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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 19.

SUNDAY, MAY 13, 1900.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

God's Hand.

THE reader must not suppose that we are very conversant with this part of the divine anatomy. Our knowledge of gods, from head to foot, is extremely limited; in fact, it amounts—as Carlyle would say—accurately to nothing. We hear what we are told, and we see what we read. That is all the information we possess. You perceive we get it at second-hand, and our informants got it at second-hand too, so there is precious little real knowledge on both sides. But this great difference is to be noted. We admit *our* ignorance, but the other gentlemen don't admit *theirs*. The clergy, in particular, profess to be very intimate with God. They talk about him—to use Matthew Arnold's language—as though he were a man living in the next street, with whom they occasionally had the honor of dining. They tell us when he is unusually active, and when he is going to do something very striking in the immediate future. They speak of his wrath and his mercy, his expectations and his regrets; in short, they depict him like themselves, only more so, and a great deal bigger. Which is quite excruciatingly funny; for, if there be a God, the creator, sustainer, and governor of this illimitable universe, with its countless constellations and its awful depths of space, it is the height of absurdity to compare him in any way with the average clergyman, or even with the most distinguished members of the clerical profession. Indeed, the Bible itself, in one of its lucid intervals, plainly tells them that his ways are not as their ways, nor his thoughts as their thoughts; and that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is he above their reach and beyond their conception.

But the reader will ask what is our reason for writing about God's hand at all, seeing that we know nothing about it. Well, it is this way. We were reading the report of the annual meeting of the Congregational Union, at which the great—yea, thrice great—Dr. Parker was for the second time elected President; and we noticed that one of the principal speakers, the Rev. J. Guinness Rogers, had something to say in introducing a motion congratulating the Prince of Wales on his escape from assassination. This reverend gentleman solemnly declared that Albert Edward's safety was due to "the hand of God"—an expression which had already been used by the Prince himself in the same connection. All the Congregational men of God present seemed to share the same view; at any rate, they raised no objection to it, and the theology and the motion were allowed to pass together.

Now what were the facts? A poor silly lad, who, if he belonged to a well-to-do family, would still be at school, being perverted by bad company, and having his weak head turned by anarchist theories which often upset the equilibrium of his elders, got a rotten old half-toy pistol that was just as likely to hurt him as anybody else, and took a hurried shot at the Prince of Wales. It does not appear that he had been practising

as a marksman, and as he was naturally in an excited condition it is not at all wonderful that he missed his mark. Some of the best shots in pistol galleries have been known, when fighting a duel, to fire amazingly wide of their opponents. The state of the nerves counts on such occasions, and a small deflection of the pistol barrel makes a tremendous difference in the direction of the bullet; so much so, indeed, that the seconds take remarkably good care to place themselves out of danger. Considering these facts, then, it is far from surprising that the Prince of Wales was not hit. There does not seem any room for a miracle in the case. But pious people are fond of a miracle, and the clergy love it—for professional reasons. Their creed is miraculous, and they themselves are miraculous, in as far as they are called of the Lord and ordained of the Holy Ghost; and the finding of a miracle in the world at large is a sort of friendly lift to their own trade, by familiarising the public with the idea which is of the very essence of priestcraft. It is not astonishing, therefore, that the clergy should make the most of the Prince of Wales's "miraculous" or "providential" escape. The game is one for him and two for themselves.

But let us reason a little on this matter. Why, in the first place, was God so anxious about the Prince of Wales? We do not wish to disparage Albert Edward, who is at least pretty free from cant and hypocrisy. Still, we venture to think that there are many lives, quite as precious as his own, which the Lord never interposes to save from destruction. Sometimes the hard-working bread-winner of a large family is dreadfully injured in an unforeseeable accident, and is brought home a mere heap of mangled, dying flesh. Why did not the Lord intervene in that case? Why did he leave the poor wife and children to misery and destitution?

Why, in the next place, did God go so clumsily to work? Why did he not begin a little sooner? Why did he wait until the silly young assassin was pulling the trigger of his pistol? Perhaps it was theatrical to wait until then, but was it wise, was it just, was it humane? It would have been just as easy, and much more sensible, to stop the foolish lad at an earlier stage of his career. One miracle is as easy as another, and the Lord might have drawn the cartridges, or taken away the revolver, or (better still) inspired the silly fellow with a little common sense. But somehow or other the Lord never goes to work in that way. He generally comes in at the top of the mischief, and sometimes when it is consummated; thus showing himself, not an almighty all-wise being, but an almighty bungler.

Do the clergy really mean that God diverted the bullet fired by that Belgian boy at the Prince of Wales? If so, will they kindly tell us why he did not divert Guiteau's bullet which slew President Garfield? And why he did not turn aside the knife that was thrust to the heart of President Carnot? Are we to understand that God protects Princes, but lets Presidents die?

G. W. FOOTE

Labor and Christianity.

THE various and divergent professors of Christianity, from the "rational" believer to the members of the Salvation Army, entertain most absurd and fallacious notions in reference to the character of Christ and the influence of his faith upon human affairs. We can understand a free-and-easy orthodox adherent accepting the traditional view of Jesus, but we cannot conceive how those who consider themselves emancipated from the shackles of old theological creeds and dogmas can be deluded by the false claims urged on behalf of the hero of the Christian faith. These professed enthusiastic admirers of Christ have no more basis for their admiration than have the poor unlettered devotees for their fanatical worship of the founder of Christianity. Yet these persons, who flatter themselves that they have outgrown the fanaticism of orthodoxy, indulge in delusions equally as conspicuous as regards the personality of Christ and the influence of his teachings as those indulged in by their creed-bound co-religionists. They set him up as an ideal, although they are quite incapable of regulating their conduct by such a standard. Such persons appear to be ignorant of the fact that, if the better parts of an ideal are marred by that which is erroneous and impracticable, it is comparatively useless as a guide in daily life. That the teachings ascribed to Christ are so marred is evident from their inadequacy to satisfy the progressive demands of the present age. Take, for instance, the cultivation of the intellect, the extension of physical and mental freedom, the recognition and the application of the principle of justice and liberty to all members of the community, regardless of their belief or non-belief in theology, the knowledge and application of science and art, the organisation of labor, the proper cultivation of the soil, the possession of political power, the understanding of the true value and use of wealth, and, finally, the persistent study of, and the constant struggling against, the numerous evils, wrongs, and injustice that now rob life of its comforts and real worth. These are the agencies that all men, who claim to be political and social reformers, should support and cultivate. Not one of these originated with Jesus, and throughout his career he never availed himself of these essentials of all progress. Thus, to designate him as the great social regenerator is entirely unjustifiable. His very mode of living was the opposite to that of a practical reformer. He was an ascetic, and avoided as much as possible the turmoil of public life, from which he might have learnt something of what was necessary to adjust the social relations. Prayer, not work, was his habit.

The truth of the above observations has just been forcibly illustrated by the remarks of Mr. A. E. Fletcher, late editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, which appeared in the *Ethical World* of April 28, in reference to "The Festival of Labor" held last week at the Crystal Palace. Mr. Fletcher is an exponent of what is termed "New Christianity." Judging from his remarks upon this event, the "new" faith is no more accurate nor reasonable than the old. Here are his words:—

"Crowns, with one exception, have been the cause of most of the blood and agony and tears that have made a tragedy of the world's history. The exception was a crown of thorns worn by him who said: 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' The doctrines taught, or retaught, by the young workman of Nazareth have inspired every movement made since his day for helping mankind to mark a degree higher on the scale of existence. The difference between the two great movements of our own time—namely, the Capitalist Movement and the Labor Movement—lies in the fact that the inspirers of the one reverse Christ's teaching, while the inspirers of the other seek to carry it out. The capitalists are backed by professional pulpites, who wrest that teaching to their own damnation; and the labor men are backed by those who, even if scorning all profession of Churchianity, are yet the best of Christians, because self-sacrifice, not self-seeking, is their ideal."

It appears to us astonishing how anyone who is supposed to be free from theological restraints could write thus. What is here stated is the very opposite of fact. It is evident that the habit of paltering in religious matters has not ceased. It is the height of folly to set Christ up as being the greatest example to follow upon

the labor question. His advice was, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth." Hence he and his mendicant followers engaged in no industrial pursuits. He did nothing to develop the resources of the country and to provide employment for the poor; all his efforts were directed to the unhinging of industry, the diminution of wealth, and the promotion of universal idleness and beggary. It was no part of his endeavor to see the peasant and the artisan better remunerated and more comfortably housed, for he despised domestic comforts as much as Diogenes did, and believed that the enjoyment of them would disqualify people from obtaining the everlasting pleasures of Paradise. If a provident working man in Christ's time had managed to save enough for a few months' subsistence, he would, no doubt, have been classed with the covetous rich, and Jesus would have required him to give his "possessions" away as the indispensable condition of discipleship. The truth is Christ was a religious enthusiast, and not a practical reformer of the evils and wrongs of society. He made no attempt to rescue the land from the control of the Romans, who held it from the people, very much in the same way as landholders do now; he rendered no aid to the laborers of Rome, who in his day were resisting the injustice of the capitalists; he did not deliver his brethren of "the royal house" from the foreign rulers; and he did not even redeem the Jews from their social misfortunes. Instead of recommending labor, he counselled trusting to God for the necessities of life. His sayings were:—

"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek), for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first righteousness and the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

We entirely dispute the claim which Mr. Fletcher puts forward on behalf of Christ. True, he only gives assertions, and the question is, Are the assertions based on fact? We allege that they are not, and we should be pleased to know what evidence he has to support his allegation. His contention is that "the young workman of Nazareth has inspired every movement made since his day for helping mankind to mark a degree higher on the scale of existence." Not a particle of evidence is adduced in support of this bold statement. Will Mr. Fletcher inform us what inspiration Christ ever gave to promote self-dependence, intellectual cultivation, mental freedom, education, the advancement of science, or the removal of poverty? Did not "the young workman of Nazareth" show an utter disregard of all these movements? Did he not plainly state that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he was not of the world? Was not his teaching, "Blessed be ye poor," "Woe unto you that are rich"? Does Mr. Fletcher believe this is so? If he departed on a mission of propaganda in favor of peace, or the "new Christianity," would he start, as Christ advised, without scrip, money, or purse, and beg his way through the world? We think not.

As Christ's social teachings were defective, so were his political views. We are told that on finding a coin of the realm bearing the superscription of Cæsar, he declared that both Cæsar and God were to have their due. The very pertinent question put to him by his disciples afforded a good opportunity for some sound advice to be given by Jesus upon the political subjection in which the people to whom Christ was talking were

living. They were in bondage to a foreign power, and were anxious to know if it were "lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not." Instead of returning a clear and intelligible answer, Jesus replied in words which were evasive and meaningless, so far as the information sought for was concerned. If he had any desire to alter the then existing political relations, or to suggest any improvement, he might have given a practical lesson upon the duties and obligations of the ruled to the rulers. Thus it will be seen that Christ did nothing during his whole life to destroy the crowns which Mr. Fletcher states were "the cause of the blood and agony and tears that have made a tragedy of the world's history." On the contrary, he taught "resist not evil," and recognised submission to the powers that be as a duty incumbent upon his followers. Where, we ask, is the proof that the "crown of thorns" worn by Jesus was the "exception" to other crowns? The exclusive and persecuting spirit taught by Christ has caused untold agony among all circles of the community; while his doctrine of future punishments, and his advice to husbands to forsake their wives, and to children to leave their parents, have caused bitter tears to be shed in many families. Moreover, under the rule of those who accepted the "crown of thorns" as a symbol of their faith, more blood has been spilt, and more lives lost, than from the influence of all the other crowns in the world's history.

Even to insinuate that Christ manifested any sympathy for a labor movement, as that organisation is now understood, appears to us to be completely unjustifiable. The justice of the labor movement cannot be advanced by any appeal to Jesus, who inaugurated a system of relief to be obtained from heaven, or through begging, or through the division of the property of converts. It is clear to most of us that even the communism of the primitive Christians would fail to solve the labor problem of our time. Besides, it would be useless to seek support for the improvement of our modern industrial system from one like Christ, who gave no indication that he was at all acquainted with the necessities of modern life. If the evolution of the industrial system depends upon the carrying out of the teachings of Jesus, it is in a worse condition than we thought possible. It is only since the followers of Christ have been largely deprived of the control of labor that any marked improvement has taken place in the relationship of Capital and Labor. For ages the Church prevented any proper adjustment of these two great social forces, by teaching the doctrine of submission and obedience "taught or retaught by the young workman of Nazareth."

CHARLES WATTS.

The Old Testament.

NEW VIEWS AND THE KENOSIS THEORY.

By some process, which is not at all intelligible, a large number of modern Christians seem to have arrived at the conclusion that in no way are they compelled to accept or defend the historical accuracy or the alleged inspiration of the Old Testament.

In light and airy fashion they disclaim any concern as to whether, from these two points of view, more than one-half of the Bible is fiction or fact. They profess to be undisturbed by any *exposé* of the "mistakes of Moses." They cast Moses overboard with as little compunction as the sailors pitched Jonah into the sea. They are ready to admit, almost before they are challenged, that the Pentateuch is full of error, that the patriarchs and the prophets and the kings of Israel, including David, were no better than they should be, that the Hebrew records of God's dealings with men are not to be implicitly relied on, and they claim that, in common with present-day Rationalists, Christians are at perfect liberty to reject as much as they please from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Malachi.

To this class of so-called Christians Bishop Blomfield applies, in his work on *The Old Testament and the New Criticism*, the following illustration by Professor Salmon: "There are some living beings of low organisation which

it is hard to kill, because, when you lay hold of one of them, the creature will leave half its body in your hands, and walk off without suffering any apparent inconvenience."

These Christians are fully prepared to discard the Old Testament as an authoritative part of revelation. They pin their faith to the New Testament, and to that alone. Freethinkers who trouble themselves to attack the Old Testament are said to be merely wasting their time. Their criticism of that collection of books, though true and just, has little else than an academic interest. There are spiritual lessons in the old Hebrew books, and there are poetry and prayers and meditations which are stimulating to the soul. But from any discussion as to the credibility of Old Testament narratives, or the morality of Jahveh's commands, or the performances of his peculiar favorites, these modern Christians desire to be excused.

This attitude is more than a little curious. It is a sign of the times, and of the desire to discard rotten, ragged, and mouldy "old clo'." There is more than this: we discern in it the long-delayed, but inevitable, result of the labors of Voltaire and Paine. They, more than any heretical writers in the history of Freethought, set the ball of Old Testament criticism vigorously rolling. The modern Christians, who pride themselves upon being so much "advanced," are indebted, in the first instance, for their enlightenment to these active assailants of Bible-worship generations ago. They prepared the way for Wellhausen and Kuenen, and, in our own country, for Dr. Driver and Canon Cheyne. The great regret is that Voltaire and Paine are past all possibility of witnessing the outcome of their work. But they are immortal in the sense that their memory is ever green, and their self-sacrificing efforts are constantly bearing fruit. This is the real immortality. In contradistinction, what is there in the mere living through an uneventful and comparatively useless life in this world, and then desiring to continue the same kind of thing in a life hereafter?

Modern criticism of the Old Testament reaches much farther in its effects than the orthodox are willing to admit. Critics have gone beyond the point of analysing the different books with a view of fixing their dates and authorship. Their conclusions on these points necessitate an abandonment of many old and accepted notions. But there is much more behind. The vital effect of the new criticism is fully recognised by Bishop Blomfield, who, in his before-mentioned work, says:—

"It is the very substance of the books themselves that is attacked, as being spurious, legendary, unhistorical, valueless—late and untrustworthy accounts of things that never happened, or misrepresentations of things that actually happened. It is needful to press this point, because many who have some acquaintance with the general tendency of modern 'scientific criticism' do not seem to realise the gravity of the questions at issue. And so excellent men go on writing good little books, or delivering sermons or lectures in which they talk about the untenableness of 'verbal inspiration' and about 'recognising the human element' in Holy Scripture, and about not being disturbed or alarmed when mistakes in chronology, exaggeration of numbers, or errors in fact, are discovered in the Old Testament; and all the while they cannot, or will not, see that it is not about the *inspiration* of the books, but about their veracity and credibility, that the real conflict is being waged. It is not the human element, but a very different thing, the mythical, fabulous, unhistorical element, which we are told we must recognise fully, or pay the penalty of being regarded as purblind obscurantists, obsolete survivors of an impossible faith."

The new critics, with their latest and most elaborate examinations and analytical expositions of the text, have, after all, arrived simply at the conclusions of Voltaire and Paine. They have made it clear that the Old Testament is *not* the "Word of God." Dr. Driver, in his *Sermons on Subjects Connected with the Old Testament*, informs us that "the common use of the expression 'Word of God,' as a term descriptive of the entire Bible, may sometimes give rise to misunderstanding. Especially in dealing with persons of limited education, it would be judicious to exercise some reserve in the use of the term, and to prefer modes of expression which, while not less just to fact, might be less open to misconception." He thinks it better that the expression, when used at all, should be

accompanied by some suitable qualification such as "the Word of God, mediated by a human agency."

Mediated by a human agency! What devil's tricks may not have been played with the word of God in the course of this mediation? Wellhausen's view of the early part of the Old Testament is summarised by Bishop Blomfield as follows: Under the leadership of Moses, a rude but able chief, an uncivilised horde, calling themselves descendants of Abraham, migrated from Egypt to Palestine some thirteen centuries before the Christian era. They brought with them no arts, no laws, no literature, no religion superior to that of the Canaanites, among whom they tried to establish themselves. A tribal deity, worshipped under the form of a young bull, was the object of their *cultus*; a few rude festivals, connected with agriculture and the fruits of the earth, formed the whole of their ritual. In the four centuries following, the prophets introduced monotheism; but at the end of that time "the Law" was not to be found, for the simple reason that it did not exist! What is preserved is merely by way of tradition.

Of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament the Jews possess no tradition worthy of credence. They have nothing but vague and uncertain reminiscences, intermingled with idle speculations. The age and authorship of the books of the Old Testament can be determined (so far as it is possible) only on the basis of the internal evidence supplied by the works themselves. No external evidence exists.

The main point, however, in regard to the now generally adopted views of the Old Testament is their bearing upon Christianity. In the New Testament there is no suggestion that the Old Testament is unhistorical and incredible. Christ himself is represented as alluding to it in full belief in its historical character. He even accepts the story of Jonah and the whale. Why should present-day Christians presume to be superior to Christ? He did not seem to be aware of the conclusions to which the higher critics have now arrived, and in the face of which all the familiar features of the early part of the Old Testament have vanished into thin air. He did not know that Professor Driver would prove that—

"No such beings as Adam or Eve, Cain or Abel, Seth or Enoch, Noah or Methuselah, ever existed. No ark rested on Mount Ararat, for no flood on which that ark could have floated ever happened; no Tower of Babel was ever built or destroyed; no rainbow ever shone on the world as a sign from heaven, for that was impossible to the legendary survivors of an imaginary deluge."

The references by Christ to the Old Testament narratives, and personages render it difficult indeed to understand the position of so-called Christians who regard that collection of books as unauthoritative and uninspired. To meet that difficulty a "Kenosis" theory has been started. It is supposed that ignorance was a part of Christ's humiliation as a man—a phase of the Incarnation—so that he did not know whether he was quoting from fiction or fact! What wretched foolery!

A writer (M.A., Cantab) in the *Church Gazette* effectively disposes of this theory from an orthodox point of view. He says:—

"If our Lord knew future events, He must surely have known past events, seeing that 'without him was not anything made that was made' (John i. 3). Therefore His humiliation did not imply ignorance on His part, so that He did not know whether He was quoting fiction or fact, which that theory would necessitate if carried out to its logical sequel—which is a *reductio ad absurdum*. Then He would not know so much as His ordinary inspired prophets and writers who record such history. That He knew future events, and never lost sight of His Godhead, will be manifest when we consider His remarkable prayer for His elect to the end of time. The only great possible exception to the limit to the knowledge of Christ He mentions Himself, which is recorded in Mark xiii. 32: 'But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.'"

The Kenosis theory may be dismissed as nonsense—a mere subterfuge suggestive only of a combination of clerical and legal intellect "hard put" to find a means of escape. Modern Christians would be glad to get rid of the authority of the Old Testament, but the collection of books remains there, an inseparable part of Divine revelation—authoritatively quoted from by Christ,

and standing or falling with the Bible as a whole. If it was part of Christ's humiliation, according to the Kenosis, to accept the Old Testament, it does not devolve on rational beings to similarly humiliate themselves. Perhaps, as we do not care very much for the Old Testament ourselves, the best thing is to send it to the heathen. It may, with the aid of missionaries and interpreters, appeal to the native intellect, and, at any rate, afford some innocent amusement.

FRANCIS NEALE.

In Answer to Prayer.

TURNING over a lot of books on a penny barrow the other day, I came across a little volume bearing the above title, and published two years ago. The volume was got up very daintily in white and gold, and if the inside had been as satisfactory as the outside was attractive, my purchase might have been considered a bargain. From the point of view of printing and binding the book was cheap for the humble copper; from that of its intellectual value I paid its full worth; while, from a wider outlook still, and judging from the time spent in reading it, I consider I have a fair case for "moral and intellectual" damages against the publishers.

Amongst the ten contributors who are responsible for the 120 pages of printed matter are such well-known names as those of the Rev. Dr. Clifford, the Rev. Dr. Horton, Mr. Hugh Price Hughes, "Ian Maclarett," and Canon Knox Little. Needless to say, they all affirm most solemnly that prayers are answered, and are ready to adduce a number of more or less striking proofs of their assertion. It could hardly be otherwise. Bearing in mind the circumstance that the efficacy of prayer is one of the beliefs by which the clergy live, the question of whether prayers are answered or not seems a pretty safe one to ask. Their testimony can hardly be called unprejudiced, even by the most religious.

There is very little attempt in the volume before me to face any of the legitimate objections to the belief in prayer. The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes confesses that he has never "been able to appreciate the so-called scientific objection to prayer"—a statement which all who know his peculiar type of mind will easily credit. The Bishop of Ripon, with dark profundity, opines that "the least-answered prayer may be the most answered." Canon Knox Little gets slightly more argumentative, and administers a number of little knocks to objectors in the following manner: "It is said God knows already; why tell Him? The same objection would apply to many a request on earth. It is said God foresees; why try to influence what he knows is sure to be? This objection applies to all our actions; to follow out this we should not only not pray, but also never do anything.... Prayer, we must remember, is not to change the holy counsels of the Eternal, but to accomplish those ends for which it is the appointed instrument."

As this is the high-water mark of argumentation touched by the various writers, it may be as well to point out that the objections do not hold with equal strength in both cases, as the Canon supposes. If we make a request of anyone on earth, it is because we often feel that the request may be the determining factor in its being granted. On theistic principles, God already knows what is best for us, and cannot be determined by our requests. In the next place, it does not, by any means, remove a difficulty to point out that the same difficulty exists elsewhere, and as in this case the difficulty of answering the question, "Why do anything at all if the world is governed in accordance with God's will, and if what he wills must come to pass?" is due entirely to the theistic position, it would seem as though here were another reason for dropping the hypothesis altogether.

Dr. Horton has the most picturesque method of all of answering objectors. He believes "it is futile as well as indelicate" to press too closely for evidence of prayer being answered. With charming ingenuousness, he declares: "If you are concerned to disprove my statement, and to show that what I take for the hand of God is merely the cold [why cold?] operation of natural law, I shall only smile." And he is so enraptured with this

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admirable method of disposing of objectors that at the end of his essay he is again smiling, "not scornful or impatient, but full of quiet joy." That is Dr. Horton's method in a nutshell. If an unbeliever points out that there is no clear evidence that prayers are ever answered, that the belief in prayer is part of a vanishing cluster of beliefs, of which miracles and witchcraft are deceased specimens, don't argue with him, simply smile; and if in the intervals of smiling you can rub in a few mis-statements concerning Darwin or Mill, after Mr. Horton's own fashion, your smile may have the effect of impressing the unbeliever with your superior knowledge, when it does not convince him of your intellectual inanity.

One notable feature about the answers to prayer that are given is the extent to which money figures in the petitions. One gentleman, a Scotch preacher, raked in no less than £9,277 as the result of seventeen batches of prayer. An average return of about £1,300 per batch of prayers is calculated to go a considerable distance towards convincing a stubborn generation of the value of this particular form of religious indulgence.

One instance is worth recording for the sake of its dramatic nature. It is told by Canon Knox Little. A clergyman, unnamed, required £40 to meet a bill due to a tradesman for work in connection with a "home." The clergyman was poor. Had it been otherwise, questions might have been asked. Walking one day down Regent-street, a carriage drew up in front of Madame Elise's shop just as he was passing. Out of the carriage stepped a handsomely-dressed lady. She drew an envelope from her pocket, and handed it to him, saying: "You have many calls upon your charity; you will know what to do with that. The envelope contained a Bank of England note for £50. Who she was he did not know, and never since has he heard." One cannot but admire the "unities" of the scene. The poor cleric, the fashionable dressmaker—entering a grocer's shop would not have been near so impressive, and the rich lady who carried £50 notes about in envelopes for the benefit of poor clergymen. Quite dramatic, and so convincing.

Marvellous as this story is, Hugh Price Hughes goes one better. The unknown cleric wanted forty pounds and got fifty. There is too great an air of chance about this to suit the veracious Hughes. He and "his principal colleague" required £1,000 of the Lord by a particular day. The day arrived, and only £990 had been received. Here was a situation! A thousand had been asked for; Hughes and his "principal colleague" had been the petitioners, and there was ten pounds short. "As a theologian," he plaintively remarks, "I was perplexed. We had asked for a thousand pounds; there was a deficiency of ten. I could not understand it." The Lord's credit hung in the balance; he was nearly losing the moral support of the West London Mission. But on returning home he discovered a letter lying in the hall. When opened, "it contained a cheque for £10, bringing up the amount needed for that day to the exact sum which we had named in our midnight prayer meeting." After this there is nothing more to say.

Conversions of one kind or another, in answer to prayer, also figure pretty largely in the narratives. Canon Knox Little supplies a case of an unnamed heretical father who refused to allow his children, varying from seven to twenty years of age, to be baptised. The parson asked a number of devout Christians to make the matter a subject of prayer. They did. "In about three weeks the father called upon this very clergyman, and asked him to baptise his children."

Needless to say, when it comes to conversions Hugh Price Hughes is easily first. One Tuesday night he received a request from the daughter of "an avowed infidel" to pray for her father's conversion. This was, of course, a trifling commission for Hughes. He prayed, and on Friday received news of the father's conversion. He had been on his way to a theatre, and had been driven by a sudden shower of rain to take shelter in a chapel. The preacher had touched his heart, etc., etc., and the thing was all over. How marvellously all things work together! The prospective visit to a theatre, the fall of a sudden shower of rain when near a chapel, with the alteration of all the cosmical forces that determine a rainfall—all were

specially produced to convert this "avowed infidel." The story carries conviction on the face of it; only one wonders why there are not more prayers, or why there are not more conversions.

It would be unfair to Mr. R. F. Horton not to mention his two convincing illustrations of the power of prayer. He was in Norway, boating with a party of ladies and gentlemen. One of the ladies lost her golosh, and, although the whole party hunted for it, it was not found. Thought Horton—these are his own words—"Why not ask our gracious father for guidance.....If the hairs of our head are all numbered, why not also the shoes of our feet?" The result of the prayer was that he rowed back, sprang out, by inspiration, presumably, at a precise spot, "And there lay the shoe before my eyes, obvious, as if it had fallen from heaven!"

The other cases refer to recovery from sickness. Case number one was that of a child that had been given up by the doctor. "We prayed," says Horton, "the Church prayed.....The child recovered, and still lives." As doctors are never mistaken, this instance is specially forceful. Case number two was that of a young girl, also given up by the doctor. But "I proposed that we should kneel down and pray. I asked definitely that she should be restored." This girl also recovered, and is now quite well. There could be no mistake about this last case. It was a "definite" request, and the preacher did not leave the Lord a chance of saying that he misunderstood the petition. Like another preacher in the same volume, he made "the terms of the prayer most explicit," and so shut out all possibility of mistake.

It would be a pity to spoil the reading of these instances of answer to prayer by any moralising on their intellectual value. I will therefore conclude with an anecdote. In a New England village the "good" folk were much disturbed by the presence of an Agnostic, who refused to be turned from the error of his ways by either social censure or argument. During a very dry summer, at the end of three months' drought, it was decided by the elders of the community that a solemn prayer-meeting should be held asking for rain. The meeting was held, prayers were said, and rain followed. Here was a chance! A deputation waited on the Agnostic to point out the benefit of prayer. "Are you quite sure that the rain came because you prayed?" he queried. "Quite sure." "Would not have come without?" "Certainly not," was the reply. "Well," said the hard-headed unbeliever, "it seems to me that you are a mighty mean lot not to have prayed two months ago." C. COHEN.

Boers, Britons, and Bible.

THE following highly interesting correspondence is published in a letter from Johannesburg. It is said to have been exchanged by heliograph between the Boer General De Wet and Commandant Cronje before the latter's capitulation. On February 25, at ten in the morning, President Kruger telegraphed to De Wet, "Inform Cronje that great reinforcements are on the way, and that he will be freed, Psalm, 22, v. 21." (Save me from the lion's mouth; for Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.) Hereupon the following exchange of messages took place between the two Generals in the field:—

"February 25.—12.20 afternoon. De Wet to Cronje: President telegraphs to hold out. Considerable reinforcements are approaching. As soon as they have arrived, we shall attack early in the morning from the north. Psalm 64, v. 7." (But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.)

"February 25.—4.15 afternoon. Cronje to De Wet: My provisions are becoming scarce; for the rest I do not doubt with God's help I shall be able to drive off the enemy to the north. Psalm 20, v. 7." (Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.)

"February 26.—7.20 in the morning. De Wet to Cronje: Reinforcements, it is to be hoped, come to-day. Hold out till to-morrow evening. Are sending provisions as soon as possible. Psalm 59, v. 15." (Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.)

"February 26.—9.30 in morning. Cronje to De Wet: The enemy has received tremendous reinforcements. I am hard pressed. Psalm 3, v. 1." (Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me.)

"February 26.—De Wet to Cronje: The reinforcements are already visible in the distance, but I myself am attacked by superior hostile forces. Psalm 60, v. 1." (O God, Thou hast

cast us off, Thou hast scattered us, Thou hast been displeased ;
O turn Thyself to us again.)

"February 26.—4.10 afternoon. Cronje to De Wet : The bombardment is overwhelming. Heavy losses. The majority of the burghers want me to surrender. Psalm 60, v. 11." (Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man.)

This last-quoted heliogram is said to have been read by the British, who thereupon heliographed to both Generals : "All further opposition on Cronje's side is useless bloodshed. He is surrounded by 70,000 men with 120 guns, and not a single man of his troops will escape alive if he does not surrender at once. Psalm 63, v. 10." (They shall fall by the sword : they shall be a portion for foxes.)

[The above was contributed to the *Daily News* by its Berlin correspondent. We do not know whether there is really any truth in it. Our readers must take it for what it is worth. It is at least amusing.]

The Priests of Prey.

TUNE : "The Vicar of Bray."

IN Good God Jahveh's reeking reign,
When homicide no harm meant,
His agents clothed themselves, for gain,
With blood, as with a garment.

Said they : This law we will maintain
Until we're 'neath the sod, Sir !
That whilst the shekels we can gain
We'll be the vicars of God, Sir !

These Bible, saintly, godly knaves—
The beasts whom Jahveh petted—
Made countless minds and bodies slaves ;
Misdeeds which God abetted.

Said they : This law we will maintain, etc.

This God is but a name to-day
Which people hear on Sunday,
When used by priests to bless the sway
Of gold and Mrs. Grundy.

Say they : This law we will maintain, etc.

Priests still are rich and fat and sleek,
Although they "work" but *one* day ;
They "make" enough for all the week
By telling lies on Sunday.

Say they : This law we will maintain, etc.

The truthful always welcome truth
Wherever they may find it ;
The parsons welcome truth, forsooth !
When Comfort smiles behind it.

Say they : This law we will maintain, etc.

The parsons fail to see the facts
Of anti-Christian thinkers,
Because a stipend counteracts
The light, like blinds and blinkers.

Say they : This law we will maintain, etc.

Priests never say that God takes beer,
And dearly loves to brew it ;
The reason why they don't is clear :
They're never paid to do it.

Say they : This law we will maintain, etc.

Priests, *now*, are curbed by lay police,
Else still like beasts they'd seize us ;
They, *now*, but gently curse and fleece,
And all for love of Jesus !

Say they : This law we will maintain
Until we're 'neath the sod, Sir !
That whilst the shekels we can gain
We'll be the Vicars of God, Sir !

G. L. MACKENZIE.

The Weary.

O happy dead, whom dreamless sleep
Hath wrapt in endless peace and rest,
Ye make no moan, no tears ye weep,
O happy dead.

O'er flint and thorn on Life's long way
To you we come, O only blest !
For rest, rest, rest we weep and pray,
O happy, happy dead.

For rest we pray ; lo, on our knees
We fall to saintly Death, and fain
Would drain his chalice to the lees,
O happy dead.

That we might pillow on Earth's breast
The poor, tired head that aches in vain ;
That we with you might lie and rest,
O happy, happy dead.

C. D. STEPHENS.

Acid Drops.

THE London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews has just held its annual meeting at Exeter Hall, under the blessing of God and the Bishop of London. The Society's income for the past year has been £40,342. There does not appear to have been many converts bagged for the money. The Bishop felt moved to say that success in spiritual work must not be counted by mere numbers ; besides, there were times when periods of non-success were followed by great in-gatherings. We conclude, therefore, that the Society is spending its income—on its officials, and waiting for the great in-gatherings ; that is to say, for the converted Jews.

The Christian Evidence Society has also held its annual meeting, this time at the Mansion House, with Alderman Sir Joseph Savory in the chair. One of the principal speakers was the Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon, who admitted that "a small proportion of unbelief was intellectual," but maintained that most of it was "due to lack of desire to obey"—in other words, to sheer wickedness. We should like to hear whether the Rev. E. L. Engström, the Society's head secretary, is prepared to uphold this view. With regard to the other secretary, the Rev. T. T. Waterman, B.A. (we mustn't forget the B.A., for *he* never does), we have no sort of quarrel with what he said—namely, that the Society "needed imperatively more intelligent qualified specialists as lecturers." Everybody knows that.

Sir Joseph Savory, the chairman, expressed surprise that a Christian Evidence Society was needed at this time of day. "Nineteen hundred years," he said, "ought to have proved the power of Christianity." Well, so they have, Sir Joseph ; and that is why there are so many unbelievers. Christianity is a mighty power for maintaining the supply of *flats*, upon whom so many *sharpers* make a capital living.

Archdeacon Sinclair, another speaker at this C. E. S. annual meeting, said that the Society existed for the "promotion of true Christian thought" in this country. Perhaps it does, but in that case it is so much the worse for true Christian thought. With regard to Christian Evidences, as illustrated by this Society and its advocates, it is, generally speaking, undeniable that they either find a man a blackguard or leave him so. Mr. Engström's attention has often been called to the mental and moral antics of his employees, but he has always shuffled out of the difficulty by means of the paltriest evasions, and we have come to the settled conclusion that he privately sanctions their worst excesses.

The plague is ravaging, as usual, amongst the Mohammedan pilgrims to Mecca. Not that *they* mind it ; they rather like it, for they really believe in heaven, and the plague takes them a day's march nearer home. But the secular authorities have to subject them to quarantine regulations in passing through the Suez Canal. Steamers carrying them are only allowed to advance by day ; at night they are tied up and surrounded by a cordon of armed troops, with instructions to fire if the pilgrims attempt to escape.

America and Germany are joining England in relieving the people of India who are suffering from a terrible famine caused (on Christian theories) by the deliberate neglect of "Providence." No less than 5,474,000 persons are now in receipt of relief. It is pitiful to read of the sufferings of the poor little children.

Lord Kinnaid said a very curious thing about that Indian famine. Speaking at the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, he said : "He would not say much about the famine, except that, while they were trying to help, they should cast themselves upon God in the time of trouble." Why God, if there be a God, has himself *caused* all the trouble, by withholding rain and blighting the crops. Happily the poor starving Hindus have a better resource than casting themselves, or being cast, upon God. Subscriptions are far more useful than divine interposition.

"Is there a God?" was the (reported) exclamation of President Kruger on hearing of the terrible explosion at Begbie's foundry at Johannesburg. If this be true, Oom Paul's faith was shaken, and it *must* have been a tremendous explosion to do that. We do not hear that anybody answered Kruger's question. As a matter of fact, of course, nobody knows whether there is a God or not ; but it looks extremely unlikely, and we fancy the most pious Boers will get a glimpse of this truth before, or after, the war is over. Certainly, if there is a God, he seems to have been com-mandered by the enemy.

The annual festival of the Sons of the Clergy was held on Wednesday afternoon at St. Paul's Cathedral. The sons of the clergy, acknowledged and unacknowledged, must be pretty numerous.

Mr. J. K. Starley, of Barr's Hill, Coventry, is a cycle director. He is also a good Christian. In that capacity he has often wondered why the Hebrew scriptures have invariably been placed before the Christian. To remedy this mischief, he has printed a new Bible with the New Testament first and the Old Testament after it, by which means he hopes the latter will no longer prove "an obstruction to intellectual and spiritual growth." Mr. Starley has considerably favored us with a copy of this novel production. We thank him for it, and we are almost sorry to tell him that it doesn't matter a farthing to us in what order the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are printed. Our religion, like that of the gentleman in the play, is in neither of them, but may be found on the blank page which divides them. Still, we did think that the Old Testament was a *part* of the Christian scriptures. Mr. Starley, however, seems to think otherwise, and we allow him the liberty of his opinion.

The silly season is drawing near, and the ghost of Queen Catherine Howard once more walks Hampton Court. We hardly suppose she is searching for Henry the Eighth, who is probably cuddling his six hundredth spouse in what Mr. Stead calls the borderland.

Primrose League parsons are going it strong. Here is the Rev. C. F. de Salis, rector of Weston-super-Mare, speaking at a Constitutional Club dinner, and giving his ideas on the British Empire. "He believed," the report says, "that where we English people took our Bible and occupied land we did it honestly and for the good of the country and for the better civilisation of the world. Where we occupied land we tried to civilise the people and tried to give them good government, and, above all, to give them the Gospel of Jesus Christ." This is decidedly rich and rare. "Took our Bible and occupied land" is positively delicious. "Give them the Gospel of Jesus Christ" is an equally dainty morsel. It reminds us of "Give them beans," or "Give them fits." And it comes to pretty much the same thing in the end, for we give them Jesus Christ at the muzzle of a rifle and the point of a bayonet; whereupon the missionary rejoices, and his brother the parson at home rubs his hands with joy, and the poor devils who have Jesus Christ "given" to them are buried and forgotten, if they are not claimed in annual reports as converts.

This reverend gentleman stated his own attitude towards the Tory party with refreshing frankness. "He felt," the report says, "that as long as the Constitutional party upheld our Church as the Church of the Establishment and the Church of our country, it might look to her clergy to help her as far as the party wanted help." You scratch me, and I'll scratch you. One good turn deserves another. Honor amongst—well, parsons and Primrose Leaguers.

You can hardly expect Bovril to be in love with Lipton's Extract, or either of them to be in love with Liebig. Nor can you reasonably expect a Church parson to be in love with a Dissenting minister. It was quite natural for Parson de Salis to sneer at the 250 denominations outside his own Church. He objected to being included with them in any compliments or congratulations. Religion means Christianity, and Christianity means Church of Englandism.

This Rev. Charles de Salis, who is a relative of the late Archdeacon Denison, has just had conferred upon him by the Bishop of Bath and Wells one of the three vacant stalls in the Cathedral. We understand now, even better than before, how natural it is that he should love the Primrose League, which stands up for religion and the Established Church.

The late Rev. Dr. John Hall was the minister of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York. A memorial tablet has been placed in the vestibule of the sacred edifice, bearing the text: "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." This is very rough on the deceased, although the sarcasm was, of course, unintentional.

For some time past there have been laments in Church papers as to the remarkable falling off in the number and qualifications of candidates for holy orders. The same kind of thing appears to prevail in the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Gillespie, addressing the Aberdeen Church Synod, said it was a positive disgrace to the Church to leave ministers so poorly paid. C. C. Macdonald stated that young men were not showing the same inclination to enter the divinity halls "on account of ministers being left in almost the condition of absolute poverty."

But then "almost absolute poverty" was the condition of Christ and his Apostles. What more do these young men want? In the Church, as outside, the prizes and plums are for the few. The young Christian student should feel it a distinction that he is entering on an occupation which will secure for him the priceless blessing of everlasting life, though he may be unable to pay his landlady for his weekly washing. The gospel of Christ was never the gospel of the rich. Yet

there is a Pope with untold wealth, and an Archbishop of the Anglican Church with £15,000 a year and two palaces.

Of *Quo Vadis*, as produced at the Adelphi, the *Sunday Sun* observes: "It is hard, no doubt, to put art to the test of the sorrow of humanity, but when we talk about the struggles of the early Christians in Pagan Rome we are entitled to expect something better than a vapid harping on emotionalism, and something more real than the most antiquated impossibilities of melodrama."

Miss Olga Nethersole has entered an action at Washington against one of the "unco guid" who made so much fuss about the play in which she appeared. The defendant is a Presbyterian minister, and she claims from him twenty thousand dollars (£4,000) as damages. He denounced her from the pulpit as a "lewd actress" in her assumption of "Sappho." Other suits will be instituted against papers and preachers who have attacked Miss Nethersole.

A curious craze seems to have seized Joseph Hewitt, stoker, who was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labor at the Central Criminal Court for breaking and entering All Saints' Church, Isleworth, and stealing the communion jug and glass and a bottle of wine. The haul was paltry, and Joseph Hewitt ought to have known better, because he has been convicted several times before of breaking into churches. He was never able to carry much away, for the simple reason that whatever there was worth having the parson already had in his own possession.

Worship in Mafeking seems to have been conducted under difficulties. The church has been partially unroofed, and it was impossible to worship in it during the daytime on account of the shells dropping around it. But church people met on Easter Sunday and prayed for relief in addition to commemorating the Passion and Resurrection. Poor people, they have a lot to thank the Lord and the War Office for!

When Archbishop Trench was Dean of Westminster he delegated Canon Cureton to preach at the Abbey on a certain saint's day. On such days the boys of Westminster School attended service, and after service had the rest of the day as a holiday. While the Canon, on the morning of the day of which he was to officiate, was looking over his sermon at the breakfast-table his son asked, in a tone vibrating with anxiety, "Father, is yours a long sermon to-day?" "No, Jimmy, not very." "But how long? Please tell me." "Well, about twenty minutes, I should say. But why are you so anxious to know?" "Because, father, the boys say they will thrash me awfully if you are more than half-an-hour."

The French evangelical missionaries on the Zambesi River, Egypt, report the baptism of the heir to the throne of the country—Litia, son of Lewanika. He has been a professed Christian, "except for one or two lapses." After these lapses they put him on probation. If he keeps all right henceforth, he will be safe for the kingdom of heaven. But there is not the least evidence that Litia, son of Lewanika, knows anything about the faith he is accepting. It is English, and that is all he knows.

A sergeant-major of the 14th Hussars, writing from Blomfontein, suggests that some of the parcels forwarded by post to the men in front are lost or appropriated because they are labelled "Tobacco, pipes, etc." He says if they were labelled "Tracts" their safe delivery would be ensured.

At Thorpe, Essex, the Rev. Osmond Cookson, vicar of Elmstead, has been fined £6 18s., including costs, for keeping a carriage, male servant, and three dogs without licences. A supervisor of Inland Revenue said the vicar had given the authorities a great amount of trouble.

At Cavendish Church, Manchester, where Dr. Talmage was announced to preach, Dr. Leach intimated that in view of an ill-founded, but prevalent, belief that Dr. Talmage exacted large fees for his work, he desired to say that "Dr. Talmage comes to preach for us here without fee or reward except the luxury of doing good." This may be quite true about his present visit, but when he came to England years ago he exacted large fees, and positively declined to go on the platform until he was paid. At Curzon Hall, in Birmingham, he kept an audience waiting more than half-an-hour because he would have his fee in his pocket before he opened his mouth. The silly people who had paid to hear him were meanwhile singing "Hold the Fort" and other Moody and Sankey hymns.

Here is an amusing echo from one of the May meetings: Lord Chelmsford said that one great difficulty in the path of the missionary lay in the natural propensity of the Zulu to argument. The Zulus are a great talking people, and delight in arguing together for hours at a stretch; and it is extraordinary with what keen interest they will thresh out a subject. It is, therefore, quite conceivable that the missionaries may at times find themselves in very embarrassing

positions. But, still, it seems quite clear that every effort to win these people to become good citizens and good Christians will be amply justified sooner or later.

The Courts are winding up the Woman's Land Syndicate, a fraudulent real estate scheme engineered by Mrs. R. A. Emmons, the wife of a Baptist minister, and secretary of the lecture bureau of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Mrs. Emmons bought some land in Waukegon, Ill., for three hundred dollars per acre, paying one hundred dollars down. She then cut it into lots, which she sold to the Christian Temperance women at from three hundred dollars to six hundred dollars each, or from three thousand dollars to six thousand dollars per acre. She and her confederates thus realised something more than half a million dollars, but never paid the mortgage on the land, which is now being foreclosed. The Christian Temperance women lose all they put in.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A funny thing happened at the Royal Academy banquet. They put up the Archbishop of Canterbury to propose the toast of "Prosperity to the Royal Academy," and the old gentleman frankly stated that he was probably the most ignorant person in regard to art in the whole company. He said that he knew nothing about painting, and couldn't even draw; and that he was now too blind to see pictures at all. It was like choosing a bat or an owl to toast the sunshine.

"The End of Sodom" is the warm title of a play by Suderman, which is being acted in Berlin, after being passed by the Minister of the Interior. This official told the Emperor that he had asked himself "Could I see this with my wife?" The great William suggested another question, "Could I see it with my daughter?" Well, there couldn't be much harm in doing that if she had already perused the delectable story in the Bible on which the play is presumably founded, or by which it was probably suggested.

Emperor William rules by the grace of God. He has just declared that "the consciousness of a task entrusted by God fills the soul of every monarch and prince equally with ourselves." No doubt he includes his good friend Abdul the Damned, who is a monarch anyway, and not a beastly Republican or a disgusting Democrat.

The most interesting meteorological fact about May is the cold spell which almost invariably comes on for three or four days in the middle of the month. In nine years out of ten it is very cold from the 13th to the 19th of the month. This is generally attributed to the interception of the sun's heat by the swarms of meteors through which the earth passes at this time. The real explanation of this "stinging tale of winter," however, is much more interesting, if less scientific. It is all the doing of St. Dunstan, whose day falls on the 19th. According to the legend, St. Dunstan was a brewer, and sold himself to the devil on condition that his Satanic Majesty should blight the apple trees, and so stop the production of cider, the rival drink; the blighting to be accomplished, according to express stipulation, by the 19th. The devil, if all tales of St. Dunstan are true, is sure of his bargain long ago, but he still keeps to his agreement, like a gentleman of his word, and the cold snap at mid-May is his annual redemption of his promise.—*Daily News*.

That enterprising religious showman, the Rev. Wilson Carlile, let the cat clean out of the bag in an interview with a *Daily News* representative. He denied that he imitated the Salvation Army in his conduct of the Church Army, but proceeded to make the following admission: "Here is how we began. We realised that the Salvation Army, all honor to it, was taking away many Church people on account of the Church's want of an Evangelical outlet. So we started our Army." Precisely so. In that sense, at any rate, it was intended as a rival to Booth's organisation. And the same may be said of the Wesleyan West London Mission, and other Nonconformist efforts. The real truth is, that the Salvation Army was chiefly recruited from other Christian bodies, and something had to be done all round to stop the leakage.

President Kruger is a man of one book—the Bible. The following story is told of him by Mr. Hales, the war correspondent who was taken a prisoner by the Boers. Englishmen, Hollanders, Germans, and Boers were met round a camp fire during a shooting expedition, and the conversation turned on great writers. A German praised Goethe, and an Englishman praised Shakespeare, but when Oom Paul's opinion was asked he growled out that he had "Never read either of 'em." He was then asked what the deuce he had read. "Only this," said Oom Paul, pulling a frayed and tattered Bible from his pocket, "and I have not half mastered its glories yet, though I have read it day and night for well nigh forty years. When I have exhausted the Bible, I'll perhaps find time for Shakespeare and Goethe. Tell me, had either of those men more wisdom to teach than I can learn from the Book of Proverbs? Could either of them write such glorious lines as King David, the ancient poet of

the Jews, has left us in his wondrous Book of Psalms! Could either Shakespeare or Goethe have written the Songs of Solomon? If I want to read of hunting, I find it in the Bible; if I want to read of love, where in all the books in all the world is love described so simply, and yet so beautifully, as in the Bible? if I want to read of war or ambition, need I go further than the Bible? if I want an example of patience, can I do better than study the Book of Job? if I feel tempted by a woman, can I learn the folly of such things better than by picturing the mighty Samson shorn of his strength and his eyesight through the treachery of Delilah? Samson alone in the midst of his foes. Do I think of the friendship of man for man? Tell me, you book-worms, where in all the libraries of Europe can I read of anything so well told as the love of David for his friend Jonathan? Can any books teach us a son's duty to his father better than the Bible? What book or books can better guide a man in his duty to his country? Burn nine-tenths of the books in the world to-day, and give each boy and girl a Bible, and the next generation of men and women would be braver and better, more hopeful and courageous, more charitable and thoughtful, more loveable and more content, than the men and women of to-day seem to be."

Oom Paul would evidently make a first-rate Evangelical preacher—that is, if he really does talk in this way. When the war is over, and South Africa is resettled, if the Grand Old Man of the Transvaal is in want of a job he might do worse than go on a preaching tour through Great Britain. He would be sure of big congregations, and no less sure of beating most of our own pious talkee-talkee men hollow.

The *Essex Weekly News* notes that the Grays Free Church Council have addressed a letter to the Urban Authority protesting against a bye-law recently passed which prohibits open-air meetings in the Public Park. It also notes that the same Council have requested that secular music should not be allowed in the Park on Sundays. The Free Churchmen want to preach and pray to their hearts' content in the Park, our contemporary says, and at the same time they want to prevent other people from hearing good music there.

E. Scott, in the *Yarmouth Mercury*, replying to Mr. Headley's strong letter on the misdeeds of Popes and the Catholic Church, has the ignorance or the impudence to say that "the victims of the Inquisition were the victims of the State." The fact is, however, that wherever the Inquisition was established it was in spite of the opposition of the laity and the secular authorities. We advise E. Scott to read history at first-hand before inflicting any further letters on such a subject upon the public of East Anglia.

A Jewish member of the Primrose League writes to the *Westminster Gazette* complaining of the permitted antics of these Church parsons. "I never supposed," he says, "that the purpose of the League was to wage a crusade against the faith of myself and my forefathers." Of course a Jew is an "infidel," and the worst of infidels, for he rejects Christ, and his forefathers crucified Him [capital H please, Mr. Printer, this time, to save the grammar].

What is the matter with the Malthusian League, or rather with the Council, for there seems to be precious little League? Since the Secretary, Mr. W. H. Reynolds, received a cheque for £800 as a legacy from the late Mr. Bonsor, one of the League's best supporters, there has been a curious indisposition to admit members. Mr. Reynolds received that cheque, and we presume he holds it, or what is left of it. This gentleman is a self-made man, and looks the part to perfection. His manners to correspondents are simply porcine. We have seen an acknowledgment by him of a subscription to the League, written on the back of a printed card inviting somebody or other to a public dinner, and without any date, address, or signature. Several persons of late have informed us that they sent a member's subscription to the League as per advertisement, and had the amount returned after the lapse of two or three weeks, with an intimation that the Council declined their application for membership. One of these precious epistles lies before us as we write. The applicant was a lady, and the fact ought to have been obvious even to Mr. Reynolds, as she signed herself "Georgina." But he addresses her as "Mr. G." etc., and doesn't take the trouble to sign his reply! The lady is told that her subscription is returned, and that she cannot be admitted as a member. No reason whatever is assigned; the brutal insult is naked and unashamed. On the whole, we feel moved to put these queries:—(1) Are any members being admitted to the League? and (2) Will any members be admitted until the exchequer needs recruiting?

Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham is said to have come from, is supposed to be the cradle of the Jewish race. Its ruins are to be excavated, probably with a view to finding "cradle" relics. Abraham's rattle or popgun would be decidedly interesting. And it may be found, for the ingenuity of "explorers" is notorious.

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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, May 13, The Athenæum Hall, London, W.C.; 7.30. "Is there a God? An Answer to President Kruger's Question." May 20, Manchester; 27, Athenæum Hall.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—May 19 and 20, Failsworth; 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.

We go to press too early to report Mr. Foote's highly successful meeting at Canning Town on Tuesday. Mr. Cohen was announced, amid cheers, as the lecturer for the next week.

D. BAXTER, newsagent, late of Glasford-street, Glasgow, has removed to 126 Tringate, where he will be happy to supply the Freethinker and other Secular publications to his old customers and any number of new ones. Freethinkers in the district should at once note his change of address.

JAMES NEATE refers to the "large and attentive audience" which Mr. Cohen had in Victoria-park on Sunday afternoon, and the fact that a collection of over £1 was taken up for a member of the Bethnal Green Branch who is seriously ill in the London Hospital, making over £2 in all with the amount collected by the Secretary during the preceding week. We are also informed that there was a record sale of the Freethinker in Victoria-park.

S. BAKER.—Dr. Dillon's Sceptics of the Old Testament is really a very valuable and interesting book. You will find it well worth the investment.

COLLIER LADDIE.—A weekly contents-sheet shall be posted to the newsagent mentioned. Thanks. Mr. Foote is in good health, but very hard-worked and rather weary. Pleased to hear from you as one of his readers. You may take it that not only the Archbishop of Canterbury, but every other Bishop, regards the Creation Story in Genesis as "false" except as "an allegory."

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome and useful.

F. J. GOULD.—Pleased to hear that you are likely to find time to write for the Freethinker again. We are always glad to receive your contributions, as our readers are to peruse them.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Gateshead Friend, 10s.

J. RALSTON.—Pleased to hear that the newsagent, to whom you gave a guarantee for unsold copies, has been able to sell out his supply of the Freethinker. We are sending him a weekly contents-sheet. Many thanks for your trouble in the matter. It is not surprising to learn that you are "quiet" at Motherwell. As you say, the war is absorbing all interest. We are obliged at you for your congratulations, and feel a little red in the face at your compliments.

P. RYAN.—Your letter is inserted this week. We wish you a good time during your holiday in the United States. The Freethinker shall be sent to the address you mention. You say that "the change in premises ought to prove beneficial." Yes, it has proved so already.

INDIGNANT.—Your feelings are natural, but we don't intend to notice the fellow. That is what he is fishing for, and the more we ignore him the madder he gets—which is, at least, diverting. We have not allowed the Freethought Publishing Company to suffer directly by the recent business difficulties, as will duly appear by the annual report. While the Company was marking time it was not losing any capital; no, not so much as a penny.

M. E. PEGG.—Subjects sent. Kindly forward a bill of the lectures. Could you manage to get a press paragraph inserted about the afternoon and evening lectures? It would be worth trying, anyhow.

GEORGE PORTER.—Thanks for your letter. We are keeping a wide-open eye for the tricks of the bigots. We always reckon on these vermin causing us all the annoyance and doing us all the injury possible.

G. F. H. McCUSKEY.—Such cuttings are always welcome. Mr. Foote thinks of visiting the West of England and South Wales in the autumn. Is the Co-operative Hall at Plymouth still available for Sunday lectures?

E. W. QUAY.—Charles Bradlaugh affirmed and took his seat in the House of Commons on July 2, 1880, by virtue of the standing-order carried by Mr. Gladstone on the previous day, and sat there until March, 1881. It was his voting in the House, on this basis, that gave rise to the Newdegate action for the legal penalty of £500. Bradlaugh's Oaths Act passed the House of Commons in December, 1888, and passed unaltered through the House of Lords.

H. PERCY WARD.—We have handed Mr. E. Barreyatt's complaint to Miss Vance, who will attend to it on behalf of the Freethought Publishing Company. Unfortunately, these complaints as to the business at 28 Stonecutter-street are coming in like a flood. The Company will, at least, see that those who have paid for the Freethinker shall receive it, if they will only send particulars. We note your statement that "There is much satisfaction being expressed locally at the new management of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited." Your suggestion re Mr. Joseph Symes is under consideration.

W. COX.—The Liverpool Branch has our best wishes for its new year.

C. D. STEPHENS.—Always pleased to hear from you.

D. FRANKEL.—See paragraph. Let us know if another appeal is necessary.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—The Torch of Reason—World's Advanced Thought—Boston Investigator—New Century—Progressive Thinker—Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper—Sydney Bulletin—Tiverton Gazette—Yarmouth Mercury—The Ethical World—Essex Weekly News—Glasgow Evening Citizen—Illustrated Weekly News—Two Worlds.

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.

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.

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.

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.

LETTERS for the Editor of the Freethinker should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the Athenæum Hall this evening (May 13), and will take for his subject "Is there a God? An Answer to President Kruger's Question." Freethinkers should bring this lecture to the notice of their more orthodox friends and acquaintances.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured in the Athenæum Hall, London, to a very appreciative audience. The heavy rain that fell just before lecturing time interfered somewhat with the attendance. Those, however, present thoroughly enjoyed the review given of "The Freethought Scientists of the Victorian Era." Previous to the lecture Mrs. Charles Watts gave two interesting recitations, which were received with great applause.

Mr. Cohen's open-air lectures were interfered with by the rain on Sunday. We hope he will be more fortunate in this respect to-day (May 13). He lectures in the morning on Clerkenwell-green, and at Finsbury-park in the afternoon. No doubt the local "saints" will rally round him in strength on both occasions.

Mr. Robert Forder is somewhat better in health than he has been for many months. During the past half-year he has been quite unable to attend to his business, and it became absolutely necessary for the Freethought Publishing Company to do its own business in its own premises. Mr. Forder has sent in his resignation as Honorary Secretary of the National Secular Society on the ground of his broken health, but of course he remains a Vice-President, and thus retains his connection with the Society. Probably the honorary secretaryship will be abolished at the approaching Conference. It was only created in order that Mr. Forder, in resigning the paid secretaryship some years ago, might continue to render special service in that way.

Unfortunately, the dislocation of business following on Mr. Forder's breakdown has been very trying. A number of subscribers to the Freethinker have written to the Company this week complaining that they have not received the paper. Their complaints have been attended to, but it would be well if further complainants would state the facts regarding their subscriptions—that is, how long they subscribed for, and the date of commencement.

It has been stated that it will take some time to make up the ground lost by this dislocation of business during the last six months generally, and during the last two or three months

in particular. We are happy to say, however, that a distinct improvement has taken place already, especially in regard to the *Freethinker*, which moved up last week towards its normal circulation. Considering all it has suffered of late, the *Freethinker* may be set down as almost indestructible.

We are making up an entirely fresh list of newsagents who will display a weekly contents-sheet of the *Freethinker* if it is posted to them. Several names and addresses of such newsagents have been forwarded to us during the past three weeks, but we are very anxious to obtain more. Will our friends kindly interest themselves at once in this matter? It is of very great importance to the circulation of the paper, and, therefore (we may say), to the spread of the Freethought movement.

Mr. H. Percy Ward keeps up his activity at Birmingham. In addition to his Freethought labors he has "taken on" a public debate with Mr. G. Tooth, of the Social Democratic Federation, the subject for discussion being, "Can Socialism Benefit the People?" with special reference to the Law of Population. The debate takes place on Sundays, May 13 and 20, in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broadstreet. Mr. A. Scrimshire is to occupy the chair each evening at 7 o'clock.

The Birmingham *Daily Gazette* prints an excellent letter from Mr. H. Percy Ward protesting against the "Liberal" Eight on the Birmingham School Board being called "Secular." He points out that the Liberal Eight advocate Bible-reading in the schools, while Secular education involves the exclusion of all religious teaching whatsoever. With regard to School Board education, Mr. Ward says: "It is the duty of the consistent Secularist to oppose both the Church and the Liberal party."

The Liverpool N. S. S. Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday evening. It was well attended, and with the local resources, and the assistance received from the Secular Society, Limited, the Branch commences the new year free from debt and with an improved prospect in other ways. Mr. Hammond was elected president, Messrs. Rhodes and Degnan vice-presidents, Mr. Shippam treasurer, Mr. Cox secretary, and Messrs. Ross and Small auditors.

The Leicester Secular Society sends us its Report for the year ending April 1, 1900, printed by order of the Committee, priced at one penny, and obtainable at the Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate. It is cheerful and encouraging reading. Everything connected with the Society appears to be progressing. Mr. William Wilber is the new President, in succession to Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, who has retired from the post after twelve years' loyal and invaluable service. Mr. Gimson's interest in the Society remains unabated, and he offers £100 towards the £500 which he proposes to raise for its work in the immediate future. We may add that Mr. Gimson is now Treasurer as well as a vice-president. In September next the Leicester Secular Society will hold a three-days' Bazaar, contributions to which will be thankfully received. We note that Mr. Gould's salary and expenses as Secretary and Organiser are borne by a separate Fund, and do not appear in the Society's balance-sheet. This separate Fund needs to be from £160 to £200 yearly, and we hope it is adequately supported. Mr. Gould is a man of great ability and tireless energy, and the Leicester Secular Society is to be congratulated on having secured his services.

"Without fears, without desires, without ceremonies, he has used sheer reason, and played the philosopher." We agree with the *Daily News* that Voltaire's "fine description of Confucius" has been realised by Mr. Herbert Spencer. "Our great philosopher," as Darwin called him, has just completed his eightieth year. His life, or at least his work, is practically closed. He has earned the admiration of all intellectual men and women, and his name will live in the roll of illustrious thinkers. In spite of his idolaters, however, he is not infallible. Future thinkers will add to his work, and subtract from it, and amend it; for even the greatest of systems is small in comparison with the illimitable universe. But away with reservations and exceptions! Let us end with perfect cordiality, and wish Mr. Herbert Spencer a beautiful, serene sunset to his laborious and noble life.

The Humanitarian League's annual report states that "A large number of the League's pamphlets on 'The Shadow of the Sword' and 'International Arbitration' have been circulated." The first of these two pamphlets was presented to the League by its author, Mr. G. W. Foote.

The N. S. S. Branch's open-air work at Limehouse should be well supported by the local Freethinkers, as there is likely to be more than dialectical opposition offered by the Christian Evidence Brigade. These people boasted of having driven Secularism out of Limehouse, but they have done nothing of the kind, and they must not be allowed to "drive" it out in the worst sense of the word.

The Failsworth Secular Sunday School, whose proceedings are chronicled in another column, has invited Mr. Foote to attend the opening function on Saturday, May 19. "Your presence," the Secretary says, "would be highly esteemed by your Failsworth friends." Mr. Foote has replied that he will be happy to attend if possible. He lectures at Manchester on the Sunday (May 20), and will try to leave London in time to be present at the interesting Failsworth ceremony.

The following circular has been sent by post to a number of Secularists, principally in London: "THE COMING CONFERENCE.—For the first time in eleven years the National Secular Society's Annual Conference will be held in London on Whit-Sunday (June 3, 1900). Delegates from provincial Branches, and many individual members, will come up from all parts of England, Scotland, and Wales; and some of them, perhaps, will never have seen the metropolis before. It would be a graceful thing, therefore, if the London Secularists, particularly, were to provide a Fund for the social entertainment of these provincial visitors, if only in recognition of the hospitality shown to visitors from London at so many provincial Conferences. Such a fund has been sanctioned, at my suggestion, by the N. S. S. Executive; and I now invite subscriptions towards it, which can be sent to me, or to the Secretary (Miss E. M. Vance), or to the Honorary Treasurer (Mr. S. Hartmann). Whatever sums are received will be promptly acknowledged in the *Freethinker*, and deposited in the Treasurer's hands, for ultimate use according to the Executive's determination. Of course the extent of that use will depend upon the response to this appeal. Personally, I should like to see as much as £50 raised. This would enable us to provide our visitors with a dinner on the Sunday, and (say) a drive in brakes around London on the Monday. But this is only a suggestion, and I leave the matter, practically, in the hands of those I am addressing.—G. W. FOOTE (President, N. S. S.), 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C."

This circular was only sent out on Monday, and the following subscriptions were received by Miss Vance, at the N. S. S. office, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, on Tuesday:—George Anderson £10, D. Yule £1, C. Bowman 10s., E. J. Brewster 5s. No doubt a good many subscriptions will come in during the next week. That £50 ought to be made up very easily. What is it amongst so many, if they only put their hands in their pockets, and take out, and give, what they will never miss, and what will help to make this coming Conference not only a glorious but a genial success?

Branches of the National Secular Society should now be making arrangements for representation at the Annual Conference, which is to be held in London on Whit-Sunday. We shall have to write at greater length on this subject next week.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C., on Thursday, May 3; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, S. Hartmann, W. Heaford, W. Leat, B. Munton, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, E. Quay, C. Quinton, V. Roger, F. Schaller, T. Thurlow, C. Watts, T. Wilmot, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. A letter was received from Mr. R. Forder tendering his resignation of the honorary secretaryship in consequence of his failing health, and a resolution was passed accepting the resignation and noting his reference to the Executive's "indulgence and goodwill."

The President reported that arrangements had been made for the business meetings of the Conference to take place at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, W.C., and the evening meeting at the Queen's (minor) Hall, Langham Palace, Regent-street, W.

Messrs. E. W. Quay, W. Leat, and E. Bater were appointed as a Conference Reception Committee, and Messrs. Cohen and Gorniot as the Agenda Committee.

The President was asked to draw up the Annual Report and present to the special meeting which was arranged for Monday, May 14.

The Secretary reported the result of her inquiries re the Annual Excursion, and was instructed to arrange for Margate and Ramsgate with a general tea at the Terrace Hotel (proprietor, Mr. S. Munns).

Mr. Quay moved, and Mr. Hartmann seconded, "That outdoor demonstrations be arranged as early as possible, upon the plan of last year." Carried.

The meeting then adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary.

N.B.—Provincial Branch officials will greatly assist the Secretary by sending names of delegates, etc., and notices of motion for the Agenda immediately.

Woman and Modern Religion.

HER DEBASEMENT UNDER JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

THE Bible and Christian theology are everywhere conspicuous for their sex consciousness. With uniform and unblushing grossness they maintain the distinction, male and female. They rarely rise above the primary animalism. They have doomed religion to perpetual immaturity and bound it to barbarism. They make religion offensive to genius, intolerable to justice, and incapable of art. They sacrifice spirituality upon the altar of sexuality. They constitute a venerable and vicious conspiracy against the freedom and equality of one-half of the human race. They insult and enslave woman and live by robbing her. A man-made Bible, a man-made theology, and a masculine God are the ancient triple alliance against the really divine part of this poor world, its motherhood. There are persons uninformed as to historical facts and strongly prejudiced in favor of traditional religion who honestly and candidly believe that all woman has achieved of elevation and respect in this world she owes to the Christian Bible and the Christian Church.

Within the past generation great progress has been made in finding out the story of the past. Buried cities long forgotten, and even until unearthed unknown, have been brought to light. Pictures, tablets, inscribed stones, brick, architecture, monuments, and symbols have been discovered upon which have been found hints of the life, the customs, the thought, the ambitions, and the ideals of vanished people. From these various sources of knowledge the world has discovered a strange thing. It is that the world once knew a time when woman was regarded as supreme. The word describing that period is matriarchal or mother-rule. In the old monuments found in the buried Egyptian cities the queen alone wears the triple crown. Man's hand in the distant past never placed it upon his own brow. The authority to exercise civil, ecclesiastical, and judicial authority which the triple crown signifies was conferred only upon woman. Man wears the triple crown in the modern age. He is the pope of Rome, but in the ancient age it was the woman alone given that distinction and vested with that authority. In those days, according to the story of the ruins, women traded, bought and sold in the market, while the man devoted himself to the more laborious toil. In the marriage ceremony the man promised obedience to his wife in all things, took her name, and his property passed under her control. It is Professor Wilkinson's statement that the marriage relation was signalised by great contentment and perfect equality. The husband and wife sat in the same double chair in life and rested in the same tomb in death. In China, up to this day, in pagan China, a priestess officiates at the altar where the people worship their ancestral gods. Among the Finns, before the introduction of Christianity, the woman took precedence over the man in the performance of domestic worship. In Germany, before it was converted to Christianity, the office of priestess was common. Since then the women of that Christian state have been reduced to slaves, serfs. All of the ancient peoples recognised a female priesthood, and together with it a feminine God. This is not a peculiarity of climate, or soil, or latitude, or zone. It seems to have been the common thought and practice of the ancients. It is found east and west, north and south.

Among the ancient Scandinavians the women were treated with infinite respect. They sat in all the councils, and when war was to be declared they possessed the veto power. Among that ancient pagan people there was a sense of natural justice that impelled them to allow the mothers to decide whether their sons should be sacrificed upon the grim and reeking altar of war. Among our own Zuni Indians, said to be the oldest aboriginal tribe upon the continent, there was an elaborate system of worship. It was represented externally by seven cities, each one of which had a great temple. If there were more cities, they were grouped into companies of seven. In six of these city temples a man priest officiated and had limited authority within his jurisdiction. In the seventh city there was a high priestess, a woman, who had final authority over all the

other cities and over all other priests. There is a legend that when they were looking for the coming of their Montezuma, their Messiah, their simple Indian Christ; when they were about to perish from the drouth—for they lived in a land where rain never fell—flocks and fields and human life were supplied from the water of three great springs that rarely became exhausted—but in this long and cruel drouth two of them had gone dry and the third was failing. The lives of their flocks, their harvest, their own lives, were dependent upon the maintenance of this spring until there should come the strange subterranean force that replenished them from the hidden sources of the earth. No rain had ever been known to fall. In that time of extremity it was a woman, a maiden, that went out and turned her face towards the east, from which, the tradition said, their deliverer was to come. Their deliverer was the rain. It was the cloud bearing water and bringing health and hope and giving life. This maiden went out and turned her face towards the east. Above her bent the brazen sky without a cloud or sign of rain. While she waited rapt, expectant, and intent, a cloud gathered upon the horizon and slowly ascended to the zenith above her head, and the great drops began to fall. With the impact of the first drop upon her she became with child, and the son born of the Indian virgin came at last to be the deliverer of the people. The legend is so strangely similar in many respects to the world-old and world-wide stories of virgin-born redeemers that it is alike suggestive and full of interest. But it was the woman, the priestess, that stood there beneath the withholding skies waiting for deliverance from the great invisible spirit. Deriving their redeemers from woman, such is the story of all religions. Then degrading woman, such is modern religion.

When the Portuguese discovered Malabar in the fifteenth century, a small country 150 miles long and forty miles wide, lying on the eastern shores of the Indian Ocean, they were astonished to find two things. The first was the opulence of the cities, the advance that had been made in industrial arts, the perfection of the navy, and the refinement of the habits of the people. The other thing was that the affairs of that simple pagan people were entirely under the control and direction of their women. That was in the fifteenth century, at a time when the Christian continent of Europe was in the utmost depths of its Christian degradation, ignorance, superstition, vice, and crime.

The pagan philosophy that recognised the natural superiority of woman must have proceeded in the most rational way. It looked upon her as the mother, the creator, and the preserver of man and of his world. Man knew then as we know now that civilisation began with the mother. All progress in this world is led forward by the divine guide, love. Woman was the lover first; man was the fighter. The fighter never made civilisation; the sword never brought anything into light but blood and suffering, agony and tears. It is the heart that bends and broods, the soul that watches and waits, the spirit that is thrilled and glorified by loving that brings progress to mankind. It is conceded now that the formation of the family was the first step in the progress of civilisation; but the family unit consisted primarily in the relation between mother and child. Marriage, as we use the word, did not exist, and was not known then. The child did not know its father, perhaps the mother did not; but the child knew its mother and the mother knew her child, and when the ancient pagan, half-barbarian mother sat beneath the shade of some booth in the forest and watched and sang in minor key her lullaby to her babe she chanted the first note of this world's progress. It is singular, too, that in this conception of the early pagan time there was a hint—ungessed, unsuspected by them, of course, but a hint—of the discovery that science was some day to make the discovery that the element of femininity pervades all the known worlds; that in the plant as well as in the animal, in the crystal, the rock, the mineral as well as in the plant, this eternal correlation of the two forces exists and is inexorable. I fancy in that distant time the sentiment of the men, the simple reasoning of the simple man that lived in the darkness before the Christian light had come, it may be that the thoughtful among them, those that were capable of being touched by sentiment, looked upon their mother

and said: "But for her I had not been; I am because she is. I slept the strange and mysterious birth-sleep hidden beneath her heart, slowly filling with life, like a moon with silver. She went for me down to the gates of death and smiled through her agony that I might live. When I was helpless and weak and could not walk, her arms were at once my chariot and my couch. When I was ignorant and could not think and did not know, she was thought and providence for me. I slept beneath her loving eyes and wakened in the light of her smile. I had my sustenance from her breast, 'that drifted font where perfect peace finds perfect form.'"

Thinking these things, man, in the long ago, placed upon woman's brow the triple crown, and, looking up to the sky, knowing no higher, no holier name for the nameless one, called God mother.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

J. E. ROBERTS.

(To be continued.)

A New Testament Forgery.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.

If we select the Second Epistle of Peter as an example of a New Testament forgery, it is not because we by any means consider the more important portions of that compilation to be genuine. On the contrary, of the twenty-seven documents included in the New Testament only the first four epistles of Paul were certainly written by the person whose name they bear. We instance the Second Epistle of Peter, both because it has been given up as spurious by many pious Christians, and because, if spurious, there is no other alternative than that of forgery. Either it was written by the Apostle Peter, or it was fraudulently put forward in his name.

In the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which every competent critic admits was certainly not written by Paul, the only forged portion is the superscription declaring it to be "the Epistle of Paul, the Apostle to the Hebrews." But even the orthodox are relinquishing the notion that the titles of their sacred books were dictated by that mysterious individual, the Holy Ghost. The Gospels are professedly *according to*, not *written by*, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. With the Second Epistle of Peter there is no such evasion. The claims of the author to be the Apostle Peter are ostentatiously put forward. It commences by the writer styling himself "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." He declares that he was present with Jesus in the holy mount, and heard a voice from heaven (i. 18). He says: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." Evidently he wishes to be taken for the same person as the author of the first epistle.

That, however, the Second Epistle of Peter is by a totally distinct writer is the conclusion of nearly every critic of eminence. Not only is its genuineness rejected by rationalist critics like Baur, Hilgenfeld, Bleek, Reuss, and Davidson, but also by conservative theologians like Calvin, Grotius, Neander, Weiss, Huther, Abbott, and Farrar. Indeed, Renan says that amongst true critics it has not a single defender. Both matter and manner of the two epistles are utterly unlike. Archdeacon Farrar says: "Independently of this distinctiveness of verbiage, there is a wide difference between the two epistles in the general form of thought. This is a fact too obvious to be denied."* The first epistle is full of Hebraisms,† the second not; the first calls Jesus only Christ, the second continually calls him Lord and Savior; the first dwells on "hope," the second on "knowledge."

Still more decisive are the indications of late date in the second epistle, which Davidson places at about A.D. 170. The similarity with Jude is most striking,‡ and that the latter was the basis is proved by the greater simplicity, naturalness, and spontaneity of those expressions in Jude which are also found in Second

Peter. If Jude borrowed from Second Peter the description of the mockers in chapter ii., he would surely also have borrowed their refutation in chapter iii. 2 Peter ii. 11, "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusations against them before the Lord," is unintelligible without Jude ix., which gives the particular instance of the archangel Michel, who when contending with the Devil about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation. Jude used the phrase "clouds without water," which Second Peter alters to "wells without water." Reuss does not scruple to call the book a palpable plagiarism of Jude. But the plagiarist exposes himself. When Jude exhorted the faithful to be mindful of the words of your apostles, it was in keeping with his character, for Jude was no apostle; but when the writer of Second Peter copied the phrase he betrayed himself to be not of the number. The fact is fraudulently concealed in our version, which reads "us the apostles," while the Revised Version gives the true translation, "your apostles." The author, as Dr. Abbott and Archdeacon Farrar show, was acquainted with the works of Josephus, which were not published till after Peter was said to have been crucified at Rome. The allusions to the heresies are further indications of late date, confirmed by the fact that, whereas all the early documents of the New Testament speak of the second coming of Christ as close at hand, Second Peter says that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The allusion to Brother Paul's epistles as scripture also betrays a post-apostolic age. The Epistle of Peter to James, in which he speaks of Paul as "the enemy," more clearly shows the spirit of primitive Christianity.

The external testimony leads to the same result. The work was unknown to any of the early Fathers. Neither Clement, Barnabas, Ignatius, Polycarp, nor Justin Martyr knows anything about it. Irenaeus (182-200 A.D.), to whom we mainly owe our canon, and who received the Epistle of Clement and the Pastor of Hermas as inspired, ignored Second Peter, mentioning the first "Peter in his epistle" in a way to imply he knew no second. It is not in the Muratorian canon, although that included the Revelation of Peter. Nor is it in the Syriac or the Vetus Itala versions, nor in the Apostolical Constitutions (210), although that work prescribes what books are to be read. Clement of Alexandria, who cites as inspired the Pastor of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, that of Clement, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Egyptians, the Traditions of the Apostle Matthias and other works, does not allude to it, but seems to exclude it by the expression, "Peter in the Epistle." Tertullian (220 A.D.), who cites Barnabas as the author of Hebrews, does not mention it, neither is it known by the other great African Bishop, Cyprian. Canon Westcott admits it does not seem to have been generally known before the end of the third century.*

Origen (250 A.D.), who received the Pastor of Hermas as inspired, says Peter left but one acknowledged epistle. This is tantamount to a denial of the genuineness of the second. In his Greek works Origen speaks of "the epistle and the Catholic epistle" in the singular. It is only in the Latin translation that a reference to the second epistle is found. Eusebius (340 A.D.), in the chapter in which he speaks of the books of the New Testament,† reckons it amongst the *antilegomena* or disputed books, and, as Reuss shows, by "disputed" he means "illegitimate." He says that tradition does not reckon, as a part of the New Testament, the second epistle ascribed to Peter; but that, as in the opinion of most men it is useful, it is much read. Didymus of Alexandria (392 A.D.) says that in his time it was accounted spurious and was not in the canon, and that yet it was publicly read.‡ It was rejected by St. Chrysostom (407 A.D.), who doubtless thereby incurred eternal damnation; and by Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus. Even in the sixth century Cosmas says that only three Catholic epistles, instead of seven, were received. Various councils included it in the canon, and in the Dark Ages it was generally received. At the dawn of the Reformation, however, Erasmus challenged it, and

* *The Early Days of Christianity*, p. 104.

† This by no means proves it the work of Peter. It is extremely unlikely that a Jewish fisherman knew Greek at all.

‡ Compare especially chap. ii.

* *On the Canon*, p. 245.

† *Ecclesiastical History*, book iii., chap. 23; also *ibid*, chap. 2.

‡ Westcott, p. 416.

a succession of critics have confirmed the objections to it which in Dr. Schaff's orthodox *Encyclopædia of Theology* are acknowledged to be solid. These facts ministers carefully conceal from their congregations lest they should unsettle their faith, for any investigation into the claims of the work not only shows that the Holy Ghost has failed to guide the Church into all truth, but that the Church has received, and teaches as the Word of God, a deliberate forgery.

Failsworth Secular Sunday School.

The extensive alterations, renovations, and additions, which have been in progress at this school during the last nine months, are now practically completed; and arrangements are being made for the opening ceremony, which will take place on Saturday, May 19, followed by a Tea Party and Social; and on Sunday two services will be held, when Mr. Charles Watts will deliver two addresses.

- The additions to the buildings comprise:—
- (a) An extension to main hall of a stage thirty feet wide by eighteen feet deep, with proscenium opening twenty feet, six inches wide by fourteen feet high, cased round with pannelled pitch pine facing with an extended platform four feet in front of proscenium; with steps on each side.
 - (b) A class-room for ladies, nineteen feet by thirteen feet six inches, with inside lavatory and outside lavatory for general congregation, and with vestibule giving access to platform and to cellar.
 - (c) A class-room for gentlemen, nineteen feet by twenty feet, with similar accommodation.
 - (d) Basement utilised for stokery, kitchen, etc., fitted with fire place, hot-water boiler, sinks, etc.

The whole of the works have been executed from plans, specifications, and drawings by Mr. Lerner Sugden, F.B., I.B.A., of Leek, Staffordshire, assisted by a committee of the school.

The contractors for the various works are:—For building works, Mr. Jonathan Partington, Middleton Junction, near Oldham. Plumbing and sanitary works, Mr. G. H. Coop, Ashton-under-Lyne. Heating apparatus, Messrs. Saunders and Taylor, Limited, Manchester. Decorations to old part of building, Mr. Robert Jackson, Failsworth. The cost of the entire alterations and additions will be somewhere about £250, about one-half of which has already been raised. The Committee hope, by the further help of friends and the general public, to clear the remaining balance within the next few years.

The new buildings will be opened by S. A. Gimson, Esq., of Leicester, on Saturday, May 19, at 3.45, assisted by other influential gentlemen, and the Committee cordially invite, and hope to see, a large number of friends from a distance.

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 The "Savior" seldom saw a single sou;
 The regions where damned souls for water pant you are
 Now steering for, if Holy Writ is true.

No feather-bed, or other bed, to lie upon
 Had Christ, the homeless tramp of Galilee;
 A pillow Jesus never cast an eye upon,
 Nowhere to lay His weary head had He.
 He seldom ate enough to feed a fly upon,
 And often not enough to feed a flea;
 And, finally, a cross He had to die upon,
 Was cut off at the age of thirty-three.

You ride about in arms-embazoned carriages,
 While homeless Jesus had to "pad the hoof";
 Your suites of rooms outshine, most likely "Claridge's,"
 That mansion in the west for men of "oof."
 You don't drink wine, 'tis true, but Christ at marriages
 Created some—in "John" you'll find the proof;
 Your conduct's therefore wrong, for it disparages
 Christ's conduct 'neath the Cana people's roof.

Enough to give a thinking man the hump it is
 To see the way you scorn the Christ you "puff";
 Enough to send a sane man off his chump it is
 To hear or read your pulpiteering stuff;
 Inspired as the water from a pump it is,
 As heavy as a sailor's "spotted duff";
 Far worse than that of Christ when "on the stump" it is—
 And some of that, God knows, was bad enough.

O Cantuar, your situation's curious,
 With pitfalls and with dangers it abounds;
 God damns you if you lead a life luxurious,
 He damns you if you "treasure up" the pounds;
 In any case, He's certain to be furious,
 You'll never reach the "happy hunting grounds";
 He'll send you where the climate is injurious,
 When Jahveh makes His resurrection rounds!

ESS JAY BEE.

Correspondence.

THE WORD "RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Gould, in a recent number of the *Freethinker*, goes for my scalp with a vigor which—as one occasionally perhaps guilty of vigorous criticism myself—I rather enjoy. But the case between us is very simple. I contend that the word "religious," to nine persons out of ten, carries a theological implication. To say a man is religious is, to nine people out of ten, if not to ninety-nine out of a hundred, to say he is a Theist, and probably a church-goer. And I object to the use of the word when such an implication is not intended. It is idle, and even appears to me weak, for Mr. Gould to ask if "all the words once associated with church-worship and Theistic aspiration [are] to be forbidden." Words are counters, and we cannot make them mean what we would wish them to mean; we must take them at the value which usage attaches to them. Why, then, employ a word in such a way as to possibly mislead—especially when less objectionable words can easily be found? Mr. Gould, it is true, challenges me to supply a "better and more expressive word" than religious. But almost in framing the challenge he himself supplies three or four—loyal, consistent, high-purposed, gentlemanly. Why not use these words which are mostly secular, and are not connected intimately with "church-worship and Theistic aspiration," for which it seems to me Mr. Gould has a temperamental fondness?

Indeed, when we go beyond secular words, I may ask Mr. Gould why he adopts the word "religious" to cover the type of character he describes, instead, say, of the word "heretical." He mentions Savonarola, Milton, and Mazzini. But, in so far as we honor these men, it is precisely for their rebellion against tyranny, for their heresy in greater or less degree, for their stand against the organised opinion of their day. It would, therefore, be at least not more misleading to speak of Savonarola, Milton, and Mazzini as having the "heretical" spirit than to speak of Comte, Darwin, and Huxley as "religious"; and the word "heretic" is hallowed by as many noble memories at the very least as the word "religion," the symbol for some of the greatest crimes in history. But, for my part, I think both "religious" and "heretical" ought not to be used except in their historic theological connections.

The whole question, as Mr. Robertson pointed out in the passage I quoted, is one of verbal convenience. I therefore take all Mr. Gould's remarks as to spring-cleaning, and doing penance and so forth, as being intended humorously rather than bitterly. There is no principle at stake, and there is nothing to be bitter about. If Mr. Gould supposes me to have imputed anything dishonorable to him, and he will do me the honor of re-reading my remarks, he will see that he was mistaken. Certainly nothing was further from my intention.

FREDERICK RYAN.

MY OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to Chilperic, I may say that I distinguish between religion and theology; that I attack theology every day, and am glad to be allowed to do so now and then in the *Freethinker*; that I desire to retain and use the word "religion" in an ethical sense; that, as an ex-elementary school-teacher of many years' standing, I used the term "religious instruction" as all teachers use it—viz., to denote Bible-teaching as currently given; and that I desire to see "religion disestablished," as in this case I understand the phrase to mean the disestablishment of State Churches.

F. J. GOULD.

One of the best examples of the great inventor Edison's wit is recorded. A gentleman representing the building committee of a city church called to see Mr. Edison. The committee had been unable to decide whether to equip the church with lightning rods or not, and had sent to secure Mr. Edison's opinion on the matter. "By all means," said Edison, "put on the rods. You know Providence is sometimes absent-minded."

Frank: "The bill of fare at this place is getting infernally monotonous. Here's 'fried soles' again to-day." Frank: "'Fried souls'? That does smack of infernal monotony."—*Philadelphia Record*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Is there a God? An Answer to President Kruger's Question."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Prof. Earl Barnes, "Children's Religious Ideas."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, W. Heaford.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack, "The God Idea"; 6.30, A. B. Moss, "Salvation."

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A. B. Moss, "The Secular Faith."

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, C. Cohen.

FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, C. Cohen.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture; 7, A lecture. May 16, at 8, C. Cohen.

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road): 8.30, A lecture.

LIMEHOUSE (corner of Salmon's-lane): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. May 15, at 8, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, C. Cohen.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Davies.

KILBURN (corner of Glengal-road): 7.15, F. A. Davies.

HAMMERSMITH (back of Lyric Theatre): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

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

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, Mr. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, Debate between G. Tooth and H. Percy Ward on "Can Socialism Benefit the People?" Open-air, at 11.15, in the Bull Ring, F. Barnard, "Something Better than Religion." Every Wednesday and Friday at 8, same place, H. P. Ward.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, W. B. Thompson, "George Eliot: Novelist, Freethinker, and Poet."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class; 6.30, J. F. Turnbull, A lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, B.Sc., "Modern Christianity."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, A lecture.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A local friend will give a description of his Easter trip to Paris and the Exhibition.

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

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—May 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 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.—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.—May 13, m., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 20, a., Peckham Rye; e., Brockwell Park. 27, m., Westminster.

R. P. EDWARDS, 48 Woodstock-road, Shepherd's Bush.—May 13, m., Battersea; e., Hammersmith. 20, Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., Mile End. 27, m., Hyde Park; a., Peckham Rye; e., Brockwell Park.

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(Continued from p. 304).

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