

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Christian and Scientist.

ONE of the great conflicts of the present age is that which is going on between science and religion. By the latter term is generally meant, in this country, the teachings and doctrines called Christianity. Science is based upon a knowledge of the natural, while the foundation of Christianity is speculation in reference to the alleged supernatural. We thoroughly endorse the late Professor Huxley's statement: "That every new discovery in science pushes the supernatural further from us by enlarging the boundary of human knowledge." Hence we find that, when the Christian faith was more popular as a real profession than it is to-day, modern science was comparatively unknown; but now that science is the most powerful factor in the regulation of human affairs, practical Christianity is "more honored in the breach than the observance." This is not surprising when, as we intend to show, it can be proved that the two—science and Christianity—are antagonistic, both in principle and in method. The latter is not only unscientific in itself, but it is opposed to the facts demonstrated by scientific investigation.

With the usual lack of consistency upon the part of certain professors of Christianity, they allege that there is nothing in their faith which is contrary to science, and yet they have made frequent attempts to reconcile the two. Now, it may be fairly asked, if the two are in harmony, where is the necessity of attempting to reconcile them? In our opinion, no such reconciliation could be accomplished unless the language of the Bible could be so translated as to make ancient words express modern ideas. Is this, however, possible? We think not; but even if it were, the reconciliation referred to would not be effected, for the obvious reason that the faith as it at present exists would be really transformed to something of a very different nature. The old allegation, that we do not know what matter really is, in no way affects the truth of our contention that Christianity and science are antagonistic. We may ask, What is spirit? Upon this point, be it observed, there is this important difference: that, although the scientist does not profess to explain what matter is in its essence, he knows what the term connotes, and he is familiar with the properties, powers, and movements of what is known by that term. Can the Christian accurately say as much of what is called spirit? We reply, he cannot.

Science means knowledge which is derived from investigation and experiment. It signifies the practical application of the results of observing the "invariability of phenomena." A scientist is one who accepts the systematised inferences drawn from those movements which are termed "laws of nature." These natural operations teach us that similar effects will always follow similar causes, if the circumstances surrounding the event are the same. Science is concerned only with phenomena, the term evolution being used to denote the process by which all known origins and changes have taken place. It accepts nothing as settled truth which may exist outside the lines of demonstration. The scientist holds that whatever happens depends upon preceding events, and that what occurs now will influence that which may follow, whether it be in connection with the falling of a stone or with the breaking up of an empire. It is this regularity between cause and effect which is called by Tyndall "the stability of natural law." He also adds: "The order and energy of the universe I hold to be inherent, and not imposed

from without; the expression of fixed laws, and not of arbitrary will, exercised by what Carlyle would call an Almighty Clockmaker." Whatever interferes with this sequence in nature must be pronounced unscientific. Orthodox Christianity is based upon the supposition that this natural stability can be, and is, interfered with, and it is therefore demonstrably opposed to science.

A Christian is one who accepts the New Testament teachings as a true exposition of the means by which the world was once created and is now governed; he believes that at one period the universe was not, but that it was called into existence by the voice of God; that since its creation it has always been, and still is, under God's protection and guidance; and that there is a devil who is constantly employing agencies to frustrate the decrees and purposes of an omnipotent God. Further, a Christian professes to believe that all the events in life are subject to the irresistible will of God; that human requirements may be obtained through supplications to him; and that his wisdom is seen in the constant regulation of matter and force for the good of the human race. Such is the professed belief of the orthodox Christian; and the very fact that the method of operation claimed for what is alleged to be spiritual differs so essentially from that of the material renders it impossible for both to operate on or in phenomena at the same time. If a scientist, therefore, profess the Christian faith, he cannot apply his scientific method to it without going in opposition to its claims. Whatever agencies may be alleged to have any influence over the operations of nature, the scientist knows that the truth of science, resting as it does upon the fulcrum of reason, is the only known power that does or can move the world for good.

As it is written, "if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand," neither can antagonistic methods be usefully employed at the same time and place. Those who accept the teachings of chemistry, that matter and force are indestructible and unlimited, cannot subscribe to the theory of the creation of the world, which is one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. To reject the idea of the creation, and all its supposed consequences, is to sap the very basis of the Christian faith, and to entirely ignore its remedy for the evils said to have resulted from the fall of man. Growing out of this alleged fall is the Bible story of the universal flood, which no scientist, who relies upon the result of geological investigation, can believe to be an historical fact. Neither can he consistently accept as true such statements as the naming of all the animals by Adam and the talking of the serpent. The first implies that Adam had more knowledge than it is reasonable to suppose he possessed, and the second imputes a faculty to the "beast of the field" of not only being able to talk, but also of possessing the argumentative power of refuting the assertions of his Creator. Such a specimen of the lower animals is contrary to what is known of any of their species. No scientist to-day can endorse the Christian teachings that the Adam of the Bible was the father of the human race, and that death originated through his introducing sin into the world. These teachings are refuted by indisputable facts. Science has proved that man existed upon the globe thousands of years before the alleged time of Adam, and that death reigned on the earth for ages anterior to the story of the Garden of Eden. Now, the opinions held by the scientist and the Christian in reference to these questions cannot be in harmony, and therefore a man of science can be no believer in what is termed the supernatural part of

Christianity. He may, of course, accept some of the teachings found in the New Testament as being true and useful; but, while he is unable to agree with the very fundamentals of the faith, he cannot be termed a Christian in the legitimate sense of the word.

The orthodox Christian teaches that the most important consideration for man is the condition of his soul. Is he fit to die, and is he in a state to enjoy happiness when the soul is separate from the body? The scientist, on the contrary, devotes his practical attention to the body and to the affairs of this life. He professes no knowledge of a future state of existence, or of the condition of things where functions are supposed to operate without organs. He recognises soul as the name for the natural animating principle of being, and as knowable only by its manifestations in a human organism; and the limit of the one existence, he considers, coincides with that of the other. With the scientist, continuity applies to the species, not to the individual. Further, he is compelled to keep his mind free from all notions of "Providential interference," in which the Christian professes to have such faith. The idea of the winds, the waves, or the storms being controlled by any god never enters the mind of the scientist, although it forms part of the Christian ritual. Thunder and lightning the scientist regards as natural products, while many Christians have professed to hear and see in these manifestations the finger and the voice of God. To men of science those who appeal to a god to regulate the weather are on a level with the rain-makers found amongst savage tribes.

That the products of the earth, and their power in giving health, strength, and energy, should depend upon the adoption of the Christian religion is what no scientist would seriously allege, although, by not doing so, he rejects the palpable declarations of Jesus. The founder of the Christian faith not only did not teach science, but many of his precepts, if put into practice, would result in that which would be the very opposite of scientific. In my opinion, therefore, the wise conclusion to arrive at is that, inasmuch as a man cannot be both a scientist and a Christian, the former is preferable to the latter as the real benefactor of the human race.

CHARLES WATTS.

Shakespeare: The Man.—II.

LET us now turn to the criteria which Mr. Goldwin Smith uses for "finding Shakespeare"—if we may so express it—in his writings:—

"In the work even of the most dramatic of dramatists the man can hardly fail sometimes to appear. There are things which strike us as said for their own sake more than because they fit the particular character; things which seem said with special feeling and emphasis; things which connect themselves naturally with the writer's personal history. There are things which could not be written, even dramatically, by one to whose beliefs and sentiments they were repugnant. Any knowledge which is displayed must, of course, be the writer's own; so must any proofs of insight, social or of other kinds. Inferences as to the writer's character from such passages are precarious, no doubt; yet they may not be altogether futile."

These criteria are not displayed in any logical order; indeed, they are rather haphazard; nevertheless, they are to a large extent sound, only they require to be applied with very great skill and delicacy. We cheerfully concede that even a dramatist can "hardly fail sometimes to appear" in his works; in fact, we have argued that he appears in them all the time. This appearance, however, is not direct and obvious, but indirect and suggestive. Just as a Pantheist like Goethe calls nature the garment of God, by which alone he is visible; so we may say that such a supreme artist as Shakespeare is behind all his creations, and is always perceptible there to those who have sufficient insight or intuition. He does not say "I am here," after the fashion of an inferior dramatist like Byron, whose principal heroes are the projections of his own selfhood. The revelation is not by body or voice, but by an electric presence. The living genius pulses forth its power, and we feel that it excels all its achievements,

Not that we invariably feel this truth. We are all too prone to ignore it. We are apt to look upon the vast gallery of Shakespeare's creations as something exterior to him, whereas they were all conceived by his genius, and lived within him before they existed beyond him. Dr. Johnson was once annoyed by a dream, in which an adversary had defeated him in argument; but he recovered his serenity of mind on recollecting that he himself had supplied both sides of the discussion. A similar recollection must aid us in our appreciation of Shakespeare. He created all the vital, individual characters of his dramas; he gave them their virtues and their vices, their qualities and their defects; he endowed them with their appropriate language; he furnished them with all their wisdom, wit, strength, beauty, grace, valor, and heroism. From his own mind he drew the restless, far-glancing philosophy of Hamlet; from his own nature the subtle and exquisite witcheries of Cleopatra. All the characters of all his plays are partial incarnations of himself. They are but representations of him; splendid symbols thrown off by the incessant activity of his amazing genius. He was more than they—ininitely more. They were samples and specimens, and he was the freighted store. His creative force was as full and rich as ever when he set his final seal upon the majestic *Tempest*; his wealth of thought, his opulence of imagination, his imperial command of language, were just as magnificent. His treasury was too vast to be impoverished by any expenditure. It could only be rifled by the supreme despoiler of mortality.

O proud death,
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell!

We will now look at the application of Mr. Goldwin Smith's criteria. As an instance of things said for their own sake, he cites that lovely passage from the last act of the *Merchant of Venice*, beginning with the line—

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!

"Sleeps" is one of those magical, audacious expressions of which only the highest genius is capable. Tom Moore, we believe, and even Byron, misquoted it as "falls," which is commonplace in comparison. Mr. Goldwin Smith calls it a "poetic voluntary." He points out what should never be forgotten, that Shakespeare was a poet before he became a playwright, and that it is the profound poetical element of his masterpieces which renders them in a large degree unactable; a point, by the way, that was inimitably argued and illustrated by Charles Lamb. Incidentally, it is noticed that Ben Jonson's reference to Shakespeare's "small Latin and less Greek" simply meant that he was "not classically cultured." Ben Jonson spoke as a deep scholar, one of the best in England, who was even consulted by the thrice-learned Selden. Shakespeare in all probability knew nothing of Greek. Latin he learnt, like every other pupil, at the common grammar school. That he knew French is certain. "It can hardly be doubted," Mr. Goldwin Smith says, "that he understood Italian."

With regard to Polonius's advice to Laertes, Mr. Goldwin Smith remarks that it must be set down to the credit of Shakespeare himself, because it "really does not well suit the character of Polonius, who is generally represented as a pompous old fool." Yes, he is generally so represented, but this is a great mistake. Hamlet does cry "these tedious old fools!" when Polonius is trying with his worldly plummet to sound the mysterious depths of a greater nature. But in the common sense of the word Polonius is not a fool. He is wise as the world goes; that is to say, shrewd. He is moral as the world goes; that is to say, prudent and decorous. We think, therefore, that his famous advice to Laertes is quite characteristic of the man; and he would naturally express his best, not his worst, thoughts on such an occasion.

Mr. Goldwin Smith asserts that "the mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets will never be solved." But is not the "mystery" an invention? Is it not like the "mystery of evil," a manufacture of intellectual busy-bodies? We also regret to hear Mr. Goldwin Smith echoing the usual old talk about Shakespeare's estrangement from his wife. Where is the *proof* that he saw little of her and the children for eleven years? any real *evidence* that she was not with him in London? That he led anything like a disorderly life is absolutely disproved by the rapidity as well as the quality of his

dramatic work, to say nothing of his business labors at the theatre. Critics began very early to make up their minds on a plentiful lack of evidence, and the tradition was religiously handed down from generation to generation. And as there is nothing like a prepossession to play the devil with the simplest facts, they presently found a ridiculous corroboration in Shakespeare's will, by which he left his wife only the legacy of his "second best bed"—having, as one fool commentator sneered, worn out the best one with her rival. Whereas the truth is that Shakespeare's wife, according to the custom of the age, was already provided for; and in all probability the second best bed was *their* bed, perhaps their marriage-bed; the best bed being in the guest-chamber—or, as we now say, the spare bedroom. Really, if the method of so many critics and commentators were applied in courts of justice, no man's liberty, honor, or life would be worth a month's purchase; accusation would prove guilt, and sentence would be involved in every indictment.

Assuming that Shakespeare's marriage was unfortunate and unhappy, Mr. Goldwin Smith says:—

"All this considered, we have reason to be thankful for the essential soundness of Shakespeare's morality, especially with regard to marriage. There is not in him anything of the evil spirit of the Restoration drama. Matrimony with him is always holy, and though attacks upon its sanctity form the subject of more than one of his plots, he carries it through them inviolate. There is no Don Juan among his heroes."

Substantially we think this is undeniable. Shakespeare understood—nay, he *realised*, which is much more—that human society and civilisation are founded, first upon affection, and secondly upon discipline. "Conscience is born of love," he says in one of his sonnets; and that is the whole primary philosophy of evolution in a nutshell. But the time comes when love and affection, which is one of its reflexes, need discipline in the interest both of the individual and of the social organism. Order, custom, and habit are as necessary as freedom and spontaneity; in other words, the conservative element is as necessary as the progressive. Now the family is the first degree of social order, and no one has yet shown how the family is possible without marriage. The two together secure—not perfectly, but as far as may be—the socialisation of the sexual impulse. Let that instinct, and the other great instinct of self-preservation—under which all our emotions may be subsumed—once have absolute free play, unchecked by laws, forms, and social regulations, and we should soon fall back through barbarism into savagery. Shakespeare puts this in his incomparable way, at the close of that long and wonderful passage of social philosophy in *Troilus and Cressida*:—

Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite;
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And, last, eat up himself.

We fully agree with Mr. Goldwin Smith on this point, but we differ from him on a collateral topic.

"It must be owned that in *Measure for Measure*, in some of the Falstaff scenes, and elsewhere, Shakespeare plays with certain subjects in a way suggestive of looseness in sexual morality."

Jack Falstaff talks in character. Huxley, in a letter to Grant Allen, called "Honest Jack" a great philosopher. This is true enough, but his philosophy began and ended with the world he lived in. On the sexual side he was a pure (or impure) anarchist. He talks as such, and acts as such. We may call him a most delightful old rascal. But one Jack Falstaff is enough at a time, and Shakespeare drew but one; and that he drew him with as much loving care as he drew Hamlet only proves the astonishing catholicity of his genius. With regard to certain scenes and passages in *Measure for Measure*, we admit that they *display* looseness in sexual morality, but not that they are *suggestive* of it. Coleridge disliked that play; probably not for the rather fantastic reasons he assigned, but because of its grim and relentless treatment of the darker sides of human nature. Yet through all the mire of that tremendous drama the noble Isabella moves with spotless and radiant purity. In presence of that divine woman, the

weak and profligate Lucio exclaims: "I hold you for a thing enskied and sainted." He was unable to conceive the possibility of a taint in her adorable character.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

The Progress of Secularism.

(Continued from page 516.)

IN my last article I pointed out at some length, in reply to those who complain of the slowness of the development of the Secular movement, that, bearing in mind the peculiar nature of our work, such complaints were far from warrantable. We find on all sides increasing attention being paid to the secular view of life; we find the old views on religion rapidly losing their force; and, although the old faith dies hard, yet each year brings fresh signs of its internal decay. And this gradual dissolution is, as I have said, all that we can sanely hope for. A religious system does not spring up in a night, nor does it pass away in a day. If we can hasten its decay, our work is justified, and no one who looks back at the history of the present century can doubt that, from this point of view, we have much cause for self-gratulation.

So far, the grumblers who complain that we do not get on. But if, by these complaints, it is meant that we *might* get on faster, then I am not only in agreement, but fully believe that more rapid progress is inevitable, provided proper use is made of the materials to hand. The rate of progress of a movement is never at any time a fixed quantity. It becomes greater as the forces behind it increase in strength and as those who take part in it become fully conscious of its true nature. The obstacles to the development of Rationalism are not by any means difficult to understand, although they may be difficult to remove; but, as the first step towards the solution of any problem is the exact understanding of its terms, so a brief consideration of some of the principal difficulties in our path may pave the way towards their removal.

The first obstacle to Rationalistic development, the only natural one in reality, is that of heredity. It is a commonplace to point out that all primitive thinking is fetishistic, or that, in this respect, the history of the individual is an epitome of the history of the race. Yet it is this initial circumstance, joined with the fact that for numberless generations the non-religious type of mind was ruthlessly weeded out, that makes the disintegration of religious beliefs such a slow process. For we have to fight, not only the present, but the dead weight of the past. One cannot expect to overturn in a day the accumulated tendencies of centuries of selection. We are the heirs of the ages morally and intellectually—we inherit its vices along with its virtues—with the result that, although the acquired knowledge of the individual may lead him from religious beliefs, his instincts are often in a contrary direction.

Against this influence we can only oppose the slow action of education in both the narrower sense of imparting instruction and the wider sense of developing the individual intellect by means of developing the society of which it is a part. But here at the start we are faced with serious difficulties. On the one hand, social opinion, in virtue of the causes already noted, strongly favors religious belief, and, on the other, our educational machinery is still largely dominated by clerical influence when it is not completely controlled by it. The passing of the Education Act of 1870 was a tremendous gain to the cause of Secularism. It was a practical admission of the supremacy of "this worldism"—an assertion of the supreme duty of the State to attend to purely secular affairs. But it still allowed religious teachings to occupy a certain subordinate position. And this, together with the subsidising of the Voluntary schools by the State, gave the clergy a power of which they were not slow to take advantage. The mere selection of the Bible for use in schools gave it an air of superiority over all other books, and this early prejudice was easily strengthened and encouraged by the teachings and general circumstances of after life. Children are prepared for the hands of the clergy by the

mere selection of the Bible for use in schools, and, so long as this is the case, we can hardly hope that the spread of Secularism will proceed as smoothly as it might otherwise do.

There is, therefore, one principle that should be adopted and advocated by all Secularists, and which also ought to be incorporated in the aims and objects of the Society. This is Universal School Boards. We are all agreed that education should be compulsory, that it is unwise to leave it entirely to all parents to say whether their children shall receive the rudiments of a sound education or not; let us also insist that, if education be compulsory, the State should take complete control of education *everywhere*. This does not mean prohibiting religious instruction, only cutting it adrift from State support directly or indirectly. It is, to my mind, absurd that, having decided that the education of children is one of the prime concerns of the State, it should be left to a particular locality to say whether it will have a School Board or go without it. Children are born in one place, but they do not always die there, nor is their influence in after life ever circumscribed by the place of their birth. It is a national concern, not a parochial one; and although the establishment of universal School Boards, with purely secular education, would aid enormously the disintegration of theological beliefs, yet their creation may be based upon the broad ground of a sane social policy and the dictates of a sound conception of social duty.

But for this we require the creation of a strong public opinion in this direction. It is still the power of social *prestige* that gives religious beliefs a great deal of their power, and, so long as Secularism is lacking a certain social standing, its influence will be found wanting in proportion. Unfortunately, Christianity is still further strengthened by the fact that large numbers of Freethinkers, of various kinds, continue to give it a certain nominal support, while repudiating its intellectual pretensions. Were the support which is given indirectly to the current religion by unbelievers replaced by a whole-hearted support of those movements that have legitimate claims upon their time and attention, the cause of Freethought might be furthered enormously. It is surely time that it was realised by all that in this matter there is no standing neutral. The man or woman who fails to support one party is indirectly helping the other. A large part of the strength of religion to-day is more apparent than real—is made up of the backwardness and timidity of its legitimate enemies. I know all that may be said as to the dangers of speaking, the financial or social ruin that may result therefrom, but am inclined to think that, although in many cases the plea is a good one, in many others fear exaggerates the danger, while in all the danger would certainly be lessened by a little plainer speaking than is at present the rule. At any rate, it seems to me hopeless to expect to create the public opinion we desire without some such move. The only way to gain respect for one's opinions is to commence by paying proper respect to them one's self, and this can hardly be the case while they are kept quietly in the background or brought forward with an apologetic air that half invites and half excuses the conduct of the average religionist.

And, as with the lower education, so with the higher. A great deal of our current history is still written in such a manner as to bolster up religious beliefs, even when it is not avowedly written with that object. Although, happily, not quite so common as in recent years, yet books are still issued doctored, mutilated, in such a manner that they shall not run counter to religious prejudices on the subject with which they deal. One need only refer to the villainous manner in which modern editions of Hume are served out to the public to see how well the tendency towards religion, created by heredity and fostered by early education, is strengthened by subsequent events. It is not unusual, even with our leading historians, to find, for example, the rise of Christianity treated as though it were quite different to all other religions that the world has seen; while any attempt to treat the subject in a scientific manner is tabooed by the press and shunned by the general publishers.

The removal of all these obstacles to the development of our cause is, to a considerable extent, in our own hands, even quite so since the creation of a machinery that

gives the Society's work a certain legal status, and provides absolute security for whatever funds it may happen to possess. History has been written so as to support Christian pretensions, simply because there has been a market for it and funds to pay for work done. The only sure remedy for this condition of things is for our movement to be placed in a position whereby it can assist in the publication of such works as aim at writing history in a scientific manner. Much might even now be done by the creation of a central library which should contain a judicious selection of books, among which readers and inquirers would be certain to find all that they were searching for. The first step towards this has been already taken, and its development must depend to a large extent upon the support it receives.

Let us, at least, face one simple conclusion. The economic and social factors will express themselves, deplore it though we may. So long as the religious organisations hold out a certain living for those who champion their pretensions, so long as a certain social standing is accorded to the advocate of religious beliefs, while social ostracism and privation are the lot of such as stand openly forward as Freethinkers, so long religion will have a practical monopoly of the field. This will not be because of deliberate dishonesty on the part of all who advocate religion, but simply that, under given conditions, there is no great inducement to investigate its claims. As a matter of sincere intellectual conviction religious belief in this country is practically dead amongst educated people. But religious beliefs are not existent in teaching only; they are incarnate in institutions, and these institutions have to be fought largely on economic and social grounds. It is in this direction that the force of Secularism must be spent in an increasing measure in the future. The Freethought fight in the past has been the skirmishing that precedes the regular battle. Under those conditions strong organisation was not perhaps so important. But in the immediate future the best work of the party will have to be given to the planning and building of a strong organisation; and, although this work may not have the dash and glitter of the fighting of earlier years, it may yet be productive of more permanent good.

C. COHEN.

An Ætiological Myth.

A LITTLE time ago a long and animated discussion on the story of Jonah took place in the columns of the *Church Guardian*. We have it on the authority of the *Church Times* that the conclusions arrived at were "lame and impotent." How could they be otherwise when, in the interests of so-called "divine" revelation, the most fantastic pranks were then, as they often have been, played with a plain, unvarnished story, obviously incredible as course, but, all the same, intended to be accepted by literal matter of fact, and undoubtedly so accepted by Jesus Christ, if we may believe the New Testament writers? We used to call the story a piece of absurd fiction. Now, it seems, we must describe it as "an ætiological myth." Of course, it remains none the less silly; but modern Church critics think it necessary to have some regard to sound, and so they cloak their unbelief under the euphemism—an ætiological myth.

The discussion commenced on a review of a book by a Freethinker, the late Mr. W. Simpson, called *The Jonah Legend*, in which he maintained the whimsical hypothesis—perhaps it was only a ponderous joke—that the swallowing of Jonah by the fish was really a symbolical way of representing a form of initiation in which the neophyte, swallowed up by the monster Sheol, was given back to newness of life, the fish being merely the typical place of re-birth. The Rev. Dr. A. Smythe Palmer, in a recent issue of the *Church Times*, observes that this is obviously unconvincing. That is so; but it is not less convincing than other hypotheses advanced by commentators having some claim to be regarded as orthodox. Dr. Palmer, however, goes on to say that "neither the novel theory of Simpson, nor the criticisms of those who have had no difficulty in holding it up to ridicule, have succeeded in tracing the narrative, as it stands, to its probable source, nor have they attempted

to give any intelligible explanation as to how the incident of the great fish came to be introduced."

Why should they be expected to trace it to its source, and to account for it, any more than if it were the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk? Its source and the object of its introduction are probably the same as those of all wonderful yarns, and it happens to be less supported in its credibility than the familiar yarns about the old "Sea Serpent." To disbelieve a story does not always, or generally, involve the necessity of explaining how it originated, or what idea or motive persons had in their heads when they put it in circulation. Of course, it may be interesting from various points of view to trace as far as possible, and the business of life will permit, the origin of various familiar legends; but there is no obligation to do so simply because they appear in the Bible, though that seems to be the idea entertained by Dr. Smythe Palmer.

He thinks that recent researches into the remote antiquity of the Akkadian and Babylonian languages have helped to throw new light on the Jonah story. He commences with the fact that numerous legends have taken their rise from a misunderstanding of archaic words or phrases which came to be taken too literally. Thus, because in the Vedas the sun, with his far-reaching beams, is sometimes called the "golden-handed," the Brahmans, turning the poetical metaphor into a prosaic fact which they felt bound to explain, fabled that the Sun, as a personage, had once, as a sacrifice, cut off his hand and had it replaced by an artificial hand made of gold. Then there is the mediæval legend of the gigantic St. Christopher, which is due to a vivid imagination working upon the old theological word "Christophoros," "he who carries Christ" (within him). These are two instances cited by Dr. Smythe Palmer, and serve to show how, as Bacon says, "Words, as a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment." Another instance is cited by the Rev. C. J. Ball, who suggests that the early Semitic belief that Eve, the first woman, was literally formed out of the side of the first man may have originated in a misunderstanding of "Adam," a word which was at first applied to both of the first pair. In the ancient Sumerian, which lies far back of all the Semitic languages, *A-dam* meant a *side mate*—i.e., a spouse, or one of a conjugal pair (*Light from the East*, p. 20). The name of the woman *Havva* may easily have contributed to this misunderstanding if, as Professor Kleinert, of Berlin, has suggested, that word came to be mixed up with the old Semitic 'hav, a rib, which still survives in Arabic. Professor Max Müller, in his *Lectures on the Science of Religion*, remarks: "We shall never understand the ancient language [of the first chapters of Genesis] rightly unless we make allowance for the influence of ancient language on ancient thought."

Professor Kleinert thus accounts for the Biblical fish story. In early Semitic, the fish (*nin*), from the prolificness with which it multiplies and "with fry innumerable swarms," was adopted as a symbol of multitudinous increase. When men teemed and multiplied, they were said to be fish-like. Now, the city of Nineveh was "the type and example of the teeming populations of the heathen world" (Kalisch), and, on account of its proverbial populousness (Jonah iv. 11), it was named in Assyrian *Ninua*, which means "fish city." Upon the basis of this, the Professor suggests that Jonah, when he ventured into Nineveh, would be for three days lost to sight in the "fish-house"!

Dr. Smythe Palmer points out that the Septuagint and Philo represent Jonah as saying: "Yet three days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." May not these ideas, he asks, have afterwards taken the shape of the Haggadic or parabolic statement that the prophet had been engulfed in the interior of a great fish, from which he subsequently emerged alive and uninjured?

Well, they might, but it is easier to believe the story to be a pure effort of fiction. Dr. Smythe Palmer urges that in a very similar manner Jeremiah depicts Israel's enforced sojourn in Babylon and deliverance thence under the figure of being swallowed up by a dragon and being cast out (Jer. li. 34):—

"I may add, further, that the expression, 'Out of the belly of hell (Sheol), cried I' (Jonah ii. 3), which occurs

in the Psalm that is put into Jonah's mouth, may very likely have contributed to the idea that some engulfing monster was demanded in the narrative. Both Sheol and the sea were alike conceived as a devouring creature with gaping mouth and rapacious maw. So Shakespeare, 'Some envious surge will in his brinish bowels swallow him' (*Tit. Andron.* iii. 4). See *Babylonian Influence on the Bible*, p. 62 seq., and Professor Cheyne, *Theological Review*, 1877, p. 215. Indeed, we may reverently say that these were the ideas with which the history was associated in the mind of our Lord himself (St. Matt. xii. 40). Dr. Otto Mitius has collected abundant evidence from the catacombs and elsewhere to show that the engulfment and deliverance of Jonah were the favorite subjects chosen by early Christian artists to symbolise their hope of resurrection after death. They occur repeatedly with this meaning on Roman Sarcophagi and the walls of sepulchral chambers (*Jonah on the Monuments of Christian Antiquity*; see also Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea*, bk. iv., ch. 8.)"

From all of this, and much more which it would be tedious to reproduce, Dr. Smythe Palmer arrives at the (to him) satisfactory conclusion that the "mission of Jonah to Nineveh can thus be held as an objective fact, even though the incident of the great fish may be susceptible of another interpretation." This may be Dr. Palmer's belief, but it was not that of Jesus Christ.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

Donation List to Date.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
John Downing :				T. Ollerenshaw ...	0	10	0
"Liberty" ...				W. Barks ...	0	10	0
As unfolded in	300	0	0	J. T. Ives ...	0	1	0
Milton's				J. Bullock ...	0	5	0
<i>Areopagitica</i>				A. F. Bullock ...	0	2	6
J. Umpieby ...	20	0	0	C. Handley ...	0	5	0
Major John C.				W. M. Constant ...	0	3	0
Harris, R.E.	20	0	0	W. R. Axelley ...	0	10	0
Horace Seal ...	25	0	0	D. Mitchell ...	1	0	0
A Friend ...	25	0	0	Mrs. Brown ...	0	5	0
J. C. Banks ...	10	0	0	H. Payne ...	1	0	0
W. Mumby ...	5	0	0	D. P. S. ...	1	0	0
J. F. Hampson ...	4	0	0	J. E. Kins ...	0	5	0
D. Yule ...	10	0	0	C. D. Stephens ...	0	10	6
James Neate ...	1	0	0	W. H. Spivey ...	0	10	0
Mrs. Neate ...	1	0	0	M. Dye ...	0	5	0
R. Davison ...	2	0	0	F. W. Donaldson ...	1	1	0
G. J. Warren ...	1	0	0	A. W. Hutty ...	0	2	0
T. P. Stewart ...	1	1	0	Minnie, Willie, and			
R. T. Nichols ...	2	2	0	Teddie Hutty ...	0	3	0
C. Girtanner ...	10	10	0	R. Johnson ...	2	2	0
David Watt ...	1	0	0	H. L. ...	1	0	0
C. J. Peacock ...	5	5	0	W. Lamb ...	0	10	0
A. H. Braine ...	1	1	0	L. Edmonds ...	0	5	0
H. Trotman ...	0	10	6	T. Robertson ...	1	1	0
H. B. Dodds ...	0	10	0	J. O. Bates ...	1	0	0
W. Garthwaite ...	0	10	0	H. Waller ...	0	5	0
J. G. Dobson ...	0	10	0	F. T. ...	1	0	0
J. Barry ...	0	10	0	C. Newell ...	0	2	6
T. H. Body ...	0	2	6	F. E. Willis ...	0	10	0
J. Partridge ...	0	10	6	F. J. Voisey ...	1	1	0
Martin Weatherburn	0	10	0	Monmouth ...	2	2	0
A. G. Lye ...	0	5	0	C. Shepherd ...	0	2	0
E. Self ...	0	5	0				
L. Simpson ...	0	5	0	Total to date	£368	16	0

This is the holiday season, and a dull one for all sorts of business. I shall not, therefore, occupy any further space this week, on the principle that it is a waste of time and energy to strike cold iron. Next week I shall notice a further letter from Mr. George Anderson; also one from Mr. John Downing. For the present I will only say that I am always open to receive fresh promises towards this important Fund, and that all the readers of the *Freethinker* should bear in mind that the first week in October is "Shilling Week." I may as well repeat that during that week I expect hundreds of my readers to send me at least one shilling, and as many more shillings as possible, on behalf of this Twentieth Century Fund. If all do their duty we shall have a grand rank-and-file collection. It ought to be one of which the party can be proud.

G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

PROPHETS are seldom honored in their own country. Jesus Christ gained no reputation near his home, and his own family seem to have thought he was mad. The Jews rejected him, in spite of all his "wonderful works," and Christianity has had to find adherents among the Gentiles. In other words, the miracles of Jesus Christ were wasted amongst his own people, who probably saw through them. Other people, in other lands, who never saw the miracles, and had no means of judging them, swallowed them greedily as supernatural occurrences. This is a fact which we have often referred to, and it proves that supernaturalism is born of ignorance and credulity.

Take the somewhat similar case of ghosts. They never appear to sceptics, but only to believers. Moreover, if you ask about a ghost in a house which is said to be haunted, the residents laugh at you. Inquire in the next street, and the people shake their heads and say there is certainly something very strange. Go half a mile away, and you hear that the ghost has been seen frequently. Go double the distance, and you will learn the precise time when you may see it yourself. The farther off the better for the ghost. Distance lends enchantment to the view.

It appears to be just the same with the West Kensington Ghost in Edith-villas. "Strange to say," the *Daily News* reporter observes, "dwellers in Edith-villas do not believe in the ghost. They grow angry when it is mentioned, and talk about the need for lunatic asylums." But this is not "strange" to those who are conversant with the history of superstition.

This particular ghost seems afraid of the police. It has only appeared (to visitors) since the house was uninhabited. During the time that a constable, named Fryer, and his wife were caretakers, the ghost laid low. It never crossed their eyesight, and Mrs. Fryer says she would be only too pleased to go back, provided the windows were repaired. For the visitors have been shying stones and brickbats at the apparition.

Rosenthal, the "converted Jew," who preached Christ and him crucified in the Market-place at Blyth, pleaded "guilty" to the charge of stealing a bank deposit for £60, other articles to the value of £6, and £2 1s. 6d. in cash, from his landlord, Mr. Smith. All he could plead in mitigation of sentence was that he had constantly preached the Gospel and denounced the liquor traffic; moreover, it was his first offence. He was sent to gaol for two months with hard labor; and, according to the newspapers, he smiled when he heard the decision of the magistrates. We dare say there was a world of meaning in that smile.

A preacher, who advertises himself in large letters outside his chapel, displays this week a big placard with the following announcement:—

THE REV. — WILL ASK
Next Sunday
"WHY WAS I BORN?"

Why, indeed? His best friends think he will have a difficulty in satisfactorily accounting, if not for his birth, certainly for his continued existence on the broad principle of utility.

A Yorkshire newspaper writer seems to have learnt for the first time that Chinese idols are manufactured in Birmingham. Of course, Chinese and Hindoo, and every sort of idol, has been manufactured in Birmingham for many years past. They turn them out in all sorts and sizes. Some of the Chinese idols are gods of war, judging by their stern looks and murderous swords; another, with a bland look, is a god of peace; others bear hideous leers. All are thoroughly Chinese in character and expression.

An enterprising Birmingham manufacturer is said to be prepared to supply to order all sorts of gods at varying prices. You may have one as low as £2 10s., or one of superior workmanship and size at graduated scales up to £100 or more; but the demand has received a check, owing to the war.

A fine return for all the funds spent on missions to China. Only one Chinaman, we learn, has been regularly ordained a minister of the Gospel. His name is Jam Jee, and he lives in San Francisco.

The *People* has lately been especially strong in regard to missionary mischief and humbug. A working-man correspondent writes last week: "The question of missionaries to China is one that is very often to the front just at present, especially amongst working men, and to help them to understand it I will tell them a little anecdote, which, if it has no other merit, has that of being quite true. I was working some years ago on a railway line in South Australia, on which a lot of Chinamen also worked, and a great friend of mine

was the Chinese interpreter, Tung-Ling. One night, as we sat outside his tent, he suddenly said: 'I was Clistian in China five year.' 'But,' said I, 'you are no Christian now.' I knew he was not, because I had seen him burning his 'Joss candles.'

"No good be Clistian here. Noting get,' he said. And then he told me how, finding that he could get 'plenty licee (rice), and live mission house, and no workec' in China, he came to the conclusion that, if he could get to one of the countries where the missionaries came from, and where they were all 'Clistians,' he would be even still better off, especially as he had been taught English. So he got to Adelaide, and sought out a missionary society, and told them what he was. But, to his great surprise, they did not take the slightest interest in him; did not care whether he was converted or whether he was still 'an heathen Chinee.'

"And, what was worse, they told him there was no rice given away in Australia, and, worst of all, he found that he had got to work for his living, and that is how he came on the railway line, first of all to work with pick and shovel, and afterwards as interpreter, and that is why he was 'Clistian never no more'—not even when he returned to his native land. For, as he said: 'Savee money plenty, go back China, buy lots licee and porkee, live big house. Mission no good,' and he always said, and so did all the Chinese I ever talked to, that there never was such a thing as a converted Chinaman. They are only Christians for what they get, and that is why their own countrymen kill them whenever they can—not because they are Christians, but because they are impostors."

A Boston, U.S.A., newspaper praises a certain clergyman because of "the tactful and reviving way in which he conducts a funeral service. And it detracts neither from the sincerity of this opinion nor from the dignity of his calling to add that his success at a dinner party is equally marked."

The following notice of an event to take place in Kentucky is rather remarkable. It is from the *Mount Vernon Signal*: "The colored people will have a rally at the Court House the fourth Sunday in this month for the purpose of raising money to build a Baptist church. Two ladies, which will be No. 1 and 2, will run a medal race. Everybody is asked to contribute to this cause."

While the orthodox Christian world upholds as inspired the command to use the rod upon children, more enlightened sentiment is driving corporeal punishment from the home and school and imposing the penalties of the law upon the excessive use of the whip. In Trenton, N.J., Robert Scott was a few days ago held in 400 dollar bail for whipping his children. His defence was the biblical one. He quoted passages of Scripture, and even declared that he acted under the direct command of God, and, as he went to his cell to await the action of the grand jury, he muttered a prayer and exclaimed, "Lord, I but did thy bidding." While such belief is held children will remain the slaves of pious and brutal parents. It is only in Bible-dominated countries that children are beaten as a religious duty.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Facts must be faced, says the *Anglican Church Magazine*, and it is a fact that the old-fashioned Sabbatarianism is dying out, and that not only on the Continent. It is little use preaching that it is wrong to do this or that; the more excellent way is to enforce the twofold and universal object of the Sunday—worship and rest; worship first, rest second; and to many toilers rest means healthful recreation.

The *Church Gazette*, in its latest issue, has some amusing notes on a letter written apparently by a Scottish Sabbatarian to the *Glasgow Herald*. The correspondent had heard complaints in the columns of the *Herald* that people actually insist on taking walks about the hill-side on the Sunday. This is all very wrong. He says: "The walkers should stay at home and read, as I do, only such books as the Bible, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, Boston's *Fourfold State*, *The Confession of Faith*, and the *Catechisms*, both short and long."

In a little town in Germany, where there lived a Jewish family—the only one—tradespeople, gentle and friendly, who on all points of social contact were one with their neighbors, there lived also a Gentile woman of wealth, who fed the poor and clothed them, a Christian woman of old Lutheran stock, and narrow as that can be. The Jewess, perceiving it, tried to turn the conversation from the religious topic. "Well, to well, dear Mrs. G.," she said soothingly, "some day, when we meet in heaven, we shall all know better." Mrs. G. bristled visibly, as she replied: "What? Our heaven? No, indeed! Mrs. K., we may be good friends here, but there—really, you will have to excuse me."

A Plymouth "brother" fell dead at a prayer meeting at Hereford the other day. His pious occupation at the time

was no preservative, and yet we still hear a great deal about Providence who watches the sparrows that fall.

While "divine" service was being celebrated at the Chapel of the Virgin at Bebona, a lighted candle fell and caused an outbreak of fire. In the panic which ensued one woman, a servant, was trampled to death, and another young girl was so seriously injured that her life is despaired of. A large number of the congregation were severely bruised.

The spire of Great Marlow Church has been restored at a cost of between £2,000 and £3,000. The work of restoration was necessitated in consequence of the spire having been struck by lightning, and further damaged by a terrific whirlwind a year or two ago. The Lord is no respecter of persons, nor of his own "sacred edifices."

"Life as I Have Found It" is to be the title of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker's next volume. The *Topical Times* suggests that the Doctor hasn't found it at all a bad thing on the whole.

Truth asks: How is this for blasphemy? It is the inscription on the back of the bags used by a pork butcher at Bootle, the letterpress being also adorned with an appetising picture of the "celebrated pork pie" sold at this establishment:—

THE ROYAL PORK SHOP

Is noted for the best quality.

WM. MILLERCHEN,

A Poor Sinner, saved by the Grace of God.

"Praise His Name."

Please Note.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.—1 Tim. i. 15.

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.—Amos iv. 12.

This last injunction is a nasty sort of warning to hand to a customer with a pork pie; but, of course, Mr. Millerchen is the best judge of the necessity for it.

The vagaries of Australian animals in Australian sacred edifices have lately afforded the Londoner Sundowner, says the *Topical Times*, a great chance for reminiscence. Thus we learn that a certain Antipodean church was once enlivened by the visit of a goat. It was the day of the harvest thanksgiving, and the place was decorated in the usual way. The goat perambulated down the nave, devouring the corn as he went, eminently satisfied with the proceedings generally. The verger was sent to remove him; but the animal, rushing at the portly little man, butted him furiously. Then, while the official sought to recover breath and courage, Billy ambled away to the chancel. An organised attack was there made upon him—frontal, turning, and from the rear—but in vain. Elusive as De Wet, the goat slipped through the cordon and charged into the pews. Then the ladies rose in a body and stood on the seats (just as if it had been a mouse), and so great did the confusion become that the vicar suspended the service until the animal was captured and order restored.

Speaking at Stratford the other day, Mrs. Ormiston Chant said she had not been to a single church service this year which had not been "desecrated by the raucous, vulgar, wretched noise of newspaper hawkers." From which it is obvious she does not go to church in the evening, for only once or twice has there been any newspaper crying at night. But suppose there had been, what then? The folks who go to church and chapel are, after all, but a minority of "miserable sinners," according to their own account. The great majority—especially those with relatives at the war—have naturally wanted to learn the "latest."

This cry about newspaper hawking in these exciting times comes, we must say, with special grace from religionists, who, from an early hour on Sunday, all the year round, start a most annoying and absolutely unnecessary clanging of church bells, followed later on in the day by the discordant noise of Church and Salvation Army brass bands. Why may not a Sunday newspaper be cried? It often contains more matter of interest and importance than can be found in the sermons to which the church bells noisily summon us.

The late vicar of Butlers Marston, Warwick, named Samuel Walton Kay, has been remanded at Ulverston on a charge of obtaining £10 by a trick at the Crown Hotel, Grange-over-sands. He passed a cheque on the landlord, who afterwards found that prisoner had no account at the bank on which it was drawn. Kay went to Morecambe, where a Grange police-sergeant ran him down hiding under a bed in the top room of a house in Highfield-terrace. In court prisoner said that he intended to repay the money, but evidence was given of a previous conviction for forgery and the same trick at Menai Bridge.

Some Paisley weavers were speaking about their ministers. One said that it was wonderful how much his minister could bring out of Scripture. He had known him to preach several sermons from one text. Another said his minister surpassed that, for he had preached six sermons from the shortest text

in the whole Bible. "But that's naethin' to my wife," said the third. "She's been preachin' to me for sixteen years frae nae text at a'."

The *Sunday Companion* revives the old story anent a "Bible-Burners' Club." It introduces the hair-raising narrative in the approved fashion. There are the usual comments of "gross blasphemy," "profane mockery," etc. Also the usual absence of date, names, and place. The whole thing is a lie, but that is a mere trifling feature—no bar at all to its appearance in the *Sunday Companion* under the guise of a solemn verity.

The story, retailed for the fortieth or fiftieth time, is that a number of reckless persons banded themselves together with the name of the "Bible-Burners' Club." At their first meeting, after a series of burlesque solemnities, the "high priest" approached the fire with the Bible in his hands, intending to commit it to the flames; "but at that moment he suddenly turned pale, and laid it down, saying: 'We'll not burn this book till we get a better one.'"

Now, the utter absurdity of this appears on the surface. No Freethinker wishes to burn the Bible or any portion of it. Why should he? He doesn't regard it as divine revelation. That notion is exploded. He doesn't admit all the absurd claims made on its behalf. But he has no desire to wipe it out from all possible reading. On the contrary, he wishes people to read it and learn, it may be for the first time, what sort of a book it really is.

The pious inventors of this lie have given themselves away. They have ascribed to Freethinkers exactly the intolerant method of dealing with—not only books, but their writers—which not so many years ago was their own particular method. Freethinkers do not wish to burn books or their writers—though Christians were accustomed in that way to dispose of both. But, apart from any reasoning on the why and wherefore, this story in the *Sunday Companion* is an absolutely contemptible, wretched piece of fiction, and the silly person who edits that paper ought, even in his silliness, to have known better than to have inserted it.

In heaven, we suppose, we shall hear Italians sing without it costing us a red cent.

An inquest was held in London not long ago in which the relation of a deceased person to a neighboring church was inquired into. "To what church did the deceased belong?" asked the coroner. "He was an octogenarian, I believe, sir," said the witness.

A story is told of a rural dean who, when going the round of his churches in the deanery not long ago, found that the majority were kept close barred and bolted during the week. At last, to his great delight, he found a church whose doors were always open. Addressing the clerk, the rural dean said: "Do you find that people retire here for prayer and meditation?" The clerk smiled: "They did try that game at fust, but I pretty soon bundled 'em out, I can tell 'ee."

The villages round Malton were billed with the particulars of a coming sale by auction, which included certain antiquities and curios. The three lines which were printed in the biggest capitals, and which could be read at a considerable distance, were "Three Old Church Fonts," a certain number of "Chinese Geese," and "Seven Tons of Turnip Manure." This caused much scandal among church folk of the district. An incumbent of one of the parishes where these bills were posted, a gentleman of much repute as an antiquary and ecclesiologist, obtained a copy of the poster, and forwarded it to Lord Grimthorpe, asking civilly if he could not interfere to stop the sale of the old fonts, as they probably had been ejected from churches without any faculty, and citing precedents for such action. The reply he got from Lord Grimthorpe was a postcard, on which were written merely these words: "The Chancellor has neither the power nor the inclination to stop anyone selling old church fonts, any more than Chinese geese or turnip manure!"

It is noted by the Berlin correspondent of the *Standard* as a fact of some significance that the dislike of Christians is very strong just now in Japan. The only Christian weekly newspaper in Japanese, the editor of which is a Japanese convert, published an article lately in which some of the ceremonies at the late marriage of the heir-apparent were described as contrary to the spirit of Christianity. For this the editor was condemned to three years' imprisonment, the further circulation of the paper was stopped, and the houses of all Japanese Christians and their friends were searched for any extant issues of the paper. Besides this, fifty persons were sentenced to several months' imprisonment merely because they had given copies of the paper to others. This action was justified even by Liberal Japanese journals, on the ground that the Japanese who is unfaithful to his ancestral religion places himself outside the protection of the laws and the State. Many of the Japanese strongly favor an alliance with China.

Astonishing! "He gave up God as a nonentity." This was a person whom De Witt Talmage pretends to have met. Talmage lies as often as he tells the truth. Of course, it is possible that this man gave up God as a nonentity. Most of us have done so, and found many confirmations of our unbelief. But the particular invention—very clumsy in its structure—is this: "I could tell you of a comrade who was great-hearted, noble, and generous. He was studying for an honorable profession; but he had an infidel book in his trunk, and he said to me one day: 'De Witt, would you like to read it?' I said: 'Yes, I would.' I took the book and read it only for a few minutes. I was really startled with what I saw there, and I handed the book back to him, and said: 'You had better destroy that book.' No, he kept it; he read; he re-read it. After a while he gave up religion as a myth. He gave up God as a nonentity. He gave up the Bible as a fable. He gave up the Church of Christ as a useless institution."

So he was hopelessly lost, according to De Witt. But perhaps he has survived, and is not at all concerned about his rejection of the Bible or the Church of Christ.

A correspondent of the *Daily Mail* has written on the subject of seaside services—a very seasonable topic. He draws a rather gloomy picture of terrorised little children, and appeals for their protection from the "vain and foolish persons" whose only desire is to hear themselves speak. The *Rock* says: "The writer's anti-Christian zeal is not according to knowledge of facts. They are not of the gloomy order of Christians who conduct these services—for the most part bright, healthily-minded young people, many of them Varsity men of the robust stamp of the Studds of cricket fame, who took a great part in this work, and afterwards gave up their lives to the teaching of the bigger children of the heathen world. Nor, again, are the children driven to these meetings. They delight in them, and we have known the youngsters of families, where religious duties are more honored in the breach than in the observance, amongst the most regular of attendants, with the parents not only raising no objections, but themselves very often in time following in their children's footsteps."

The *Rock* is, without doubt, uttering a deliberate lie when it says that children "delight" in these services. None but a blighted, blithering fool would be able to persuade himself that children had the least regard for this pious nonsense, particularly on the sands.

A Scarborough vicar has just preached a sermon that excited a remarkable degree of admiration. The heads of it were sent to a local paper. The preacher, however, was wise enough not to wait for anyone else to find him out, but wrote at once that the sermon was not his own, but by the late Canon Liddon.

"I have sometimes myself," he proceeds, "qualms of conscience about Bunyan, as savoring of the modern novel; but my inclination prevails, as I confess the *Confession* is somewhat dry at times. Paul, indeed, says: 'One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike; let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' And again: 'Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of the Sabbath days.' But I am inclined to think that if Paul had lived now he would, and perhaps soon, have been before the Presbytery for this very broad and, I fear, loose statement. No doubt our Savior walked in the fields and plucked the ears of corn; but that was a dangerous example to follow, so we must be careful. Let us study the *Confession*, for, though it is dry, it is profitable; and let us eschew modern novels, golf, and even pleasure-walking on the Sabbath Day.—I am, &c., AN OLD COVENANTER."

There is not a little irony in this letter suggesting that, after all, it is a libel to pretend that Scotsmen cannot joke, or, if they do so, it is "with deeficulty."

A church in New York City acquired its pulpit Bible in a rather curious way. During the absence of the pastor, the Rev. John B. Shaw, D.D.—as he relates the circumstance in the *Presbyterian Banner*—certain repairs and additions to the church edifice had included the gift of a new pulpit. But the new Bible was found to be too large to fit its lectern, or reading-board. One day a woman came to the minister with a neat package, which she proceeded to untie. He was not surprised to see a beautifully-bound gilt-edged Bible unfolded in her hands; but his feelings changed when she told him that she had found it in an ash-barrel! A family, after a short residence in the apartment-house where she lived, had moved out that morning, and had left their rubbish with the janitor, to be carted away in the city garbage waggon. The costly Bible was amongst this "rubbish." The family record had been cut out of it, being evidently the only thing about it that its owners valued.

Here is another story about a Bible which has all the appearance of being an invention, though retailed as truth. A certain North of England gentleman, a Mr. A.—, noted for his eccentricity and for his love of books, had a nephew, whom, though studying for Holy Orders, he suspected of being a thorough worldlying. One day, when this nephew was on a visit, he asked his acceptance of a Bible, which he hoped he would read daily. The young man gave his promise, and departed with the gift, which he put on one side, to remember it only when his uncle, as was often the case, asked him whether he had read a chapter that day, a question he always answered in the affirmative. It chanced one day that a friend, a young doctor, dropped in to have a chat, and took the Bible from the shelf where it lay. "Oh, you've got my uncle's Bible," said the young man. "I quite forgot all about it." "So it would seem," replied the doctor, who appeared to be eagerly devouring its contents. "Do you feel inclined to sell it? I'll give you a sovereign for it." "All right," was the answer; "hand it over." So the young man received the coin, and his friend carried off the book. A week later his uncle called. He looked round the room. "I don't see the Bible I gave you," he said. "No," answered the nephew; "I can't find it anywhere; it must have been mislaid." "Well, I trust it isn't lost," said the old gentleman, "because it was a first folio Shakespeare, bound in an old Bible cover, and worth £500. But, of course, as you have read it every day, you know that."

The entertaining "Hubert" in the *Sunday Chronicle*, describing the old æsthetic craze, says: "We used to write sonnets, those of us who had a turn for verse, to Death, of whom we were quite amorous, and spoke of a much-desired lover. I remember well going one afternoon to call on a young man who lived in chambers in Gray's Inn Square. He lived on the third floor, and when I arrived at the bottom of his flight of stairs I found those stairs thickly coated with young women in greenish and yellowish velvet and silk gowns, all curled up in sinuous attitudes, and looking like a lot of dear little caterpillars. I could not get to my friend's rooms at all, for I was told they were full already, and that he was reading aloud about James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*."

"Do you know that poem? If not, read it on some wet and gloomy day when you are a trifle down in the dumps, and perhaps you may get somewhere near to the state of mind (we should have called it 'state of soul') at which we tried so conscientiously and strenuously to arrive. The ladies on the stairs were a sort of overflow meeting. And the thing did not strike me as being a bit odd. On the contrary, I went joyfully away, hugging myself on the thought that there was still some love of culture left in Gath, as we habitually called London. I myself had the following lines from our favorite poet written in old English characters on vellum, and hung over the head of my bed:—

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank thee with brief thanksgiving—
Whatever gods may be—
That no life lives for ever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea

"Then sun nor star shall waken
Nor any change of light;
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight;
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night."

Self-Sacrifice.

If we all sacrificed ourselves habitually and always, the world would be so much the more wretched in consequence; if we all developed ourselves to the utmost of our ability, the world would be so much the richer and happier. Universal self-sacrifice is a meaningless conception. If one person sacrifices himself or herself for the sake of another, it is in order to make that other the happier. And if the other too lightly accepts the sacrifice, there is wrong and injustice. Most often, indeed, we feel called upon to sacrifice ourselves through some act of selfishness or wrong-doing on the part of our neighbors. Sacrifice is then, in itself, by no means a good thing; at best it is but a *pis aller* [makeshift]. It is forced upon us as a bad necessity by untoward circumstances. If others could be as happy without the need of our sacrificing ourselves, we should all be gainers. But Christianity has so exalted the false idea of self-sacrifice as in itself a good thing that most people are genuinely shocked to hear it even called in question.—Grant Allen.

N. B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stone-cutter-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.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. 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.

MR. FOOTE is anxious to obtain copies of the *Freethinker* for January 3, July 30, and September 10, 1899. Can any readers of this journal oblige him? Of course payment shall be made for the copies.

W. T. LIPSCOMB.—Ambrose Bierce is an American writer. We quoted his view, with his name to it, for what it was worth. We don't undertake to defend it, and we don't think it needs any defence. You say there is "a great deal of nonsense" in the *Freethinker*. Have you read the Bible?

JAMES NEATE.—Handed to Miss Vance. Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

"NEMO" complains that, having induced a friend to go and hear a Freethought lecture at the Kilburn open-air station, this gentleman waited three-quarters of an hour for the lecturer to turn up, and another half-an-hour for the arrival of the platform; when, being tired of waiting, he walked away, feeling that his time had been miserably wasted. We hope this was an unique and accidental occurrence. That it happened at all is much to be regretted.

E. R. WOODWARD writes: "I should like to express a hope that your suggested book on Shakespeare will materialise into fact." He adds a compliment which it would be invidious to print in our own journal. This correspondent's article will appear in our next issue.

MARTIN WEATHERBURN, sending his subscription to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, says: "I need not assure you that I have full confidence that the Fund, however large it may be, will be honestly and judiciously used in the interest of our cause."

W. COX.—Mr. Foote has written you. Pleased to hear your open-air meeting at Liverpool on Sunday was well attended.

MIMNERMUS writes: "Your Shakespeare article is very fine. I am looking anxiously for succeeding chapters."

W. P. BAIL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

CHILDREN'S EXCURSION.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—C. Shepherd, 2s.

R. CHAPMAN.—Mr. Foote has written you as to visiting South Shields.

T. ROBERTSON (Glasgow).—The last Sunday in September is booked for you.

T. CLARK, who has taken the *Freethinker* ever since it was a few weeks old, who bought eight copies weekly when it was a penny paper, and has bought four copies since its price was raised to twopenny, complains of the shocking way in which newsagents fold it. "It would be a great boon to your readers who have them bound," he says, "if you could send them out already folded." No doubt it would be a great improvement, and we begin to feel inclined to risk the expense.

VICTORIA PARK FRIEND.—We regret to hear of the death of Mr. Frederick Mortimer at Gravesend. We can endorse every word of the eulogy upon him in the local *Reporter*.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings. Mr. Foote is all the better for his partial holiday.

S. A. HOARE.—We have always supplied the *Freethinker* to the trade on sale or return. It was sheer insolence on the part of the wholesale agent to tell the newsagent you refer to that she was "lucky" to get four copies when she wanted eight. She should press the wholesale agent to deal fairly with her; if he will not, she shall be supplied direct from our publishing office. We are obliged to you for your kind attention in the matter.

RECEIVED.—Liberator—Crescent—Yorkshire Evening Post—Two Worlds—Truthseeker (New York)—Manchester Daily Dispatch—Huddersfield Daily News—Ethical World—Torch of Reason—Gravesend Reporter—Perthshire Courier—Blue Grass Blade—Freidenker—Freethought Magazine—Secular Thought.

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

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.

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

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

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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.

ANOTHER Freethought Demonstration was held on Sunday evening in Victoria Park. There was a big crowd of people around the Branch stand, and several ladies occupied seats in the centre of the meeting. Mr. James Neate beamed with happiness at the evening's success. Mr. A. B. Moss acted as chairman, and opened the proceedings with a bright little speech, which was heartily applauded. He then called upon his "young" friend, Mr. W. Heaford, who said that they always called him young, though he had been preaching Freethought for twenty-five years. Mr. Heaford's speech was vigorous and effective, and he retired from the platform amidst cheers, to go off and keep his engagement at West Ham. The next speaker was Mr. C. Cohen, who is a local favorite, and met with a very warm reception. Mr. C. Watts was also greeted most heartily, and his peroration was much applauded. Mr. Foote was the last speaker, and was cheered enthusiastically. The big crowd was orderly and appreciative from beginning to end, but there was pandemonium at a Christian meeting in the rear. All the row that *could* be made was made, but it did not disturb the serenity of the Freethought speakers, and their huge audience only smiled at the artificial, concerted cheering of the orthodox party. We hear that the speakers of that group indulged in the foulest personalities, and the name of "Foote" was flying about like rice at a wedding. But what does that matter, after all? Doesn't it prove that the Christians feel they have no case when they can only resort to abuse?

The Victoria Park Demonstration began at 6.30, and had to conclude at 7.45, owing to the Park regulations. This necessitated brief, sharp speeches all round. In order to gain a little more time the next Demonstration, which is to be held at Brockwell Park this evening (August 26), has been fixed to begin at 6. This will give something over an hour and a half for the speeches, before the failing light necessitates the cry of "All out."

The Annual Children's Excursion, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place on Saturday, September 1. Brakes conveying the youngsters to High Barnet will start as follows:—From South Place Chapel, 10 o'clock in the morning; from the Marble Arch, Edgware-road corner, at 10; from the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham-court-road, at 10.30; from the Holloway Castle Hotel, Camden-road, at 10.30. The Athenæum Hall brake will stop at the Great Northern Station, King's Cross, the York-road corner, for the convenience of children living in that quarter, provided Miss Vance receives timely notice of the number and names of the children to be expected. The whole party will meet at a given point, and, having "refreshed," will proceed to their destination by the longest and prettiest route—namely, Winchmore-hill, New Southgate, etc. The return journey, by another route, will be considerably shortened. Those in charge of the brakes will give parents information as to the time when they should meet their children to take them home. Parents will not be able to ride on the brakes, but they can go by train to High Barnet, and Underhill Farm is about ten minutes' walk from the station.

The committee will take all possible care of their young charges. Ample provision will also be made for their refreshment and entertainment. The children must not be under five nor over fourteen. Early application for tickets should be made to Miss Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C.

No doubt a good many subscribers are away from home during this holiday season, but we are astonished that more have not forwarded a donation towards the expenses of this outing for the little ones. It is a matter for the London Freethinkers, not for the provincial ones. Fifty or sixty of them, at least, on seeing this paragraph, should send Miss Vance a trifle (or more) immediately. There really ought to be no begging for such an object.

We have already announced that the National Secular Society's Executive had resolved to call a Conference of "advanced" bodies with a view to promoting the policy of "secular education" in the approaching London School Board elections. A sub-committee was appointed to see to the necessary arrangements, consisting of Messrs. C. Cohen, T. Shore, and G. J. Warren. The large hall of the Club and Institute Union was engaged for Tuesday evening, September 11; and a circular was drafted by Mr. Cohen, inviting all the "advanced" bodies whose addresses could be obtained to

send delegates to the Conference. Mr. W. Heaford, though not on the sub-committee, kindly assisted in addressing and sending out these invitations, as Mr. Cohen and Mr. Shore had both arranged to take their holiday just then. An excellent and valuable reference to the circular and the Conference appeared in last week's *Reynolds's*. References also appeared in the *Daily News* and the *Morning Leader*.

Messrs. Shore and Cohen, on Saturday evening, August 4, waited on the Executive of the Metropolitan Radical Federation, in order to ascertain whether that body would be likely to assist in the matter of this Conference. The N. S. S. delegates were favorably received, and it was arranged that they should attend again at the full Council meeting, which was to take place in a fortnight. Accordingly, on Saturday evening, August 18, Mr. Cohen, being the only one of the N. S. S. delegates able to be present, laid the "secular education" case before the M. R. F. Council. Mr. F. Pacey moved that the Federation reiterate its sympathy with secular education in Board schools, and pledge itself to support candidates in favor of secular education at the forthcoming School Board election. This was seconded by Mr. Grossmith and carried. Messrs. Hibbard, Verinder, and Grossmith were then appointed as delegates to attend the Conference on September 11.

Several other bodies have intimated their intention of sending delegates to this Conference, and we hope to be able to publish a good list of them in next week's *Freethinker*. In any case, the Conference will clear the ground and put the N. S. S. Executive in a position to act decisively in one direction or another.

It appears that the "Progressives"—that is to say, the Bible-Reading or Chapel party—are bossed by two men. These are the Rev. John Clifford and Mr. Corrie Grant. By means of what is called the Central Election Committee, these gentlemen virtually choose the "Progressive" candidates all over the metropolis. We are also informed that the bitterest opponents of the "secular education" policy, three years ago, was Mr. Graham Wallis, the well-known Fabian. We have always understood that Mr. Graham Wallis is as much an Atheist as Mr. Bernard Shaw. We presume, therefore, that he has a *political* motive in running counter to his own convictions. It will, however, be a good thing to give such gentlemen a lesson in November.

Mr. W. Heaford lectures in Victoria Park this evening (August 26). This is the last lecture of the season there. We hope the local "saints" will rally round Mr. Heaford in strong force on this occasion, as certain Christian Evidence people have made a point of disturbing his meetings with abusive interruptions.

Mr. T. Wilmot, secretary of the Camberwell Branch, 27 Lorrinmore-street, Walworth, is of opinion that Clapham Common offers a good field for Freethought propaganda. He is anxious to give open-air lectures a trial there during September. They would be arranged for Sunday afternoons. Mr. Wilmot would like to hear from local friends who would assist in "running" this station. If it proves a success, arrangements will be made to include it in the regular list next summer.

Mr. J. O. Bates, of the Vegetarian Stores, 42 Victoria-street, Gloucester, has a piece of boarding about eight feet by six outside some new premises he has just leased. It faces Victoria-street, where hundreds of workmen and other people pass by daily; and he intends to decorate it with a *Freethinker* weekly contents-sheet, and with specially good articles which he will cut out of the paper for that purpose. We are very much obliged to Mr. Bates, and we also beg to express our admiration for his courage.

Sky-Pilot Up a Tree.

THE New York *Herald* prints the following from Huntington, Conn. :—

"The Rev. H. L. Hutchins, one of the religious census enumerators sent out by the Connecticut Bible Society to learn what proportion of the State's population attends church, took his statistics under difficulties yesterday afternoon. On reaching Walnut Tree Hill, a rural district of Huntington, he started to enter the door-yard of Mrs. Georgiana Hurd.

"I know you! You can't question me! You're a public nuisance," came a voice from a window. There was a rattling of chains behind the house, and a large bulldog dashed out at him. The Rev. Mr. Hutchins, though sixty-seven years old, was on the fence in a bound. Perched on the top, with his feet jammed between the pickets, he beseeched the woman to call off her dog. The latter was leaping up against the fence to reach the clergyman's trousers.

"Mrs. Hurd's daughter, Miss Lydia, appeared. She

seized the dog's chain and tried to lead the animal away, but it refused to budge. Then the Rev. Mr. Hutchins calmly drew forth his portfolio and plied Miss Lydia with his list of questions, which she willingly answered, the dog all the while tugging at its chain.

"The questioning completed, the clergyman suggested that the chain be fastened to the fence. The dog was thus held, and the Rev. Mr. Hutchins lost no time in entering his carriage and driving off."

Notwithstanding.

BEHOLD a man of smiles and smirks,
A little 'neath the middle height,
Who steadfastly for Jesus works
By shedding forth the gospel-light.
The Book of books he knows right through,
Christ's words are writ upon his heart;
But does he do as Christ would do?
Does he with all his fortune part?
I own, with optics tearful, dim,
He keeps it, notwithstanding Him!"

An aged rustic now behold,
Who rubs his hands in foolish glee,
And says: "The same good boy of old,
To go and send these things to me!
To think as me, as cannot write,
Should have a son, a real B.A.,
To love me now my hair is white,
And all the rest have passed away!"
Yes, Christ's disciple, proud and prim,
Loves father—notwithstanding Him!"

Behold one who no further looks
For love and honor than the sphere
Wherein he moves; whose sacred books
Are Nature's writings, bold and clear;
Who fears no furious Lord above,
Nor raging demon down below,
But lives to work, to help, to love,
And shrinks not when 'tis time to go.
Like those who preach Christ's doctrine grim,
He's happy—in ignoring him. †

J. Y.

Biblical Plays.

If it be true that the Lord Chamberlain has refused a licence for a play in which Pilate and Mary Magdalene figure, he is merely carrying out the rule of his office. Only three or four years ago a licence was refused for Dr. Saint-Saëns' opera, *Samson et Dalila*, although the plot of the opera had little or nothing to do with the Old Testament narrative, it being in treatment practically like any other French operatic love story. Indeed, a hint was, it seems, thrown out that, if the title were altered to *Samuel and Semina*, there might be no difficulty—a suggestion which greatly angered the composer. Rossini's *Mose in Egitto* had a very similar fate. When it was produced in England at the King's—afterwards Her Majesty's—Theatre in 1822, the libretto had to be entirely altered, and the title became *Peter the Hermit*. When it was revived at Covent Garden in 1850, it was called *Zeno*, all Biblical names being suppressed. The Lord Chamberlain of 1847 was so particular that he even refused to license Meyerbeer's *Roberto il Diavolo* (although in an imperfect form it had been played in English under the title of *The Demon; or, The Mystic Branch*), alleging that "you might as well bring the Devil himself on the stage." His objection was only overcome by the intervention of a Royal Duke, who wished to see Jenny Lind make her London debut in the principal part. The list, given in the *Era Almanack* of 1887 of nineteen plays, licence for which was refused between 1857 and 1865, includes—besides, of course, *Jack Sheppard—La Dame aux Camélias*, and that not very harmful play, *Le Père Prodigue*; with such semi-Biblical pieces as *The Hebrew Son* (Joseph and his Brethren), and *The Triumph of the Jewish Queen* (Esther).

—*Daily News*.

Obituary.

MR. RICHARD ELLIS, of 7 Allam-street, Oxford, died August 9, aged sixty-seven years. He was a staunch Freethinker, trying, whenever he could, to do something for the cause; always one of the first to subscribe to any fund for its good so far as his means would allow. He was a very great admirer of Ingersoll, and also of the late J. M. Wheeler. He passed peacefully away without any fear of death, after wishing his youngest daughter an affectionate "Good night."

* Matthew xix. 21.

† Luke xiv. 26.

‡ Mark xvi. 16.

Mary Church.

WARD OF THE CHURCH.—Mary Church is the newly-baptised child of—nobody knows. Last week the tiny girl, excellently dressed, was found in St. Robert's Roman Catholic Church, Harrogate, and was taken to the police station, where she has been visited by many of the fashionable visitors to the town. Some of them have provided her with quite an extensive wardrobe. As no one has claimed authority over the child, she has been christened into the Roman Catholic Church, which will provide entirely for her upbringing.—*Paragraph in daily newspaper, August 13, 1900.*

THE question is, Ought Miss Mary Church to be congratulated? She will always be sure of two outfits—one material and the other spiritual. If Miss Church's material costume is to be of the "charity" order—an ugly bonnet and a dismal skirt—I should deplore her Christian misfortune. At the same time, I should recognise the perfect logic of the situation. The Gospel is quite incongruous with elegance of dress. It may be doubted if a well-fitting bodice can harmonise with heavenly-mindedness; there are reasons which lend a powerful support to the thesis that such a bodice may be a positive obstacle to the normal evolution of piety. Even a neat shoe may prevent easy ascent of Jacob's ladder. From the orthodox point of view, therefore, the safer will be the prospects of her soul. However, I leave that problem to the priest and the milliner, and merely express the hope, in passing, that Miss Church's own feelings will be duly consulted.

The subject of Miss Church's spiritual clothes is very much more perplexing. The way our souls are managed at present is singular. Miss Church's mother (one may presume) arrayed the baby in elegant robe and cape, left her in a Roman Catholic place of worship, and thereupon, as if by a decree of the gods, the child is pre-ordained as a believer in Papal Infallibility, the Immaculate Conception, the authority of the Vulgate, and fifty other more or less trustworthy articles of faith. Had a shower of rain come on, or any little accident diverted the poor mother's steps, the baby might have been deposited in a Wesleyan chapel, grown up in a Methodist orphanage, and learned to adore the Love and Wisdom of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. Why should we be tossed to and fro between the creeds? Why should our intellectual destiny depend on the tumble of dice or the casting of lots? I am born in a certain longitude; I believe in the Trinity. Or I am born fifty degrees to the east or west, and I bow to Siva, or subscribe to the funds of the Calvinistic Baptists. Why should Miss Church—why should you and I—be at the mercy of geographical chance? That the latitude and longitude should affect one's color, diet, language, and household habits, I account as no grievance. But it is wrong that our interpretation of the universe—the most majestic function of which we are capable—should be distorted this way or that by the influence of local theologies, instead of framed on principles of the general human reason.

If I could educate Mary Church, I should develop her mind by three methods. I should lead her to appreciate three classes of facts—the facts of natural science, the facts of our racial history, and the facts of human nature. This triple knowledge is the birthright of every child. All else is secondary or useless.

By appreciation of the facts of natural science I mean such a knowledge of the external world as will render us alert to possibilities and dangers, critical of our environment, and capable of self-protection and self-direction. For the mere accumulation of items of science for the purpose of "first-class" or "honors" certificates I have not the smallest respect. We have suffered badly from the great South Kensington superstition. It makes me sick to hear silly lads talk of "passing" in chemistry or geology, as if a few months' reading and a few experiments and excursions had fitted them out with a complete wisdom of life. If certificates are necessary to livelihood, I have nothing to say against the effort spent in getting them. But I am speaking, not of livelihood, but of educational outfit and spiritual clothing. What we want to build up in each learner is the critical and observant habit. "Science" never gives

us this habit; it is this habit which creates and formulates science. Free human thought preceded all sorts of chemistry, geology, astronomy, biology, etc. Therefore we must seek, not to inject into the memory a multitude of statements and figures, but to cultivate a power of rational judgment and practical apprehension. By all means teach chemistry and the sister sciences; but remember the aim and end of it all—to induce the mind to wonder, to reflect, and argue, and the hands to grasp and mould and pull and resist with deftness and alacrity.

Then as to the facts of racial history. A man who cannot remember is an idiot. A nation which cannot remember its past is savage. A nation which knows only its own annals is bigoted. We only become wise when we learn the history of our race; for then we see the unity of it all, the common emotions and hopes, the universal needs and abilities and faculties. How could I understand a village if I only knew its ploughmen? I must know also its carpenters, bakers, carriers, etc., its doctors and teachers, its social customs and trade. So, too, it is a poor training which only acquaints the learner with the records of England or the United States or France. He ought to see the growth of the whole race from barbarism to modern culture; the development of arts and sciences; the march of morality and literature. Some years ago, I think, many earnest reformers overdid the claims of science (*i.e.*, physical science). I believe Herbert Spencer has done so. Certainly we must have a discipline in organised knowledge of the facts of our natural environment. But this alone will not humanise us; this alone will only leave us calculators and measurers, not men and women. No man can ever reach real refinement and fulness of judgment who has not often turned back to study and love the story of his ancestors. I use the word "love" deliberately, in order to imply my contempt for that sort of learning which confines itself to chronology and details, and transmutes the splendid pages of human progress into a catalogue and an index.

Next, we must evolve an appreciation of the facts of human nature. The learner must first understand his own body, and its offices of digestion, sex, activity, and repose. Having acquainted himself with the prime functions of the physical machine, he follows up the process of thought and feeling, of logic and motive. It is essential to a sound education to include a comprehension of the springs of conduct. Our disappointments and amazements would be reduced to a minimum if we were all trained to notice and analyse the chief mental and moral characteristics of our neighbors. We should know better why they sinned, and more readily forgive; we should know better where their strength or weakness lies, and more effectively assist; we should know better the probable course of their action, and more accurately prepare. In other words, this knowledge would help in the rational organisation of sympathy, law, and politics.

I fear Mary Church will not get her due share of these three departments of education. But I am quite sure she would become a much more loveable and useful woman—and wife, and mother—if the Catholic divines of Harrogate would pursue the line I have indicated.

F. J. GOULD.

What Christ Might Have Done.

The Bible has not civilised mankind. A book that establishes and defends slavery and wanton war is not calculated to soften the hearts of those who believe implicitly that it is the work of God. A book that not only permits, but commands, religious persecution has not, in my judgment, developed the affectional nature of man. Its influence has been bad, and bad only. It has filled the world with bitterness, revenge, and crime, and retarded in countless ways the progress of our race.....Would it not have been better if Christ had told his disciples that they must not persecute? that they had no right to destroy their fellow men? that they must not put heretics in dungeons or destroy them with flames? that they must not invent and use instruments of torture? that they must not appeal to brutality, nor endeavor to sow with bloody hands the seeds of peace? Would it not have been better had he said: "I come not to bring a sword, but peace"? Would not this have saved countless cruelties and countless lives?—*Ingersoll.*

A Lovable God.

Then said another : " Some there are who tell
Of One who threatens he will toss to hell
The luckless pots he marred in making. Pish !
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well !"

—OMAR KHAYYAM, A. D. 1260.

As an Atheist, I have long thought that the only lovable and workable God is that created by our witty and wise neighbors across the Channel. The old omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Deity, "creator of all woe and sin," beloved of their forebears, was extinguished a century and a half ago by Diderot and his fellow Encyclopedists. Monsieur l'Étre, indeed, had little chance of surviving the analysis of that daring, original, and profound band of thinkers. But your typical Frenchman is not the sort of man to forego any luxury which is not terribly indigestible; so, although no longer able to digest mentally the conception of M. l'Étre, he found that it was by no means impossible to provide a wholly harmless and good-working substitute, and to that end he created *Le Bon Dieu*, of all French creations one of the most charming I know. This good God of our neighbors is no bloodthirsty ogre creating a hell and fitting it up with a chief roaster, assisted by a host of bakers, stokers, basters, trussers, turnspits, and many others, and then cramming it full of his wretched creatures foreseen from all eternity as, and created purposely for, flesh for hell's gridirons.

On the contrary, it is not even certain that *Le Bon Dieu* had much of a hand in "the creation" at all. Indeed, his creator created him in the likeness of a magnified *bon homme*, eternally benevolent, and, as far as his powers go, ever beneficent. He has no touch of bitterness or even austerity, and, if reproached by his French creator for letting things get sadly out of gear at times, apologetically replies :—

"My dear man, it's not my fault a bit; don't, for goodness sake, blame me! Nothing makes me so miserable as to see you unhappy. Why, my sole occupation is that of ameliorating your lot wherever and whenever I can. Look what I've done for you! All the good things you enjoy are my gift. Over the bad things I've little or no control. I didn't make 'em, and I can't mend 'em or end 'em. But I give you such compensation as I can—lovely lasses, generous wine, a pleasant land, good humor—the best of all gifts—and a sly wit. I know you are afflicted with ills, but they are none of my devising; true, I made the sun to ripen your grapes. In this I was not altogether successful, and I apologise; but the natural intractability of things was too much for my complete success in this as in so many other matters, and, although it causes famine now and then, and even sunstroke, is perhaps one of its smallest violences. Yet look on the vine, and think kindly of me for that! Women are sweet and children delightful, and their sweetness and delightfulness are my work. True, the sweet may turn acid, and the delightfulness may become ungrateful; but these, again, are evils for which I am not responsible. I did my best for you—I never do less—but neither the material on which I worked, nor the powers which I possess, enabled me to make any perfect thing. Only this I claim: that whatever of good there is in a man, woman, or child, that good comes from me, and whatever pleasure their lives achieve is with my help. In fact, I am *Le Bon Dieu*, and nothing else, and don't you forget it; but when you next have your sweetheart in your arms, kiss her and take her kisses, for you can worship me in no pleasanter way."

Our Frenchman accepts this explanation and installs *Le Bon Dieu* in his heart. When trouble comes to him he's sorry for himself and for the good God who was unable, though intensely desirous, to forestall it. And with this cheerful, jolly God our neighbors keep on the best of terms. "God damn you!" is an English oath; the Frenchman does not believe that *Le Bon Dieu* would damn anybody, "not even a priest," as one of their wicked wits said. "Go to hell!" is another English oath. Your Frenchman does not believe in the existence of such a place, and would never be so rude as to consign anyone to it. Even so far as two centuries back it was a faded nightmare among the educated, for a certain naughty lady, of aristocratic birth, being told that, for her sins, she would probably go to hell, replied: "Do not fear, Monseigneur, the Almighty cannot afford to damn a person of quality!"

A very brotherly God is *Le Bon Dieu*—one we can walk arm in arm with, sure of warm sympathy, and a

willing listener and sensible adviser. No threatener and destroyer he! Indeed, the Gaul has become largely an eclectic Manichean, retaining only the good principle and rejecting the evil—imputing the latter to the unintelligent obstinacy of things; a nuisance, an infliction at times, but no bluggy bogie wilfully seeking whom he may devour.

You may urge that, philosophically, this is not a very intelligent creation, this *Bon Dieu* of our friends across the Straits! Perhaps you're right; but no other God yet created is a whit more intelligent, while not any other God is half so good to live with. The Frenchman dwells companionably with his *Bon Dieu*, with much cheerful camaraderie. But what of our strife-breeding, hell-manufacturing, sin-creating, pain-and-disease-inflicting deity? Can we really claim that our horrible creation is either companionable and humorous or wholly benevolent, and as far as possible to him, *the omnipotent*, wholly beneficent? *Je pense que non!* The Frenchman's good God does not keep him awake at night bewailing his sins and sweating with terror at the idea of a Christian hell. "Surging, crammed with all the torments of the damned." Not a bit of it. *Au contraire*, he, the lucky Gaul, falls asleep, dreaming of the next good thing *Le Bon Dieu* will, whenever he can, bestow on him. Lucky Frenchman! Jolly *Bon Dieu!*
OMARIST.

Moses the "Boxer."

In order to show that the Chinese are far behind the age, even in warfare, the New York *Sun* quotes the thirty-first chapter of the book of Numbers, descriptive of methods prevailing in the time of Moses, or some 1,450 years before Christ. The story which the *Sun* quotes is as follows :—

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
"Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites;
afterwards shalt thou be gathered unto thy people."

"And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian."

"Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war."

"So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war."

"And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand."

"And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses, and they slew all the males."

"And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain—namely, Evi and Rekem, and Zur and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian; Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword."

"And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods."

"And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire."

"And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts."

"And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab; which are by Jordan, near Jericho."

"And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp."

"And Moses was wrath with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle."

"And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?"

"Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord."

"Now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him."

"But all the women children that have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves."

Hereupon it is commented that the Chinese, in their reported massacres of foreigners, women, and children, no less than men, and in their refusal to give any quarter to prisoners, are simply following and preserving the

usages of warfare of the time of Moses. Since that day the humanity of Christendom has come to revolt against such mercilessness, but the civilisation of China is still the same in spirit as it was in the Shang dynasty of the time when Moses wreaked so horrible a vengeance on the Midianites. We are thus carried back nearly four thousand years by the events now occurring in China. It must be remembered that the Israelites who killed all the men and all the mothers and all the male children of Midian were not an irresponsible mob. They were not a lot of rebels under the lead of an outlaw, but were soldiers carrying out the orders of their highest official, Moses, the law-giver.

Admitting that Chinese soldiers might claim as spoil the daughters of the foreigners they had massacred, would the Chinese priests demand a share of the plunder as described in that part of the chapter of Numbers which the *Sun* omitted to print? Moreover, if the soldiers neglected to slaughter and outrage, would they be rebuked by a wrathful commander, as occurred to the soldiers of Moses? (Num. xxxi. 14-18). Let us quote further from the inspired account dictated by the God of the people whom the Chinese are reported to have massacred:—

"And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation.

"And levy a tribute unto the Lord of the men of war which went out to battle; one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep.

"Take it of their half, and give it unto Eleazar the priest, for an heave offering of the Lord.

"And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord.

"And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses.

"And the booty, being the rest of the prey which the men of war had caught, was six hundred thousand and seventy thousand and five thousand sheep.

"And threescore and twelve thousand beeves.

"And threescore and one thousand asses.

"And thirty and two thousand persons in all, of women that had not known man by lying with him.

"And the half, which was the portion of them that went out to war, was in number three hundred thousand and seven and thirty thousand and five hundred sheep.

"And the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen.

"And the beeves were thirty and six thousand; of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and twelve.

"And the asses were thirty thousand and five hundred; of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and one.

"And the persons were sixteen thousand; of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two persons."

To clearly demonstrate that Chinese warfare is as barbarous as that commanded by Jehovah, it would be necessary to prove that after the Chinese have won a battle the priests get a percentage of the captured virgins, as nowadays chaplains share prize money with the crews of warships.

We sometimes hear the slaughter of the Midianites defended on the ground that they were immoral—that they indulged in idolatrous and obscene rites; but how much morality could they learn from a people, albeit God's chosen, who worshipped Jehovah, and, in the language of our early historians, "reserved women for a fate worse than death"?

In point of fact, Chinese warfare on foreigners, so far from being as barbarous as that ordered by Jehovah, is probably no more atrocious than the wars of Christians on heathens a few centuries ago. How did foreigners of both sexes fare at the hands of the Crusaders?

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

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Correspondence.

CHRISTIAN FALSEHOODS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am afraid I cannot compliment Mr. Tabrum on his defence of Messrs. Farrar, Horton, and Clifford. He tells us that Dean Farrar did not mean that the writers referred to used the words he quoted; the references were given as having a bearing on the subject. Will Mr. Tabrum inform us what bearing Tacitus has on the matter? He does not, in the chapter quoted, even mention Roman women, good or ill, and cannot, therefore, have a "bearing on the general subject." Tertullian also has absolutely no bearing whatever on the matter. And Suetonius can only be cited as proving that a deal of immorality existed, as one might quote a current attack on society.

Now for Dr. Horton. The report of the sermon was contained in the *Christian World Pulpit*, and, unless I am misinformed, proofs are sent to the gentlemen whose sermons are reported week by week. I assume, therefore, the sermon appeared with "his knowledge and sanction," and represented him faithfully. At any rate, the report has never been challenged by Mr. Horton, although he knew it was made the subject of criticism, as a copy of the *Freethinker* containing my article was forwarded to him. Until Dr. Horton repudiates the report, I must decline to modify my language in the smallest degree.

Next, Mr. Tabrum's opinion, that Dr. Clifford's ranking Darwin as a typical Christian leader will "bear full and honest criticism," is of small value to me. The man who will classify Charles Darwin, who deliberately rejected Christianity both in general and in detail, and who avowed himself as an Agnostic, as a "typical Christian," is slandering the name of a dead man, and might fitly be used as the object of the little homily which Mr. Tabrum devotes to one who repudiates such conduct.

C. COHEN.

"SHAKESPEARE: THE MAN."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am of opinion that you ascribe to Shakespeare a scope touching human ethics which he would take exception to if he read the above article. Because of his great intellect, it is certain, to judge from his writings, that he never presumed to establish a parallelism between *all nature* and human nature, the outcome of which resulted in the establishment of the great principle of moral causation. All his characters work out their own destiny, unaware of any moral finality, and I challenge you to show that any of them were actuated by any other motives but those incarnated in their individual substance *by all nature*.

I am prepared to admit, beyond dispute, that Shakespeare has had the genius of wording men's thoughts in most forcible renderings, but I am at a loss to find the basis of any system of morals in them. Even yourself, if you take the trouble to confront your conclusions consistently with the allegation that "the vast bulk of the British public are ignorant of Shakespeare's works," must admit that "The great bases he laid for eternity" have not made the world-man better than he was.

Literary men of all grades and races are rather prone to ventilate beyond measure the practical value of their pens. It must be said of Shakespeare that he divested himself of moralistic tendency; he was content to put into impersonation the world and the under-world of his time; but never in a single instance did he award a transcendental success in the life of his personages because he deemed them better than they should be according to their temperament.

On all hands it must be granted that he was a faithful historian of his time, a monument for all ages, for men who are seeking through what vicissitudes men's minds have been passing; beyond that I can see no peg on which a universal moral law can be attached; yet I am hopeful that in your concluding article you may open my eyes to facts which shall make or alter my views, being always open to conviction.

T. FAULKS.

"THE BIBLE AND A FUTURE LIFE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I cannot believe you would wish to misrepresent those who differ from you. Permit me, then, to say that your article, "The Bible and a Future Life," very gravely mistakes Christian opinion respecting its quotations from Ecclesiastes. Such teaching, though in Scripture, we deny to be the doctrine of Scripture. Ecclesiastes relates how Solomon, despite unique advantages, failed to get happiness in the world; and it also records what were his musings on fate and destiny when for a season abandoned to the stupidity of the fallen heart. These musings are infallibly recorded, just as are the lies whereby Satan deceived Adam and Eve. But neither can be called the inspired teaching of Scripture. The distinction is obvious. As I have often observed the error of Mr. Symes in "Freethought" publications, I beg to send you this short remonstrance. On the principle of treating others as you would be treated by them, I hope you will be good enough to insert this letter from a clerical subscriber.

HENRY J. ALCOCK, M.A.

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.]

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THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

WEST LONDON BRANCH ("Victory," Newnham-street, Queen's-street, Edgware-road): August 28, at 9, Business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, C. Cohen.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, C. Cohen.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, F. A. Davies; 6, Freethought Demonstration.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, W. J. Needs.

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, E. Pack.

HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, W. Heaford.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Fruits of Christianity"; 7.15, A lecture. August 29, at 8.15, A lecture.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, A lecture.

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

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (in the Bull Ring): 11, H. Percy Ward; 7 (Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, Broad-street), H. Percy Ward, "The Story of the Trial and Imprisonment of G. W. Foote for Blasphemy." Mr. Ward will also lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.

LIVERPOOL: Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. Closed until September 2. Outdoor lectures at the Monument, bottom of London-road, on August 26, at 7 p.m., Stanley Jones.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (1 Grainger-street): 3, Members' Monthly Meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—August 26, m., Station-road; a. Peckham Rye.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 26, m., Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—August 26, Birmingham. September 2, Glasgow; 10, Debate at Bradford. 16, Birmingham. October 1 and 2, Debate at Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—August 26, a. and e., Brockwell Park. September 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

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APPLICATION FORM FOR ORDINARY SHARES.

TO THE DIRECTORS OF THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, Limited.

GENTLEMEN,—Having paid to the Company's Secretary the sum of £....., being a deposit of 2s. 6d. per Share on application for Shares of £1 each in the above-named Company, I request you to allot me that number of Shares, and I agree to accept the same or any smaller number that may be allotted to me, subject to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and upon the terms of the Company's Prospectus; and I authorise you to place my name on the Register of Members in respect of the Shares so allotted to me, and I agree to pay the further instalments upon such allotted Shares as the same shall become due, as required by the said Prospectus. In the event of my not receiving an allotment, the amount to be returned in full.

Name (in full)

Address

Description Date

All Cheques, etc., to be made payable to the Company, and crossed.

Freethinkers are invited to fill in the above Form, and send same with their remittance to the Secretary.