece of crushing sarcasm. But he seems to have over-shot the mark. For his main point is that Dr. Barry, in making a fuss, or, indeed, caring a fig, whether he prays or not, "*takes himself a little too seriously.*" The innuendo is obtrusive. To the *Tablet* correspondent the whole praying business is a joke, and he pokes fun at Father Barry for regarding it otherwise. Because, manifestly, if Father Barry is taking himself too

Empire, and so forth. If Providence *did* call all the other Empires up, how are we to account for the fact that these god-raised organisations have frequently been in conflict? If not—if it is only the Roman and British Empires that have been specially favored by the superintendence of Providence—we should like to know how the Cardinal has discovered the fact? What a satire, verily, on our civilisation when transparent and clumsy nonsense like Cardinal Vaughan's can be solemnly circulated amongst people not insane, with all the ceremonial and circumstance that is supposed to accompany the highest and loftiest truth!



seriously in withholding prayer, Cardinal Vaughan is taking himself too seriously in offering it. And the *Tablet* contributor is about right. The gentlemen in black really over-estimate their importance in the scheme of things, though one did not expect the confession would have come so artlessly from the organ of aristocratic Catholicism.

FREDERICK RYAN.

### Acid Drops.

IN the best sense of the word, John Ruskin was the greatest preacher in England. None of the Bishops could hold a candle to him. Nor had he any love to spare for the said Bishops. He regarded them, generally speaking, as shepherds, whose chief interest in their flocks was the fleecing. He also looked upon them as high-toned hypocrites. On one occasion—it was many years ago—he pointedly asked the late Bishop of Peterborough whether he had ever rebuked the sins of any man who was known to have more than three hundred a year.

John Ruskin's father wanted him to become a professional preacher. This is how the great writer described his father's ambition for him: "That I should enter at college into the best society, take all the prizes every year, and a double first to finish with; marry Lady Clara Vere de Vere; write poetry as good as Byron's, only pious; preach sermons as good as Bossuet's, only Protestant; be made, at forty, Bishop of Winchester, and at fifty, Primate of all England." Happily, this ambition was in no wise realised. The eagle escaped the cage.

John Ruskin was asked in 1886 to give something towards clearing off the debt on a certain church. His reply was a warm one. "Of all manner of debtors," he wrote, "pious people building churches they can't pay for are the most detestable nonsense to me. Can't you preach and pray behind the hedges, or in a sandpit, or a coal-hole first? And of all manner of churches thus idiotically built, iron churches are the damnablest to me."

According to the *British Medical Journal*, or rather to a correspondent of that paper, the late Mr. John Ruskin suffered several severe illnesses, including some attacks of brain fever. Mr. Ruskin stated that during one of these attacks his madness took the form of his being constantly "in conflict, more or less personal, with the Evil One." He was impelled by the "tyrant devil" to do "some fearful wrong," which he strove to resist with might and main; but his efforts were of no avail, and every time he did the wrong the demon voice of an old peacock belonging to the house "gave forth a loud croak of triumph."

Mr. Justice Grantham's hit out at the Dean of Durham, in connection with the Dean's sermon on the war spirit, shows how easy it is to get hot and quarrel over politics. There are even some Freethinkers who are too passionate over differences of opinion. Now the first duty of a Freethinker is to think freely himself, his second duty is to recognise the right of everybody else to do ditto, and his third duty is to understand that free thought involves the practice of free speech. It is childish to get out of temper with another person who cannot see eye to eye with you, and who may after all be right, as you may after all be wrong. Let us all keep open minds, at least as open as possible, and give each other credit for good intentions when we cannot agree about anything else.

Dean Fremantle has not won the support of the Rev. Harry Jones. The latter gentleman declines to sign the former's document against the war. He says he began with sympathy for the Boers, but his eyes have been opened by the facts of the case, and he thinks it nonsense to talk about shaking hands in the middle of the fight. "They are not bad fellows at bottom," he says of the Boers, "though they read the Bible as badly as Saul did before he became Paul, and lie like Jacob."

"Lie like Jacob" is distinctly good. We thank the Rev. Harry Jones for the expression. He is a Daniel come to judgment; yea, we say, a Daniel. But it must not be forgotten that the Bible God never thought the worse of Jacob for his sly and subtle mendacity. A man like that was dear to the Bible God's heart. "Jacob have I loved," he exclaims, and he adds: "Esau have I hated." Now the gentleman whom this God hated, and we suppose still hates, was a brave, straightforward person, without the slightest taste or capacity for lying. Jacob had so much of both that there was none left for Esau.

Kruger is quite certain that the Lord is on his side. He wires to President Steyn: "The Lord has shown that He is

with us, as the enemy have to regret the loss of hundreds, while we have only to lament the loss of a few." Put what will he think of the attitude of the Lord when the Britishers arrive—as they must eventually—at Pretoria, and give him a roasting that will wipe off old scores?

How nice to hear "floating upon the air, when darkness had fallen, well-known Dutch hymns sung by the Boers, and repeated from kopje to kopje, the effect being strangely weird and highly inspiring, alike to graybeards and beardless youths." The singers of these hymns, be it noted, had just had a hard day's work trying to kill as many of their fellow Christians as they could.

G. Vallance (is he a reverend?), writing from Redlynch to the *Daily News*, says that he holds by Jesus Christ's maxim about not resisting evil. "Even," he says, "if the retention of my life depended on my destroying someone else's, I had rather permit, if absolutely unavoidable, myself to be killed than kill." Well, we don't believe him. No doubt he honestly thinks he means what he says. But if we were to make a dash at him with a long knife, and he had a revolver in his hand, we should expect to be shot—that is, if he could hit anything.

Some idiot has written to the *Rock* protesting against the War Office refusal to appoint chaplains to the Imperial Yeomanry. Why should any be appointed—primarily at the expense of the nation? They are not of the least good in active warfare. Now and then, to bolster up the stupid idea that they are necessary, we are treated to stories how this chaplain dragged a man out of the enemy's fire, and how the other chaplain rendered "first aid" at a critical moment. That is all very fine. But let the chaplains, if they want to take credit for these services, devote themselves entirely to work in these special directions. Let them go out as surgeons and dressers, or, if they are so very brave, let them shoulder a rifle and march with the rank and file. But no, that would hardly suit them. They prefer chiefly to administer spiritual consolation. This is so very comforting that there are not a few people who would, we believe, die at once in order to escape it.

We have been waiting for this. We knew it would come: "Among the invalids proceeding home in the next hospital ship is Private James Williamson, of the Black Watch, a native of Montrose. He was struck by six bullets at Magersfontein. One bullet hit a Testament which was in his breast-pocket over the heart. The ball glanced off the Testament and passed through his left arm, which it broke. He thus owes his life to the possession of a copy of the Scriptures. Williamson was shot through the left foot, left thigh, right shoulder, right leg, and back."

Good old Testament! though a strongly-bound copy of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* would have served just as well.

Lord Curzon admits the tremendous reach of the famine in India. Nearly four million persons are receiving relief, nearly fifty millions are affected, and his lordship refers to "our duty of saving millions of lives." But he does not say a word against "Providence," who is responsible for all the mischief. Not that we believe in "Providence," but Christians do, and Lord Curzon is a Christian.

*Great Thoughts* is a periodical which is not very "great," and not remarkable for "thoughts." The last number contained a portrait and brief notice of Louis Agassiz, the Swiss naturalist, who settled down and became a citizen in the United States. After praising him in exaggerated language, for he was not a Darwin, our misnamed contemporary rejoices that "he was to the last, like Faraday, a religious man, a believer in a Creation and a Creator, also a firm believer in the records of the Gospel history, and a sincere Christian." But surely this reference to Faraday is very unfortunate. What, after all, was the intellectual value of that great man's adherence to Christianity? He belonged to a most obscure sect called the Sandemanians, and it is recorded of him by Dr. Bence Jones, his biographer, that he absolutely refused to reason about his faith as he did about his science. From a rational point of view, therefore, his testimony was worthless. The greatest man's opinion on any subject is undeserving of the least attention if he refuses to think about it. His opinion, indeed, in that case, is either a mere *ipse dixit* or a mere acquiescence in what has been taught him. But your orthodox Christian loses sight of all this, and keeps on shouting "Faraday! Faraday!" as though there were magic in the name.

Sandemanians, as we have said, was the name of the sect to which Faraday belonged. Well, if we may be pardoned a play upon words, it seems to us that all Christians should be called Salamanders; for, if their creed be true, most of them will live for ever in everlasting fire, and nobody knows (in



this world) who belongs to the lucky minority bound for heaven.

This same *Great Thoughts* publishes an interview with Mr. Richard Whiteing, the author of that clever and sparkling, but, in our judgment, much overpraised novel, *No. 5 John-street*. We note that Mr. Whiteing professes himself "an invincible optimist"—which one would hardly have imagined. Things are getting better all round, he says, and "we must keep pegging away." In conclusion he quotes Browning:—

God's in his heaven,  
All's right with the world.

But if God's in his heaven, and all's right with the world, what necessity is there for pegging away?

Mr. Whiteing is an able man and a graphic writer. But it does not seem given to him to be rational all round. We mean no offence, but we are reminded of something that Heine said about the Englishman. When he talks about most subjects he speaks very reasonably, but when he opens his mouth on religion he is pretty sure to utter nonsense.

Some time ago the *Christian Budget* published an article on "The Worst Village in England," giving a frightful account of Denaby Main, in Yorkshire. The matter was taken up by the Colliery Company, and the *Christian Budget* has taken all its words back. It says the article was unjustifiable, and it apologises—not to the libelled inhabitants, but to the Colliery Company. See?

The *Christian Budget* is beyond redemption. After being obliged to publish an apology for lies it had printed reflecting on Denaby Main, and paying the costs of proceedings instituted against it by the Denaby and Cadeby Main Collieries, Limited, it now prints at the top of a page a paragraph on "The Essence of Lying." The words are Ruskin's. But the *C. B.* can tell more about that kind of thing than Ruskin ever dreamt of. Why can't the *Christian Budget* be content with the "day of humiliation" it has already alighted upon? Why does it invite further comments on its own admitted want of veracity? Ruskin's "Essence of Lying" quite fails to explain its own procedure.

Lord Overtoun seems to have recovered from the *Labor Leader's* attack upon him as a "sweating" employer of labor. He is once more to the front in the evangelising business; for, if he is not too particular about the bodies of his work-people, he is very anxious about the souls of the people of Glasgow. At present there is what is called an Evangelistic Campaign being carried on in that city, under Generals McNeill, Mackay, Montgomery, and Mursell. But it doesn't seem to be very successful. According to the *British Weekly*, which is not prone to cry stinking-fish on these occasions, the success of the movement is fair amongst "young people" (query, Sunday-school children?), but amongst "adults" it is "not so marked." What a pleasant way of chronicling a failure!

The Rev. Joseph Cook, who is living for a time at Newton Centre, Mass., is recovering his health, and is able to give several hours a day to literary work. Mr. Cook is an expert geographer. His specialty is hell and its environs, and he knows more about that district than any other living explorer. Mr. Cook has done a great deal of hard work in keeping up interest in the place, and in advertising its climate and resources to a somewhat sceptical public. In so doing, he has placed the Devil under deep obligation to him—an obligation which, we hope, he will sometime be able to repay. So far as we can learn, it is not Mr. Cook's intention to reside there permanently—at least, not till his health is better than at present; but, of course, it is not impossible that he may be indulging in a real estate speculation, or holding stock in a local sulphur manufacturing company. Whatever his motives are, he has certainly been a most untiring publicity agent for the locality in question.—*Boston Investigator*.

The London Baptist Association held its annual gathering last week. One subject before the meeting was "The Doctrine of Retribution in the Light of Modern Science"—or, to put it more briefly, "Hell and Evolution." The Rev. J. A. Jones, who started the discussion, said that, if the old notions concerning it had gone, hell itself remained more terrible than the literal fire. Most people, however, won't mind that as long as they are not roasted. There *may* be something more terrible than fire, but the average man would prefer anything else; and if hell isn't as hot as it was thought, he will face all the rest. It was always the temperature that troubled him.

Bishop Jayne, proposing the "Immortal Memory of Burns" at the Caledonian Dinner at Chester, said he should not be afraid to deliver a sermon in Chester Cathedral exclusively made up of quotations from Burns's letters and epistles, and it would not only be a very interesting, but a very strong,

sermon. No doubt it would; infinitely more interesting than a discourse founded on some passage in that old Jew-book. Why doesn't Bishop Jayne try the experiment?

Now this will really be a funny experiment: The Rev. Charles Sheldon, author of *In His Steps*, has been given the control of a Kansas daily paper for one week beginning on March 13, and will try the unique experiment of conducting it as he believes "Jesus would do."

Very much, indeed, should we like to see Jesus in the editorial chair of a daily paper for just one week. We should await, with genuine amusement, the appearance of each issue. Considering that there is no record that Jesus ever wrote a line in his life, except on one occasion, when he scrawled something in the sand, it would be interesting to know how he would turn out editorials. If he were not a little more moderate in his invective than when he assailed the Scribes and Pharisees, he might easily land his paper in a libel, or, if the paper were published in the States, might find some indignant townsmen calling round to shoot the editor "on sight."

He would probably knock out half the advertisements as mere lying puffs, and generally play hell and tommy with the contents. The inventive penny-a-liner would have no chance under his all-seeing eye. We should find the sensational "copy" shorn of nearly all its most attractive features. It is true he could introduce some "specials" that would make the other papers green with envy. "Items from Heaven" or "Tit-Bits from Hell" would sell the paper like wild-fire. One question is whether he would have any sporting news in his columns. His own "tips" would knock those of Captain Coe and Larry Lynx into a cocked hat. His advice as to shares would be invaluable. We should, indeed, know when to buy and when to sell.

Of course, he would make the acquaintance of the "father of the chapel" in the printing department, and throw the inkpot at the printer's devil. One is in doubt whether he would receive, with friendly acquiescence, the invitation of that always huge toff with pockets full of money—the advertisement canvasser—to "come out and have two pen'north." But, whatever we may think about the idea in regard to details, we can be sure that before the week was up Jesus as an editor would bring tears into the eyes of the proprietor of that paper.

What the Rev. Charles Sheldon might do, following according to his idea in the footsteps of Jesus, we haven't the faintest conception. And don't care to take the least trouble to imagine. Sheldon is an ignorant, conceited humbug, not worth a minute's consideration. Of course, he will make an ass of himself, and say it's following Jesus.

The *Church Times* is jubilant at the fact that the legislative proposal in the States of Alderney, for permitting marriage with a deceased wife's sister, has been indefinitely shelved. Whilst the Bishops and clergy are so stupidly obstructive in this matter, folks are very silly to trouble about any religious or formal ceremony at all. There are no insuperable legal difficulties in regard to disposal of property in connection with these unions, and that is the only thing that need occasion concern.

The New York Presbytery have decided to allow Professor McGiffert to remain in the Presbyterian Church without a trial for heresy. Four points in his work on Apostolic Christianity have, however, been made the basis of condemnation—viz., (1) that the Government of Holy Communion was not instituted by Christ himself; (2) the discrediting of the view that St. Luke was the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles; (3) doubt as to the authorship of the fourth Gospel; (4) that our Lord's teaching as to the necessity of faith in and acceptance of himself means his message, and not his personality.

Mirza Ahmad, a Mohammedan of India, has the courage of his religious convictions. He sees about him a half-dozen contending religions, of which, he is satisfied, only one, and that his own, can be true. He, therefore, proposes to Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, that the British Government call a public conference of all religions for the purpose of determining the validity of their pretensions by a miracle competition. By accomplishing the most astounding miracle Ahmad hopes to prove that Mohammed is the greatest of all the representatives of the Deity, and if he fails to do this he offers himself for crucifixion, that being the most degraded form of punishment he can think of. Lord Curzon has not replied. If the Mohammedan could induce the Christian and other priests to put their prayers to the test, he would merit the decision in advance, for no more astounding miracle than that is likely to occur.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Judge Bacon, in the Whitechapel County-court, caught a



witness kissing his thumb instead of the Testament. The gentleman said he did so on sanitary grounds; so many people had kissed the book already, and he might catch something he didn't want. Very good, said the judge, but why didn't you take the oath in the Scottish fashion? The witness said he had forgotten. But the judge was not satisfied. He feared it was a subterfuge, and remarked that "witnesses who intend committing perjury make a practice of kissing their thumbs." We believe this is quite true, though it is very strange. The notion seems to be that if they don't kiss the book the Lord takes no interest in the proceedings.

The Rev. Edward Wordsworth Jones, rector of Dunsby, having gone "stoney-broke," has had to be examined in the Peterborough Bankruptcy-court. In view of the deficiency of £1,000, the registrar asked him about his assets, and the reverend gentleman gravely answered that he was the registered owner of the copyright of a certain song. "Is it a hymn?" asked the registrar. No, it wasn't a hymn; it was a song, dedicated by permission to the Duke and Duchess of York, and very suitable for the present condition of the British nation. "Perhaps we can push it a little," the registrar suggested. Yes, it *ought* to be, the reverend gentleman said; indeed, he added that there was "quite a little fortune in that song" if it were got out speedily. Then he obliged them with the first line—"Arise, ye sons of Britain!" Whereupon there was a great outburst of laughter. The audience didn't want any more of it. We presume, therefore, that Parson Jones's creditors won't publish that goldmine of a song at their own expense. Perhaps the Duke of York will risk the investment.

The Assumptionist Fathers, a band of priests and newspaper proprietors, have been fined by the judges, and their community is dissolved as an unlicensed association. Some people, who do not know the facts of the case, may consider this a severe and unjust judgment. But you cannot eat your cake and have it too. If the Catholic Church wants complete liberty in France, it must relinquish all its privileges. The State is not going to pay something like a million a year to the Church without retaining some control over its action. There is also a political aspect of the case, which must not be overlooked. "The Republic," as the *Outlook* observes, "only acts in self-defence; for it believes that the French priests detest the form of government under which they live, and that, if they could, they would upset the Republic to-morrow."

The Pope has ordered special prayers against the influenza, of which complaint there are now 30,000 cases in Rome. What with the war and other matters, the Almighty must be simply inundated with special prayers. But, bless you, he doesn't mind. He never pays the slightest attention to any of them.

"The Chatham Board of Guardians have passed a resolution acceding to the chaplain's request that he might be permitted to carry out the burial of paupers and receive the fees." It will not make much difference to the paupers—lying happily in oblivion. The fees will make some difference to the chaplain's purse. For Christians who take no thought for to-morrow, who labor not for the meat which perisheth, who love not the world or the things of the world, who care not to lay up for themselves treasures on earth—these clerics are pretty thick on the pieces.

A Century Prayer Union is the latest association. It is rather a reflection on the intelligence of the times. But no matter. If people cannot occupy their leisure better than in assailing a stone-deaf old Ear, they may go on praying till they are hoarse. Their idol, of which there are cast embodiments in South Kensington Museum, sits silent and cynically smiling.

There is a sickening exuberance of pious phraseology in a divorce case of last week in which a wife eloped with her husband's "best man" at the wedding. The wife writes back to the man she has deserted asking him to teach their child to "pray for mamie," and "give me a thought in your prayers." The seducer, whilst confessing himself a mean dirty traitor, writes: "Tita's life is sacred in my hands, and, God helping me, I will protect her." In another letter he says: "I outraged your confidence—God knows I never meant to," and "God helping me, I will shelter and protect her." Next to the husband, the person most to be sympathised with in this miserable story is poor old God.

The *Christian*, writing on the reassembling of Parliament, says: "Each House opens its daily proceedings with prayer, too often a period used for the mere purpose of securing a seat." Quite true; amongst other rotten formalities in the Talking Shop, prayer receives the least attention—in fact, is treated with undisguised contempt. If there were any real genuine piety about our legislators, they would drop the

formality as tending more to irreverence than anything else.

The Lower House of the United States Congress have decided to exclude from membership the polygamous member, Mr. Roberts, of Utah. There is, no doubt, a great deal of religious feeling at the bottom of the opposition. Though, as the Rev. Dennis Hird has shown, there is no reason why a Christian should not have two or more wives, if circumstances are favorable. There is nothing in the New Testament to prohibit it, and the Old Testament history shows that God's choicest friends were polygamists, and some of them had many concubines.

The Rev. G. E. Berry, vicar of Emmanuel, Plymouth, complains that he is boycotted. The Archbishop of Canterbury refused to see him when he was at Plymouth, the Bishop of Exeter will not write to him, and the Archdeacon of Totnes declines to keep an arrangement to preach in his church. His offence is that he recently preached in a Nonconformist chapel. His remedy is obvious. Let him chuck the Church.

Sabbatarianism has received a check at Wolverhampton, and *via* Wolverhampton throughout the whole of England. A barber in that town, being fined for shaving customers on Sunday, appealed against the magistrates' decision, and has obtained judgment in his favor from the High Court. Mr. Justice Channell held that the old Act of Charles II. did not cover barbers, who were, therefore, at liberty to practise their profession seven days a week if they chose. Henceforth the police and the magistrates will save the time they have been in the habit of spending on the harmless and necessary wielders of the Sunday morning razor, and we hope they will devote it to the detection and arrest of real criminals.

Criticising a rather sceptical book, the *Christian World* says that its "references to the miraculous birth are indelicate." Our contemporary might say whether it finds much *delicacy* in the conversation between Mary and Gabriel in Luke. Which, by the way, is beaten on its own ground by certain birth stories in the Old Testament.

The Rev. C. M. Sheldon suggests that preachers should give up one service every Sunday, and that the congregation should go out on evangelistic work. Excellent! And perhaps in twenty years' time some advanced cleric will suggest that preachers should give up both services. The congregation could then hire motor-cars to go after the Sabbath-breaking cyclists.

*The Coming Bible* is the title of a book by a Mr. Parker, who holds that the Four Gospels alone will constitute "the complete Christian Bible." Considering what this gentleman drops, we should have thought "The Going Bible" would be a better title.

### The Brutal Assault on Mr. Joseph Symes.

FROM the issue of the Melbourne *Liberator* now to hand we learn that Mr. Joseph Symes, at the time of its publication, was still suffering severely from the effects of the murderous attack made upon him under circumstances which we reported last week. The doctor who is attending him is afraid of developments. Mr. Symes says he finds himself both deaf and weak; he cannot prevent his brain working, but will make as little effort as possible. There is not the least doubt that his assailant was a Roman Catholic, who has taken this method of replying to some strictures by Mr. Symes on Popery. He believes that it was a deliberate attempt to murder him. The doctor informs him that if the blows had fallen half-an-inch from where they did he must have been killed. The police have taken such particulars as could be given as to the kind of man the assailant was. The Melbourne papers have refrained from reporting the occurrence.

At a meeting at Yarra Bank the following resolution was passed:—"That this meeting deeply sympathise with Mr. Symes in his present painful illness, but is pleased that he escaped with his life. We recognise in him a staunch friend of the oppressed, a lover of truth, a champion of progress, and a sincere upholder of fairplay and justice. Deeply regretting such humane men are scarce, we deprecate the assault, and hope, in the interest of toleration and liberty of thought, that the dastardly criminal or criminals will be brought to justice."

"How these Christians love one another!" remarked a lawyer, when it came out in Melbourne divorce-court the other day that a clergyman, who had himself seduced a girl, had married her to a man who was a perfect stranger to him and quite ignorant of the fact that his bride was almost immediately to become a mother.—*Sydney Bulletin*.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 4, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints', Manchester: 11, "Cardinal Vaughan and Professor Mivart: the Row in the Catholic Church"; 3, "The Curse of Christianity"; 7, "The Dream of God."

## To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 4, Sheffield; 11, Bolton; 18, New Brompton; 25, Glasgow; 26, 27, and 28, Glasgow districts. March 4, Dundee; 11, Huddersfield. April 8, Camberwell.—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.

P. DICKINSON.—We do not know whether the book of Reminiscences you refer to is cheap or dear at five shillings. Mr. Robertson's *Short History of Freethought* is published at eight-and-sixpence. We should hardly think Mr. Forder could supply you with a second-hand copy yet, but you can ask him, and please do so direct, as we cannot undertake to act as intermediary in such matters. You wish to know when our notice of Mr. Robertson's book is to appear. Well, as soon as we can do it reasonable justice. We have been terribly busy of late.

C. D. LEY.—Never believe stories told by Christian clergymen about the late Colonel Ingersoll. It is simply a lie that he ran away, or hid away, or was taken prisoner by a boy, during the American War. The veterans of his old regiment held a meeting after his death and spoke of him in the terms we printed. Surely they knew his military conduct far better than the nameless "minister of the Established Church" to whom you allude.

G. DIXON highly approves of E. Gwinnell's method of advertising the *Freethinker*, and says that the poorest Secularists can help in this way. This correspondent says he often posts a copy to ministers or laymen referred to in our "Acid Drops."

S. H. L.—Thanks for your appreciation and good wishes. With regard to the Sunday League, we don't know what we can add to show the absurdity of its legal and registered designation. All through the recent trouble, it seems to us—and we have said so—that the Sunday League has been conniving at the County Council's interference with Sunday freedom. The League's officials seem to regard themselves as naturally, or supernaturally, entitled to a monopoly of Sunday music. The pioneer has apparently contracted vested interests against the progress of the movement.

J. MARTIN.—Dean Stanley's name was put in the Calendar of the *Secular Almanack* by our old friend and colleague, the late J. M. Wheeler, on the ground of his brave and steadfast defence of Colenso against the bigots of his own Church. Dean Stanley was not exactly orthodox himself, and would probably have been brought to book if he had not held the Deanery of Westminster, which is part of no diocese and is under no bishop, being held directly from the Crown.

STUDENT.—Ruskin's *Unto This Last and Time and Tide* contain the essence of his social teaching. It is much amplified and illustrated in *Fors Clavigera*, but the four volumes of this work cost twenty shillings. Perhaps you could get to read them in the nearest Public Library.

A. BARNARD.—Translations of a writer like Flaubert are nearly sure to be unsatisfactory. He was a great stylist, as well as a profound thinker; and his literary charm evaporates in an ordinary rendering. Special passages might be translated successfully, if done *con amore* and with ample care; but to translate hundreds of pages in the same fashion would occupy months, and perhaps years. We have occasionally given bits from Flaubert's correspondence (4 vols. in French), and we hope to give more.

C. ANDERSON.—Your notion that a mother, who gave a child life, has the right to take it away—that is, to murder the child—is distinctly original. But we don't propose to discuss it with you. Nor will you find a jury much inclined to argue the point, if you are a parent yourself, and if you should extend the same right of child-slaying from mothers to fathers. Perhaps the circumstances referred to in your postscript are responsible for your aberration.

H. THORP.—If the Sunday school in question teaches secular subjects, and morality without theology, the *Freethinker* you refer to is quite right in sending his children there. But if it is one of the common order of Sunday schools, he is recreant to his own principles and his plain duty to his offspring. We fear there are too many *Freethinkers* who do not take proper care to protect their children from the poison of superstition. It is good to yearn for the salvation of the world, but best to make a beginning with one's own family.

W. SIMONS.—We once more note, at your request, that one or two Branches have not yet made returns of tickets in connection with the Pagan Testimonial Concert. The Balance-Sheet you send us of the Ball's Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society is a healthy document.

R. M. B. (Birmingham).—The cases are not really analogous. However, an acknowledgment was made, though by anticipation, in a previous number of the *Freethinker*. The Ingersoll pictures we published did appear in the *New York Truth*, but they were not original there. They were taken in that instance from photographs and lithographs published by Mr. Farrell, Colonel Ingersoll's brother-in-law.

H. PERCY WARD.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Gould had good audiences at Birmingham on Sunday, and that his lectures were much appreciated. Thanks for the cuttings. Will you kindly send us a brief report of the Ridgway Presentation? With regard to the Board school question, we hope the Branch will very carefully consider the conditions now sought to be imposed. To forego the sale and distribution of literature is a serious matter.

T. SHORE.—Thanks. We are looking it through. Mr. Foote is nearly himself again, and we hope you are quite recovered. The weather has been very trying of late, and the party called "Providence" must be sadly out of temper.

A. E. ELDERKIN.—Glad to have your approval in the matter. Thanks for the enclosures.

G. CRUDDAS.—See paragraph. The announcement will appear in "Lecture Notices" next week.

E. NORWOOD.—You cannot do better than read Colonel Ingersoll's principal writings and lectures first. Afterwards you might read Büchner's *Force and Matter*, Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*, and Holyoake's *Secularism*.

J. BEVINS.—It was the Boers who crept up Majuba Hill. The small British force was massed on the saucer, so to speak, of the top.

J. FORRESTER.—We have not reproduced the report, but inserted a paragraph in "Sugar Plums," which is our usual method.

A. B. MOSS.—Very sorry to hear that you have been down with influenza; also to hear of the general illness in your family. We hope you will all soon be well and happy again.

W. S. CLOGG.—Sorry to refuse, but it is not our custom to insert political resolutions.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your constant friendly attention. Your batches of newspaper cuttings are always valued.

G. F. DUPLAY.—What is the use of controversy between disputants who start from different first principles and have apparently nothing in common? We have no time to waste.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Ethical World—Birmingham Daily Mail—Catholic Times—Isle of Man Times—Birmingham Daily Argus—Liberator—People's Newspaper—Secular Thought—De Vrije Gedachte—Crescent—Northern Daily Telegraph—Two Worlds—Sydney Bulletin—Boston Investigator—Freidenker—World's Advance Thought (Oregon)—Der Arme Teufel—Maldon and Heybridge Gazette—Torch of Reason—San Francisco Free Society—British Invention—Dundee Advertiser—South Wales Echo—Humanity—Lancashire Daily Post—Literary Guide.

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

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

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

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

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

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.

MR. FOOTE delivers three lectures to-day (Feb. 4) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester, and will be glad to meet as many as possible of his South-Lancashire friends.

Mr. Foote had good audiences at Glasgow on Sunday. The evening meeting was of course the largest, and was particularly appreciative and enthusiastic. Mr. Foote was much pleased to hear that the Glasgow Branch is making steady progress. An agreeable innovation is being organised for the month of March—namely, a Children's Party; and the Committee are asking Miss Vance to give them a few hints from her experience of such functions in London.

Notwithstanding the terrible weather last Sunday evening—a combination of hail, rain, sleet, and snow—an enthusiastic audience greeted Mr. Charles Watts's lecture at the Athenæum. Mr. Bater occupied the chair.

The Athenæum Hall platform will be occupied this evening (Feb. 4) by Mr. William Heaford, whose subject will be "A World without God." We hope there will be a good attendance. Mr. Heaford, though not an old man, is an old and hard worker for Freethought, and we should like to see him active on the indoor platform in the winter as he is upon the outdoor platform during the summer.

To-day, Sunday (Feb. 4), Mr. Watts lectures, afternoon



and evening, in Science Hall, Rockingham-street, Sheffield. Friends living in the surrounding districts will please note this.

So Birmingham Secularists have been partially successful. They have triumphed over the bigotry of a section of the Birmingham School Board. The tenancy of the Bristol-street building for Sunday lectures will be renewed on certain new terms. At a meeting of the Board on the 26th inst. the Sites and Buildings Committee reported that "an application had been received from the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society for a renewal of the occupation of the Bristol-street school on Sundays for lectures in connection with the Society. The period during which the Board declined to allow the Society the use of the school having expired, the Committee had granted permission for a renewal of the tenancy on the same terms as before, subject to the provision that no literature of any kind would be allowed to be sold on the premises."

The Bishop of Coventry was, of course, again to the fore in the way of opposition. He moved an amendment to the Committee's proposal, and made a speech which elicited a cry of "Rats" from the public gallery. And no wonder when he had nothing better to urge than that "Secularism had no logical termination except animalism," and that, "if Secularists were ratepayers, there were burglars who were ratepayers too." Mr. Titterton thought that the Bishop's comparison of Secularists with burglars was grossly unfair. If the Bishop, he said, did not drive the Secularists out of the city, it was only because he could not. The Bishop: No. Mr. Titterton: You drive them as far as you can. The Bishop: No. Mr. Titterton: You would drive them out of the Board schools. The Bishop: Out of the Board schools, yes.

No doubt, the amiable Bishop would if he could, but fortunately his power is not equal to his desire. The Rev. J. A. Sharp opposed the amendment, and pointed out that the Secularists were allowed to use the Town Hall. Something being said in the course of the discussion as to the distribution of literature at lectures, the Committee inserted the words "or distributed" after the word "sold," and in that form the recommendation was carried by seven votes to four. The restriction as to the sale or distribution of literature is absurd, but there does not seem to be any possibility of inducing the Board to be wholly tolerant and fair.

Both the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Argus* have editorial notes on the subject, approving of the decision of the Board. The former thinks it unfortunate for the opposition the Bishop of Coventry had to offer that his argument was not of a more substantial character. In regard to the objection by the Rev. W. E. Ivens as to the kind of language alleged to be used at Secular meetings, the *Mail* observes: "To that the obvious reply is that there is no compulsion on anybody to go and hear what is said." The *Argus* remarks that "it savors of religious bigotry for a great city like Birmingham to deny to one set of earnest believers, mistaken though they be, what it readily grants to others."

Mr. Cohen's lecture at Dundee on "Religion and War" is reported in the local *Advertiser*, which notes that there was a large attendance, and calls him "a racy and fluent speaker."

Mr. Cohen delivers a course of lectures at Stanley as follows:—Saturday evening, February 10, in the Board School, and Sunday afternoon, February 11, in the Co-operative Hall. Admission will be free, with a collection to defray expenses. Freethinkers in the district will please note.

Mr. C. Thorpe, of High-street, Maldon, contributes to the *Maldon and Heybridge Gazette* some verses on "India's Famine." The concluding lines are:—

For help man can but look to man,  
'Tis fruitless the dumb heaven to scan;  
No pow'r but in himself doth lie  
To nobly live and nobly die.

The *Crescent*, a weekly record of Islam in England, edited by W. H. Abdullah Quilliam, is an interesting little periodical. In its latest issue it prints an editorial note on "Christian Atrocities in China," concluding with the ironical remark, "Voilà, how Christians civilise the heathen Chinese!"

The Melbourne *Liberator* reprints from our columns an article on "Characteristics of St. Luke," by Chilperic.

"Bradlaugh," says a writer in the *Morning Herald*, "had in him the makings of a great Member for India." After some remarks on his eloquence, and his "singularly sensitive mind," the writer proceeds: "But Bradlaugh was cut off ere he had more than given an indication of his possibilities in this rôle. His last breath was drawn ere the echo of the great shout which fell on his ears as he quitted Calcutta, after he had attended one of these very national congresses, had died away! He was but at the outset of this career,

he had only just been fascinated by its momentous possibilities, when death came, and, in Sterne's famous line, 'Opened the gate of fame and shut the gate of envy after it.'" Perhaps the best thing, after all, that this writer says of Bradlaugh is that towards the end of his life he had "emerged out of the storm of envenomed misrepresentation and lying into the haven of a great Parliamentary respect and a warm national esteem." Naturally, however, this writer does not remark that the lies and misrepresentations were all levelled at Bradlaugh by Christians, and were the direct result of his bold and constant advocacy of Freethought, which some of us think was by far the most fertile and beneficent of his activities.

The third annual meeting of the Moral Instruction League will be held on Wednesday evening, February 14, at 8 o'clock, at Surrey House, Victoria Embankment. Miss Vallance has retired from the secretaryship, and her successor has not yet been appointed.

### Sins.

"It is a sin to steal a pin"—

So say some fussy "fossils"  
Who work the "biz." of Christ and His  
Disciples and Apostles.

"It is a sin to steal a pin"—  
To "plungers" in the "Fountain"  
A worm's a snake, a pond's a lake,  
A mole-hill is a mountain.

"It is a sin to lay up 'tin,'"  
Said Christ, as you and I know;  
For this the priest cares not the least,  
He treasures up the "rhino."

It is a sin to take a spin  
On bike or "shank's pony"  
Upon the day when parsons bray  
To keep from getting "stony."

"It is a sin to shave your chin  
On Sunday—cease the habit;  
All Sunday work you ought to shirk,"  
Say men who churchward "cab it."

It is a sin to scratch your skin  
On Sunday, when it itches;  
So think, no doubt, the men that spout  
In broadcloth coats and breeches.

It is a sin to swallow gin,  
And also port and sherry,  
Unless it's sac-ramental "tack,"  
God's fluid sanguinary.

It is a sin to lose or win  
By backing racing horses;  
'Tis devilish odd, the men of God  
Are often seen on courses!

It is a sin to raise a din  
By setting church bells clanging;  
Full many a chap prefers a "nap"  
To church and Bible-banging.

It is a sin to raise our "fin"  
To smite the cheeks of smiters?  
God save the Queen! Thy friends have been  
The bloodiest of fighters.

It is a sin to kM our kin?  
Your followers, if you please, Sir,  
On distant shores think shelling Boers  
No worse than shelling peas, Sir.

It is a sin to laugh and grin  
At Scripture, but it makes us;  
On reading all its tales so "tall"  
Our gravity forsakes us.

It is a sin when men begin  
To think, and use their reason;  
The priests say so because they know  
It spoils their "fruitful" season!

ESS JAY BEE.

"This," said the guide, "is the grave of Adam!" Historic spot! With reverential awe, nay, with a feeling of deep thankfulness, the wealthy merchant tailor on his first trip to the Orient drew near and cast a flower on the tomb. "Erring ancestor," he murmured. "I should be the last man on earth to revile your memory! To your sin I owe my prosperity!"—*Chicago Tribune*.

### The Fagan Testimonial Fund.

W. C., 5s.; A. Hurren, 5s.; L. Trevillion, 2s.; J. Robertson, 3s.; J. Groul, 1s.—GEO. WRIGHT, Treasurer.



## Early English Freethought.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.

(Concluded from page 60.)

IN 1585 the Star Chamber was instituted. Through the instrumentality of Archbishop Whitgift, printing was restricted to London and the two universities. The number of printers was limited, and every publication had to receive the approbation of the Primate or the Bishop of London. These efforts to gag opinion were defied by "Martin Marprelate" with his private traveling press. Whether Henry Barrowe, Job Throckmorton, or some other, was the author of the Martin Marprelate tracts, they are deserving of mention both for asserting the liberty of the press and as an early instance of the effective employment of satire against ecclesiastical pretensions. Martin's "pistles" against the "proud, popish, presumptuous, profane, paltry, pestilent, and pernicious prelates" were not without their influence in disenthraling the people from their ancient intellectual servitude to the hierarchy.

Browne, like Thomas Bilney, "that blessed martyr" as Latimer calls him, was a Norfolk preacher, and, probably from the settlement of the Dutch in Norwich, that part soon became a seat of heresy. The martyrs whose names are recorded as having been executed there, however, all bear sterling English names. Matthew Hamond, a ploughwright of Hitherset, near Norwich, comes first. Stowe tells us he was burnt to ashes in the castle ditch at Norwich (May 20, 1579) for denying Christ to be our Savior, and saying that the New Testament was but a storie of men, or rather a mere fable. In 1583 John Lewes, "an obstinate heretike denying the Godhead of Christ, and holding other detestable heresies (much like his predecessor, Mathew Hamond), was burned at Norwich." Blomesfield, in his *History of Norfolk*, tells us he "dyed obstinately without Repentance or any Speche"; and, further, that in 1587 Peter Cole, of Ipswich, tanner, was also burnt to death in the castle ditch "for those abominable blasphemies"; and in 1588 Francis Ket, of Windham, Master of Arts, "was burned at the same place for the like heresies." This Ket was a relative of the famous rebel, Robert Ket, whose rising is so graphically described by Froude. Strype says Francis Ket "seems to have been a minister." Bishop Scambler, he informs us, summoned this heretic, "whose opinions were found so vile and horrible concerning Christ that the Bishop was forced to condemn him for a stubborn heretic." Ket was educated at Cambridge, and it is quite possible that he came in contact with Robert Greene, the poet, and Christopher Marlowe, who Swinburne calls "the father of English tragedy and the creator of English blank verse."

Greene, a Norfolk man, in his catchpenny *Groatworth of Wit*, that "crazy death-bed wail of a weak and malignant spirit," in the passage immediately preceding his reference to that "upstart crow" Shakespeare, alludes to Marlowe as a companion in saying, "like the foole in his heart, there is no God." Vaughan of Golden Grove, a contemporary, says Marlowe wrote a book against the Trinity, and Thomas Beard, Oliver Cromwell's tutor, in his *Theatre of God's Judgments* (ch. xxiii.), says Marlowe "denied God and his Son Christ, and not only in word blasphemed the Trinity, but also (as it is credibly reported) wrote books against it, affirming our Savior to be but a deceiver, and Moses but a conjurer and seducer of the people, and the Holy Bible to be but vain and idle stories, and all religion but a device of policy." Probably these accusations were only founded upon a report which is to be found among the papers relating to the Court of Chancery in the Harlein MS., which shows there was an attempt to incite a prosecution for blasphemy against Marlowe. Among the "horrible blasphemies" mentioned in this paper are his allegations that the Indians and other authors wrote of times preceding those of Adam; that Moses was but a juggler, and that one Heriott can do more than he; that the first beginning of religion was only to keep men in awe; that Christ was the son of a carpenter, and that "yf the Jewes among whome he was borne did crucify him, thei best knew him and whence he came"; that the sacraments would have been better administered in a tobacco "pype"; together with ribald allusions to

the woman of Samaria and the apostles. It further alleges that one Richard Cholmelei hath confessed that he was persuaded by Marlowe's reason to become an Atheist, and that "almost in every company he commeth, persuadeth men to Athiesme." These charges were never sworn to on oath, and may be taken *cum grano salis*. Mr. E. A. Bullen, in his preface to Marlowe's works, says: "It is a comfort to know that the ruffian who drew up the charges, a certain 'Rychard Bame,' was hanged at Tyburn on December, 1594." Whatever Marlowe's opinions, there can be no question about his daring genius. Of his influence upon succeeding poets Swinburne observes: "To none have so many of the greatest among them been so deeply and so directly indebted. Nor was ever any great writer's influence upon his fellows more utterly and unmixedly an influence for good."

If any man influenced Shakespeare, it was Marlowe. Did he influence his religious opinions? That Shakespeare was a Freethinker is argued by Mr. W. J. Birch in his *Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespeare*. "It is hard, indeed, to say whether he had any religious belief or no. The religious phrases which are thinly scattered over his works are little more than expressions of a distant and imaginative reverence. But on the deeper grounds of religious faith his silence is significant. He is silent, and the doubt of Hamlet deepens his silence about the after-world. 'To die,' it may be, was to him as it was to Claudio, 'to go we know not whither.'" Often as his questionings turn to the riddle of life and death he leaves it a riddle to the last, without heeding the common theological solutions around him. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep." It has been debated whether Shakespeare was a Catholic or a Protestant. No doubt he was a Catholic in the best sense, and for this reason his works have always been the opprobrium of pious Puritans. Human action and passion is his theme, as of all the other great Elizabethan dramatists, and they treat it without any reference to dogma or bias to any system of theology. Mazzini remarks:—

"The divine power has scarcely ever any direct intervention in the Shakespearean drama. The fantastic element, so frequently introduced, if closely examined, will be found never to depart from the individual sphere. His supernatural apparitions are all of them either simply personifications of popular superstition, or, like Caliban and Ariel, symbols of the duality of humanity; or, like the witches in *Macbeth*, the incarnations of human passions."

No student of that period who compares the state of England, with all its persecuting High Court of Commission and Star Chamber, with the devastating wars of religions which occupied France and Germany, can fail to see that in England there were a number of men of worth who cared little for the differences of Catholics and Protestants, and much for the honor and safety of their country, and who were ready to acquiesce in persecution of either Jesuits or Separatists whose teachings tended to endanger the peace and order of the realm. Outward conformity to the religion of the State was the desideratum.

The Elizabethan age, nevertheless, showed signs of free speculation. In 1572 we find grave Burleigh complaining of the queen's own household as "a coverture for no small number of *Epicures* and *Atheists*, because the court is not comprehended within a parish, but seemeth to be a lawless place." When Giordano Bruno visited England he numbered Sir Philip Sydney and Sir Fulke Greville among his friends. In 1584 Reginald Scot published his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, the first rational treatment of that question. Sir Walter Raleigh and Thomas Harriot, the mathematician, who accompanied him to Virginia, and who wrote the account of that country in Hakluyt's *Collection of the Early Voyages*, are set down by Aubrey in his *Lives* as Deists. Although Raleigh's writings abound with fine expressions of religious sentiment, it has been noticed they contain no allusion to the positive doctrines of Christianity. As Aubrey says, it was concluded "he was an A-Christ, not an Atheist."

Bacon, writing to Burleigh, speaks of his philosophic studies as "my religion," and in regard to those studies bows theology out of court with an excessive graciousness which almost suggests a lurking mockery. In his



essays morals are founded on human wants, and, though he cannot believe the universe is without a mind, he says: "Atheism leaves a man to reason, philosophy, natural piety, laws, reputation, and everything that can serve to conduct him to virtue; but superstition destroys all these, and erects itself into a tyranny over the understandings of men; hence, Atheism never disturbs the government, but renders man more clear-sighted, since he sees nothing beyond the bounds of the present life." Even Hooker, the master mind in the Church at that period, shows signs of rationalism, and links the laws of ecclesiastical polity as well as those of scripture to the unwritten laws which lie in human nature itself.

In 1605 Dr. John Dove wrote a *Confutation of Atheisme*. By his classing Holofernes Sennacherib and "Olimpius the Arrian" as Atheists, along with Lucian, Julian and Doletus [Etienne Dolet], "which called Moses, Helias, and Christ the three deceivers of the world," it does not appear that this doctor of divinity was very exact in his definitions. He would have Atheism rooted out of the land:—

"And since the Church hath no other sword now but the censure of excommunication, which is so greatly despised, if it would please God to put it in the hearts of princes to strengthen excommunication with their princely authority, to add the sword of the kingdom to the key of the Church, not to suffer any person that is noted of impiety to dwell in the land, but to deliver him over to the hangman, whom the Church hath delivered to Satan..... and then I may use the phrase of the Holy Ghost, 'Let his house be made a jakes' (Dan. 3)."

That sanctified person, James I., was inclined to follow this advice. The Arminian treatise of Vorstius, *De Deo*, was burnt at St. Paul's Cross, and James hinted to the Dutch States "that as to the burning of Vorstius for his blasphemies and Atheism, he left them to their own Christian wisdom; but surely never heretic better deserved the flames." On March 18, 1612, Bartholomew Legate was burnt at Smithfield, and in the following month Edward Wightman was burnt at Lichfield for antitrinitarian heresy, Wightman being the last person burnt to death for his opinions in England. "God," observes Fuller, "may seem well pleased with this seasonable severity, for the fire thus kindled quickly went out for want of fuel." It, however, appears that these executions excited murmurs and sympathy: "Wherefore King James politickly preferred that hereticks hereafter should silently and privately waste themselves away in the prison, rather than to grace them and amaze others with the solemnity of a publick Execution, which in popular judgments usurped the honor of a persecution"—so that the fires went out rather from policy than for want of fuel.

The reign of James was marked by an increased assertion of the divine right of kings joined with episcopal supremacy, ripening to a rude downfall under Cromwell. The royal enemy of witchcraft turned in the direction of Arminianism towards the end of his reign, and a school of Latitudinarians arose, assembling at Lord Falkland's, of which Hales and Chillingworth were the most distinguished members. Hales, at the Synod of Dort, "bade good-night to John Calvin." Chillingworth, converted first to Romanism and then back again to Anglicanism, in his *Religion of Protestants* contended that it was only necessary to believe what was plainly revealed, and ended so confirmed a Latitudinarian that he was looked upon by all the orthodox as a Socinian. Among those who, amid the conflict of sects, sought for a tenable position by discarding the disputed points and retaining only the elementary traits common to all faiths, must be mentioned Lord Herbert of Cherbury, usually called the father of the English Deists.

In his work *On Truth* he suggests that true religion must be universal, and he finds its attestation in truths intuitively perceived. Of such truths he enumerates five: the existence of God; the duty of worship; piety and virtue as the means thereof; repentance; and the existence of rewards and punishments both here and hereafter. His book on *The Religion of the Gentiles*, interesting as an early essay on comparative religion, betrays an equally crude conception of the primitive universality of Monotheism.

A far more vigorous thinker was Thomas Hobbes, the thoroughly English philosopher of Malmesbury. Hobbes was the first to place the basis of moral and

political obligation in the experience of the race. His principal works, written amid the turmoil of the Commonwealth, show his love for order and stable government, and are chiefly noticeable to us by their deliberate subordination of religion to absolute civil power. Hobbes, as a man of the world, had noticed how the fanaticism of the Puritans and the sacerdotal claims of the hierarchy were alike opposed to national welfare. He interpreted literally the saying of Christ, My kingdom is not of this world. That he did not openly break with religion arose from the circumstances of the time. His principles tended to undermine it. Civil power was to determine all religious worship, and even the canonicity of books. He questioned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch before Spinoza, denied eternal punishment, questioned the personality of the devil, with arguments which equally apply to God, and pithily summed up the theological position by saying that superstition was religion out of fashion, religion superstition in fashion.

### "Another Converted Infidel."

THE *Methodist Recorder* (winter number) contains an article entitled "Class Meeting Episodes," by "A Leader." The Methodist Class Meeting is the Methodist "Confessional," the Leader being the "Confessor." One of the "Episodes" records the conversion of an Infidel. Now, I am always deeply interested in these stories of Infidel conversions; I have followed up a good many of them, but I have never yet found one that would stand the test of ordinary investigation. The "converted infidel" is a phantom created by the priests to bolster up their decaying gospel. He is real enough "in imagination." Try to touch him however, and he vanishes into thin air. They all have a close relationship to that wonderful Atheist shoemaker who was so cleverly evolved out of the brain of the ingenious Hughes as substantial evidence of the wonderful work of the West London Mission. This infidel of the *Methodist Recorder*, however, promised to pan out as the really genuine article. Here are the "facts":—

1. His name was "Joe Donaldson." That is something to start with.
2. He was "good looking," and he was thirty years of age "some years ago." This is rather indefinite, but quite sufficient for the Christian old ladies who read the *Methodist Recorder* (winter number).
3. He was brought into a Bible-class meeting one Sunday afternoon by a policeman! The policeman said that Joe was anxious for "salvation"; all three got down on their knees and held forth mightily to the Lord, but Joe did not "find peace" until the following Tuesday midnight in his own room. (Name and number of this policeman not given.)
4. "Joe Donaldson" was apprenticed to a "Presbyterian" deacon who was "hard and cruel" (not a "Methodist" deacon, mind). Therefore Joe D. became a "pronounced infidel," and took "a leading position among unbelievers for some fifteen to twenty years." The restraints of religion being withdrawn, he became not only a "hard drinker," but fell into "worse vices."

Exactly. "Infidelity" is synonymous with "crime," and all "infidels" are men of "vice." The *Methodist Recorder* forgets that the Rev. R. Wilberforce Stave, one of its own most popular ministers, took to hard drinking, and finally hung himself—and this quite recently. Where were the "restraints of religion" in this case? But poor Joe fell "from grace." We are informed that the first two years of his Christian life were "the best." He went to see some commercial travellers at an hotel, and his old enemy, mastered him. Evidently he had left the "restraints of religion" at home. He was "a miserable backslider" for "several years," but at last came back to the "Savior," and was "restored." A most accommodating religion. You may run riot for twenty years or more, and when you are tired you can come back and be "restored."

Now, in the endeavor to trace up this infidel I congratulated myself that I had a good start in the fact that he was not nameless. He was "Joe Donaldson," and had been a "leading unbeliever" for twenty years. But I had reckoned without allowing for the cunning of the "class leader" who tells the story.

At the close of the episodes the author obligingly vouchsafes the following information—"In the above episodes the names in all cases have been changed to avoid identification." So there you are; the converted infidel has a name, but it has been changed "to avoid identification." A nameless author, a nameless policeman, a nameless infidel; no place, no date, no anything. And this is a sample of the "true Methodist stories" that the *Methodist Recorder* dishes up every winter for the mental pabulum of its clients. Good old Methodism! Good old Christianity! Names changed "to avoid identification" is the most delicious bit of frankness I have come across for many a long day.

ALERT.



## Book Chat.

HUYSMANS, the French novelist, who has been all sorts of things in his time, is now a Roman Catholic, and it is announced that he will join the Benedictine Order on March 19. "On that date," he says, "I shall put on the clothes of an oblate, and shall have thus mounted the first step of the celestial ladder." The ladder, we presume, which reaches up to heaven. But it is just possible that Huysmans may change his mind again, and slide down the ladder to the world—and Paris. Even as it is, he will not live in the monastery, but in his own house at Liguacé, and he will continue to write novels.

Colonel Ingersoll called Shakespeare the greatest of sons of men, and Mr. Gladstone asked him how he *knew* it. Mr. Gladstone called Aristotle the greatest thinker of antiquity, and Colonel Ingersoll asked him how he *knew that*. A hit, a hit, a palpable hit!

We quite agree with Ingersoll's estimate of Shakespeare. We are also of opinion that Shakespeare was the greatest of all moralists, as well as the greatest of all poets. As civilization advances the interest in Shakespeare intensifies. He was not for an age, as Ben Jonson said, but for all time. His wealth of intellect, sympathy, and imagination is practically inexhaustible. We gradually leave the Bible, or most of it, behind us in the march of progress; but Shakespeare keeps his old position, unimpaired and unthreatened, far in front of the procession.

It is curious how Shakespeare fascinates the highest minds. In writing about him the best authors have delivered their finest utterances. This is true of Goethe, of Coleridge, of Lamb, of Hazlitt, of De Quincey, of Landor, of Emerson, of Arnold, of Swinburne, and many others. It is no less true of Ingersoll. The most splendid things he ever said are to be found in his Lecture on Shakespeare.

Shakespeare the man fascinates as well as Shakespeare the poet. Critic after critic has tried to pluck out the heart of his mystery. Their very divergence, however, shows that he has baffled their scrutiny. They turn and twist his magnificent and incomparable Sonnets, for instance, and pretend to discover in them all sorts of biographical revelations. But one says this, and another says that; and, when all is said and done, we seem to see the same old, benignant, sphinx-like smile on the Master's face. "Others abide our question, thou art free."

Nevertheless, these criticisms are interesting in their way. We look forward with pleasure to the publication of Mr. Frank Harris's long-promised book on the Man William Shakespeare. Mr. Goldwin Smith, too, after giving us two big volumes in his old age on the political history of the United Kingdom, promises us another book on *Shakespeare the Man*. It is sure to be good reading, but will it justify its title? We trow not. After all, Shakespeare is best known to us through his works. His *mind* is in them. And as we read we form inductively our conception of him. Without saying "Lo here" or "Lo there," we feel the essential Shakespeare taking form within us, and that image of him is probably truer than the creation of a thousand biographers. All the circumstances of his outward life were necessarily trivial to the subjective life that went on in that wonderful creative brain. When the lamps of inspiration were lit within the dome of that mighty head, the noises of the world's busy traffic were mere alien impertinences.

## Correspondence.

### ARTHUR BONNER AND THE BEDBOROUGH PROSECUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Perhaps you will allow me, as the principal sufferer in the Bedborough prosecution, to correct some of Mr. A. Bonner's statements in the *Freethinker*, dated January 14, and, at the same time, to throw some light on the mysteries of this remarkable case.

At the beginning of the prosecution in June, 1898, I induced Mr. G. Astor Singer, my brother-in-law, to provide £200 for the defence of Mr. Bedborough, and, at the same time, we employed a detective to watch the detectives employed in the case by the police. Then we received from our private detective a report that the Scotland Yard detectives had met Mr. A. Bonner, who was the printer of the indicted book, and that he had made a certain statement to them which secured his immunity from a prosecution. The exact nature of this statement came out only at Bedborough's trial, when Mr. Mathews, counsel for the prosecution, stated the reason why a warrant had been issued

against me. But it was ascertained that that warrant was applied for and granted immediately after the meeting of Mr. Bonner and the detectives. I have a snapshot photo of this interview. Mr. Bonner has never informed me or the University Press of that meeting. Mr. Mathews's statement was false in its essential part, as I am not financially interested in the concern. That it has emanated from Mr. Bonner, and that he was prepared to act as a witness for the prosecution, has been proved by later events.

A. Bonner has received for the printing of Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* in 1898 the sum of £132 10s., for which the University Press holds his receipts. He has altogether received for the printing of the *Free Review* and different other items not less than £950. His enmity against me commenced when we erected our own printing works at Watford. Then Mr. Bonner started the *Reformer* to supplant the *Free Review*, which Mr. G. Astor Singer had bought from Mr. John M. Robertson for £500, the larger part of which amount went also to Mr. Bonner, as J. M. Robertson was indebted to him for the printing of that magazine.

For a disputed balance of about £40 Mr. A. Bonner brought an action against me in 1899, long after I had left England; and in that action he made an affidavit which contains the very statement which, in 1898, he had made to the detectives, reproduced by Mr. Mathews at the trial—namely, that I was the only person interested in the University Press, and the sole proprietor of the concern. I will, if necessary, publish this affidavit; it serves as an indisputable proof of the *role* which Mr. Bonner played in the Bedborough prosecution.

Mr. Bonner is practically the only person who has made a profit out of Dr. H. Ellis's book, having received the amount stated; while Dr. H. Ellis, at that time, had only received £25, and the bookbinders £45. The University Press, so far, has to register a loss of £675 in solicitor's costs and books destroyed by the police. Mr. Bedborough certainly has not gained by the proceedings. And yet Mr. A. Bonner was a witness for the prosecution which resulted in my banishment, instead of being included in the indictment.

Cologne, January 20.

R. DE VILLIERS, M.D.

### A SUNDAY LEAGUE RUSHLIGHT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I read with much interest your report of the formation of the Entertainment Reform League, and was induced to look at some of the theatrical papers to see what view they took of this new reform movement. I found that, generally, the proposal to transfer the licensing powers from the County Council to a judicial body is approved by the press, but the *Stage* was an exception, and in its issue of the 11th inst. it had a leading article which described the new body as "An Intrusive League," the burden of the article being that the new body was an offshoot of the National Sunday League, which is described as having "masqueraded as a religious body," and reference was made to the generally accepted fact that the National Sunday League is registered as a body of "Protestant Dissenters who object to be designated." In the *Stage* of the 18th inst. an error into which the editor had fallen is corrected by Mr. Henry Mills, the secretary of the N. S. L., which, he says, has "absolutely nothing to do with the Entertainment Reform League," but as regards the registration of the Sunday League as a religious body he says: "I cannot understand why other persons, in addition to yourself, somewhat persistently use a form of words which we do not use ourselves." Now, Mr. Editor, you have studied religions of all kinds, from the worship of the sun to the devotion that is the outcome of a rushlight; but we here have the Secretary of "the National Sunday League of Protestant Dissenters who object to be designated," registered with that description under the Toleration Act, writing to the papers to say that it is "a form of words we certainly do not use ourselves." Can you, sir, inform the readers of the *Freethinker* why the National Sunday League should pay a registration fee to the Government to become a Religious Rushlight, and then, forsooth, endeavor to hide their glimmer "under a bushel" in very shame of their name and "designation"?

SIDNEY HERBERT LAING.

A rather amusing bit of criticism was that given by the Diocesan Inspector at the annual meeting in connection with the Board of Education for the Archdeaconry of Salop (Lichfield diocese) at Shrewsbury. He said he had to disagree with the indiscriminate use of hymns which he sometimes found. His advice was that teachers should hesitate to put into the mouths of babes the expressions of such thoughts and experiences as are conveyed in the lines, "Weary of earth and laden with my sin, I look to Heaven and long to enter in," or, "I loved the garish day, and spite of fears, Pride ruled my will, remember not past years." Nor did the words, "O Paradise, O Paradise, 'tis weary waiting here," come quite naturally from a band of healthy children in the dawn of life and hope.



## 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, W. Heaford, "A World without God."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.

NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Leighton Hall, Leighton-crescent, Kentish Town): 7, H. Snell, "Was Jesus a Socialist?"

KINGSLAND: 12, Meeting at the Bradlaugh Club.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Song of Songs."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Stanton Coit, "Thou shalt not steal."

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Arms, Page-street): 7.30, R. P. Edwards, "Christianity a Product of Buddhism."

## COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): 3.45, Councillor Bowman, "Towards Conscriptio."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): H. P. Ward—11, "The Church Party and the Birmingham School Board"; 7, "Is Secularism Immoral? A Reply to the Bishop of Coventry."

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

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, Andrew Paul, "Christian Infidels."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen—11.30, "The Perils of Patriotism"; 2.30, "The Other Side of Religion"; 6.30, "Religion and War."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote—11, "Cardinal Vaughan and Professor Mivart: The Row in the Catholic Church"; 3, "The Curse of Christianity"; 7, "The Dream of God." Tea at 5.

PORTH BRANCH (30 Middle-street, Pontypridd): 6, A Meeting.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): C. Watts—3, "Peace and War: From a Secular Standpoint"; 7, "Decay of Christianity: Its Claims Refuted." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A Reading.

## Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—February 4, Glasgow; 11, Stanley; 25, Manchester. March 4, Porth, South Wales.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—February 4, Birmingham; 25, Birmingham. March 11, Sheffield; 18, Birmingham. April 1, Glasgow; 8, Birmingham; 15, Stockton-on-Tees; 29, Birmingham.

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