

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Health and Poverty.

HEALTH and poverty are terms which represent two conditions of life that should command our most serious attention, for they involve those states of existence which either promote or retard the happiness of the human race. From a Secular standpoint the first subject of importance to man is his physical health. His bodily organisation demands special concern, because with an abnormal condition of body a normal state of mind is hardly possible; and it is certain that there must be an entire absence of comfort and pleasure where the system is subject to the ravages of disease. It is said self-preservation is the first law of nature, yet in respect to health it is frequently most woefully neglected. In this age, when enlightenment has become so widely spread and education is so general, it is lamentable to see how indifferent many persons are to the laws upon which their health depends. A sound mind in a sound body most persons extol, but the combination is unfortunately not always to be met with. All agree that health is the chief good of life, and should be the principal aim of man; and yet how few pursue it in the proper manner. Money, fame, the "bubble reputation," and ambition, men struggle to obtain, overcoming what appear to be insurmountable difficulties in the contest; but health they scarcely bestow a thought upon, until nature gives warning that its laws are being trifled with. The neglect of the laws of health is one of the deplorable evils of the present age, and it is to be found not simply amongst the illiterate, but also in the halls of intellect, the temples of genius, and even in those places where science should hold sway.

It is not necessary to dwell at any length upon the evils of poverty, for unfortunately they are too well known. Christianity may pronounce it to be a virtue, but, if it be so, the followers of Christ are never anxious to possess it; on the contrary, to obtain riches is their great ambition, although their Master is reported to have said: "Woe unto you that are rich." The lesson of experience is that poverty has always been one of the greatest curses that have ever afflicted humanity. It has deprived thousands of the comforts of life, and blighted the healthy ambition of those who desired to reach their legitimate position in society. John Bright spoke truly when he said: "Palaces, baronial castles, magnificent halls, stately mansions—they are not the things that make a nation. The nation in every country dwells in the cottage." And this is so, hence the pride of the true Briton is his home, where happiness and plenty should abound. But the sad fact is that it is in the cottage that poverty is mostly seen in all its miserable forms. It is, of course, pleasing to see that efforts are being made to solve the housing problem, or, in other words, to provide better dwellings for the poor. Deplorable as the sufferings and loss of life upon the battlefield are, the fact must not be overlooked that the diseases caused by the insanitary dwellings wherein our poor are compelled to exist produce moral and physical degeneracy which, in its injurious effects, is as disastrous both individually and nationally as the ravages of war. The Dean of Canterbury recently said: "They could not look around without being struck to the heart with the colossal character of the problems that met them on every side—the overcrowding, the slums, the jerry-builders, the army of drunkards, both men and women. Surely the task before them was enormous if they thought of this one fact—that there are living in London no less than

900,000 people, all of whom are breaking the law about living in overcrowded tenements, and who are breaking it without the slightest fault of their own, because it is impossible to find tenements in which in those quarters they could keep the law at all."

What has Christianity, as such, done to remove the appalling evils of poverty? Individuals professing the Christian faith have, no doubt, rendered aid in the work of amelioration; but where can be found Christian organisations based upon principles that are calculated to prevent people from becoming poor? "Christian" legislation has always commenced at the wrong end. Instead of aiming to avoid poverty, it has sought simply to palliate its effects, and has thereby perpetuated a class of persons who have to exist upon charity. Secularism, if it had the power, would reverse this order (or disorder) of things and bring society to such a condition that it would be impossible for any man to be poor. There is sufficient wealth in the world for all to be free from abject poverty if society were well organised. The poor Irishwoman who pleaded for help upon the ground that she had a large family of small children was consoled by the priest saying to her that wherever God sent a mouth he also sent a loaf to fill it. "That may be so," replied the woman, "but some mouths get two loaves, while others get none." So it is with the community. There are comforts and food sufficient for all to have a fair share; but the evil is, one section gets a superabundance, while another is inadequately supplied.

It is impossible for health to obtain in the midst of the poverty and bad sanitary arrangements which even now exist among certain sections of the community. Years ago Professor Fawcett pointed out this fact in his work on *Pauperism: Its Causes and Remedies*; and the Rev. J. Fraser, who was afterwards Bishop of Manchester, subsequently did the same in his report to the House of Commons. The *New Age* publishes the following:—

"England herself is supposed to be the most favored part of our glorious British Empire. If you want to know how some poor people live in this beautiful island, read the following picture drawn by a Cambridgeshire vicar, who is chairman of a Parish Council and a County Councillor: A couple of open ditches run from one end of the village to the other, generally three feet deep of the filthiest liquid imaginable. One house, at least, has the closet about three feet from the back door, and had, at least, 200 gallons of five-year-old night soil in an uncemented hole, whose surface was a foot, at least, above the living-room floor.....Most of the cottages are provided with non-fitting doors. Many without thorough ventilation and backdoors. Thirteen with one bedroom, forty-four with two, including several places under stairs. Not much overcrowding—children die off and prevent it. The Chairman of a Parish Council in Essex says: The District Council are mostly owners of village property, and the sanitary officers of the Council are their servants. Such being the case, it is easy to understand why loathsome diseases, such as diphtheria, scarlet fever, and measles, are rife year after year, and why the schools are shut summer after summer. When sanitary abuses become unbearable, the authority then attempts to make the property habitable at the expense of the parish instead of the owners. The water supply, if the laborer can pay for it, is drawn from wells in the farmer's yard, to which there is no protection from manurial filtration, and is charged a halfpenny per bucket. This charge amounts to some 7s. 6d. in the pound on their rental. Those who cannot afford this luxury use ditch water and roadside pond water, open to every sort of contamination."

Not long since, the Woman's Industrial Council held an inquiry into the condition of about four

hundred London women who earn money by working at home. The result of the inquiry was, that the majority of these unfortunate creatures had to exist upon starvation wages, and to eat and sleep in filthy dwellings amidst the lowest depths of squalor and misery. Such is the condition of a large portion of the toiling classes and their homes in "Christian England" after eighteen hundred years' preaching of the Christian faith.

Now, what is the remedy for these evils? Not Christianity, for that has had a long and fair trial, and has proved a most decided failure. Besides, science, self-reliance, and prudence are essentials to any reform in these matters, and such essentials are not to be found in the religion of Christ. Under any system conducted upon rational principles the first social requirement is to provide for sufficient food, clothes, and shelter; for to talk of comfort and progress without these requisites is absurd. Now, it was about these very things that Jesus, as it has been frequently shown, taught that we should take no thought. In Matthew (chap. vi.) special reference is made to the Gentiles who *did* take thought as to the necessities of life; but other people were not to be anxious upon the subject, "for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," and a promise is given that he will provide them as he "feedeth" "the fowls of the air." Poverty and idleness were essentials to Christ's idea of a social state, as is proved by his advice to the rich young man, to whom he said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matthew xix. 21). In John (vi. 27) it is also said: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth." What wealthy Christian will sell what he has and give to the poor, and thus carry out Christ's idea of social duties? And if the toiling millions did not labor for their meat, they would get but little of it. It is not overlooked that Jesus said to the young man, "and follow me," which meant, I presume, that he was to join the Christian society in which they had "all things common" (Acts iv.). But this state of existence could only be maintained by giving up all one's possessions and adding them to the general stock. If all did this, the stock would be soon exhausted. And the point here to be noted is, that in Christ's scheme no provision is made to provide for a permanent mode of living, except by prayer or miracle.

It is significant that the *Church Gazette* (January 6, 1900) candidly admits: "There are in London 1,244,675 persons who live more than two in a room; 485,258 who live more than three in a room; and so on upwards to those who live eight, nine, or more in a single small, dirty, squalid, and miserable apartment. Such a state of things, then, is not only possible, but prevalent; and not only, be it understood, prevalent in the Metropolis, but in all large towns; nor yet in urban populations exclusively, since, as has been recently made plain, it obtains with nearly, if not quite, equal flagrancy even in small country towns and villages, in which the interests of the owner are found to clash with those of the occupier, of course to the detriment of the latter. This being so, and the magnitude of the evil being once thoroughly realised, it is all too obvious that, so far as concerns the population affected, it is comparatively futile to hope anything from the Gospel, or from evangelistic effort of any kind, until an effectual remedy has been devised and put into practice."

CHARLES WATTS.

More Freethought Notes.

HAVING dealt last week with the position and prospects of the Secular Society, Limited, I now return, as I promised, to those of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. This Company was formed for the purpose of placing the literary propaganda of Freethought upon a thoroughly business footing, and also to free me, as far as possible, from financial and detail worries, so that I might be able to devote more time and energy to my proper functions. A very gratifying response was made to the appeal on behalf of this enterprise. Shares were subscribed with far greater liberality than many persons expected; and the Board,

including myself as Managing Director, hoped to be able to begin active operations at least with the new year. But man proposes, and something else disposes. The nature of things, so to speak, has been against us. Ordinary difficulties have been multiplied and aggravated by the exceptional character of our Company. Bigotry and prejudice have constantly tripped us up when we attempted a fresh move. Personally, I am not a despondent man; some would perhaps say I am too sanguine; but I confess that if I had foreseen all the trouble and anxiety that this enterprise has already occasioned, I should have hesitated to launch it on the sea of fortune. There can be no drawing back now, however, and we must push forward in spite of all obstacles.

The one indispensable thing was to find suitable premises, in which all the work of the Secular movement could be concentrated; that is to say, a business home for the Freethought Publishing Company, and offices for the Secular Society and the N. S. S. Every agency would then be under one roof, which would both increase efficiency and diminish cost. Friends calling there, from London or the provinces, could transact all their business at one stroke, instead of calling at a shop here, an office there, and another office somewhere else. Besides, they would have at least a chance of seeing me, if they wanted to, as they often do, without tedious and sometimes prohibitive formalities, such as a correspondence beforehand with a view to an appointment. These premises, then, had not only to be suitable and not too expensive, but also to be on the line of Fleet-street and the Strand; not necessarily *in* either of these famous thoroughfares, but certainly *off* them, and not *too far* off. It will thus be seen that our field of choice was very limited. Nevertheless, we saw several places that would do on a pinch. Miss Vance indefatigably hunted them out first, and I looked at them after. But we never succeeded in getting a foothold. Sometimes we received no answer at all, sometimes we were led a fruitless dance, sometimes we were told judicious lies, and sometimes we met with a flat refusal. It all depended on the feeble or robust nature, with intermediate degrees, of the bigotry that was aroused when we disclosed our name and object. Of course it was very annoying, but it was a splendid object lesson for those superfine—I might even say finicking—Freethinkers who imagine that the world has grown quite tolerant, and that there is no further need of any sort of attack upon bigotry and superstition.

In these circumstances we learnt once more the staunchness of one of our Directors, who is also a Director of the Secular Society, Limited, and honorary Treasurer of the National Secular Society. I refer to Mr. Samuel Hartmann. He stepped into the breach and offered to have premises taken in his name, and thus to become legally responsible for the rent and all other obligations. He did not require any pressing, and his disinterestedness and determination grew stronger with every fresh difficulty. I respected him very much before, but now I can hardly give free expression to my esteem for him, lest I should be suspected of exaggeration. Of one thing, however, I am quite assured—namely, that the Freethought cause has no truer and more steadfast friend than Mr. Samuel Hartmann. And he gives himself no airs; there is not a trace of "side" about him; he is so modest, in the best sense of the word, so reasonable, so good-tempered, and so unexacting, that I am half inclined to bless the late troubles for revealing his character in such perfection. I know he will not thank me for saying all this, as he evidently thinks he has only done what anybody else would (or should) do in the same circumstances; but I thought I would just ease my mind a little, and show incidentally that if I hate mere fault-finders (what an easy job they have!) I love a man who is quietly ready to do his best, and more than most people's best, for the cause to which he has given not simply his adhesion, but his heart.

Mr. Hartmann is to be the legal tenant of the premises I referred to last week—unless a hitch occurs to dash our hopes again. I quite expected to be able to announce this

week that the negotiations were concluded, that the lease was signed, and that we were in possession. But I now see that Shakespeare, who spoke of the law's delay, might have used stronger language if he had been connected with a Freethought Publishing Company looking out for premises. Everything seemed going on all right up to Thursday evening (March 22), but by the last post I received a letter which our solicitors had hurriedly sent to Miss Vance, to the effect that we might consider the matter altogether "off." This was not a pleasant epistle to sleep on, after a month or more of troublesome negotiation. Still, I did sleep pretty well, for I made up my mind to see the matter through if I possibly could, and wrote letters to all the parties concerned before going to bed. The next morning I took Miss Vance (as secretary) with me to our solicitors, and discussed the matter with them. Then we went to see the lessor again, and then back to our solicitors. Finally, we called on Mr. Hartmann, after which I went home with an easier mind. All this takes very little time in telling, but it occupied me from ten in the morning until six in the evening, a good part of the time being spent in a hansom cab. I had set the day aside for mowing down arrears of correspondence, and it was the only day I could find for the purpose; a fact which I mention for the sake of some correspondents who cannot understand how it is that I don't always answer letters "by return."

Let me here pause to say, in mere justice to myself, that until fresh arrangements are made it is utterly impossible for me to get through all my work; and as what must be done must be done, it is correspondence that principally suffers. I have no secretary or assistant as yet. Everything has to be done by myself. My pen is always going, when I am not otherwise employed; and, with rare intervals, I am at work seven days a week from breakfast till supper time, and sometimes till much later. I could not have stood the strain without a good constitution, preserved by temperate living; and as I am getting older, and necessarily going down instead of up the hill of life, I am anxiously looking forward to the time when the mechanical part of my work will be considerably lightened.

But to return to the premises we are seeking. Mr. Hartmann is practically accepted as tenant by the lessor, who understands that the object is to carry on the business of the Freethought Publishing Company, and that Mr. Hartmann is a member of the Board of Directors. Solicitors on either side are "arranging" the lease, and these gentlemen generally proceed with a due regard to the fact that the law is a grave and dignified thing, which must not move with any unseemly haste. Laymen may fret and fume, but they have sooner or later to realise their inferiority, or, at least, their subordination in the matter of legal processes. The lease, then, is not yet signed, and we are not yet in possession; and in these circumstances it would be gratuitous folly to enter into details. Suffice it to say that the premises, if we settle down in them, will be very suitable for all the purposes we have in view, both at present and in the future. They are in a good and easily accessible position, and may be made capital working headquarters for the Secular movement.

Should this matter be finally and completely settled by next week, it will be my duty to enter into the fullest details. I shall state precisely what business arrangements are being made on behalf of the Freethought Publishing Company. This may involve some scarcely avoidable plain-speaking. I shall also state the position in the new premises of the Secular Society, Limited, and that of the National Secular Society. All of which, I imagine, will be of great interest in various directions.

During the enforced interregnum the Freethought Publishing Company has been doing little more than marking time. Further capital has not been called up, nor have fresh Shares been invited. But as soon as the interregnum is ended we shall have to call up more capital and issue another Prospectus, which will doubtless secure many new shareholders.

G. W. FOOTE.

Half-witted God.

"MORE blasphemy," the ordinary Christian will exclaim on reading the title of this article. Here are these infidels outraging Christian feelings once more, and, above all, shocking that commodity known as "the Nonconformist conscience," by applying abusive epithets to the Christian Deity. Is there not in this kind of language sufficient warranty for enforcing blasphemy laws, or any other laws that will stop people outraging a Christian's sense of decency? How long, O Lord (chief justice), how long are Christians to submit to this trampling upon some of their most sacred feelings by ribald unbelievers?

This is all very well so far as it goes, although I do not see why there should not be the same liberty to call the Deity half-witted as there is to call him all-wise. Criticism is criticism whether it be favorable or unfavorable, and the Christian who praises in none too melodious tones the wisdom of God is criticising his Deity quite as strongly as the one whose judgment is of an opposite character. True, both judgments cannot be equally accurate, but that is a matter of opinion, and quite apart from the question of whether it is legitimate to criticise. If the believer will persist in giving his God human qualities—love, wisdom, power, etc.—he must expect those who are at all logical to criticise their exercise as they would the mental characteristics of John Smith or Dick Jones.

But, as it happens, the expression does not belong to the infidel at all. It emanates from a character of unquestioned Christian piety, and whose portrait, clasping a huge open Bible to his breast, with an expression strongly suggestive of undigested suppers, lies before me as I write. The phrase belongs to no less a champion of the faith, and figure-head of Nonconformity, than Martin Luther. It will be found on page 249 of Bohn's edition of Michelet's life of that great (?) man. Not quite the place in which one would expect to find it, I grant; but there it is all the same.

And now having sheltered myself behind the religiously respectable figure of Martin Luther, let us see if, after all, he was so far out in applying the epithet "half-witted" to the Christian Deity. Under ordinary circumstances we gauge a man's wisdom by three circumstances—by the plan he proposes to carry into execution, the materials available for his purpose, and the skill with which he manipulates them. In the case of the Deity these three canons are reduced to two. As, on the hypothesis of theism, he *created* the materials and endowed them with all the properties and qualities they possess, any failure on his part to realise his plan cannot well be placed to the credit of the materials at his disposal. Their qualities are as much an evidence of his wisdom, or lack of it, as is the execution of the plan that the universe is supposed to manifest.

What, then, was the plan embodied in the "divine scheme of creation"? According to the Westminster Confession—and in this matter it not unfairly represents orthodox Christianity generally—God made the world for the benefit of man, and made man for the benefit of himself, "to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy." Well, even if we refrain from criticising the reasonableness of the end aimed at, it is certainly impossible to congratulate him upon the success that has attended his efforts. God, according to Milton—who knew as much of the matter as anyone—anxious to make up for loss of worshippers, intended to create

..... out of one man a race
Of men innumerable, there to dwell
Till by degree of merit raised
They open to themselves the way,
And Earth be changed to Heaven and Heaven
to Earth
Our kingdom, joy, and union without end.

What happens? Man, who is made for the glory of God, is roped in by Satan, the competing Deity. God provides the material, Satan gets the profit. Man, who is declared to be "very good," turns out so bad that a wholesale clearance of the race has to be made, until, finally, the Devil seems to be getting so much his own way that one-third of the Deity has to be offered as a ransom to him in order to gather a few for the "greater

glory of God." Something evidently went wrong with the first part of the scheme.

The world, say theologians generally, was created and sustained for the benefit of man. How far does it realise this object? Not half the world is at present habitable by man. Huge areas are untenable by frigid cold or torrid heat. And of the portion that is habitable a large part of that has only been made so by human labor and skill, and at the cost of thousands of lives. "The Lord made the world in six days," said a clergyman who was preaching in a very hilly and broken district. "Possibly," said one of the congregation, reflecting upon the hardships attending locomotion, "but he could have put in another day's work in this neighborhood, with considerable advantage to the residents." And, if the earth was formed with a view to human habitation, one can only say, with the Spanish king, that a better arrangement might easily have been suggested.

The "plan" of the animal world at large is as strong proof of the accuracy of Luther's phrase as one could desire. More than half its members are parasitic, while the condition of existence of a large number of others is the destruction of other animals. Without counting the various kinds of microbes, the known number of which scientific investigation steadily augments, the human frame forms the lodgment of about three dozen different parasitic forms—exclusive of the clergy. Man, the crown of creation, for whose benefit, we are told, the whole world was planned, may be, and often is, at the mercy of a small parasite "scarce a span long." Is there not something ridiculously stupid in creating a world for the benefit of human beings, and then filling it with conditions and animal forms that render human life a matter of grave uncertainty, and in many cases an impossibility. Not only that, but if we leave the animal world at large out of sight (and there is really as much reason for the tapeworm assuming that man was made to provide it in food as there is in man drawing the same inference from the existence of any animal upon which he feeds)—if we restrict our attention to man, we find him filled with feelings and passions that constantly tend to disturb a desirable condition of social life.

A little time ago there occurred what was probably the most unique strike on record. It occurred in Barnum and Bailey's show, and was occasioned by the manner in which the advertisements were worded. It dawned upon the armless man, the bearded lady, and others of that kind, that advertising them as "freaks" cast some kind of imputation upon them. A meeting of the curiosities was held; the indiarubber-skin gentleman expressed his opinion that he represented a superior type of being, the lightning calculator said openly that he had more intelligence than those who paid to see him, and the whole tribe went on strike until some less offensive title should be discovered. The public, in turn, grew interested in the strike. Several wrote to the papers proposing titles, and among others came the suggestion that they should be called "God's curios." The title was not adopted, for obvious reasons; but, in my opinion, it was an admirable one. From the theistic standpoint, these people were as much the creation of God as any that paid their money to view them; although it would puzzle the believer to say where the wisdom lay in making a man without arms, a woman with a flowing beard, or a man with a skin several sizes too large for him. The animal world simply teems with abnormalities, cruelties, and failures; and if we are to take the existence of a normal type of animal or of a healthy organism as proof positive of divine wisdom, what, in the name of all that's reasonable, is the conclusion we are to draw from the existence of their opposites?

There is the same want of wit displayed in the revelation that God has been pleased to give to man. A revelation of truths that could not otherwise be discovered, told in such a manner that all would understand, would be highly acceptable and highly useful. But what really has happened? The Bible, while tolerably rich in fancy, has been deplorably weak in matters of fact. As a work of imagination, it probably equals Burke's *Peerage*. As a catalogue of facts, it is sadly out of place. There is no book in existence concerning the precise meaning of which there is as much disputing as there is concerning the meaning of the

Bible. There is no book that has been responsible for so much hatred, quarrelling, and bloodshed as can be placed to the credit of the Bible. If God meant the Bible as a means of enlightening and helping mankind, it is evidently not in the wisdom displayed in this direction that we can honestly find anything to admire.

The clergy, again, tell us that they are selected by God for their work. "Do you feel that you are inwardly moved by Holy Spirit?" is the question asked at the ordination of a man into the ministry of the State Church, and the presence of this internal rumbling is the infallible sign of God's selection of them for the ministry. In the same manner the dissenting clergy have a "call" from the Lord to take up their ministry. Well, I do not want to suggest that this "call" to the ministry is just about on all fours with the "call" to take up a position in, say, the Civil Service; I am content to ask if we can honestly declare, after looking at the clergy all round, that any supernatural wisdom is shown by the selection. I do not mean that there are not clever men and good men among the clergy of all denominations; but I do mean that, taking them collectively and comparing them with lawyers, doctors, or scientific men, they are vastly inferior in intelligence and also in character. If the deity has shown any wisdom in *their* selection, it must be because he imagined an overdose of intellect would tend to unfit them for their work.

No, looking at the matter all round, it does not seem as though Martin Luther was far from hitting the mark in speaking of "poor half-witted God." If the whole scheme of creation is what the orthodox Christianity declares it to be, if man was made for the glory of God, if the world was constituted for the benefit of man, if the Bible was framed for the clear and safe guidance of man, or if the clergy were selected because of their fitness to be teachers of the people, the wisdom of God must be of a poor type indeed. Perhaps, however, God has had nothing to do with any of these things. Perhaps the Atheist is right, after all. If so, we can rescue the Christian deity from the stigma of half-wittedness by relegating him to the limbo of exploded myth.

C. COHEN.

Voltaire in England.

"Dès ce moment Voltaire se sentit appelé à détruire les préjugés de toute espèce, dont son pays était l'esclave."—CONDORCET.

RELEASED from the Bastille in May, 1726, Voltaire sought refuge in England, and a year later took lodgings in Maiden-lane, Covent Garden, at the sign of the White Peruke. Here his adroitness and mastery of our language saved him from what might have been an unpleasant adventure. He happened one day to be strolling along the streets when his peculiar foreign appearance attracted attention. A crowd collected, and some ribald fellow began with jeers and hoots to taunt him with being a Frenchman. The rabble were already preparing to pelt him with mud, which, no doubt, would have been followed with missiles of a more formidable kind. But Voltaire was equal to the occasion. Confronting his assailants, he mounted on a stone which happened to be at hand, and began an oration of which the first sentence only has been preserved. "Brave Englishmen!" he cried, "am I not sufficiently unhappy in not having been born among you?" His harangue, according to Wagnière, was so effective that the crowd was not merely appeased, but eager to carry him on their shoulders in triumph to his lodgings.

This was not the only occasion on which he experienced the rudeness with which the vulgar were accustomed to treat foreigners. He happened to be in a boat on the Thames when one of the men who were rowing perceived that he was a Frenchman, and began to boast of the superior privileges enjoyed by English subjects. He belonged, he said, not to a land of slaves, but to a land of freemen. Warming with his theme, the fellow concluded his offensive remarks by exclaiming, with an oath, that he would rather be a boatman on the Thames than an Archbishop in France. The sequel of the story is amusing. Within a few hours the man was seized by a press-gang, and next day Voltaire saw him at the

window of a prison with his legs manacled and his hand stretched through the bars, craving alms. "What think you now of a French Archbishop?" he cried. "Ah, sir," replied the captive, "the abominable Government have forced me away from my wife and children to serve in a King's ship, and have thrown me into prison and chained my feet for fear I should escape before the ship sails." A French gentleman, who was with Voltaire at the time, owned that he felt a malicious pleasure at seeing that the English who were so fond of taunting their neighbors with servitude were, in truth, quite as much slaves themselves. "But I," said Voltaire, "felt a sentiment more humane; I was grieved to think that there was so little liberty on earth" (*vide* Letter to M——, *Œuvres Complètes*, *Beuchot*, vol. xxxviii., p. 22).

On the voyage to this country Voltaire was the prey of the most melancholy thoughts. But, on landing, he soon recovered his cheerfulness, and, according to Churton Collins, he threw himself in a transport of joy on the earth and reverently saluted it. "Many of his countrymen," says Collins, "have described their first impressions of the land of Shakespeare and Newton, but to none of them has it ever presented itself as it presented itself to the fascinated eye of Voltaire. Everything combined to fill the young exile with delight and admiration. Though his health was delicate, he was in exuberant spirits. It was a cloudless day in the loveliest month of the English year. A soft wind from the west—we are borrowing his own glowing description—tempered the rays of the hot spring sun, and disposed the heart to joy. The Thames, rolling full and rapid, was in all its glory; and in all their glory, too, were the stately trees which have now disappeared, but which then fringed the river banks on both sides for many miles."

The occasion was exceptionally lively, for it was the anniversary of the King's birthday and the opening of Greenwich fair. The river between Greenwich and London was one unbroken pageant. On landing he went to the park, and spent the afternoon in observing what was going on. He admired the skill with which the young women managed their horses, and was greatly struck with the freshness and beauty of their complexions, the neatness of their dress, and the graceful vivacity of their movements.

Voltaire had brought with him many letters of introduction, and how fully he availed himself of these and other methods of access to influential friends is proved by the fact that when he quitted England in 1729 there was scarcely a single person of distinction, in letters or politics, with whom he was not personally acquainted. His most intimate associate was a wealthy English merchant, Everard Falkener, afterwards knighted, who resided at Wandsworth.

Shortly after his arrival in this country, Voltaire devoted himself with great assiduity to the systematic study of English. He obtained an introduction to Colley Cibber, and regularly attended the theatres, following the play in a printed copy.

Little information as to his movements during the autumn of 1726 is available. We learn that he instructed his correspondents in France to direct their letters to the care of Lord Bolingbroke; but he was evidently not in personal communication with Bolingbroke, or with any member of the Twickenham circle. "His attenuated figure and eager, haggard face grew familiar to the frequenters of fashionable society." At Eastbury a discussion arose on the merits of *Paradise Lost* between Voltaire and Young, the author of *Night Thoughts*. Voltaire, who had as little sympathy with Milton as he had with Æschylus and Dante, objected to the episode of Sin and Death, contending that, as they were abstractions, it was absurd to assign them offices proper only to concrete beings. These objections he enforced with his usual eloquence and sarcastic wit. "The parallel between the hungry monster of Milton, grinning horrible its ghastly smile," and the meagre form of the speaker—his thin face lighted up as it always was in conversation with that peculiar sardonic smile familiar to us from his portraits—induced Young to close the argument with an epigram:—

You are so witty, profligate, and thin,
At once we think thee Milton, Death and Sin.

During his visit he occupied himself in the collection

of materials for his *Lettres Philosophiques*, his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, his *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, and his *Histoire de Charles XII.* He investigated the various Protestant sects, and observed: "If only one religion were allowed in England, the Government would very possibly become arbitrary; if there were but two, the people would cut one another's throats; but as there is such a multitude, they all live happy and in peace." Naturally Voltaire was deeply interested in the controversy which was then raging between the opponents and the apologists of Christianity. Anthony Collins had two years previously published his *Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*.

In 1727 appeared the first of Woolston's *Six Discourses on the Miracles of Christ*. Voltaire held Woolston in great respect, and has given, in an article in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, a long and appreciative account of the labors of that courageous Freethinker. His admiration was not confined to mere eulogy, for when three years later Woolston was imprisoned and fined for his heterodox opinions Voltaire at once wrote from France offering to be responsible for a third of the sum required (Duvernet, *Vie de Voltaire*, p. 72).

When Voltaire's poem of *Henriade*, published by Woodman and Lyon, Russell-street, Covent Garden, was passing through the press, a curious incident occurred. A proof-sheet of the first page had, by some accident, found its way into the hands of one Dadichy, a Smyrniate Greek, who was at that time residing as an interpreter in London, and who appears to have been a scholar of some pretensions. The poem then opened, not with the simple ringing verses with which it now begins, but with a series of verses, of which the first couplet was:—

*Je chante les combats et ce roi généreux
Qui força les Français à devenir heureux.*

Dadichy made his way to Voltaire's residence, and, announcing himself as the "countryman of Homer," proceeded to inform the poet that Homer never opened his poems with strokes of wit and enigmas. Voltaire took the hint, and the lines were altered as they now stand ("*Henriade*," *Variantes du Chant Premier*).

At the beginning of 1729 Voltaire left England for his native country. "Had I not been obliged," he said in a letter to Thiériot, "to look after my affairs in France, depend upon it I would have spent the rest of my days in London." Altogether, deducting a month for his short visit to France in the summer of 1726, Voltaire spent about two years and eight months in this country.

FRANCIS NEALE.

A Converted Socialist.

A MAN came into the *Truthseeker* store a few days ago to get some books which he said his wife had requested him to obtain. Before leaving he disclosed his name to the Editor, and dilated somewhat on the delusions of Socialism. He made his manners and went away just as I approached, but not until I had heard him advance the proposition that the incapable honest would get the short end of the bargain under Socialism just as they have been used to getting it under competition, and colonies would draw their members from the class accustomed to being plucked, and from the other class who had been plucking them—or words of similar import. He spoke as one who had been a Socialist and had reformed. I learned the gentleman was Herbert N. Casson, former pastor of the Lynn Labor church, with an anti-capitalistic creed. His change of views came about through a residence of some months at the Ruskin community in Tennessee, where he edited the *Coming Nation* and tasted associate life. He is not the first who has taken the colony-cure for collectivism with encouraging results. I suppose that if institutes could be established in various parts of the country, where those who think the highest duty of life is to work for others and board themselves could be treated scientifically, a great many more would be helped.

—George Macdonald, in "*Truthseeker*" (New York).

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

Acid Drops.

"THE Bible," says Dr. Parker, "is a record of murder, lust, drunkenness, lying, hypocrisy, prodigality, and all manner of evil." We agree with him this time.

What would Jesus do? "Jesus," Dr. Parker says, "would make the times lively." Once more we agree with him. Jesus would make them *very* lively. He would keep the world humming. When a town like Ladysmith was besieged, he would do his bread-multiplication trick, and make the enemy a laughing-stock. When the drink ran short at weddings and other jollifications, he would "Hey! Presto!" a lot of water into beer or whiskey. Now and then he would give a fine public performance of his pedestrian powers, and walk on the Thames from London Bridge to Westminster. He would enter hospitals and cure the most hopeless patients on the spot. He would meet funerals on the way to Highgate or Finchley, and practise the "Get-up-and-walk" business on the parties in the coffins. He would die and get buried himself, and slip back and join the funeral party over the cake and sherry. Oh yes, Dr. Parker, he would make the times lively. It would be a constant beanfeast for the newspapers.

One of the compositors in the office of the *Topeka Daily Capital* got drunk as the paper was being taken over for a week by the Rev. Charles Sheldon, who was going to run it for that period on "What would Jesus Do?" lines. When he got sober again he begged to be forgiven and reinstated. His appeal to Mr. Sheldon, however, was wasted, and the poor fellow went and hanged himself. We suppose this may be taken as a practical illustration of the text, "Blessed are the merciful."

The editor of the *Paris Missionary Society's Journal* has discussed the question of what would Jesus do as an example for his French constituents. He says: "It is very difficult to answer this question; there are so many positions which one would scarcely picture as occupied by Jesus—thus Jesus as a husband, as the father of a family, as a young girl, or the mistress of a house; Jesus as a millionaire or as a septuagenarian, or as an artist, a tradesman, or a manufacturer." It is really very curious, after all, how many important positions in life this "perfect example" never filled, and therefore, personally, has presented no guide to us. So far from being a many-sided man, he was singularly limited.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, having done a tour in the East for the benefit of his health, has returned to tell his congregation at St. James's Hall that the Mohammedans are sincere and earnest in their religion, unlike multitudes of Christians. He arrived at Constantinople during Ramadan, and found the Turks abstaining, not only from food and drink, but also from the much-loved tobacco. In the mosques he found absolute equality; there was no snobbery and no class distinction. Even in the lowest parts of the city there were no drunkards to be seen. If a Turk begins to drink, they say he has become a Christian. Apart from their detestable government, the Turks are fine, manly, healthy fellows. Mr. Hughes admired them very much. But he says the Crescent is bound to give way to the Cross. What a pity!

Christians are getting far more particular than their "Master." Some churches are dropping the use of wine in the Communion, and adopting other liquids. We read of one church that patronises the milk of the cocoa-nut. South Congregational Church, Boston, U.S.A., goes in for water. This is often a dangerous drink. They might make it coffee.

Methodist ministers at Milwaukee have censured President McKinley for drinking every kind of wine on the list the last time he dined in that city. But wouldn't Jesus Christ have done ditto? He was no teetotaler. He drank what was going in his time. On one occasion, at least, he supplied extra free liquor at a wedding.

There is a Women's Society for Political Study in New York, at a recent meeting of which a speech was delivered by Mrs. Raney St. John Gaffney, who seems pretty intimate with Jehovah. "All the world," she said, "looks on at this war, yet no one has stepped in to see fair play, except Providence, which, so far, seems to be all on the side of the Boers. Truly, the Lord God is a God of War, and he has buckled on his sword and armor and is keeping up the fight night and day. May the Lord God remain with the Boers." But the Lord God seems to have changed sides since then, unless "Bobs" is too many for him.

The Duke of Norfolk is off to the front, but the Bishop of Norwich remains at home to fight the battles of the Lord.

He was the preacher on Sunday last at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, London; his congregation including several peers and members of parliament, but very few of the common herd. The subject of his sermon was Nature and Providence. His lordship said that God governed the world by general laws, but occasionally he intervened with a miracle. In otherwise unaccountable events the Christian saw the finger of God. But his lordship did not explain what he meant by an unaccountable event. If he meant something that could not be foreseen, there are millions of them, and all of them natural. If he meant something hard to understand, it was still far from a miracle. It is hard to understand, for instance, how Christians can pay a Bishop thousands a year to preach "Blessed be ye poor." Still, it is not miraculous; for there are a lot of bishops, and the game goes on for generation after generation.

The Bishop of Norwich referred to the saying that Providence is on the side of the biggest battalions—ascribing it, curiously enough, to Frederick the Great instead of Napoleon. "That was usually so," his lordship said, "but not always." Now could anything be more ridiculous? This amounts to saying that, in a general way, God takes the stronger side, whether it is right or wrong; but now and then he ranges himself on the side of justice. Well may the Lord ask to be saved from his friends—especially in shovel hats and gaiters.

After the Bishop's apologetic blasphemy we will take a sample of his apologetic logic. He took the case of a guide, leading a military force, who loses his way, and, coming to two routes, chooses one of them, and that the right one. "How," the Bishop asked, "could we account for the choice he made unless we admitted the interposition of God?" But surely the choice, however hesitating, must be made on some indications; and if there are only two ways, one of them must be the right one. General Methuen's guides led his troops in the *wrong* direction. Does the Bishop of Norwich mean, then, that God interposed in order to bring about a British reverse? Or what *does* he mean?

Mr. Charles Cook, the Hyde Park evangelist, celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his Religious Services at the Metropolitan Theatre on Sunday evening. Thirty-three years ago, he said, the Lord was pleased to convert him from a life of worldly pleasure. He had an ambition for the stage, he also tried business more than once, but it was not to be—his business was to win souls. It appears, therefore, that Mr. Cook was a failure as an actor and as a man of business before he found a career in the soul-saving line. We imagine that a good many other evangelists might make a similar confession.

More Sabbatarianism. The Bournemouth Free Church Council recently sent a deputation to the Town Council with reference to the coach drives and the sale of newspapers on Sunday in Bournemouth and the district. The Town Clerk has now been instructed to write to char-a-banc and coach proprietors, stating that the Corporation desire the discontinuance of Sunday traffic. The attention of the police is to be called to the matter of the sale of newspapers on Sundays, and the Pleasure Gardens Inspectors are to be instructed to keep newspaper boys out of the Gardens.

In both these matters the so-called representatives of the ratepayers on the Bournemouth Town Council have been led away and hoodwinked by the religious bigots, who are pretty numerous at that sea-side resort, but who are by no means entitled to dictate what other people—visitors there, it may be, for one or two days only at the week end—may or may not do.

The coach proprietors, and, for the matter of that, the newsagents, will be simply mean hounds if they allow themselves to be dictated to in this fashion. The coach drives into the New Forest and to Boscombe, etc., are especially enjoyable, and our lovely climate is so fickle that it may often happen that the only agreeable day out of four or five is a Sunday. The Town Council, however, steps in, and peremptorily puts a stop to perhaps the only pleasurable possibility of the visit. Then, again, when you are lounging in the Pleasure Gardens on a Sunday morning, what is more agreeably opportune than to see a newsboy come up to your seat with his collection of Sunday papers?

Really this grandmotherly legislation in regard to the Sunday makes one's gorge rise with indignation. It is such a tyrannous interference with other people's pleasure by the miserable church and chapel folks who pretend that they are so much superior to their neighbors. Personally, it makes one feel inclined to adopt Luther's suggestion, and laugh, sing, whistle, dance, and do everything that is gay and boisterous on the Sabbath, simply in order to show one's contempt for these monstrous restrictions.

Who are the people who impose them? Mostly professional

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sky-pilots who cannot endure rivalry to their gospel shops and their own pulpit eloquence—save the mark!—and a miserable following of sanctimonious asses who think that one way of gaining happiness hereafter is to be unhappy themselves and make others unhappy on the Sunday. If this is the way they behave on earth, one would certainly never wish to meet them in heaven.

A man may not kiss his daughter good-bye at a railway station on Sunday in Boston, Massachusetts. One who committed this heinous misdemeanor was imprisoned the other day under an old law "for the better observance of Sunday," or, as Mr. Austin Holyoake used to say, for the "bitter observance of the Sabbath." This and other recent cases may lead to a necessary revision of the codes. To show the absolute silliness of the present code in Maryland, the police of Baltimore compiled a list of 6,000 persons who had laid themselves open to prosecution by Sunday whistling, cycling, kissing, and smoking in the streets. The Grand Jury refused to indict them, and the State Legislature is now weeding out the ancient statutes.

There is one thing to be said for the Queen in the matter of religion—she is not swayed by any Sabbatarian nonsense, and she is very tolerant of other people's religion. The *Daily Chronicle* recalls an incident which occurred at Balmoral some years ago. One of her gamekeepers married a Roman Catholic, and the bride was concerned that she could not conscientiously attend Craithie Church along with the other servants. On this coming to the ears of the Queen, she presented the gamekeeper with a horse and trap in which to drive his wife on Sunday mornings to the Roman Catholic church at Braemar.

What, by the way, is the meaning of the announcement that President McKinley has instructed the American Ambassador in Paris to see that the Sabbath is observed as far as possible in the American section of the Paris Exhibition? Does this mean that the American section is to be practically closed on the Sabbath, and is the instruction a sop to the Puritan element of the States? Seventh-day pleasure is surely not to be stopped because an arrangement of six days' labor amongst employees is necessitated.

The *Christian* alludes to the recent substitutes for Christianity under the following heads:—Aestheticism, Theosophy, Otherism, Faith Cure, Pessimism, Agnosticism, Materialism, Liberalism, Spiritualism, Mormonism, Christian Science, etc. Some of these, it says, are distinctly moribund creeds; others have just appeared above the horizon. It adds: "There is one significant omission from the above list which would not have been possible fifteen years ago—Secularism—which, since the death of Mr. Bradlaugh and the defection of Mrs. Besant into the ranks of Spiritualism, has altogether lost its hold as a public movement. The above creeds are doomed to the same fate, for they have no Gospel for the soul of man."

We cannot expect much attention to accuracy on the part of the *Christian*—if we did, we should be disappointed. But what is this wild talk about the Secular movement ceasing to have any popular hold since the death of Mr. Bradlaugh and the defection of Mrs. Besant, not to Spiritualism, as the *Christian* puts it, but to Theosophy? The National Secular Society may surely claim to be some official evidence of the continued existence of Secularism as a public movement. If the *Christian* had taken the trouble to inquire before making positive statements, it would have discovered in the Secular movement at the present time indications of exceptional vitality. But 'twas ever thus with Christian critics.

It is understood, says the *Rock*, that Bishop Henry Melville Jackson (coadjutor at Alabama) will shortly be deposed. He has already resigned at the request of the great body of the clergy of the diocese. The cause, sad to say, is habitual intoxication.

A runaway vicar, the Rev. C. H. Courtenay Downman, returned a little time ago to his neglected and indignant flock at Easton Mandit, Wellinborough. A local paper stated that the news of his coming reached the village before he did, and a number of the parishioners awaited him with tin kettles, and gave him a lively but discordant reception. The rev. gentleman sued the paper for damages for libel, but after his cross-examination as to the debts and difficulties which caused him to leave, the jury stopped the case, and a verdict was returned for the defendants.

Here is a part of the cross-examination: "Do you think it a good thing that the Good Friday bells should be rung, and people arrive at the church and find no vicar there? What is your excuse?"—"I was mentally upset." "Was it because your wife would not lend you further money that you left?"—"That is not altogether my excuse, but partly."

A pious official of the Methodist New Connection—none other than the treasurer of the Circuit funds at Leeds—is now doing twelve months' imprisonment with hard labor. He used his position to obtain money, which he lost in speculation, and ended by becoming a bankrupt with a deficiency of £10,000, and a criminal convicted of fraud.

When will coroners make themselves acquainted with the law relating to the "Swelp me God" formula, which is such a ridiculous feature of our jurisprudence? One of these functionaries—who seems to have a mighty high, but an entirely erroneous, notion of the extent of his powers—held an inquest at Brynn, Wigan, relative to the death of John Haydock, a collier, who had been killed by a fall of roof in a mine. William Haydock, son of the deceased, was called as a witness, and when asked to kiss the Testament stated that he could tell the truth without kissing the Testament. The coroner's business was then to have asked him if he wished to affirm. Instead of doing so, this little god almighty and legal ignoramus remarked that if the witness did not comply he would commit him. Of course, he had no power to do anything of the kind, but the threat seems to have had its effect, for the witness kissed the book. That compliance was a regrettable mistake.

If the witness had plainly, but firmly, refused to kiss the book and demanded that his evidence should be taken on affirmation, this domineering and incompetent coroner would have had no alternative but to give way and eat his own words about committing for contempt. The law, with a provision that its administrators would often excite contempt, has invested them with certain penal powers for their own protection. But such powers are fortunately inoperative in a case like this.

A learned judge ought surely to be sufficiently *au fait* with the possible bearing of the law on his own personal "will and testament" when he draws that solemn document up, especially after he has had an acquaintance with the sort of litigation that arises over disputable testamentary dispositions. However, an instance to the contrary has lately come to light. It seems that there is an Act on the Statute Book called the Catholic Emancipation Act (10 George IV., c. 7) which prohibits gifts by will to religious orders bound by monastic or religious vows. The late Mr. Justice William O'Brien, forgetting the Act, bequeathed to the community of Jesuits in Dublin his valuable library. The Irish Master of the Rolls has been obliged to declare the gift void, and Mr. P. O'Brien, M.P., wants the Attorney-General for Ireland to say if he intends to propose an amendment of the law.

Father Ignatius has now fallen foul of Dean Farrar, whom he accuses of suggesting in his book, *The Bible and the Child*, that there are things in Holy Writ which should not be taught to children. This is the comment of the *Church Gazette*: "Indeed, Father Ignatius might fairly enough have gone a step further and affirmed—without much danger of contradiction—that there were some things which are not wisely taught either to children or to anyone else. We say it discreetly, though with reverence."

Note the concluding remark. Why should the *Church Gazette* be so punctiliously reverent over that which is undeserving of reverence?

Dr. Minot J. Savage, preaching in the Unitarian Church of the Messiah in New York, made some comments on Bible history which the religious press describe as "sensational and blasphemous." He said: "The doctrine of the fall of man in Adam and his condemnation to eternal death on that account is one of the most immoral, unjust abominations that ever entered into the brain of man.....The belief that God came down and was incarnated in man and suffered and died and went to hell to save men is philosophical speculation, first taking its shape in the Nicene Creed. The Church Fathers did not believe it, so far as we can find out. We know that many of them did not. There is no reason to suppose that the Apostles themselves believed it. Paul certainly did not, and there is the best reason in all the world for supposing that Jesus did not believe it."

With regard to the Papal decree forbidding "binage," the saying of Mass twice on the same day, the *Reveil* (Montreal) says that, from the layman's point of view, it would be better to forbid the priests "concubinage."

Dr. St. George Mivart has a very low opinion of the arts of Catholic apologists. He refers disdainfully to "the way in which many of the clergy play fast and loose," and to their "disingenuous special pleading." "What a contrast," he says, "is offered by the quibbling, verbal jugglery and shuffling of these apologetic theologians to the proceedings of men of science and of historical experts in their search

after truth! The conception 'truth' does not seem even to enter into the minds of these apologists, but only ideas as to what may be expedient, what may satisfy temporarily, and so serve the turn for the present."

Some Catholics, even in England, are still as credulous as they make them. "A clerical friend assured me, not many years ago," says Dr. Mivart, "he firmly believed that the sun and all the stars revolved round the earth once in each twenty-four hours, also that he so believed because the Church had authoritatively interpreted Scripture in that sense." This reminds us of the Church of England curate who said he had so much faith that if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, instead of the whale swallowing Jonah, he would have believed it.

The new Education dodge of our Tory Government is to abolish the earning of grants by merit, and to make a block grant of 21s. or 22s. according to the inspector's report and recommendation. By this plan the average Voluntary school will receive 1s. 4d., while the average Board school will receive 8d. The Church schools will profit the most under this pleasant arrangement. On the other hand, the Chairman of the Manchester School Board states that his Board will lose over £1,600 a year under the new Code. Such a state of things is simply infamous. To support the parsons' bad schools the Government is prepared to half wreck the general system of elementary education.

With regard to the proposed religious census, a correspondent sends us an amusing little story: "A German I knew years ago told me that while he was living at Frankfurt the census was taken, and for that purpose a paper was left at his house. When the collector called it was not filled up. No one was in the house but my German's wife, and she did not know how to fill up the paper, so the collector offered to do it, and obtained from the lady answers to the various questions. When it came to that of religious belief, she declared her ignorance. 'But,' she added quite innocently, 'if you go round to the Red Lion I suppose they can tell you.' Homeric shouts of laughter shook the Red Lion when the German told the story there."

The Humanitarian League has issued a forcible appeal against Mr. Wharton's Flogging Bill and Lord James's Birching Bill. These Bills seek to extend flogging and birching to other offenders than those on whom they are at present inflicted. Now this is a mere return to barbarism. Physical punishment of the kind contemplated is degrading and useless, or useless and degrading, as you choose; for if it is useless it must be degrading, and if it is degrading it must be useless. The first punishment in human society was death; this was modified in the course of time into beating and mutilations; later on, an effort was made to make the punishment moral, and this can only be done by a moral appeal to the offender. But there is no moral appeal in lacerating a man's back, or wealing a boy's posterior. It is simply a degradation, and the victim always feels it as such.

No one ever proposed to flog officers in the Army. The flogging was always reserved for privates. But if it was good for privates, why was it not good for officers too? The answer was that to flog an officer would be to wound his honor and lower him in the eyes of his men. In other words, it was a degradation—which is precisely what we maintain.

Corporal punishment of every kind ought to be abolished as quickly as possible. It works nothing but mischief, and is really but a relic of the barbarous old system of torture. Even in schools there should be no beating permitted. Beating a child shows that you are strong and angry; it shows nothing else. Besides, it is a dangerous thing to strike a child at hazard. Boxing his ears is almost as bad as hitting him on the eyes. Very often the hand is chosen for caning, but this shows a lamentable ignorance of anatomy, for the hand is a wonderfully delicate arrangement, as may be seen by a glance at Sir Charles Bell's classic work on this organ. A child may be injured for life by being struck with a hard object upon the hand. If you beat him on the back you may hurt his spine. You had better strike him on the face, where there is no vital part to injure. A gashed cheek, or a black eye, looks bad, but is not dangerous. The fact is, there is only one part of a child's body, under his clothes, that you can thrash him upon with any approach to impunity. It is the part which has been said to be providentially supplied for the purpose. But if our sense of decency—to say nothing of grave sexual reasons—prevents us from beating a child on this "providential" part of his anatomy, we should have the sense to cease beating him altogether. And when we have done that, we shall soon be astonished to learn how

much better we get on with him, and he with us. The blow being no longer ready, the word of wisdom has to be found, and thoughtful patience takes the place of stupid intolerance; until, finally, we wonder how anyone who has beaten a child can look into his eyes afterwards without seeing a devil reflected in them. "Hands off!" should be the first rule of practice in every nursery, and every school, in the world.

A Westmoreland minister begs a tricycle through the *Christian World*. He appears to want it for his pastoral peregrinations. Evidently he is lacking in faith. It was promised by Jesus that those who believed in him should do greater wonders than he did; and, as he walked on water, this Westmoreland minister ought to walk on air.

On Saturday, March 24, a "Special Meeting for Young People" was held in the Temperance Hall, Bolton. It was announced to be held "If the Lord will," and we presume he did will, since we have not heard of any recent miracle in that locality. Admission was to be "free," and there was to be "no collection." This was, of course, a partial attraction, but it was eclipsed by the subject—"A Roaring Lion; a Tame Tiger; and a Bleeding Lamb." Some people would regard the last clause as swearing, but they are too fastidious, and don't understand the exigencies of revivalism. Did not the good old Salvation hymn run thusly?—

Oh the Lamb, the bleeding Lamb!
I love the sound of Jesus' name;
It sets my spirit in a flame,
Hal'elujah to the Lamb.

Sublime, is it not? Shakespeare and Shelley hide their diminished heads.

The editor of the Birmingham *Daily Argus* was brought up to London to answer for his attack on Mr. Justice Darling. Three judges tried him for "contempt of court"—Lord Chief Justice Russell, Mr. Justice Grantham, and Mr. Justice Phillimore. An abject apology was tendered by the editor and writer of the peccant article, and their lordships deferred judgment till the next morning—probably not to look in a hurry. But where on earth does the "contempt of court" come in? Nothing was said in the *Argus* to prejudice the case being tried by Mr. Justice Darling. He was pitched into unceremoniously for lecturing the press on its duty. And why not? Is a judge sacred? Is it blasphemy to criticise him, however severely? If it is, the offender ought to be tried by a jury, and not by the offended judge's professional colleagues.

We are not able to comment on the result of this case, as it is not announced at the time of our going to press. Perhaps it will call for some observations in our next issue. Meanwhile we beg to say, for our part, at the risk of proceedings against us for "contempt of court," that Mr. Justice Darling's conduct at the trial of the man Wells was perfectly ridiculous. Fancy a judge on the bench airing his own personal opinions on social questions, and assuming it to be a crime to differ from him! Fancy a man of a judge's age and experience holding it to be wicked for parents to keep the size of their families within the limit of their means of supporting them! Fancy a judge taking his Bibliolatry upon the seat of justice, where an Atheist has as much right to sit as a Christian has, and quoting the Psalms of David (who never wrote them) against Neo-Malthusianism! It would be an insult to the fair sex to call such a judge an old woman.

Sincere believers in Christianity will soon cease to interfere with the management of a world where they profess themselves to be pilgrims and strangers. The new supreme Being [Humanity] is no less jealous than the old, and will not accept the servants of two masters. But the truth is, that the more zealous theological partisans, whether royalists, aristocrats, or democrats, have now for a long time been insincere. God to them is but the nominal chief of a hypocritical conspiracy, a conspiracy which is even more contemptible than it is odious. Their object is to keep the people from all great social improvements by assuring them that they will find compensations for their miseries in an imaginary future life.—*Auguste Comte*.

By *damning* a soul—that is to say, by turning it away for ever from his presence, or, in less mysterious words, by shutting it out for ever from the truth—God would turn himself away from his soul, would limit his own power, and would, so to say, damn himself also to a certain extent. The pain of *damnation* recoils on him who inflicts it. Instead of damping those who have gone wrong, God should everlastingly call them back to him.—*Guyau*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 1, The Athenæum Hall, London, W.C.; 7.30, "Some Suggestions for God."

April 8, Athenæum Hall; 22, Camberwell; 29, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 1, Birmingham; 8, Camberwell; 22, New Brompton. May 27, Bradford.—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.

S. J. B.—(1) The subject has already been treated by Mr. Mackenzie, whose epigram you probably overlooked. We are sorry for the *contretemps*. Send us something else, please. Always glad to hear from you. (2) We much regret to hear that your newsagent has again received no contents-sheet for two weeks running. Unfortunately your complaint is only one of many. However, these matters will be set right now that the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, is entering its own premises with a view to conducting its own business. This step has long been advisable, and is now imperative.

H. C. SHACKLETON.—You forget, or perhaps don't know, that the *Freethinker* is practically made up for the press on Tuesday evening, although it is dated Sunday. We have to print so as to be ready for the Wednesday evening wholesale trade, and for the ordinary trade on Thursday morning. When we went to press last week President Steyn's reply to Lord Roberts, with regard to the Boer abuse of the white flag, had not been published. We have seen his reply since. He denies what Lord Roberts says he saw with his own eyes, and we don't wonder that Lord Roberts has not "thought it desirable to continue the correspondence." The Boers have certainly their good points; they seem to have behaved remarkably well to British prisoners and wounded; but an occasional duplicity is what might be expected from people nourished too exclusively on the Old Testament.

A. B. MOSS.—Glad to hear you will be continuing your open-air lecturing work during the summer. Special attention will be given to such work this year from headquarters. Mr. Foote has also decided to organise more Freethought demonstrations in as many parts of London as possible. Thanks for your inquiry as to his health, which is good enough, although, like other folk, he could do with a little more genial weather.

W. A. NEWCOMB.—We should be sorry to see such an excellent co-operative movement break up, but what can we do? You don't suggest anything. We are quite overwhelmingly busy, and cannot attempt to act on vague suggestions. Try to be more specific.

FREQUENT VISITOR.—You are quite right in objecting to controversial questions being put after Freethought lectures. Questions ought, as you say, to be put only for the sake of information, and other questions ought not to be allowed. If a member of the audience wishes to raise a discussion, he should do so in the proper way, by stating his objections and letting the lecturer answer them. Mr. Foote has several times said this at the Athenæum Hall. You must bear in mind, however, that people sometimes err in ignorance or mental confusion, and that every chairman is not a trained controversialist.

W. HEAFORD.—Pleased to hear that you will be doing some lecturing this summer, if not as much as in former years. Our movement needs the services of all its effective advocates, and we should be very sorry to see you slacken your activity beyond what is necessary. We note your change of address to 29a Marsham-road, Thornton Heath, Surrey. Branch secretaries and others concerned will doubtless make a mem. of the alteration.

M. BLISS.—Your suggestion has been anticipated by Mr. Foote, on whose motion the Secular Society, Limited, has already given some assistance to the Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S. It was fair to presume that the late Mr. Birch would like to see the Freethought movement sustained in his own city. We note your view that the Liverpool Branch does not advertise its meetings sufficiently, though the Branch may think otherwise. Good advertisement is not only desirable, but vitally necessary; on the other hand, there are often difficulties in the way of doing it on a proper scale.

W. JENKINS.—There can be little doubt who is meant by "the Agnostic you can trust." Leaving money in secret trust is not, however, a very "wise" policy, particularly when no necessity for it any longer exists. The testator's object is, in that case, at the mercy of all sorts of accidents, even if the person trusted is beyond the possibility of temptation. In some respects, an open, legal trust is less serviceable than an incorporated Society, because there is seldom, if ever, any provision made to guard against the intellectual or moral default of the trustees. Any member of the Secular Society, Limited, could prevent the Directors from acting *ultra vires*.

PERPLEXED.—It is not true that the *Mistakes of Moses* is out of stock or out of print. There are plenty of copies on hand. You should order of the Freethought Publishing Company direct.

A. C. GODWIN.—As soon as we get settled down under new conditions in the Freethought Publishing Company's own premises we shall resume the "Book Chat" column, which many of our readers, like yourself, used to appreciate. We have of late been extremely busy in other than literary directions, but we hope to get more quiet leisure for pen-work when business affairs settle down into regularity.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for your useful cuttings.

D. FRANKEL.—See paragraph.

YOUNG FREETHINKER.—Of the two writers—if you have not time to read both—you will probably find Spencer more useful to you than Mill. Spencer is an evolutionist, and his works abound in information. Mill was more dialectical.

E. VETTERLEIN.—See "Sugar Plums." We wish the West Ham Branch all success. As it arose out of the *Freethinker* agitation, we feel a sort of paternal interest in it, and shall be glad to help it in any way we can.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Public Opinion—Blue Grass Blade—De Vrije Gedachte—Two Worlds—Crescent—People's Newspaper—Isle of Man Times—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Sydney Bulletin—Free Society—Awakener of India—Boston Investigator—Torch of Reason—Secular Thought.

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.

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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 occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (April 1). The subject of his lecture will be "Some Suggestions for God." This ought to be an interesting subject to Theists, and even Christians, as well as Freethinkers. Will Freethinkers, therefore, try to make it known amongst their friends?

To-day, Sunday, April 1, Mr. Charles Watts lectures morning and evening in Birmingham. The following are his subjects, which should prove attractive, and evoke some profitable discussion:—Morning, "Can a Scientist be a Christian?" Evening, "The Defeat of the Cross."

The East London Branch begins its open-air work this morning (April 1). A lecture will be delivered by Mr. E. Pack at Mile-end Waste. Unfortunately, the Branch's exchequer is nearly empty, and will have to be recruited if the lectures are to be continued after April. Mr. G. J. Warren has issued a spirited appeal for funds. For fifteen years he served the Branch as honorary secretary, besides being a good subscriber. He has therefore earned the right to ask assistance from others, and we hope it will be promptly forthcoming. Donations can be sent to him at 20 Rhodeswell-road, Limehouse, E.; to Mr. D. Frankel, the present secretary, at 25 Osborne-street, Whitechapel, E.; or to Mr. J. F. Haines, the president, at 212 Mile-end-road, E.

The West Ham Branch held its first annual meeting on Thursday, March 22, Mr. Sims being in the chair, and the attendance of members being capital. An excellent report of the year's work was made, and the financial report was also satisfactory. It was decided to start propaganda in South West Ham, and to hire the Minor Public Hall, in Barking-road, Canning Town, for week-night lectures. These lectures are to be arranged and advertised as soon as possible, and it is hoped that the local Freethinkers will do their best to make them in every way successful. West Ham is a very progressive centre of working-class population, and affords a fine field for Freethought efforts.

Dr. St. George Mivart, the great seceder from Rome, gives

the following plain view of the Bible in the *Nineteenth Century*:—"In very truth the Bible is a complex collection of most varied documents. They contain much that is admirable and valuable, but also legends, myths, contradictory assertions, accounts expressly falsified to suit later times, mere human fictions and words spoken in the name of the Lord without there having been any authority for attributing to them such a sacred character. There are writings which merit most reverent treatment, and there are stories no more worthy of respect than the history of Jack and the Beanstalk."

Here is another striking extract from Dr. Mivart's article:—"However clearly the fact may be demonstrated that Roman Catholicism is founded on absolute falsehood as regards Scripture and is intellectually untenable, no marked results are likely to follow that demonstration, because the religion of the majority of mankind reposes not on reason, but on feeling. The many ties which bind Roman Catholics to their faith and their great strength I well know by personal experience. Still, little by little, intellectual progress makes its way. One by one, in many places, the number of the faithful diminishes. But the result of this process only becomes unequivocally manifest when we reckon by centuries.The Egyptian religion lasted more than 6,000 years; what may be the state of the Christian religion in the year 4000? It is impossible to repress a smile as we ask, Will its dogmata then be absolutely the same? A little flock of faithful souls there may be, but it is not by them that their doctrines will be understood."

Dr. Mivart admits the very important and significant fact that "the Bible is not comprehended by those who still regard it as 'the written word,' but by outsiders who study and criticise it while entirely devoid of any belief in its supernatural character." This is the reason why all the most valuable and illuminating criticism of the Bible has been done by "infidels," from Spinoza down to Strauss and Matthew Arnold.

"Dr. Mivart's Religion" is the title of an interesting article by Mr. Joseph McCabe in the April number of the *Literary Guide*. The writer wonders whether Dr. Mivart will continue to cling to "the dogma of the spirituality of the soul," or whether he will eventually accept the whole of man's nature as a product of natural evolution. Of course there is no saying. Dr. Mivart has taken one big leap, and, finding no bones broken, he may take another.

M. Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, made an excellent little speech on Monday evening. It was a piece of tact on his part to mention that Voltaire brought his ideas of intellectual liberty from England. He finely remarked that all good authors were the priests of a new religion of intelligence, which was truly international. His final hope was that England and France might rival each other in this field, and thus promote the best interests of civilisation.

Mr. Goldwin Smith's new book, entitled *Shakespeare: The Man*, will be published immediately. Its idea is to find indications of the poet's personality in the text of his plays. From the pen of such a writer it is sure to be very interesting. We shall give our readers a taste of it as early as possible.

A copy of the first folio Shakespeare, from the library of the late Augustin Daly, has just fetched 5,400 dollars. This is a record price. The time will come, no doubt, when a first folio Shakespeare will be worth ten times its weight in gold. He was not for an age, but for all time, as Ben Jonson had the sagacity to perceive. He is gradually becoming the great connecting link between all parts of the English-speaking world. As the Bible sinks Shakespeare rises, and the time may not be so very far distant when his birthday will be celebrated instead of Jesus Christ's.

It is possible that the National Secular Society's Annual Conference, which is a fixture for Whit-Sunday, will be held this year in London. With a view to this contingency, the President has already instructed the Secretary to make detailed inquiries as to available halls. It has been found that St. Martin's Town Hall is not let on Sundays for any purpose. Holborn Town Hall is rather dubious, in consequence of the disturbance which was threatened at a projected lecture there by Mr. Hyndman. The N. S. S. Executive meeting will be held soon after the publication of this number of the *Freethinker*, and we may be in a position to make a definite announcement on this subject in our next issue.

Those who swallow their Deity, really and truly, in transubstantiation, can hardly find anything else otherwise than of easy digestion.—*Byron*.

Shakespeare's Sister.

(Mr. Justin McCarthy, in an interesting article in the current issue of the *North American Review*, laments that George Eliot is no longer popular.)

It is nearly twenty years since the world was trying to realise the extent of the gap made by the death of "George Eliot." She had long been accepted as one of the foremost imaginative writers of her age, and what is not always the case with Freethinkers, she was popular with the great body of average readers.

It has been suggested that her popularity is now vanishing; that the multitudinous readers of the works of Marie Corelli and Guy Boothby consider "George Eliot" as old-fashioned. It is not unlikely; but, long after these suburban idols shall have been forgotten, the volumes of "George Eliot" will be found side by side with those of Shakespeare. She left her country a priceless legacy in books which must last while the world values superlative achievements in English prose.

"George Eliot" had the magic gift of portraiture. She makes us behold the eternal tragedy of the human heart. She is unrivalled in our English tongue, except by him who is beyond rivalry in all the branches of his art—the mighty master, Shakespeare.

They were both cradled in the same county; they were nursed by the same outward influences. The same Forest of Arden was round them both. It is pleasant to think that the rookery elms of her childish memories, survivors of the great Forest, may have cast their shadows on that immortal poet to whom we owe the deathless gifts of the ever-charming Rosalind and the melancholy Jaques. There was something Shakespearean in "George Eliot's" genius. Who that has known them can forget pretty Hetty Sorrel, poor Mr. Tulliver, the Dodson sisters? Mrs. Poyser is one of the most extraordinary creations in all literature. She took her place from the first moment by the side of Sancho Panza. It was but a few weeks after the appearance of *Adam Bede* that a speaker in the House of Commons quoted one of the genial farmer's wife's sayings, sure that his hearers would understand him. "George Eliot's" sketches of women were especially wonderful, but the characters of Tito, Arthur Donnithorne, and of Grandcourt show that her pitiless portraiture was not confined to her own sex.

"George Eliot" was one of the freest of thinkers on all subjects. But, like Shakespeare, she had the power of putting herself in the position of the holders of all creeds, so deep was her sympathy with humanity. The half-pagan faith of Dolly Winthrop; the matter-of-fact beliefs of Mr. Irwine; the passionate fervor of Dinah, were equally understood by her. In the same way, the old pagan religion, the Catholic superstitions, the Protestant fervors, were realised by Shakespeare himself. The ground-tone of the thoughts of both was essentially and intensely Rationalistic.

"George Eliot" was at once Freethinker and poet. In her character she united the critic who analyses and the artist who creates. The pen which had interpreted Strauss, the most relentless opponent of the Christian tradition—this very pen drew for us the charming portrait of Dinah, the Methodist girl, and composed the touching prayer in the prison. All writers but the greatest—a Shakespeare, a Goethe, a Scott, a George Eliot—take interest in their own class, their own ideas on religious matters, alone. The characters they introduce in their works are merely marionettes. But the really great writer shows that even the humblest, if you prick them, will bleed," and discovers the good in the most unpromising characters: in frivolous little Hetty, in sensuous Arthur Donnithorne, as well as in pious Dinah and Mr. Irwine. Or, as Shakespeare saw it, in pleasure-loving Falstaff, in crafty Iago, in ambitious Lady Macbeth, or in mad Lear.

The greatest writers draw inspiration from philosophy. George Eliot was no exception to this rule. "The still sad music of humanity," which had fired the imagination of Comte, was to her a well of exhaustless inspiration. When the history of modern Freethought comes to be written, it will be impossible to neglect the personality of "George Eliot." The greatest woman among her contemporaries, may be the greatest of all

women, she did magnificent work in her day and generation. She counts among the social pioneers of the age. She was one of the first to attempt to free the life of the nation from the alien rule of ecclesiastical authority, as she had, indeed, freed herself. The wish of this splendid woman has been fulfilled, that she might—

be to other souls
A cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty.

MIMNERMUS.

The Deistic Movement.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.

(Concluded from page 189.)

MATTHEW TINDAL'S *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, published in 1730, when the author was over seventy years of age, is considered to have marked the culmination of the Deistic controversy. No less than a hundred and fifteen answers to it appeared. The argument, that the religion of nature is perfect, and that revelation can neither enhance nor diminish its perfection, is one without force in days when the varied manifestations of the religion of nature, as exhibited amongst savage and barbarous races, are known; but the incongruity of an immutable God giving a revelation only to a barbarous tribe in an obscure quarter of the earth, and the difficulty of reconciling the divinity of a religion with its want of universality, were evidently keenly felt at the time. It was an attack from the currently-received notions of the perfections of Deity. The author, a Fellow of All Souls, had passed through many phases of thought, and had evidently closely studied the controversy. At first a High Churchman, his principles had led him to Romanism; but reason at length drew him back to Deism. At the age of fifty he had published a defence of civil and religious liberty under the title of *The Rights of the Christian Church*, a work which had the honor of being presented before a grand jury of Middlesex.

One of the most redoubtable opponents of Tindal was Waterland, whose *Scripture Vindicated* was highly extolled by the orthodox. Waterland swallowed the hog, bristles and all. The talking serpent, confusion of tongues, and stopping of the sun, were all literal. God may have kept the clouds in such a position that there were no rainbows before the Flood. The Jews, as the chosen of God, were quite entitled to spoil the Egyptians and massacre the Canaanites. Ehud was right in stabbing Eglon, and his example was no justification of the Popish assassins, Clement and Ravailiac, since "The text expressly says the Lord raised up Ehud." Jael was justified because "it was prophesied beforehand that the Lord should sell Sisera into the hands of a woman." Dr. Conyers Middleton, the principal librarian of the University of Cambridge (who had already dealt a heavy blow at the most considerable body in Christendom, by his *Letter from Rome*, showing an exact conformity between Popery and Paganism), entered the controversy with a powerful pamphlet directed against Waterland. Middleton, while representing himself as a true Christian, avowed his disbelief in the literal story of the Fall, and convicted his opponent of much shuffling in his endeavors to defend the old Jewish stories.

While the bolder Deists were attacking Christianity directly, Latitudinarians, like Conyers Middleton and Samuel Clarke, were undermining the old foundations. Unitarianism, too, was advancing, gathering to its side superior men like Moses Lowman and Nathaniel Lardner. The repeal of the law against witchcraft in 1736 was a significant sign of progress. Butler's famous *Analogy* was followed by Morgan's *Moral Philosopher*. Thomas Morgan was a dissenting minister, who had been dismissed on account of his Unitarianism. His work is noticeable for taking a more historical view of the rival claims of Freethought and dogmatism, and for his anticipation of Baur, in pointing out the two great schools, Pauline and Judaic, which divided early Christianity. Paul, the *bête noir* of Chubb, as of Bolingbroke, was recognised by Morgan as the true founder of Christianity and the exponent of its most liberal spirit.

In 1742 appeared an anonymous treatise, entitled *Christianity not Founded on Argument*. This was one of the cleverest tracts of the whole controversy. It was written by Henry Dodwell, the son of the learned, but eccentric, nonjuror of that name. In a tone of grave irony Dodwell argues, as a Christian, that Christians had made a great mistake in appealing to reason. Rational faith is a contradiction in terms. Proof presupposes suspension of conviction. The rational Christian must have begun as a sceptic. He must have doubted whether the gospel was true or false. The settling of doubts is precarious, and likely to take up much time. If doubting is lawful for a moment, it might be lawful for a lifetime. Reason cannot come to any one decision concerning things beyond human faculties. To permit reasoning is to permit a variety of conclusions. How are children, or the unlearned, to be saved by a faith founded on reason and the examination of evidence? All are required, under threats, to think alike, and are ordered to be baptised into the true faith. As a matter of fact, the mass of people have never thought out the problem of the truth or falsity of the propositions to which they assent. And then how ridiculous of those, who admit reason, to attempt to prescribe its limits. Jesus Christ did not propose his doctrines for examination, but spoke with authority. He refused to work miracles to convince the unbelieving. Let those who are unconvinced look to it.

The dust was to be forthwith shaken off against them, and their doom pronounced. The apostles derided philosophy and vain wisdom. Christianity requires all men to believe alike, but all are not equally convinced by reason. No man can say Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. All difficulties are chased away by the simple axiom that "with God all things are possible." Philosophy and religion are utterly at variance. The ground-work of the one is examination and scepticism; that of the other, submission and faith. Tertullian was right when he said, *Credo quia absurdum et quia impossibile est*. Therefore, my son, trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.

It is notable that, while Dodwell was urging this in irony, Wesley and Whitfield were proclaiming its truth in solemn earnestness. The reaction of Methodism was soon to show how superficial was the culture of reason, and how far more deeply seated lay the complex inherited emotions and superstitions upon which religion is built.

The God of Battles.

I AM the God of battles; fire and sword
Still work my will—midst cannon's thunders pealed,
The shrieks and groans of the dying from the field
Are in my ears like music hell-adored;
The widow's wail and the orphan's needs afford
A sweeter pleasure than hell's flames can yield;
'Gainst pity as a wall my heart is steeled—
Lo, I work only evil—I, the Lord.

Lo, I am hate and envy, and since man
Created me, I have fooled him with my might;
Hell, fashioned in his heart, has been the light
Wherein I have seen his weakness, known my strength!
And, though 'tis rumored I must fall at length,
Still I am strong, and work the ill I can!

J. A. B.

Obituary.

BIRMINGHAM has lost a staunch Secularist by the death of Thomas Davis, on March 21, at the age of seventy-five years. Mr. Davis began to work for the Freethought movement at an early age, and throughout his life was a fearless advocate of its principles. The late Charles Bradlaugh, whom Mr. Davis knew well, named one of his sons, and Mr. Foote one of his grandsons. For many years past the deceased had been suffering from a stroke, and often longed for the end. One of his last wishes was to have a Secular Burial Service. His funeral took place on March 26 at the Lodge Hill Cemetery, Birmingham, when a Secularist funeral address was read at the graveside by Mr. H. Percy Ward.

Moody and Ingersoll.

(Concluded from page 188.)

BECAUSE Mr. Ingersoll believed the very opposite is the reason he went up and down the world trying to free men's souls from superstition. He believed the curse pronounced upon the pair of naked souls to be but a fable; he believed that that doctrine had done more to fill the sky of human souls with black clouds and terror than any other that had ever been preached; and he stood, not to snatch brands from the burning, but to snatch souls from the clutch of a hideous and hateful doctrine invented by the priest for selfish purposes. He gave himself with the same abandon to the same pursuit, with the same spirit of sacrifice. He did not lecture to make money. Those near to him knew, from his own statement, that he could make thirty dollars in the practice of his profession to one in lecturing; but it was his great love of mankind, it was his glowing, burning desire to lift the burden of fear and superstition from the souls of men; it was his ambition to put in the sky of human life the star of hope, and make men happy and free.

In the administration of money the men were singularly alike. Moody's schools cost from one hundred to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars per year for running expenses. And there were endowments besides, and the original investment. His hand was ever open, and ever filled by the various churches; but not in one instance did he use it for selfish purposes or self-aggrandisement. Mr. Ingersoll did the same thing. From a loving, admiring public a stream of money flowed into his coffers, but he died poor. The wants about him were too many, the cries of the needy too numerous. He could not look upon suffering and want and enjoy the possession of hoarded gold; he knew how useless it was; he knew the function of the dollar, and how it was to travel on as a blessing and benefit. The dollar could not stick to his generous fingers.

These men were alike in using their gifts and powers for the common weal. I have a theory that amounts to a positive conviction that no great genius can remain honorable, and preserve his self-respect, who changes upon the bargain-counter of the world that genius into current coin of the realm. I have a feeling born of conviction that every great genius in every field is, in some sense, the product and result of the toil of millions, and the efforts and desires of thousands of generations that have preceded him; that when the brain of Shakespeare blossomed and embowered the world, the effort and toil of millions came to fruition. When the hand of Rembrandt touched the canvas, and God was made manifest, that result was possible because thousands upon thousands had touched the canvas and left but a daub; when a Michael Angelo takes the chisel and brings from the shapeless marble an immortal statue, it is because thousands upon thousands had taken the chisel and worked upon the rude block of marble, and left it as rude and unfinished as when they found it, because thousands upon thousands had had the dream, the longing, the ambition, the aspiration made it possible for the master souls to win. This talent, this genius, this power, belongs to the race; and when a singer, an artist, an orator, a poet, a preacher, takes his gifts and offers them at so much the piece, why, nature has made a mistake and given the talent to the wrong man.

In a large and generous sense these two men, each a genius in his field, were thoroughly uncommercial. They had the manhood, the fortitude, the dignity, the grandeur to command wealth, and not to be commanded by it. They had the greatness and the goodness, the nobility of purpose, and the magnitude of heart to administer their divine gifts as though held in trust for the use and benefit of all.

The two messages were dissimilar. They may be described in these words: that of Mr. Moody was the doctrine of dependence, that of Mr. Ingersoll the doctrine of self-reliance. Without reference to difference in detail and miscellany, these were the two gospels. According to the first, man is dependent because he is helpless mentally and morally. He cannot with his own powers know the truth; he cannot, unaided, do what is right; he is dependent upon supernatural power,

first for his knowledge, second for his ability to put it into effect. That is the whole gospel accepted by the ancient and immemorial Church, and, being dependent for his knowledge upon supernatural power, of course a revelation is necessary, and there it is lying open upon the pulpit, every word divinely inspired, and it is man's business to believe it. It says that man is bad; he would not have known it himself, because, the reason being perverted and his eyes blinded, he thinks he is good. One of the chiefest blessings of the Bible is to show how bad man is, and to make him happy by making him miserable. It is not a question of truth about the Bible or lack of error; it is just the question of accepting it. That was Mr. Moody's doctrine. It is perfectly consistent, perfectly rational from his standpoint. Now, being dependent, he must believe in, and accept, the sacrifice, be washed by the blood, pray, get the Holy Ghost, get full of it.

The other message was exactly the reverse. Man must rely upon himself. There is no item in the whole sum of the knowledge of the world that man has not found out by following the light of reason, the light shed by the brain. There never was any revelation that came to this world by supernatural means. All that man knows he has found out by experience; all that he knows of the world he has discovered himself; he never went to school to the angels; he never sat at the knees of a revealing god; he never had one of the holy spirits point to the letters on the pages of the primer and teach him to spell. If a man wants anything, he must go after it. The providence of man is man, not God. It cannot be shown that there ever was an interposition of supernatural power or agencies or mediators or interferers or advocates, or any other supernatural means. As to prayer, Mr. Ingersoll said that "for the purpose of preventing famine one plough is worth more than a million prayers." He did not find any hope for the world or promise of its ultimate betterment in calling upon unseen powers. He believed that knowledge and science alone had within them the power to lift up this human world. He believed with millions of others that supernaturalism in religion and in the Church has demonstrated itself conspicuously and hopelessly a failure. But he did not despair of mankind, he did not despair of human progress, he did not give humanity over to darkness and desolation and remediless woe; he believed that when the reign of justice should come man would be a brother to his fellow-men; when equity and right and honesty and truth should prevail the dream of paradise would be realised upon this earth, and it would come only when men were honest with themselves mentally and feared not to speak their honest thought.

Such were the two messages—one of dependence, one of self-reliance; one that believes in God, and one that believes in man; one that prays, and one that works; one that hopes for salvation through the righteousness of another, and one that scorns salvation unless won and merited in its own right; one that believes in a final hell for all who do not accept its theories, and one that believes reason is fallible and that a just God cannot damn an honest man.

One was a message of the past, and in preaching it Mr. Moody was seriously handicapped. If he had had behind him the Churches honest and consistent, and as full of the belief and of the Holy Ghost as he was, he could have done what he said the newspapers had done on this continent in the last twenty years—occupied this North American continent. But while he was believing those things, preaching about a literal Bible and the Holy Ghost, there were increasing numbers in his own party who were criticising the Bible and saying that some of it was of doubtful authority, and still more of doubtful authenticity. Just as he was at the zenith of his power and the completeness of his fame, the last college of revisers were completing their work. They were men who made the brackets and parentheses and the footnotes, and changed some of the translations of different words, and somehow without meaning gave color and currency to the criticisms of the men who were inveighing against the whole Bible scheme. Then there came slight tokens of unbelief; there were symptoms of apostasy and half-heartedness, and the uncompromising Moody stood against it all and said these things were true—believe them and get full of the Holy Ghost. He said the incident in the history of

Jonah was literally true. Did not Jesus affirm it, and did not the Lord of all say, Get full of the Holy Ghost? But the critics were saying—eminent men in the Church, learned and solemn advocates of the gospel, were saying—this is an allegory. If there was one thing Mr. Moody did not like, it was an allegory. He liked facts. It was no trouble for him to believe that the fire department carried Elijah into the sky; no trouble for him to believe that two she-bears ate forty-two children and were still hungry; no trouble for him to believe that the whale did swallow Jonah. But these learned men were saying that this is an allegory; that the whale did not swallow Jonah, and, if he did, that settles Jonah; he is there yet, he never came back.

So, the fact that Mr. Moody was being undermined by the Church, by the preachers, by the doctors of divinity who were seeking to trim a little their theological sails, who were taking a reef in the dogmatic sheet—the fact that these things were happening made him play a losing game, made him an advocate of a failing cause. Twenty years ago the name of that man was almost talismanic. Let him enter a city, and he was substantially in command. Public sentiment could close business houses on week days at noon-time, and no halls, no theatres, no places of assembling, were sufficiently large to hold the multitudes. Not only that, but the multitudes were profoundly impressed. Hundreds of thousands were swayed by his appeals, grounded their arms of rebellion and turned in with the overtures of mercy.

Twenty years ago the Churches were substantially united; they had faith, they did believe, they were full of the Holy Ghost. But in later years the multitudes were curious, unimpressed, complacent, un-stirred, and the movement was like the ruffle of a breeze that strikes and bounds aloft, and stops and strikes again; the men of the lake call it the "cat's paw," but there were no depths that moved. In the little after-meetings that followed, where they went to drag in the net and sort out the different kinds of fish, there was no great draught, so that the net broke in bringing it in—just here and there a sucker.

Mr. Moody had outlived his cause. It was a new Church. It was not the Church that existed when he first began his career. He was an advocate of a vanishing past, a fading faith, a losing cause.

Mr. Ingersoll was a prophet of the future, the light-bringing herald of the dawn. He was equipped by every step that science had made in her wonderful progress for the last half century added reinforcements to the position he took and clearness to the conclusions he reached. He reverently followed the unobstructed, the sacred light of reason. Within the circle where its rays reached he was positive and candid; beyond that circle, into the unknown, lighted only by faith's flickering light or superstition's fitful glare, he would not go. He belonged to the future, to progress, to liberty, to the generations that are yet to come. There will be no more Moody's; the world is too intelligent. There will be, alas! no other Ingersoll; the world is not intelligent enough.

(DR.) E. J. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

How so many absurd rules of conduct, as well as so many absurd religious beliefs, have originated we do not know; nor how it is that they have become, in all quarters of the world, so deeply impressed on the mind of man; but it is worthy of remark that a belief constantly inculcated during the early years of life, while the brain is impressionable, appears to acquire almost the nature of an instinct; and the very essence of an instinct is that it is followed independently of reason.—*Darwin*.

When we are in earnest about the right we need no incitement or support from above; we need no Christian rule of political right; we need only one which is rational, just, human. The right, the true, the good, has always its ground of sacredness in itself, in its quality. Where man is in earnest about ethics, they have in themselves the validity of a divine power.—*Feuerbach*.

Another Ingersoll Fable.

THE New York Press of January 15, 1900, gave utterance to the following invention, which has been repeated by newspapers in every state in the Union:—

BALTIMORE, *January 13*.—Where a man of brains and kindly thought met a little child and was conquered by sweet babyhood and trusting faith is best told by William Wordsworth Goodrich, an architect of this city. He never tires of telling the story, and his hearers never weary of listening.

"It was on January 12, 1898," he said, "when I occupied a berth in a Pullman car coming from Chicago opposite that occupied by Robert G. Ingersoll. In the next lower berth to his were a woman and her babe. The young wife, who was on her way to New York, had her berth made up early. She had prepared the baby for bed, and as she sat on the edge of the berth, the baby at her knees, she taught the baby its evening prayer—'Now I lay me down to sleep.'

"The child lisped the prayer as only a baby can. As the words, 'I pray the Lord my soul to take,' were uttered, who should be standing with folded arms in a very reverent attitude in the aisle beside the bowed form? None other than Colonel Ingersoll.

"God bless mamma, God bless papa, God bless everybody," the mother spoke, and the baby lisped.

"At the final 'Amen' Colonel Ingersoll clasped the baby in his arms and kissed the child on the forehead reverently, saying 'God bless everybody.' By this time all of the car occupants were onlookers. The great Ingersoll held the wee little baby, cooing in his arms, and he was talking to it. When finally he laid the child in the berth, saying, 'Good night, little one; good night,' quick as a flash the baby said, 'Dod bess 'oo.'

"Ingersoll's answer was, 'Yes, yes; God bless you!'"

There are convincing reasons why Mr. Goodrich's narrative cannot be accepted as true. We will proceed to name some of them. First, it is in the nature of things impossible. The behavior described is foreign to the nature of Colonel Ingersoll. In the second place, the Colonel, not being one who liked to be gazed at, was accustomed to secure a state-room when travelling between Chicago and New York, thus avoiding the stares of which he would otherwise have been the object. Thirdly, in his travels at or about the time mentioned he was accompanied by his agent, Mr. Farrell, and by his daughter Maude, neither of whom is able to recall the incident described, which they would have been cognizant of had it miraculously occurred. Fourthly, it is incredible that Mr. Goodrich should have withheld his narration for two years, and remembered it only after Colonel Ingersoll's decease. The fifth reason why the account cannot be true is that on "January 12, 1898," and for some time before and afterwards, the Colonel was in New York, and did not come from Chicago. To this may be added the testimony of his entire family that the account is a fabrication from beginning to end. The fact that Mr. Goodrich "never tires of telling the story" is probably due to the pride of authorship, and perhaps it is the only one he knows.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

All the Same as Devil.

Federal Judge Williams, the same who recently delivered the infamous decision in the Reese case, tells this story on himself, without fully realising its significance, else he would never tell it:—

Years ago he was a district judge in Arkansas. At a certain term of court a murder trial came before him, and the most important witness for the prosecution was a colored boy only ten years old. The lawyers for the defence set out to show that the boy was too young to understand the nature of an oath, and therefore was not competent as a witness.

"Boy," said one of them, very severely, "do you know what would happen if you swore to a lie?"

"Yes, sah. Mammy would lick me."

"Would anything else happen?"

"Deed dey would, case de debil would git me."

At this point Judge Williams leaned over his desk, and said:

"Don't you know, boy, that I would get you, too?"

"Yes, sah. Dat's what I jus' said."

—*Jerry Simpson's Bayonet*.

If you believe there is a Providence looking out for a chance to save man, just walk across some thin ice when there is no one in sight. Providence may come to your funeral, but not to your rescue.—*Washburn*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Some Suggestions for God."
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mr. White.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Conversazione.
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 12, Special Business Meeting at the Bradlaugh Club.
NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Leighton Hall, Leighton-cescent, Kentish Town): 7, J. R. Macdonald, "Silence and Religious Worship."
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Pack, "The Golden Rule."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, John M. Robertson, "The Ethics of Shakespeare."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Stanton Coit, "The Diamond Fields of Africa."
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, Stanley Jones.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): Charles Watts—11, "Can a Scientist be a Christian?"; 7, "The Defeat of the Cross."
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "The Queen's Reign of Peace."
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): H. Percy Ward—11.30, "The Gospel of Secularism"; 2.30, "Christianity before Christ"; 6.30, "Why I am an Atheist."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): Children's Cantata, *Daisy Dell*, performed by members of the Secular Sunday School.
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, S. Reeves, "Russian Politics."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, W. Sanders, "Chamberlain's Crime; or, the War for Gold in South Africa."
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A Reading.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, "Manxland"—with descriptive lecture and special lantern illustrations.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17, Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—April 15, a., Peckham; e., Camberwell.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—April 22, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Stratford. May 6, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park. 13, a., Peckham Rye; e., Brockwell Park. June 17, e., Stratford. 24, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—April 1, Glasgow; 8, Birmingham; 15, Stockton-on-Tees; 29, Birmingham.

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