

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Did God Do It?

THERE were storms all over the south of England on Easter Monday, resulting in much damage to property, and a considerable loss of life. A young woman, named Annie Friend, was killed by lightning while standing on the sands at Ramsgate. After striking her head—if we can say "after" in a movement which is practically so instantaneous—the lightning passed right down the left side of her body to the feet, causing the boot on her left foot to burst. Of course a coroner's jury had to "sit" upon the poor young woman's dead body, and they brought in a verdict of "Death by an Act of God." It does not appear that they took any evidence on the point. We do not read that they discussed whether it was God or the Devil who killed that young woman as she was enjoying herself on a Bank Holiday. They probably followed the directions of the coroner, who in turn followed the old usage of our pious ancestors. Before the age of science, in the days of real Christianity, people regarded all special occurrences as acts of Providence. Sunrise and sunset—things that happened every day, and with the utmost regularity—were part of the ordinary course of nature; but a blight or a drought, an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, a deadly plague or a very severe thunderstorm, were particular visitations of the Almighty. If a man expired on his bed, he died from natural causes; but if he expired suddenly from heart-disease, or still more suddenly from a stroke of lightning, he died by the Act of God. It wasn't murder, and it didn't look natural, so they put it down to the Lord. And this old notion still survives in occasional verdicts at inquests, and in bills of lading, where the liability of the shipowner for the safety of the cargo is declared to be voided by "the act of God or the Queen's enemies"—both these parties being lumped together as dangerous and destructive, and of quite incalculable malignity.

According to that Ramsgate jury, however they arrived at the conclusion, poor Annie Friend was killed by God; and there the matter ends for the common herd of unreflective persons, and the selecter fold of credulous superstitionists; but, not belonging to either of those varieties of human dough—either half baked or dry baked—we beg to ask, respectfully yet firmly, Did God do it? We say *respectfully*, because it does not seem respectful to believe God capable of murdering a young woman on Ramsgate sands, and on a Bank Holiday, without satisfactory evidence. It is all very well for the orthodox Christian to regard our curiosity as blasphemous, but it really seems far more blasphemous on their part to let their deity suffer under such a dreadful imputation. We cannot admit that their desperate or thoughtless hurry is a valid excuse for swearing away his character.

On one theory it is indisputable that God *did* kill poor Annie Friend; we mean the theory of his Omniscience and Omnipotence. "I create good and evil, I the Lord do all these things" is the language, and the *true* language, of severe Monotheism in Isaiah. "Kismet!"—It is the will of God!—cries the monotheistic Mohammedan, in the face of death or disaster; and the exclamation is both pious and logical; for, if God be omniscient, nothing happens without his knowledge, and if he be omnipotent, nothing happens without his sanction. What he does, and what he permits to be done, are effects from one and the same ultimate cause, resultants from one and the same

original fount of power. From this conclusion there is no logical escape. You may set up a Satan, or talk of man's free-will, or indulge in other intellectual subterfuges; but if you take the trouble to think you come at last to God as the Supreme Creator, and perceive all created things act by his permission, and therefore by his authority; or you are obliged to limit his wisdom and power, to confront him with an eternal opponent, and degrade him from an all-wise, almighty being into one who is perpetually frustrated and only succeeds in doing the best he can in the circumstances. In one sense, therefore—that is to say, on the theory of pure Monotheism—the question, Did God do it? must be answered in the affirmative. On that theory God does everything—good, bad, or indifferent. Light and darkness, beauty and ugliness, pleasure and pain, joy and misery, are all his handiwork. He makes the leopard and the gazelle, the shark and the swimmer, the slayer and the slain. He moulds our faces to the smile of happiness or the contortion of suffering. His will is destiny, and all morality disappears under his fiat.

The usual refuge from this dilemma is the pious idea that the whole matter is "a mystery," which will be cleared up some day, not in this world, but in the next. Some time, perhaps hundreds or thousands of years after the undertaker has done with us, we shall be fully enlightened. Then we shall understand that all the misfortunes and miseries of this world, and maybe of other worlds, are parts of one infinite plan of love and happiness. We shall look back on our old sorrows and see that they were joys in disguise; we shall remember our old toothaches, and see that we were really full of pleasure while we thought we were suffering and knew we were swearing. Yes, it will all come right at the finish; at least the clergy say so, and they *ought* to know, for they take millions of money every year on the supposition that they *do*, and they all profess to be very intimate with the mind of God.

But all that heavenly illumination is reserved for the sweet by-and-bye. For the present, at any rate, the ways of the Lord are fearful and wonderful—to use the Psalmist's language about his own body, probably after consulting many physicians about an incurable internal complaint. Reverting to the case of poor Annie Friend, it is hardly worth while discussing whether the Devil killed her; first, because that personage has rarely been accused of such crimes; and, secondly, because twelve jurymen and a coroner, presumably all Christians, have decided that God killed her. According to that verdict, God committed a murder on Easter Monday; and the logical result should be an order for his arrest on a charge of wilful homicide. But it would perhaps be extremely difficult to execute the warrant. A crazy German once addressed a letter to "God in Heaven," and the Post Office returned it as "insufficiently addressed." It is impossible to find a being who is everywhere. Being everywhere in general, he is nowhere is particular; and we venture to suggest that it was for this reason the old Hebrew writer asked, "Can man by searching find out God?"

For our part, we shrink from believing that God committed a deed for which any human being would be hung. We prefer to believe that Annie Friend happened to stand in the path of the lightning, which, like all other natural forces, acted under blind necessity, without any moral or immoral intention, either in it or behind it. Some people call this a cheerless philosophy, but we think it better than belief in a divine assassin.

G. W. FOOTE.

Secularism as a Moral Force.

By the term "moral force" is here meant that power possessed by man which impels him to pursue a course of conduct that is truthful, honest, just, and sincere. It is generally considered that a person is guided by this force when he eschews lying and hypocrisy, and the habit of wilfully misrepresenting and injuring his fellow men. On the other hand, where it is found that a desire is manifested to ignore the duty of working to promote the general well-being of society, and where a determination is shown to misrepresent and persecute those who differ in opinion, there undoubtedly exists a lack of moral force. To my mind, it appears evident that all principles which tend, when consistently acted upon, to elevate both individual and national character, and to inspire useful work, must necessarily contain a moral force. That Secular principles, when properly understood and legitimately acted upon, stimulate ethical power cannot, in my opinion, admit of any reasonable doubt. And yet orthodox Christians are constantly stating that the highest degree of moral power can only be obtained through believing in their faith. These persons further allege that Secularism is destitute of the incentive to a strictly moral life.

The most recent instance that I have had of the avowal of this orthodox fallacy is in a letter sent me by a professed Christian, who desires to "bring me to Jesus." The writer asks me six questions, which he requests me to answer if I can, but which he "very much doubts" my capability of doing. His questions are: (1) "Does not universal consciousness testify to the freedom of the human will within certain limits?" (2) "Has not God implanted in man a sense of right and wrong?" (3) "Does not Christianity offer future rewards for good conduct, and threaten punishment in another world for wrong-doing; and is not this the highest possible incentive to the promotion of virtue?" (4) "Has not Christianity improved the position of woman, and did it not abolish slavery and condemn tyranny in all its forms?" (5) "Was it not Atheism that produced the horrors of the French Revolution?" (6) "Is it not true that the little good there is in Secularism has been taken from Christianity?" As these questions contain errors and misapprehensions which are common amongst theologians, I will reply to them *seriatim*.

(1) Consciousness and the freedom of the will. Frankly, I see no necessary connection between the two. Certainly, consciousness is a fact; but what are its nature and functions? I do not accept the theory that it is a separate faculty, but, with Professor Ribot, I regard consciousness as a word "which expresses in the most general way the various manifestations of psychical life. It consists of a current of sensations, ideas, volitions, and feelings." Thus consciousness represents a mental condition which depends for its nature upon influences which differ with time and place. Hence it is not uniform in all men, neither is it in the same person at all times. It may be quite true that an individual is conscious of a certain thing, but it by no means follows that the thing of which the individual is conscious is true. As Buckle observes: "Consciousness is infallible as to the fact of its testimony, but fallible as to its truth." Now how this affects the human will I fail to see. What does my correspondent mean by the "will" being free "within certain limits"? Is it an independent existence, with absolute power to control the thoughts and actions of man? If it be an entity, where is it located, and how are we to learn its nature? On the other hand, if it be dependent upon something apart from itself, how far does that dependence extend? If we are free in any degree, where does the freedom end and necessity commence? If a person has the power to call up a desire by the "will," it is certain that some prior desire induced him to do so. What, therefore, caused *that* desire? Suppose a person says he wills to do a thing, and he does it; he must have had an inclination to do it, or he would not have willed and acted. Now the point here is, some circumstance must have existed prior to the action of the "will" which influenced it; and surely

the "will" cannot be the cause of that which precedes itself in time, and to which, in fact, it owes its existence. The truth is, that if the term "free-will" be used in any other sense than as a freedom to act in accordance with the impulses of the will, it is a fallacy.

(2) I certainly do not agree with the statement that God implanted in man a sense of right and wrong. That such a sense exists in man is readily admitted, but where is the evidence that God implanted it in him? No doubt there is in the mind of all persons, more or less, an appreciation of right, and a detestation of wrong—and this points inevitably to a moral law; but this law is based upon the fitness of things, and where there are moral natures it cannot but exist. The error into which, in my opinion, the theologian falls is in supposing that this law implies "a law-giver." If right and wrong exist in the nature of things, and are eternal distinctions, it will be seen at once they needed no being to frame them. As Cudworth remarks: "The distinction of right and wrong is discerned by reason, and as soon as these words are defined it becomes evident that it would be a contradiction in terms to affirm that any process, human or divine, could change their nature." But if right and wrong are mere arbitrary distinctions, as they must be if they depend upon the will of any being, it certainly is quite within the range of possibility for that being to change their respective positions. If they are real distinctions, they must be so with regard to every being in existence. To say that an act is good because God so willed it is to hold that good and evil exist only in the mere pleasure of God, who, if he so willed it, could make all vice right and all virtue wrong. This theory, however, altogether upsets the religion it is called in to support, for it destroys at once the goodness and wisdom of God. The moral law exists in the eternal fitness of things, or it is dependent upon the will of God. In the former case, it does not prove a law-giver; in the latter, it undermines the whole foundation of religion.

(3) The objections to the Christian teachings of rewards and punishments in a future life are numerous. They are disproportionate, and are supposed to operate at a time too late for them to affect the conduct of the recipients. If it be urged that it is the hope of the one and the dread of the other that influence human action, my reply is that professed Christians at the present day, as a rule, think more of the advantages to be secured in this life than of any reward to be had hereafter. And certain it is that dread of future punishment is no deterrent to wrong-doing, as the history of criminality amply proves. The fact is, our worse criminals have invariably been believers in the punishment threatened by Christianity. The fear of the punitive laws of man is far more potent in the prevention of crime than is the dread of the Christian's devil and his fiery abode. But perhaps the gravest objection to the New Testament teachings of rewards and punishments is that they are not in accordance with the moral law. One of the most heinous offences which theology describes, and one against which more denunciations are hurled than any other, is want of faith. The severest punishment of all is reserved for the unbeliever. Surely it will not be said that this tends to strengthen the foundations of morality. According to the popular religion, there is no crime so great as a disbelief in its authority. All the moral duties of life sink into insignificance when compared with faith. This is the great primary virtue in the eyes of the theologian. Such a feeling tends not to promote morals, but to encourage bigotry. It is useless to talk about the result of the promise of future reward upon society in promoting virtue, unless it can be shown that in every case the acts for which such reward is promised are virtuous. If it should happen that future bliss is held out as a reward for an act that is mischievous in its tendency, the whole argument falls to the ground. And this is really the case with regard to faith. Bigotry and intolerance are two of the leading features of Christianity. And in all ages they have been cultivated extensively by its professors. Only bring men to believe that certain persons they may come into contact with are worthy of no better fate than damnation in the world to come, and they are not likely to accord them much respect in the present. An orthodox Christian looks upon a heretic, no matter how moral he may be,

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as designed to receive the most frightful punishment in the future state. From this teaching has sprung that persecution for opinion which has been the curse of the Church.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

Lord's Day Nonsense.

WE are supposed to live in enlightened times, yet scarcely a week passes but we find aggressive Sabbatarianism presenting itself in some phase or other, more or less objectionable. It scores so frequently, and becomes so emboldened by success, that it is difficult to predict where its insolent and intolerant interference may end.

The peculiarity of this form of religious mania is that it seeks to limit the liberty of people who are not at all concerned about the so-called sanctity of the Lord's Day. Rational folks have no objection to Sabbatarians making themselves as unhappy as they please on Sunday. Let them, if they like, pray and sing psalms, and inflict religious discourses on each other all day long. Let them make as many sacrifices to their fetish as their human endurance will stand. No one will care; in fact, the more they humble their own spirits and mortify their own flesh, and generally make themselves miserable, the better, because the excess may in time lead them to an improved change of mind.

What we do most strenuously object to is their unwarrantable and impertinent interference with other folk. And of late this interference has been going on at such a rate that common-sense people will hardly be able in time to breathe on the Lord's Day without permission from the Chadbands, and the Stigginses, and the Mawworms, and all the little Bethelites and Ebenezerites who are now assuming supreme social command on this one day in seven.

The other week the Sabbatarians induced the South London magistrates to confirm the refusal by the Penge Bench of a seven days' licence for the sale of drinks at the Crystal Palace. The consequence is that that admirable place of entertainment—to which visitors from all parts of the country, and, indeed, nearly all parts of the world, are in the habit of flocking when they have the opportunity—will in future be closed on Sundays. The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes devotes over a column of editorial notes in his *Methodist Times* to approval of this magisterial course. He accuses the Crystal Palace Company of "heartless greed," though that is obviously a question not for him or the magistrates, but for the public to decide. If the public were confronted with what was really "heartless greed," they would naturally refuse to satisfy it by the simple expedient of staying away, or declining to buy any drinks when they were there. There is no compulsion, and as for "temptation" there is plenty enough of that elsewhere in much less restrictive surroundings, as the temperance party are very well aware.

The "heartless greed" is on the part of the gospel shops. The men of God who run them, and strive to make as much out of them as the publicans do from their establishments, will not brook any rivalry. If they cannot get folks into their conventicles one way or another, they are determined, in a spirit of meanest spite, to shut up other public resorts which may have, and may easily have, superior attractions.

That a purely religious objection is at the bottom of this and similar interferences is shown by the tenor of all Hugh Price Hughes's editorial comments, and especially by the triumphant way in which he points to the memorial of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. The Sunday labor which, it is said, would devolve upon the Company's employees might, and would, be easily got over by an arrangement for extra assistance and the strict limitation of six days' work a week to each of the staff. Price Hughes's talk of a "possible Saturnalia" amongst the visitors is but a sample of his customary florid and reckless rhetoric. His condemnation of the "lamentable conduct of the *Daily News*," which dissented from the magisterial decision, must also be taken simply for what it is worth. However, the fact remains, the Crystal Palace

is closed to the public on Sundays, and for this we have to thank these illiberal and intolerant religionists.

There is another grievance now discovered by the "unco guid," who seem to find their chief pleasure in stopping other people's enjoyment. The *Christian Herald* has undertaken to lecture the Upper Ten on their Sunday dinner parties which are so prominently reported in society journals. This is safe enough for a paper like the *Christian Herald*, but it will be dangerous ground for Christian organs of a higher type. We can be sure they will think twice before assailing the Sunday pleasures of the rich. Still, the Chaplain-General (Rev. Dr. Edghill) has undertaken to speak out. He says:—

"We must acknowledge before God the sins and sores of this nation which cry aloud for his displeasure. Take, for instance, the neglect of Sunday among the upper classes of society. The two chief objects of the day are rest and worship? Where is the rest and worship? Where is the rest amid fashionable dinner parties? Where is the worship when the day is given up to games and amusements of all sorts? And these are entered into, not by the poor, but by those who have plenty of time all the week. The keeping of the Day of Rest has been part of our national character."

Suppose it has; our dull and dismal Sundays, especially in London, are surely nothing to be proud of.

The society which calls itself the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association—how many real working men are in it?—arranged for 400 sermons and addresses on Sabbath observance to be delivered last Sunday and during the week. Not only this, but they distributed many thousands of pamphlets, leaflets, etc. Except with ill-informed and bigoted religionists, they are not likely to have effected much in a propagandist way; but that section of believers is so large that it has to be counted with, which is the main reason for mentioning this latest phase of Sabbatarian activity. Whilst Rationalists are resting in a Fool's Paradise and deprecating anti-theological work, the army of superstition is hard at work. What appropriate and encouraging texts were afforded for all these four hundred addresses by the recent successes which Sabbatarianism has achieved!

Though Price Hughes inveighs against what he calls the "accursed Continental Sunday," our foreign neighbors exhibit in this matter very much more sense than we do. Here is a lament from the *Church Times* on the supposed iniquity of Parisians: "With a contemptuous disregard of Holy Seasons, the long-anticipated Paris Exhibition was opened on Holy Saturday. The same decline from old French reverence was marked in the order from the Minister of Marine forbidding the observance of Good Friday at the arsenal by draping the rigging with crape."

Dreadful—was it not? But our neighbors across the Channel seem not to be the only offenders in regard to slighting Holy Days. The *British Weekly* has received a letter from a correspondent at Simonstown, where the Boer prisoners of war have been staying, describing how they spend their Sunday. "Not in psalm-singing and prayer, as you might fancy. True, they do start in the early morning with hymn-singing, but that is soon over, and they pass the rest of the day in playing football, to the edification of the crowds of people who throng to see them!"

The bicycle, perhaps more than any rational argument, bids fair to break down the Sunday superstition in this country. Certainly the clerics have tried to capture the cyclists by means of "Church cycle parades," but the votaries of that exhilarating sort of locomotion are not to be tempted to limit their "spins" on fine Sundays by this deference to ecclesiastical demands. In this connection, it is worth while recording the fatal consequences that a cyclist brought upon himself by shamefacedness in being seen on his machine on a Sunday. He went out cycling on Sunday, the 25th ult., at Keighley. Nearing his home, he turned down a steep and narrow lane, and was pitched against the side of a house and killed. His wife told the Coroner's jury that he rode down the lane because he did not like to be seen cycling on a Sunday. If he had gone along another and a safe thoroughfare, the accident would not have happened. His Sabbatarian scruples, or the

fear of those held by his friends, killed him. This story has the merit of being true, which cannot be said of those apocryphal tales told in Sunday-schools (and satirised by Mark Twain) of wicked youths who go out boating or fishing on the Sabbath, and are, in consequence, drowned.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Martineau's "Study of Religion."

IV.—GOD AND THE MORAL SENSE.

FROM an examination of the external world Dr. Martineau next turns to man's moral consciousness for corroborative proof of his Theistic beliefs. His object here is twofold—to demonstrate, first of all, that the nature of the moral sense bears ample testimony to the existence of an "Eternal Mind," of which it is, in some sense, a copy; and to vindicate this assumed controlling intelligence from the criticisms directed against it.

According to Dr. Martineau, "the moral law is imposed upon us by an authority foreign to our personality" (foreign, that is, to the personality of the race), and we may "read in our ethical discriminations the reflections of an Eternal Justice." According to the Evolutionist, our moral sense is the result of the accumulated experience of unnumbered generations of social life, and has ultimate reference to courses of conduct that are, on the whole, beneficial to the species. Conscience to the one is "the Divine speaking through man"; its dictates are "not to be canvassed, but only to be obeyed or disobeyed." To the other it represents the force of social experience and social opinion, and needs constantly modifying or educating in the light of growing knowledge.

Dr. Martineau's objection to the evolutionary account of the moral sense is chiefly remarkable for the omission of the one factor that makes it evolutionary—that of growth. Right through his criticism this is apparent, and is, indeed, the customary sin of the introspective moralist. Space prevents my dealing at any length with his treatment of the moral sense, but one point will illustrate what I have described as his characteristic weakness. It is argued that conscience cannot be the result of cumulative public feeling, because there is already with each individual a conscience to which all social regulations appeal. Now the only possible means of establishing such a contention is by completely shutting one's eyes to the question of whether conscience is a growth or not. The objection simply takes for granted that conscience, as it exists in the present individual, is a primitive faculty; which is clearly the point in dispute. Dr. Martineau does, in a rather oblique manner, admit the education of conscience, without seeing that this is largely another name for the *making* of conscience. To say that our feelings concerning the rightness or wrongness of particular actions admit of modification, or even of reversal, and to say that conscience is only a general term for the sum of our moral feelings that are determined by association, are really two ways of stating the same fact. But, while admitting the former statement as correct, our critic denies the latter's accuracy. Why? Practically because, if conscience is but the consolidation of feelings of pleasure or pain attached to certain classes of actions, it ceases to be of any moral value.* Again, why? That conscience is a compound of simpler feelings the Evolutionist asserts most emphatically; that it therefore ceases to be of any moral value he denies with equal emphasis. Dr. Martineau is simply begging the question by asserting that, if it is so, therefore conscience ceases to have any moral character. Let me put the matter in a sentence. Either the feelings summed up under the term "conscience" have reference to actions that are thought to be useful to the race, or they have not. If they have, an analysis of the relationship only exhibits, not destroys, their character. If they have not, Dr. Martineau is taking up the curious position that only those actions that are void of benefit have any valid claim to the title of moral.

But the "moral consciousness" of man is to the Theist a veritable Frankenstein. Called into existence as a servant, it assumes the position of a master; and,

criticising the theory it is intended to subserve, it raises difficulties far more powerful than any it helps to remove. Having, therefore, assumed that the world is governed by benevolence, justice, and love, Dr. Martineau next faces those aspects of the world that apparently conflict with such a position.

The first difficulty to which Dr. Martineau addresses himself is that connected with the existence of suffering in the animal world. Without stooping to the mentally dishonest plea that there is no suffering to apologise for, that the animals that are hunted enjoy the sport quite as much as those that hunt them, he argues that "the preponderance of pain is the point on which the argument hangs," and, consequently, his reply takes the shape of proving that, on the whole, animal life experiences more pleasure than pain, and that the objection to pain is really an objection to sentient existence. The conclusion is that, if we have animals that experience pleasure, they must also be capable of experiencing pain, and that the present condition of things "accomplishes the maximum of good with a minimum of evil."

I have in other places* already pointed out at some length that the argument from the suffering of the animal world does *not* hinge upon there being a surplus of pains over pleasures. No addition in *quantity* can alter the *quality* of suffering. Pain is no more pain when it occurs in a million cases than when it occurs in one. A thousand people with the toothache suffer neither more nor less than a single individual. Pain is always an individual matter; and its existence in a single case is as much an indictment of such a God as Dr. Martineau paints as the production of myriads of instances. And as to the second contention, that you cannot eliminate the susceptibility to pain without destroying the possibility of pleasure, here again there is a sheer begging of the question. All that it amounts to is the bald statement that *under present conditions* suffering is an inevitable concomitant of animal life. This no one denies; nor does anyone deny that some good emerges from much evil. All that one need point out is, if the Theistic theory be sound, the universe is the result of a prearranged plan. Out of an infinitude of other possible plans this one was adopted. All its possibilities were foreseen; and we are, therefore, justified in asking, if God is filled with benevolence, justice, and love, why should evil be the raw material of good, pain the mine from which pleasure is quarried, the suffering and destruction of myriads of animals the condition of the "fitness" of those that survive?

Dr. Martineau is far too acute to deny that some other plan *might* have been devised, or to avail himself of the cheap retort of asking himself *what* better plan an objector could suggest. Instead, he seeks to parry the force of the criticism by asserting, first, that God, having once committed "his will to any determinate method.....thereby shuts the door on a thousand things that might have been before."† To which one need only say, so much the worse for his judgment; while, if once having adopted a "determinate method," he is resolved to adhere to it, irrespective of possible beneficial modifications or animal suffering induced by his scheme, we can only apply Emerson's phrase, "A foolish consistency is the bugbear of little minds," to what Dr. Martineau believes is the greatest mind of all.

The second plea urged is that we exaggerate the actual amount of evil by omitting to make allowance for the good resulting therefrom. There is no war in nature "except those of each tribe on which it is appointed to subsist.....The carnivorous tribes are not omnivorous, but select, in their tastes and antipathies.....And, among the modes of death, there is no reason to suppose that to become the victim of animal voracity is more painful than to perish by disease, or pine away by exhaustion."‡ One needs to be a Freethinker to appreciate the delicious humor of an apology of this description. Anyone but a Theist might be struck by the thought that the fact that certain tribes have been deliberately "appointed" as food for others makes the case worse rather than better; and that, looked at from the standpoint of the eaten, they might well have

* In my two pamphlets on *Pain and Providence* and *Evolution and Christianity*.

† *Study of Religion*, ii., p. 80.

‡ *Ibid.*, ii., pp. 88-9.

* See *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii., pp. 15, 16.

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praised God had their devourers been less "select in their tastes and their antipathies." And, after all, the "select" tastes of a great many carnivora are fairly comprehensive, as a short account of man-eating tigers and the like would show. And it is still more curious to find it gravely propounded that, because the "Divine Perfection" has provided worse forms of death than being eaten, therefore let us not complain of that. "If a fly walks on you," said Artemus Ward, "praise God it isn't an elephant." "If you are devoured by some other animal," says Dr. Martineau, benignly, "praise the Lord, you might have met a far worse death than that."

Next, Dr. Martineau asks triumphantly: "Withdraw altogether the carnivorous habit.....How would you dispose of the bodies of dead animals?.....Nature, in her predatory tribes, has appointed a sanitary commission far more effective than those which watch over our villages and cities; and one of the great difficulties of our civilisation is due to the fact that there is nobody to eat us,"* so that the "Divine Perfection," having created a number of animals, is compelled to create others to eat them, in order that their festering bodies shall not poison the air; and then, despite the laudations of the disinterested affections contained in Dr. Martineau's writings, human interference with the divine economy, by preventing other animals eating us, gives rise to "one of the great difficulties of our crowded civilisation." It reminds one of Swift's tract on the benefits of babies as an article of diet.

And, finally, we are assured that anti-theistic criticism is often wide of the mark because the growth of disease and the like "are evidently not the ends for which the organs are constructed.....for which accordingly it is as unreasonable to seek a 'Wherefore' as to ask the runner why he fails, or the boatman why he shoots Niagara." But the runner fails because of weakness of lungs, of limbs, or of some cause that may be definitely related to the task proposed. It is *not* unreasonable to ask either of the questions cited, and it is *not* unreasonable to ask why there should be so much disease in animal life, which is admitted to be most "perplexing." If disease is not included in God's plan, how comes it to be? If it is, then it is "the ends for which the organs are constructed," and Dr. Martineau's plea falls to the ground.

And what, after all, does Dr. Martineau, or anyone else, know of the "ends for which organs are constructed"? The whole sentence is a tissue of unverifiable and baseless assumptions. The lungs carry life-giving oxygen to the blood, and with equal readiness and thoroughness spread typhoid germs through the system. Why should we say the lungs were "constructed" for one purpose rather than another? Indeed, viewing the struggle mankind is everywhere and always engaged in to overcome the various agencies that threaten the security of human life, one might, with equal reason, say that the aim of nature is to extinguish human life from the face of the earth, and is only prevented doing this by constant effort and vigilance. The "end" that Dr. Martineau discerns is not in nature, but in himself. He discerns a result, and supposes a plan; discovers a fact, and infers a purpose. An examination of nature tells us only what *is*; it does not tell us *why* it is, or that it forms part of any predetermined "plan of creation." The idea that nature is a designed servant to human welfare may be a pleasing one, but it is nevertheless an illusion. As Kant says: "Reason brought design into the world, and admires a wonder created by itself."

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

The clergy pray for rain or fine weather, and on great occasions, such as the potato blight, the archbishop issues a special form of petition for its removal. But the clergy and archbishop are aware all the time that the evils which they pray against depend on natural causes, and that a prayer from a Christian minister will as little bring a change of weather as the incantation of a Caffre rain-maker.—J. A. Froude.

A Sainly Sinner.

A SIDELIGHT ON ST. GEORGE.

"Our ancient word of courage, fair 'St. George,'
Aspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons."
—SHAKESPEARE (*Richard III. v. 3*).

THE recent inclusion of the harmless, necessary Union Jack among the most sacred symbols of our most holy religion has led to a renewed interest in the personality of the gent who is facetiously known as the patron saint of England.

It was, indeed, fondly hoped that, by the help of the Almighty and the *Daily Mail*, many otherwise decent citizens might be persuaded to observe St. George's Day by wearing roses.

The suggestion, as might have been expected, fell flat; but it may prove interesting to many to be informed who St. George was, his connection with English history, and his association with our national flower—the rose. We regret exceedingly to find that the saint's biography is by no means pleasant reading, and quite unsuited for the family circle. Historians agree in disclosing a pitiable story of a misspent life. From the highest to the lowest, from Gibbon to a certain Dr. William Smith, they describe George as an unadulterated rascal. Even that cultured Bostonian idol, Emerson, can find no redeeming traits in the saint's character. Hear what Emerson has to say:—

"George of Cappadocia, born at Epiphania, in Cilicia, was a low parasite, who got a lucrative contract to supply the army with bacon."

This is decidedly unsettling. But for the present we refrain from levelling the guns of our criticism at this saintly army contractor.

"A rogue and informer, he got rich, and was forced to run from justice."

This seems to suggest that George sold pigs which had died natural deaths, was a swindler, and had learnt the art of sprinting at the psychological moment.

"He saved his money, embraced Arianism, collected a library, and got promoted by a faction to the episcopal throne of Alexandria."

Like most army contractors, George had his saintly head screwed on the right way. As for his collecting a library, his previous commercial reputation was sufficiently bad to prevent the booksellers allowing the saint any credit. We may be equally certain that his ordination as a right-reverend Father-in-God was against the public interest.

"When Julian came, A.D. 361, George was dragged to prison."

We were just getting ready some powerful language of the Lyddite description to express our feelings when we read of George getting into trouble. Mr. Julian did not arrive a moment too soon.

"The prison was burst open by the mob, and George was lynched, as he deserved."

There is something particularly distressing in the idea of a bishop being lynched. If George had taken to drink in his old age, we might still have remembered that bishops are but human. This lynching, however, is a dreadful business. Now for Emerson's peroration:—

"And this precious knave became, in good time, Saint George of England, patron of chivalry, emblem of victory and civility, and the pride of the best blood of the modern world."

A lemon-hearted cynic might liken the history of the patron saint of England to a page out of the *Newgate Calendar*. Some modern historians, realising the disgraceful nature of George's career, have made desperate attempts to whitewash his saintship. They have succeeded in deceiving themselves that George was not George, but another gentleman of the same name. But criticism, sharp as Shylock's knife, cuts their nonsense to pieces. The tutelary saint of England was a blackguard, and "there's an end of it."

We have not sufficient space just at present to refer to George's connection with the dear dragon. Neither have we the heart to discuss his relation with that

beautiful flower, the rose. So far from recommending any citizen to wear a rose in honor of George of Cappadocia, we rather suggest that it would be a kindness to strew the poppy of oblivion over the grave of such a sacrosanct scoundrel. MIMNERMUS.

Pharisee and Publican.

You call me a "sinner"—perhaps I am,
Such as your narrow creed would damn;
And yet, maybe, I am better far
Than some who aloft in "saintship" are!

I hurt nobody by greed or guile,
Nor mask deceit with a specious smile;
I have clothed the naked, the hungry fed,
And the homeless ones to a shelter led.

The sick have received my loving care,
And the prisoner, too, in his dungeon there;
By the couch of the dying have comfort said,
And buried the poor and friendless dead.

And yet, because I do not speak
In a "holy tone," with an accent meek,
And because I am jolly, and hearty, and free,
"What a wicked sinner!" you say of me.

I honestly lead a natural life
In love and goodwill, avoiding strife;
I cannot frown on this world's delight,
Nor say that its pleasures are far from right.

You think what a "godly" name you'll win
By branding all sensible joy as "sin";
You fancy your seat in heaven will be
Very high up, for your "sanctity."

Denying the needs of your nature now,
And the body forced in restraint to bow,
You live on such an unnatural plane
That your life is but self-inflicted pain.

O take the good of this world to-day!
Swiftly—too swiftly—it melts away;
Seek the charm of the passing hour,
Live in its beauty, enjoy its power!

"While we live, let us live!" It is wiser so
Than in mourning and penitent garb to go;
No future life can repair the loss
To those who treated *this* life as "dross."

When you have done with things below,
Should your steps up "a golden stairway" go,
Your spirit will be exceeding glad—
If spirit there be—for the joy you had!

GERALD GREY.

Acid Drops.

PROPHET BAXTER is still playing his profitable old game, predicting the "Wars and Revolutions" which are to precede and herald the second coming of Christ—who, by the way, has never been proved to have come the first time yet. Ever so many years ago Prophet Baxter wrote a book to prove that Louis Napoleon was the destined monarch of the world. Louis Napoleon died, and Prophet Baxter has backed half-a-dozen other gentlemen for the same job since. But they too have all died. Indeed, it is as good as a death warrant when Prophet Baxter patronises you as the hero of his "coming events." We see he is now backing Prince Victor Napoleon, who is living at Brussels, or Prince Louis Napoleon, who is living at St. Petersburg. Well, we are sorry for both these gentlemen. They may make their wills and get ready for their funerals.

Rev. Mr. Sheldon, of "What Would Jesus Do?" celebrity, addressing a meeting of Methodist ministers at Paterson, New Jersey, on April 4, said: "If a grand inquisition could get at our ministers, three-fourths of us would be found guilty of heresy upon some point." This raised a violent storm amongst the Methodist ministers. When it subsided Mr. Sheldon added: "I made that statement recently to a venerable divine, who told me that I would be nearer right if I said nine-tenths." It appears, therefore, that what is called the Higher Criticism is permeating the most orthodox of Churches.

"Church members," said the Rev. C. M. Sheldon in the *Topeka Daily Capital*, "respectable citizens, men and women who stand high in social circles, lie about their taxes. These

are facts. Apply the moral for yourselves." We suppose the moral is, Pay your taxes straight, as Jesus would do. Yes, but Jesus had a very short and easy way of doing it. When the tax-collector called for his little bill, Jesus sent Peter fishing, and Peter caught a finny specimen with money in its mouth, which money he brought to Jesus, who paid the tax-collector's account with it. If Christians could pay their taxes in this simple fashion, few of them would take the trouble to "lie" in making their returns.

Mrs. Langtry seems to have had a bad time in America. The purity people there are very numerous, and they strongly object to "The Degenerates," a play which she took over from England. In some places she had to cancel her engagements owing to the opposition. The Mayor of Newark, New Jersey, declared that Mrs. Langtry's acting in that city during Holy Week was "a gratuitous insult to the respectable, God-fearing people."

The Scottish Reformation Society propounds a new theory of the war in South Africa. "The cunning hand of the Jesuits," its report says, "has prepared and precipitated the unhappy quarrel." This may be true, but one wonders how the Jesuits managed it. The Boers are ultra-Protestants, and Great Britain is mostly Protestant too. As the *Glasgow Herald* says, "there is something extremely piquant in the idea of Oom Paul as a Jesuit in disguise."

Rev. H. R. Haweis, speaking at the London Spiritualist Alliance annual conversation, said a very curious thing for a Church of England clergyman. He declared that Spiritualism had "given a philosophic basis to belief in the immortality of the soul." But, according to the New Testament, it was Jesus Christ who brought immortality to light nearly two thousand years ago. Mr. Haweis is a Christian, and gets his living by preaching Jesus Christ; but he does not appear to rate his Master's contributions to the theory of a future life too highly. And the cream of the joke is that Mr. Haweis professes to believe that this Jesus Christ was God!

Mr. Haweis characterised the prosecutions of clairvoyants as anachronisms. The Privy Council, he declared, might as well prosecute doctors for obtaining money by pretending to cure that which they did not cure, or clergymen for preaching "Hell fire," and thereby frightening women and children into madhouses. Heaven help all the clergymen, he exclaimed, if they were going to prosecute all people who got money by false pretences.

Mr. Haweis fell foul of Talmage for saying that nine-tenths of Spiritualism was fraudulent. Talmage, said Mr. Haweis, talks a lot of rubbish; he has not conceived a new idea for the last thirty years. But of how many more men of God might not the same thing be said with equal accuracy?

There was some pretty plain speaking about the parsons at the Teachers' Conference in York. One delegate, Mr. Cryer, said that something must be done to stop "the black vultures pilfering the funds set apart for education."

Dr. Maclure, the Dean of Manchester, is a very composite chairman. Acknowledging a vote of thanks to him as chairman of the annual parish meeting for the election of churchwardens and sidesmen, he said: "I wish you to understand that I am not a Papist or a Ritualist. I am a downright, good, high, low, broad, evangelical, catholic churchman." God Almighty will have a job to sort this parson out at the day of judgment.

The *Westminster Gazette* calls attention to the following advertisements in the *Times*: "Advowson for sale in Southern county. Healthy vacancy must soon occur. Small pop. Good neighborhood. Income nearly £400 net, and good rectory and grounds. Apply, etc." "Advowson for exchange. Pretty agricultural village. About £250, with early possession, etc." The *Westminster Gazette* observes that the statement, "Healthy vacancy must soon occur," is curiously cryptic, but there is no doubt what is implied by "small pop."

Whether Professor Cheyne knows it or not, his heresy is the occasion of much pain to that aged Protestant sheet—the *Record*. In its latest issue it gives a review of Professor Cheyne's work on *The Christian Use of the Psalms*. It observes: "We can but say, with no hesitation whatever, that we lay this book down with pain and sorrow. We felt with wonderment that Professor Cheyne should express such calm conviction that millions of Christian men and women for many generations have been completely mistaken in seeing the person of Christ shining from the pages of the Psalter."

The *Record* wonders, too, if there is any other Church in

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Christendom saving the Church of England, of which Professor Cheyne can speak in such contemptuous terms, which would allow one of its ministers to hold a lucrative appointment and yet flout its most cherished doctrines.

Here the *Record* is right. It does seem a singular fact that Professor Cheyne, who has travelled far away from the creeds of his Church, should cling to its loaves and fishes.

Now that we are located so near St. Paul's Cathedral, we are naturally beginning to feel an added interest in that stately structure at the top of the hill. It is distressing, therefore, to find that some new mosaics recently added, and for which Sir W. B. Richmond is responsible, are not at all satisfactory, even to Churchmen with some pretensions to taste.

Sir W. B. Richmond has usually made many departures from the grotesque traditions of medieval art. He does not present us with splay-footed saints whose figures are contorted into shapes which are mainly suggestive of paralysis. Nor what idiotic-looking Apostles whose personal appearance of imbecility accounts for much that we read of in the New Testament. But he has gone and done something which has given mortal offence to a correspondent of our dear old contemporary, the *Rock*.

"Scripture," says this correspondent, "is deliberately misrepresented. In the resurrection picture the sepulchre is represented as having high folding doors, and its floor as being two or three steps higher than the ground without, whereas more than one Gospel says that it had no door, and St. John says that he had to stoop to look into it. In the entombment picture an angel is represented as laying out our Lord's body!"

This is very sad. The illustrator should stick to his text, though in this case the text generally, which includes the respective accounts of the resurrection, is in a hopeless state of contradiction and confusion. It seems, however, pretty clear that there was no door to that tomb, and that St. John had had to stoop to look into it. Religionists have to stoop to take in the story of the resurrection at all. And yet that seems odd, for if ever there was a "tall" story that is one.

A new edition of Sir Henry Thompson's work on *Modern Cremation* has been issued. The advantages of cremation in disposing of the dead do not now need to be discussed. The author, rightly enough, devoted but little attention to the religious aspect of the subject. At the same time, it is interesting to note that the early Christians departed from the heathen custom of burial because they believed in the resurrection of the dead as coming within a few short years, or even days. Poor fools!—and yet their folly originated in the declarations of Christ.

What a waste of material must be the common-sense observation on the burning to the ground of the Wesleyan chapel at St. Leonards. The rector of St. Leonards piously writes: "Of course, we know that He who works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform has a wise purpose in allowing this trial to overtake you, and we can only say, Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight."

There is nothing like accommodating oneself to circumstances. Still, we read in the same account that the "fire brigade worked vigorously," and that the trustees are now placed in very embarrassing circumstances. No doubt more money will be raised in time to rebuild the chapel. But Providence might have preserved this "handsome edifice," as it is described, and disposed the forthcoming donors to expend their money in building a chapel somewhere else.

However, the new one, when erected, will, like the old, be formally "dedicated to his service," which suggests the remark that, if Providence can't or won't look after his own Temples, it isn't much use relying upon him for anything else.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer says that not long ago he asked a young man to join a cricket club. "Excuse me," was the reply, "but since I became fully consecrated I have given up cricket." "Then will you play the violin at our evening concert?" "Oh, I am sorry, but I have given up the violin." Mr. Meyer seems surprised, and, though he doesn't say so, was probably a little disgusted at this exhibition of effeminate sanctification. All the same, these consecrated creatures are a natural product of a great deal of present-day pulpit teaching.

The Countess of Warwick has recently given expression to some home truths that will be anything but palatable to the pious. Speaking at Leamington in support of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, she said that, at the risk of giving offence, she would like to point

out the absurdity of sending thousands of pounds out of this country to so-called foreign missions when there was plenty to do at home. Surely it was their duty to alleviate the sufferings of the little ones at home before going out to other nations, whose primitive moral convictions were often superior, and certainly not inferior, to those of a professedly Christian land.

It is not often nowadays that we find a coroner's jury returning the antiquated verdict of "Death by the Act of God." This, however, was the finding of a jury who sat to inquire at Ramsgate the other day into the circumstances of the death of an unlucky woman who was killed by lightning on the sands. Such a verdict takes us back to the centuries of ignorance in regard to natural phenomena when everything at all remarkable was ascribed to the direct action of Deity. With the advance in knowledge, the old form of "Visitation of God" is now generally superseded by the much more sensible verdict of "Death from natural causes," which fact shows that, at any rate, some progress is being made.

With all its accumulated wealth and sources of emolument, the Established Church of England might at least keep its clergymen out of the County Court. The Rev. H. N. Walde, rector of Linkenholt, near Hungerford, Berks, has been sued for 15s. by a firm of publishers, who alleged that the rector had a Bible valued at £5 from their agent, and, after retaining it for a year on approval, returned it. Judgment was given for the sum claimed. He was also sued by his cook for £3 wages. The rector wrote to the Judge complaining that he was only in receipt of £80 a year, and had to keep a house and sustain a family on that. Well, there are many families in this happy Christian land that have to live on less. Besides, as the plaintiff's solicitor pointedly observed, whatever the rector's income might be, if he thought proper to engage an expert cook he ought to pay for her services. A commitment order was granted.

The Bible, so considerably placed in each cell of her Majesty's prisons for the spiritual improvement of the prisoners, seems occasionally to be put to some practical purpose. In the West-end massage scandal case, which came the other day before the Marlborough-street Stipendiary, it transpired that a man who had been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for keeping a disorderly house had managed to surreptitiously communicate with the outer world by means of notes scribbled on leaves torn out of his cell-Bible. Certain pages selected from the Old Testament might have afforded remarkably appropriate material for marginal instructions as to the carrying on of the houses of ill-fame in which the prisoner was interested.

A man named Alfred Owen Williams, who was accused of a number of petty thefts, some from the House of Commons and others from his lodgings, pleaded for leniency on the ground of his previous good character, as shown by presentations that had been made to him by his Church and Sunday-school at Llanelly. His religious associations seem not to have had much restraining moral influence on his actions, and, probably regarding him as one of those canting hypocrites of whom there are such a number about, the Marylebone magistrate sentenced him to three months' imprisonment.

Ollie Tombs, a Kansas City fanatic, predicted that he would fast thirty days, and then die, and three days later be raised from the dead. The New York *Truthseeker* says he has done the easiest part of the trick. He is dead.

The Alexandra Palace is to be put to a new use. Pleasure-seekers and racing men will give it a wide berth during the week in May, when it will be the scene of the World's Convention of Christian Endeavor Societies. Such a Convention ought to impregnate the whole surrounding district with the spirit of piety. One of the "good and eminent men," as the *Daily News* sarcastically puts it, who are expected to attend the Convention, is the Rev. C. M. Sheldon.

Arthur Ernest Cole, carpenter, of Lower Edmonton, was engaged to be married to Annie Brocklesby, of Dalston. They first met each other at the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Tottenham, and subsequently at open-air meetings. "How nice it will be," the amorous carpenter wrote, "when we are married, to be able to work for Jesus together." By-and-bye, however, he changed his mind, and preferred to work for Jesus with another lady; and now he has to pay £72 damages to his first love for breach of promise.

The inhabitants of the Raratonga islands in the Pacific—or, at least, such of them as profess Christianity—are now involved in a most serious difficulty. We should be heartless in the extreme if we failed to extend to them our sincerest

commiseration. They have, it seems, by a pure mistake, been keeping Sunday on the wrong day!

This terrible fact dawned upon them a little time ago, and we have some recollection of mentioning the discovery soon after it was made. But there have been developments since, and now we learn from a correspondent of the *New Zealand Herald* that the islands are in a state of something approaching revolution. The trouble arose in this way: the earlier missionaries kept the same Sunday after leaving Sydney as before, forgetting that they had passed the 180th degree of longitude, and, consequently, the wrong Sunday has been kept until now. The Raratonga Federal Parliament has just decreed that the calendar is to be brought into accord with the rest of the world. The business houses and Government offices met the change at once.

Not so the native-converts who are now experiencing the first rude shock to their hitherto implicit faith. They think they have either been shamefully bamboozled in the past, or that the Federal Parliament is trying to humbug them in the present. So they have set up their naked backs against the heresy, and will have none of it. The London Missionary Society's Church is, in consequence, deserted, and the missionaries are in despair. The natives have been keeping the old Sunday (now Saturday) at their homes, and no explanation of their error seems to commend itself to their intelligence. Meanwhile, the Seventh Day Adventists who have a mission recently started are receiving many temporary adherents.

It is feared that the outcome will be that the natives will keep no Sunday at all. The Lord will probably make allowances for the past error into which they have been led, but their present wilfulness may not be so readily overlooked—at least, that is what the missionaries think. Earnest prayers are, therefore, being offered that the native element may not continue in their present state of stiff-neckedness or thick-headedness over the 180th degree of longitude, and that all may yet be peace.

How thankful we ought to be that in our own Christian land we have a Sunday which is beyond dispute!

Believers in the occult will be interested to learn that a "white Mahatma" has foretold that Pretoria will be taken by us on July 6, and that the war will be over in September.

Marriage by phonograph is the latest American novelty. A minister in Louisiana was very anxious to perform the marriage ceremony for his daughter, but was taken dangerously ill. He, however, ordered the phonograph to be brought to his bedside, and spoke into the instrument his part of the marriage service. Later on the phonograph was placed on the communion table of the church, and by its means his daughter was duly married to a young merchant. Query: What did the One Above think of this novel solemnisation?

Dreadful scandal seems to have been caused by the entire absence of any religious service in the inauguration proceedings at the Paris Exhibition on the 14th. To mark his sense of this outrage, and of the additional infamy of opening the Exhibition on the solemn day between Good Friday and Easter Day, Cardinal Richard has arranged for a special mass at one of the cathedrals.

Somebody in search of the longest word in the English language has found, in the *Life of Archbishop Benson* (p. 441), certain people alluded to as "Antidiseestablishmentarians." Wouldn't "mules" be shorter, and equally expressive of the stubborn stupidity of those who are intended to be described?

The great, great, extra-great Talmage is in England. He has come over here to save souls and carry home dollars. His first sermon was delivered at Manchester. It was chiefly about Hell, on which Talmage is a high authority. Not that he has ever visited it, although some people wish he would. Anyhow, he is quite certain that all "agnostics and infidels" go to the pit where they are ranged under their "brigadier-general, Voltaire." Talmage adds that Voltaire wished he had never been born. When and where he wished it is not stated.

Talmage says that Christians should look upon agnostics and infidels as they look upon "one who allowed his hair to hang below his shoulders and left his finger nails uncut, and had in his eye a stare of incipient lunacy—something to be pitied, not to be argued with." Quite so. It is so much easier—and safer—to pity the infidel than to argue with him. Talmage knows that from experience.

"There is to-day no religion in Italy," says Don Margilia, the eloquent Sicilian ex-priest, and he adds that "The fault is not with the Italians, but with the priests." This may be true enough from Don Margilia's point of view, but what he considers as no religion is probably just the sort of religion that serves the priests' turn. We regret, therefore, that we cannot be jubilant over his admission.

America is a land of queer sects, but Russia beats it hollow in that line. Amongst the latest novelties in that holy country are the "Red Pilgrims" and the "Coffin People." The former clothe themselves in red shirts on the day of their death, and are suffocated by their co-religionists; the latter place themselves in coffins and starve themselves to death.

There was a lively vestry meeting recently at St. Luke's Church, Enfield. One member called another a liar, and another threatened the vicar. The household of faith was divided and unhappy; still, it separated without bloodshed.

According to the Rev. John Bond, speaking at a London Wesleyan Ministers' Meeting, the broader spirit and higher education of to-day were accompanied by a lack of the enthusiasm of former times. Of course, the reverend gentleman deeply regretted this lukewarmness, but he does not appear to have advanced any recipe for working up the steam again.

The Rev. John H. Goodman, preaching before the British and Foreign Bible Society at Wesley's Chapel, said there was no fear of the Bible being discrowned or dethroned. It was a book which Bishop Butler had defended, and Sir Isaac Newton had interpreted, and Shakespeare knew, and Sir Walter Scott carried in his pocket; a book which was read in kings' palaces, appealed to in courts of justice, and asked for by felons in their cells. Well, now, that is good; most decidedly good. Certainly the Bible is all right while it is patronised by felons. That is the final mark of its inspiration.

Mrs. Margaret Tyers Weller-Poley, of Brandon House, Brandon, Suffolk, has left £30,000 to various religious institutions, amongst them being the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which receives £2,000. Christian Knowledge, of course, means Christian Superstition. That is what this deceased lady is supporting, as it were, from her grave. Surely it will be well if Freethinkers do their best to counteract such a disposition of the hard-earned (by somebody) fruits of human labor. Legacies to the Secular Society, Limited, whose registered office is now at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., will be devoted, as they accrue, to the promotion of Reason and the destruction of Dogmatic Faith.

Rev. C. M. Sheldon, who made such an ass of himself trying to edit a daily newspaper, is now proposing to found a new religious sect to be called "Practical Christians." He thinks that eight weeks will be sufficient to establish it in England, and then he proposes to go on and do the same for the continent of Europe. The *Church Times* observes: "A little of the saving grace of modesty would not be amiss in this superior exponent of practical Christianity."

A Vision of Storm.

I HAD a vision of a storm at night—
A monster myriad-mouthed—I saw the sea,
That soared and roared as with demoniac glee,
Drag down great ships, and drown men (woeful sight!)...
I saw on land homes wrecked with fearful might
Of winds and floods; I saw beneath a tree
A good man slain by lightning, that left free
Another who in evil did delight.

And then I saw, as though, indeed, above
Hell's hand were there to wield the lightning's rod,
A child struck blind before its mother's eyes;
And that poor mother's grief, her moans and cries,
More than a good man's words denying God,
Disproved, if God there be, that God is love!

J. A. B.

Neither days nor lives can be made holy by doing nothing in them. The best prayer at the beginning of the day is that we may not lose its moments, and the best grace before meat is the consciousness that we have justly earned our dinner.—
Ruskin.

N.B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 29, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool; at 11, "Blessed be ye Poor"; at 3, "The Lord of Hosts and the Prince of Peace"; at 7, "Is Dr. Mivart in Hell?"
May 13, Athenæum Hall, London. 20, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 29, The Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London. May 6, Athenæum Hall, London; 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.
- J. A. B.—Pleased to have your congratulations.
- C. K. DUMAS.—Dean Farrar's work, criticised in Mr. Foote's *Book of God*, is published in one volume at fourteen shillings by Longmans and Co. The precise title is *The Bible: its Meaning and Supremacy*.
- W. BURRIS.—(1) Pleased to hear you have found Mr. Foote's articles on "God's Mother" so useful in lending to your friends. Yes, those articles will be reprinted, with some additions, in pamphlet form. (2) With regard to Freethought organisation in Bristol, no doubt something ought to be done, but it had better wait a little longer for an opportune moment. A systematic effort will be necessary, and, from what we can see, Mr. Foote will have to visit Bristol himself to set the ball rolling.
- G. F.—Thanks for your letter re the Egyptian Hall matter. The bill you refer to must have looked very funny, but it would have to be accurately reproduced to bring out the point of the joke.
- A. J. H.—Always glad to receive such extracts.
- L. SIMPSON.—We are much obliged to you for your kind offer, which shall be borne in mind, and made use of, if possible, at a convenient opportunity.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged to you for your cuttings.
- E. VETTERLEIN.—All right. Send us, as early as possible, a copy of any bill of the lectures you are printing.
- J. CLARK.—Thanks for your interesting and encouraging letter. We are very glad to hear that you and your little band of friends are determined to uphold the Freethought flag at Preston. It is pleasant to know that those who meet at your house are reading *Flowers of Freethought* together. Mr. Foote will no doubt be visiting Bolton again before Christmas, and you will then be able to run over and hear him.
- J. MENTHICK.—Sorry you have had so much trouble to get your *Freethinker*, for which you had paid, from 28 Stonecutter-street, and that no attention whatever has been given to your letters. The Freethought Publishing Company's business manager will see to the matter, and you shall have satisfaction. Glad to know you admire what you are good enough to call our "splendid abilities and fearless writings," and that you devour our article on Saturday night with your supper.
- A. E. E.—Thanks for cuttings, etc. Don't distress yourself about the other matter.
- W. B. THOMPSON.—See "Sugar Plums."
- J. MCGHEE.—Thanks for cutting. See paragraph.
- J. FULLER.—Always glad to receive papers or cuttings.
- JEAN STANBER.—The *Freidenker* is published at 468 East Water-street, Milwaukee, U.S.A. The subscription price for Europe is three dollars a year.
- H. PERCY WARD.—We are obliged to you for the information. It is really not a legacy at all. Thanks for your kind offer re the *Freethinker* and the Secular Society, Limited. We shall bear it in mind.
- W. DEY writes:—"I recently purchased the second Series of your *Flowers of Freethought*, and must say it is a work which should be in the library of every Freethinker. I hope when you get settled down you will find time to issue a third Series." This correspondent has evidently read the book carefully, for he notes a blunder in the article entitled "Are Atheists Wicked?" Darwin's *Descent of Man* is referred to as having just been published in 1860. This is wrong; the reference should have been to the *Origin of Species*.
- W. NEWBIGGING.—We have handed your complaint and order to Miss Vance, who is attending to same.

G. CRUDDAS.—The extract from Dr. Parker, which appeared in the *Freethinker* of April 1, was taken from that preacher's article in the *Daily News* of Saturday, March 24. Dr. Parker sometimes writes signed articles in the "Religious" column of the Saturday edition of that journal.

G. ANDERSON.—Thanks for calling our attention to it. We have acted on your suggestion, and printed our new address conspicuously at the top of the first column on the ninth page.

A. B. MOSS.—You have always our very best wishes.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Glasgow Herald—Essex Weekly News—Secular Thought—Sydney Bulletin—Progressive Thinker—Two Worlds—Liberator—Free Society—Isle of Man Times—Blue Grass Blade—De Vrije Gedachte—Ethical World—Der Arme Teufel—New Century—Bath Herald—Public Opinion—People's Newspaper—Torch of Reason—Topeka Daily Capital—Freidenker.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., 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.

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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LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, 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.

In spite of the sudden sultry weather, Mr. Foote had an excellent audience at the Camberwell Secular Hall on Sunday evening. Mr. Victor Roger occupied the chair, and made a strong appeal in favor of the collection on behalf of the Branch's open-air propaganda. Mr. Foote also said a word for the same object. We hope the collection was a good one, for the Branch is going ahead splendidly with its outdoor work.

Mr. Foote delivers three lectures to-day (April 29) in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool. His subjects should attract good audiences.

Colonel Ingersoll's splendid "Vision of War" is printed by the United States War Department and hung up beside Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address in the Soldiers' Homes and offices of the national cemeteries. So far so good. But will it be believed that the name of Ingersoll is omitted? Evidently the American Government is ashamed of the name of one of the greatest of American citizens, unless the omission of Ingersoll's name was dictated by the fear that an "infidel" might get credit for his own performances.

We confess to having chuckled over Lord Roberts's slating of Sir Charles Warren. We saw that gentleman at the Home Office, at the time of the Trafalgar Square row, when he was the head of the London police. His manner was extremely insolent, and our estimate of his ability was that it was about on a level with his manners. No doubt he was quite capable of defending Trafalgar Square against the people of London, with the aid of several thousand policemen armed with truncheons, and some thousands of soldiers to back them up if necessary. But fighting well-armed Boers in the mountains around Ladysmith was quite another matter. Sir Charles Warren seems to have played the fool at Spion Kop, and not a very courageous fool either. Lord Roberts practically says as much in his covering dispatch, and the London Radicals, who have waited a long time, have got their revenge at last.

Mr. W. B. Thompson, secretary, informs us that Mr. C. Watts had a good audience and a hearty welcome at the Secular Hall, New Brompton, on Sunday; in spite of the "phenomenal midsummer weather which made the green fields so preferable to the inside of a hall." Mr.

Watts satisfied his auditors that a real scientist could not be a real Christian, and his points were all warmly applauded.

This Sunday evening, April 29, Mr. Watts lectures at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road. His subject will be, "Emancipation of Human Thought."

Mr. Heaford lectured at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. The weather was all against a large audience, but those present were much pleased with Mr. Heaford's address.

Mr. A. B. Moss had a parting shot at the Church at the Easter Tuesday meeting of Camberwell Vestry. The *South London Press* says: "He opposed the election of Churchwardens, in the first place, on the ground that in a few months the new Council would have nothing to do with the Church, and would dispense altogether with People's Wardens. Secondly, he did not see what use there was for People's Wardens. They were practically the servants of the vicar. They could not initiate any reforms either in the ritual or the doctrines of the Church. The Church was essentially a conservative institution. It was intolerant of all kinds of reform, either from within or without. But as an institution it would have to modify itself in accordance with modern thought and aspirations, or it would inevitably perish. The wise words of warning of the late Dr. Mivart were just as applicable to the Church of England—the Church that professed to value intellectual liberty and the right of private judgment, yet condemned as heretics all men who exercised this right—as to any other section of the community. In that vestry he had pleaded for reform in the Church—for reform in its ritual and its teachings. He was aware that he had only been as one crying in the wilderness, but he had done his little best. He now left the Church in the hope that it would mend its ways, and, in the place of exploded fallacies, would give the people the highest and best in science and ethics."

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference, as already announced, will be held in London on Whit-Sunday. The Queen's (Minor) Hall has been engaged for the evening meeting. This is a very handsome room, though not as large as some of the other places that were applied for in vain. The Holborn Town Hall would have been very suitable, but it is no longer available on Sundays. The same difficulty obtains in regard to St. Martin's Town Hall, Westminster.

Branches and members of the N. S. S. will please note that notices of motion for the Conference Agenda must be sent in so as to reach the Secretary (Miss Vance) not later than the first post on Monday, May 14.

Miss Vance, by the way, is quite too busy just now, and some of her duties are novel. Of course she will settle down all right shortly. Meanwhile she must be excused if she is not always as prompt as usual with her correspondence.

The *People's Newspaper*, which reaches us from Rockhampton, Queensland, and is edited by our old friend Wallace Nelson, who will still be remembered by a good many Freethinkers in England, reproduces Mr. Foote's article on the death of John Ruskin.

There is hope for Cuba yet. According to the *New York Sun*, religion has seriously declined on the island during the nineteenth century. "Especially during the last fifty years," the *Sun* says, "have the services of the Church been widely neglected, while Rationalism and Infidelity have spread among the more educated classes."

In his *Reminiscences*, which the Harpers published last year, Justin McCarthy writes of Walt Whitman, whom he met on one of his visits to this country. Among the critics of Whitman, McCarthy says, it was an open question whether he was the real thing or a humbug—whether a great self-sustained poet choosing poverty rather than stifle his sentiments and peculiar style, or a mountebank putting on the appearance of poverty and using his "poetic" style as an advertisement. But the first visit to his garret-room and the first look into his honest eyes removed all of McCarthy's doubts as to his sincerity and, of course, as to his poverty. Afterwards Whitman became a little better off, but his last days were made comfortable only through the generosity of Colonel Ingersoll, who not only gave him the proceeds of a lecture, but helped him many times besides. Poetic or Whitmanic prohibitionists will be shocked to learn it; but Walt was a great lover of champagne, and it was one of the pleasures Colonel Ingersoll allowed himself to send the old man a case every now and then. Whitman and some of his friends got a deal from the great-hearted man now gone that the public never heard about. If all the men and women to whom he extended a helping hand would step forward and

testify, the records would make a library.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, is getting settled down at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C. Orders for literature—books, pamphlets, and periodicals—will be punctually attended to. There is already an improvement in the business, which we hope to see worked up to a much higher pitch during the next few months. Arrangements are being made in this direction, and announcements concerning them will appear in an early number of the *Freethinker*. Meanwhile we ask our friends all over the country to do what they can to promote the circulation of this journal. We are especially anxious to obtain the addresses of newsagents who will display a weekly contents-sheet.

John Calvin and His God.

WHERE no one knows, each may guess. Theology is the science of the unknown. It assumes its facts, and works out its theories to correspond with them. In science, the theory is subordinated to the fact. In theology, the fact is subordinated to the theory. In science, the fact is sacred; in theology, the theory is sacred. In science, belief is founded upon reason, experience, knowledge, and demonstration; in theology, belief is founded upon fiction and fear. Science makes men free; theology makes men pious. Science builds the school-house; theology builds the cathedral. Science is the savior of mankind; theology is the rabble nailing that savior to the cross.

John Calvin was born in northern France in the year 1509. He was destined by his father for the legal profession, and was educated with that end in view. At an early age he exhibited extraordinary industry and ability, and, while yet a student-at-law, had won recognition for eminent learning and remarkable power for forcible and concise statement.

About this time the Protestants were being persecuted and burned at the stake by Catholics in Paris. Calvin was there at school. He espoused the cause of the Protestants. He wrote an oration upon the doctrine of justification by faith, which was delivered as a sermon by a ministerial friend. Both the minister and Calvin were compelled to flee from Paris, and the sermon was publicly burned. He found temporary residence, first at one place and then at another, seeking always the seclusion dear to the student, and part of the time hiding under an assumed name.

The spies of the Inquisition tracked him to Italy, and he was compelled again to flee. He set out for Strasburg, near his native place. On the way he passed through the town of Geneva. He was there met, and implored to remain, by one of the old pastors. Calvin refused on the ground that he was seeking repose and an opportunity for study. Then said the old minister: "If you refuse to work for God with his Church, curses be upon your repose and curses be upon your study!" At that Calvin consented to remain, obeying, as he afterwards said, "the voice of God."

Whilst in retirement he had written the book known as his *Institutes of Theology*—a book perhaps the most famous that ever came from the hand and brain of man.

At Geneva he set about at once to reorganise the Church and the Secular Council. Theoretically, these two were independent of each other. One of his principles was complete independence of Church and State. Practically the Secular Council was under the complete domination of the Ecclesiastical Council. He extended ecclesiastical discipline to all citizens. He caused to be passed certain sumptuary laws, one of them forbidding the use of cards in games, and dancing in any manner. He punished obstinacy by banishment. It is a matter of history that he did succeed in making Geneva a wonderfully moral place for that age. He was also a good deal of a politician. Finding at one time his party likely to be defeated in an approaching election, he caused the rights of citizenship to be conferred upon three hundred foreigners, all of whom were favorable to his cause. It was natural that opposition should arise. After the space of three years his party was defeated, and the new council passed an ordinance forbidding ministers of the gospel to meddle with politics.

In retaliation, the ministers refused to celebrate the communion at Easter Sunday, and to restore certain church festivals. The Secular Council met that condition of affairs by banishing Calvin and his coadjutor. He left Geneva, but after an absence of three years he was again invited to return, and remained in Geneva until his death at the age of fifty-five, in the year 1564.

The "Institutes" are comprised of four great divisions, or books, each being an elaborate treatise upon one of these themes: "Our Knowledge of God as Creator or Sovereign"; "Our Knowledge of God as Redeemer in Christ"; "Participation in the Grace of Christ and the Fruits thereof"; the external means or media being the church and the sacraments, whereby God unites man into and retains him in the fellowship of Christ.

This system is the most rigid and remorseless predestination. The entire scheme is based upon the idea of the absolute supremacy of the will of God. This will, it is reiterated, is not arbitrary, but most wise, and just, and holy. Man is radically corrupt by the fall of Adam, and the human race in consequence bears the guilt and impotence of original sin. Redemption can only be achieved by incarnation and propitiation. The benefits of this redemption can only be secured as the soul is made a participant through electing grace. This electing grace is in accordance with certain eternal decrees of God, and includes only a part of the human race, the rest being left to perdition. Election and perdition are both predestinated in the will of God. A soul once made a participant in this grace can never lose it. The eternal media, the Church and the sacraments, are only the visible signs and seals of the essentially invisible grace. Justification is by faith alone, and that faith is the gift of God.

Such in outlines are the theories worked out in the Institutes. "The work attained immediate fame. It gave unity and vigor to the scattered forces of the Reformation. In polemical astuteness and doctrinal completeness it has never been equalled." It was, and still remains, logically irrefragable. It has been assailed by the strongest and best thinkers. It has been ridiculed and denounced by religionists and infidels alike, yet it remains still the impregnable Gibraltar of orthodox doctrine. Upon it, as a foundation, rests every division of Christendom, the Methodists alone being excepted.

For the purpose of brief statement in discussion, a much shorter outline has been in use. This outline is referred to as the five points of Calvinism, the five points being the most signal or conspicuous doctrines involved in the scheme. These five so-called points are the depravity of the human race; the sovereignty of God; predestination, effective calling, and the perseverance of the saints. There is evidently a misapprehension of the meaning of the term "original sin." Original sin, in Calvin's scheme, is not an inherited or transmitted moral defect. It is not merely depravity. Original sin is the doctrine that every one of us "fell in Adam and sinned with him." As a matter of fact, we are possessed of inherited natures that are depraved; we are morally impotent—that is to say, while our will is free to choose the good, we have no power to choose it, and never will and never can choose it if left to ourselves; but original sin is the doctrine that in our great covenant head, in our federal head, in our representative we did sin; we fell then and there; we disobeyed and broke the covenant of works which we ourselves in our representative had made with Almighty God, and by that act which we committed we passed under the eternal condemnation of God. All men have a nature which is sin, a nature which is guilt, but that is only one of the consequences of our fall. This nature of guilt we have transmitted to ourselves. We are at once both the testator and the inheritor, so were we involved in Adam's transgression.

The doctrine as interpreted by the Calvinists does not require, so they say, the condemnation of infants who died and who were not elected. There have been teachers and preachers who believed it was the logical consequence; but better interpreters, that is the more enlightened—that is to say, the more civilised, that is the least religious, escape the logical consequence in this fashion. They say if the infant is involved in Adam's fall without actual participation, so also may

he be involved in the benefits of Christ's atonement without actual participation by faith. But while they may thus save the infants from hell, yet they want it distinctly understood that every babe rescued from perdition by this wonderful grace of God is rescued as a guilty sinner, deserving an eternal hell; that that babe must be washed in the blood of the Lamb; that that babe Christ died for as much as for the guiltiest, wickedest, the most depraved of men. It seems to me that if men are going to accept a system of logic they ought to accept it, and not admit the heart. Sentiment has no part to play in the doctrine of logic. There are thousands of people, and I am one of them, who cannot read the reasoning of Calvin and find any logical means of saving infants from hell; but it would not be fair to put upon another's belief our own interpretation. Let us give them credit for saying that "hell is not paved with infant skulls."

The doctrine of effectual calling is the theory that man, being not only guilty but morally impotent, and having no power to accept salvation, is constrained to do so by the grace of God. Although Christ died, and the knowledge of his salvation was brought to the attention of men, yet no man of all the earth could, by any possibility, have accepted that salvation. Therefore, it was necessary, in order to make the atonement effectual for those who should be saved, to be effectually called. The difference between effectual calling and non-effectual calling is this: the gospel was to be preached to all mankind; it was to be declared to every creature, but only the elect would accept it. The calling that falls upon heedless ears, the call that you hear, is the work of grace, but not the effectual work, because you do not have the good fortune to be numbered among the elect. When the call of the gospel comes to the elect, their moral impotence, their inability to accept, is overcome by the gracious work of the spirit, who applies to them the efficacy of the atonement. Yet in all this scheme free will is not interfered with. No man is compelled to accept, no man is compelled to resist, the gospel call. Reprobation passing by a man and leaving him for perdition, and effectual calling applying to another the efficacy of the atonement, in no sense affect the free will. All the means employed, all the agencies used with the reprobate heart and the penitent heart—all these have been involved originally in the decrees of him that predestined all in such a manner, in such a wise and gracious manner, as that man's free will is in no sense constrained.

No man can understand the relation of the freedom of the human will and the absolute supremacy of the divine will. The world has never yet produced a scholar capable of adjusting those two wills and leaving one free and the other sovereign and supreme. The Calvinist, instructing the questioner, says that there are difficulties connected with this question, but we must accept and believe with childlike docility what we are told, even though we cannot comprehend it. At last the Calvinist falls back upon the fact that whatever God does is wise and just and good, and when it passes our comprehension there is no argument that he is not wise and just and good. Our duty is to believe and be saved; the judge of all the earth cannot do wrong.

On that last statement I take my stand with the Calvinist; the judge of all the earth cannot do wrong, does not do wrong, never has done wrong. I will go a little further and say that there are thousands of things we cannot understand; but when the Calvinist proposes a scheme which, by any standard of morals, justice, or eternal right, makes the infinite a monster, a fiend, a hideous thing, then I am prepared to deny the whole scheme and relieve God of the miserable libel.

—*Truthseeker* (New York). J. E. ROBERTS.
(To be concluded.)

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. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

Ludicrous Aspects of Immortality.

(Concluded from page 252.)

SOME of the unexpected meetings in heaven will be worth observing—that is, if personal identities and distinguishing peculiarities are retained; and if they are not, we are not ourselves, but fresh creations, like barrels made from old bung-holes. The debtor and his dun, the repentant wife and the pharisaic husband, Saint Dyson and his Eliza, the penitent thief and the detective officer, the saintly bankrupt and the ruined widow (if sufferers from crime are occasionally permitted to enter heaven as well as penitent criminals), redeemed murderers and their victims, or the wives or husbands or children of the victims—surely these will cast strange looks at each other, and intercourse between them will not be of the smoothest.

Jesus said to his Apostles: "I appoint unto you a kingdom.....that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 29, 30). And, after instituting the Lord's supper, he said: "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark xiv. 25; and see also Luke xiv. 15). When the saints come from the "four corners" of the globe and "sit down in the kingdom of God" with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who will serve out the "angels' food" to them, and what will be the general arrangements for the meals? Who will do the menial work? Will the food be so luscious and tempting that some will over-eat themselves and require the doctor's aid? Or will the heavenly stomachs be made of spiritual indiarubber, or be artificial adjuncts like the bag Jack the Giant-Killer had when he defeated the giant at swallowing porridge? Will Solomon occasionally take a little too much of the celestial wine, and talk so unbecomingly that the lady saints will have to leave the table? Will David in his cups begin to dance a little too much in the nude, as he did on earth? Will Samson carry off the gates of heaven after indulging in too much salmon at the Lord's midnight supper? Will Jacob slyly pocket the golden spoons and nutcrackers? And will Judas—for he will be in heaven according to Christ's irrevocable promise (Luke xxii. 26-30)—pop the silver articles into the bag which he perhaps still carries?

Jesus went to heaven bodily "with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature," and "there sitteth" (Article IV. of the Church of England). Christians universally believe in the "resurrection of the body" (see the Apostles' Creed, for instance). Bodies imply bodily wants and bodily functions, or else they have not the properties of bodies, and are only sham bodies or ghosts of bodies. Will the saints still be troubled with toothache and indigestion, and will physicians still be needed? How will wings be affixed when there are no suitable muscles and bony attachments for them? What will cripples and dwarfs and ugly people do with the undesirable bodies which they take to heaven with them and still have to inhabit? Turkish soldiers, it is well known, have a special religious horror of mutilation, as they think they will enter paradise maimed for ever. Will God's images in ebony still remain black, or will negroes be bleached whether they like it or not? The old veteran who left a leg in the Crimea and an arm in India, and fingers and teeth and hair in other countries, will see the scattered pieces disinterring themselves and flying together from all parts of the world. Cannibals who have devoured their ancestors, who in turn devoured theirs, will surely have an awkward time of it when they find themselves redistributed to build up the originals.

Those Christians who say the redeemed have only "spiritual" bodies contradict the Bible and the Church. In denouncing Freethought ridicule of Christian notions which they themselves abandon, but treat tenderly, they justify laughter at the foolish pretensions of the State-supported superstition. When Christian Churches reject the belief in physical resurrection it will be time to blame us for ridiculing a dead doctrine. But we shall ask these spiritual Christians how angels think, or move, or exist. Thinking without brains is as inconceivable as walking without legs. And angels without

thought, without rational faculties, without intelligence, and without eyesight, or hearing, or feeling, or passion, are simply nonentities. They become mere fond beliefs of the vaguest kind—dreams of beings more impossible than centaurs or basilisks. Spiritual bodies are solidified shadows made of a brightness that may be felt.

Do the redeemed wear "spiritual" clothing? Does it require "spiritual" washing in "spiritual" wash-tubs?—for these necessities should follow the first necessity, if it is held a valid one. Our sense of decency will not let us imagine the saints without raiment, and our imaginations refuse to picture immortal man except as faint idealised repetitions of the mortals we know or hear of. To picture them without bodies or physical adjuncts is to picture nothing—to utter words with no realisable meaning.

Of what description will the heavenly "mansions" be which the saints are to inhabit? Will they all be exactly alike, so that there shall be no favoritism or contention? Will each "mansion" be a separate house, or will there be huge blocks like "artisans' dwellings"? Will each family have a suite of rooms, or a house, as the case may be, of a size duly proportioned to the number in family? What kind of furniture and fittings will there be? Will there be sacred harmoniums or hurdy-gurdies for the parlors, and sacred washing-machines for the kitchens, where the family robes can be washed white every week in the blood of the lamb? Inquiries of this kind are not so irrelevant as Christians would maintain. In imagining a heaven, however spiritualised, they can only repeat known realities. Take away *all* the realism, and there is nothing left. A thoroughly spiritualised or de-materialised saint, or god, or paradise, is a nothing. Christians must reverently keep their beliefs vague and unexamined. Inquiry is death to them.

A very ludicrous picture could be drawn of the Christian deity "sitting" everlastingly on an uncushioned golden throne, with the co-eternal Son on his "right hand," and the pigeon-god on the left or side of dishonor—as if co-equal beings could be inferior the one to the other, and as if bodily parts and relations of up and down and right and left had any existence or significance outside material considerations. But the Christian could not see the joke. He is usually far too materialistic to perceive that even the flimsiest angels and gossamer spirits are but lumbering Dutchmen compared with the finer creations of poetic thought and imagination, which, again, are but subtle distillations of vaporous pictures of refined substance and rarefied reality.

Concerning some of these difficulties, the redoubtable Talmage says:—

"You say that 'the human body changes every seven years, and by seventy years of age a man has had ten bodies; in the resurrection which will come up?' You say: 'A man will die, and his body crumble into dust, and that dust be taken up into the life of the vegetable; an animal may eat the vegetable, men eat the animal; in the resurrection that body, distributed in so many directions, how shall it be gathered up?' Have you any more questions of this style to ask? Come on, and ask them. I do not pretend to answer them. I fill back upon the announcement of God's Word: 'All who are in their graves shall come forth.'"

Bombastes Christianoso shows us plainly that the only way to retain belief in bodily resurrection is to put reason on one side altogether, though we may as well, at the same time, go through the form of challenging it to mortal combat in proof of the superiority of our cause. Talmage represents the spirits of the dead as hovering over battlefields and cemeteries awaiting "reunion of body and soul." But some particles have formed parts of many bodies; some, perhaps, even of thousands. What a squabbling and a chattering there must be amongst those hovering spirits in claiming and in fighting for those cosmopolitan particles—those literal bones of contention. Some atoms will have belonged to saints and sinners too, and will have to go both to heaven and to hell; but with God all things are possible, except driving out a tribe of mountaineers who happen to possess iron chariots.

What will be the occupations of the immortals? Twenty-four hours a day of doing nothing would be intolerable. Kneeling and shouting, singing and harp-playing, blowing trumpets, crying out "Alleluia,"

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falling down in company with the four beasts, casting golden crowns upon a glassy sea, sitting on thrones, waving palms, and the other pantomimic occupations mentioned by inspired writers, are usually of an intrinsically childish and unsatisfactory nature. Most people would speedily be tired of such tedious tomfoolery as is depicted in the Bible, and would welcome a day's work as a glorious relief.

Of the ludicrous aspects of belief in immortality outside Christian doctrine, such as the idea of the tuft of hair by which the angels lift true Mohammedans through the air into paradise, a long description might be given, but they would not come home to Christians, who would only see in such caricatures of true religion a proof of the manifest superiority of their own set of absurdities.

W. P. BALL.

Correspondence.

MY OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION.
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Possibly the Spring-cleaning season makes men inclined to assault their dearest friends. It was about this time last year that Mr. Thurlow tried and condemned me in your correspondence columns for the offence of using orthodox terms such as "soul," "religion," etc. And now Mr. Frederick Ryan, while assuring me that I am a very good fellow, and deserve a better fate, suggests that my literary quibbles on the subject of religion will lose me "the respect of clear-headed and straight-thinking people on all sides."

Does Mr. Ryan seriously object to using old words in new senses? If so, he had better indict human language in general. Are we to have a cemetery for obsolete words, with a formal burial-service pronounced over deceased phrases? I am unable to take this mechanical view of words. There are some great words which, like human individualities, are continually changing their significance and function, and yet retain their identity. Such words are "morality," "justice," "religion," and the like. To propose their abolition is like protesting against the irregular outline of the Milky Way.

I challenge Mr. Ryan to supply a better and more expressive word for a certain class of human facts than "religion" or "religious." I have had an ample experience of Christians and Freethinkers. Amongst the professors of both forms of thought I find two distinct types recur—the one is the loyal, consistent, high-purposed, gentlemanly type; the other is the indifferent, careless, loose-purposed, caddish type. There are, of course, many grades between these leading varieties of character. Now, if I want to describe, briefly and convincingly, the nobler of these types—as embodied, let us say, in Savonarola, Milton, and Mazzini on the Theistic side; or Comte, Darwin, and Huxley on the non-Theistic side—I know of no apter method than to say these men had the "religious" spirit. Tell me a finer word, and I will use it.

But Mr. Ryan will say that this is jugglery and quibbling. Well, I quite admit that a man may juggle with the word "religion" just as he may with any other word. I leave other people to defend themselves, but, as Mr. Ryan objects to my use of the word "religion," I have this answer to make:—I am not in the habit of chalking the word up and running away. I employ it in such a context, and in such a tone, that (to the best of my belief) nobody supposes I mean anything except honorable temper, or ethical straightforwardness, or faithfulness to an ideal of a purely human character. The minute section of the world which knows me knows me as an entire Rationalist or Humanist, a complete disbeliever in the Apostles' Creed, a rejector of all forms of Theism or Theosophy. I will do penance by crawling on all-fours all the way from Leicester to Mr. Ryan's door if he will produce an intelligent man who has read my writings and concluded I am a Christian or a Theist. Bishops do not invite me to tea, and church ladies give me no smiles, as they assuredly would if they could discover in me an "infidel" who masqueraded in Christian attire.

I cannot help thinking that there may be superstition in the avoidance of a word as well as in the use of it. We all remember how the ancient Jews feared to utter the sacred name of Yahveh. Mr. Ryan shrinks from calling an honest and kind-hearted Atheist "religious." I feel a little puzzled, and even alarmed, at this intellectual attitude. Is the God-idea to be considered a sort of leprosy which taints everything it touches? Are all the words once associated with church-worship and Theistic aspiration to be forbidden? Does Atheism require that we break entirely with the language, as well as the creeds, of the past? I will adopt no such anti-historical anarchism. As a son of the past, and inheritor of its thought, I like to retain those cherished words which embodied the sincerest ideals of my fathers, and which yet are etymologically free from Godism.

F. J. GOULD.

"MR. AKED AND VOLTAIRE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Apropos of your notes in last week's issue, commenting on Mr. Aked claiming Voltaire as a Christian, may I be allowed to point out the kind of Christian Mr. Aked is? He is the minister of Pembroke Baptist Chapel, Liverpool, and is, without a doubt, the most outspoken man in any pulpit in the world. He calls himself a Christian, but there is not a single dogma of orthodox Christianity that he believes in. He created a great sensation a few years ago by giving two Sunday evening lectures on "Eternal Punishment."

In those two lectures he denounced the dogma of hell with an energy of an Ingersoll or a Bradlaugh. Christendom was shocked, indeed, as he declared he would not own such a God for his slave as the God of the orthodox hell.

Later he published a book entitled *Changing Creeds and Social Struggles*. In that book he repudiates the Trinity, he pulls the Bible all to pieces, he resets the dogma of Atonement, and in a chapter ingeniously entitled "The Limitations of our Lord's Knowledge" charges Jesus Christ himself with ignorance. Only last week, at Dewsbury, before a gathering of Sunday-school teachers, he created consternation by attacking the Bible right and left, called the Book of Esther an atrociously bad book, poured ridicule on Jonah and the Whale, and generally dropped a regular bombshell in the orthodox camp. It is not surprising that a man like this should call Voltaire a Christian. He will claim Bradlaugh and Ingersoll next, I am certain. Fortunately Mr. Foote is alive, or he would annex him. That such a man should stay in the Christian camp at all is a profound mystery.

He is no Christian. Unitarianism or Theism is his proper home; and Theism leads to Freethought. I know that no one would deny this more vigorously than Mr. Aked himself, but it is true nevertheless.

A. E. ELDERKIN.

Predestination.

By the hoof of the wild goat uptossed,
From the cliff where she lay in the sun,
Fell the stone
To the tarn where the daylight is lost;
So she fell from the light of the sun
And alone.

Now the fall was ordained from the first,
With the goat and the cliff and the tarn,
But the stone
Knows only her life is accurst
As she sinks in the depth of the tarn,
And alone.

O thou who hast builded the world!
O thou who hast lighted the sun!
O thou who hast darkened the tarn!
Judge thou
The sin of the stone that was hurled
By the goat from the light of the sun
As she sinks in the mire of the tarn,
Even now, even now, even now!

—Rudyard Kipling.

"Bruddren and sistahs," sternly said old Parson Woolimon, after the collection had been taken up on a recent Sabbath morning, "before de hat was done parsed I expounded de request dat de congregation contribute accawdin' to deir means, and I sho expectorated dat yo' all would chip in magnanimously. But now, upon examinin' de collection, I finds dat de concocted amount contributed by de whole entire posse ob yo' am only de significant and pusillanimous sum of sixty-free cents. And at dis junction dar ain't no 'casion for yo' all to look at Brudder Slewfoot, what done circumambulated de hat around, in no such auspicious manner; fo', in de fust place, Brudder Slewfoot ain't dat kind of a man; and, in de second place, I done watched him like a hawk all de time muhself. No, sixty-free cents was all dat was flung in; and I dess wants to say dat, in my humble opinion, instead ob contributin' accawdin' to yo' means, yo' all contributed accawdin' to yo' meanness. De choir will now favor us wid deir reg'lar melodiousness."—*Harper's Bazaar*.

In Cripple Creek a sturdy miner drove up to the minister's house with a young woman, to whom he desired to be married. When the ceremony was concluded, and the minister's fee came up, the happy man discovered that he had left his money in his other trousers. "What's your usual fee?" he asked. "Sometimes we get two dollars, sometimes five dollars," said the parson. "Then ther ain't no usual about it," decided the happy man, quickly adding: "Tell ye what I'll do, mister; I'll gamble with yer. I'll wait a year, an' if this pans out O K I'll give ye ten dollars, an' if it doan't —" He smiled.—*San Francisco Wave*.

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, Charles Watts, "Emancipation of Human Thought."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, J. M. Robertson, "The Jesus Myth."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 12, Meeting at the Bradlaugh Club to make final arrangements for open-air propaganda.

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

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Bradlaughism."

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, F. A. Davies, "Why we Reject Christianity."

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, H. Hunter.

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

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Where will you Spend Eternity?"

WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, E. Leggatt.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, Mr. Heaford.

COUNTRY

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): H. Percy Ward—7, "The Coming School Board Fight." At 11 (in the Bull Ring), "Can we Follow Jesus?"

CARDIFF (Swiss Hall, Queen-street): C. Cohen—11, "The Benefits of Unbelief"; 3, "Darwin, Darwinism, and Christianity"; 7, "Is there a God?"

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School: 7, Harry Hunter, "Who are the Christians?"

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—D. Black; 6.30, A. McGregor, "The Happy Land."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote—11, "Blessed be ye Poor"; 3, "The Lord of Hosts and the Prince of Peace"; 7, "Is Dr. Mivart in Hell?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, L. Small, B.Sc., "Latter-day Christianity."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (1 Grainger-street): 3, Members' Meeting. SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Lecture or reading—see Saturday's local papers.

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

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—April 29, Cardiff. May 6, m., Ridley-road, Dalston; a., Victoria Park; e., West Ham. 13, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., West Ham. 20, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., West Ham.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—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 29, Birmingham. May 20, Birmingham. 27, Northampton. June 10, Birmingham. 17, Northampton. July 1, Birmingham. 15, Northampton. 22, Birmingham.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—April 29, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park. May 6, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 13, m., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 20, a., Peckham Rye; e., Brockwell Park. 27, m., Westminster.

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