

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 35.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1900.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Decline of Religion.

It was, I think, Comte who said that the age of fetishism was the creative period of religious activity. Qualifying the statement with the remark that the fetishistic type of mind is more or less present in every period, the dictum may be accepted as substantially correct. The real living period of religious belief is that when the untrained mind reads itself frankly into nature and pictures the whole known universe as an agglomeration of living forces. Beyond this religion lives, but it can hardly be said to create. It continues to exist, but its existence involves a continuous struggle with adverse forces, before which it steadily loses ground. Above the fetishistic state the history of religion is the history of a series of modifications, apologies, retreats, and defeats. In every branch of science it has been ignominiously beaten back, and the defeat has been all the more decisive because each step of the way has been hotly contested. Even its temporary successes have only been a regaining of a portion of its losses. If it gained one convert, it had previously lost a score, and in any honest attempt to balance profit and loss there would be found a heavy balance on the losing side.

The clergy deal with this unpleasant historic process in various manners. The more foolish amongst them simply deny the fact, and point to the growth of a religious organisation here and there as evidence in favor of their attitude, quite ignoring that these movements have grown at the expense of other churches, and that their general effect on the non-Christian world is *nil*. Others accept the process, talk glibly about religious evolution, and profess to find in the multiplication of sects and the wearing down of definite religious dogmas a fresh proof of God's education of the human race. God is slowly educating the world to a knowledge of himself and his wishes, and we must overlook the imperfections of the earlier stages in view of the perfection of the completed result. On what grounds an all-wise and all-powerful Deity can be justified in sacrificing myriads of human beings in the past for the benefit of a much smaller number in the distant future, when the desired result might have been produced at once, it is not clear. One can understand and appreciate the stumbles of an individual; he or she reaps in after life the benefit of the experience; but, from the standpoint of Theism, the blunderings of earlier races, from which later ones derive benefits, are a useless and avoidable sacrifice.

Other clergymen, of a more honest, if more pessimistic, type, admit that there is a decline in religious belief, and content themselves with offering suggestions as to how interest may be reawakened. To this class belongs the Rev. G. W. Allen, vicar of Thornton Steward, Yorks., who, in a sermon preached in Ripon Cathedral on "The Declining Interest in Religion," raised a doleful lament over the religious degeneracy of the age. Doctrines are losing their hold upon people, and, in practice, Christianity is a dead letter. "If any man announces that he will not go to church, and disbelieves the Bible, and will no longer profess and call himself a Christian, we are shocked..... But if some professing Christian spreads some damaging story about a brother Christian, we are scarcely moved. If a Christian presses some private and personal advantage against another which our half-heathen legal code does not absolutely forbid him, we are not moved at all. The great thing with us is evidently the uniform—the

outward profession. So long as a man calls himself a Christian he may drive a hard bargain, underpay his workpeople, grind his tenants, defend guilt, attack innocence, and manifest, in every department of life, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness." This much has been said over and over again in these columns, but it is always pleasing to get such admission from the enemy.

Having chronicled the decline, Mr. Allen turns to a consideration of the causes. His explanation is beautifully simple, but not very sound. Buddhism, he notes, has "the great glory that it has never shed one drop of blood in the course of its enormous propaganda"—a somewhat striking contrast to the history presented by Christianity. On the other hand, "We Christians have come to feel, first that those of other religions are not only mistaken, but wicked; next, this feeling extends itself even to such as called themselves Christians, but differ from us in point of doctrine." Consequently, in England, "as soon as men begin to discuss religion they quarrel"; but in the East "nothing is more charming than the interest which intelligent Buddhists take in discussing religion with intelligent Christians—an interest which is exceeded only by the result of the extreme courtesy and gentleness with which they conduct the discussion and present their own point of view."

The quotation is, I think, well worth making, because of the amusing admission that, while the result of Christianity is that people cannot be trusted to discuss religion because they quarrel, the effect of Buddhism is that its followers discuss religion with "extreme courtesy and gentleness," besides having a history unstained by a single act of persecution. The quotation is interesting, too, because of its truth. Taking society generally, one finds people discussing questions of science, literature, or politics in a perfectly amicable and friendly spirit. It is when one touches on religion that the surface of the waters is ruffled. Springing from the savage, uncivilised nature of man, religious beliefs easily break through the thin veneer of civilisation worn by their possessor, and betray their origin in the feelings which they arouse and to which they appeal.

The conclusion at which Mr. Allen arrives is that, as a discussion of religion has been generally found to create animosity, it has been tabooed, with the result that the "faculty"—whatever that may happen to be—has dwindled away. But, as a matter of fact, the tabooing of religion in society is a fact of quite recent growth, and is a symptom of the state, not its cause. The discussion of questions of religion went on as heartily in the West as in the East, until certain conditions, to be noted presently, rendered their discussion "stale, flat, and unprofitable." People have not left off talking about religion because it created ill-feeling, but because the drift of modern civilisation makes it more and more a thing apart from their every-day lives.

The just-issued address of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference comes much nearer the true state of things in the following note on the spread of Secularism:—

"For in Secularism—not its theory, indeed, but its temper and habit—our chief danger lies both within and without the Church. It is not so much this doctrine or that, this institution of our faith or that, which is imperilled, but religion in its very being. With multitudes of the peoples of Christian Europe, God and the eternal are mere nonentities. Art and science, literature and the press, the great instruments and factors of civilised life, are largely un-Christian in their animus. The secular atmosphere that we breathe in this age of universal intercourse is laden with the infection of materialism; it has spread an impalpable haze over all

things divine, and thrown out a heat and glare of sensuous excitement that penetrate our most sheltered circles."

One may overlook the sinister implication of the "infection" of Materialism and the "sensuous" excitement created by modern life, in the appreciation of the clear and distinct issue raised. The passage contains in a nutshell the real cause of the decline of the interest in religious subjects, in sharp contrast to Mr. Allen's fanciful reasonings on the subject. Religious beliefs are not threatened specially by a discovery here or there so much as they are threatened by the whole tendency of modern life. Art, science, and literature develop when not in direct antagonism to religious beliefs; at least, in complete independence of them. The last question that any contemporary scientist would dream of putting to himself on the eve of an important discovery would be its bearings on religion. The member of Parliament who based his support or opposition to a proposed measure upon purely religious grounds would be voted a fossil by a large majority of his fellow-members. So far as the press supports religion, it does so because it is crystallised in institutions, not because it represents sincere intellectual conviction. In the words of the address from which I have quoted, we live in a "secular atmosphere," and against its influence all struggling is more or less hopeless.

There is one more sentence in the address that is highly suggestive. "The old seclusion and separateness are broken down," it remarks; and this circumstance is far from unimportant in the consideration of the decline of religion. So long as people are isolated they are local in their sympathies, intolerant in their opinions, undeveloped in their nature; in a word, religious. The villager clings to his religious beliefs with far greater tenacity than the townsman, the agriculturalist than the artisan. The most powerful cause of the survival of the Jewish religion has undoubtedly been the persecution to which its votaries have been subjected. They have been shut out from a large part of the civilisation around them, compelled to seek within their own communion for the social fellowship they were denied elsewhere, living for generations a class apart from their fellows; and this very "exclusion and separateness" has preserved a religion that might otherwise have long since disappeared. It is the same with all forms of religious belief. Keep it clear from intercourse with other forms of religious belief, and you may retain its strength; place it in constant intercourse with different forms, and its influence inevitably grows weaker.

But this separateness is no longer possible. English Protestants cannot go on regarding Continental Catholics as monsters of iniquity when the press, and the thousand and one different methods of international intercourse, furnish ample proof that, given an identity of other conditions, human nature in either Church is pretty much alike. Educated Christians cannot continue to look on other religions as "not only mistaken, but wicked," when each year brings fresh proofs of how much Christianity is indebted to these other religions, that they embody the same ideas, and have sprung from the same conditions. For a time apologists may postpone the inevitable end by pleading that all these religions have caught glimpses of a truth that Christianity possesses in full measure; but, in the long run, comparative mythology gives Christianity its proper place as one of many forms of religious delusion, while the science of anthropology shows the primitive human conditions from which all these delusions have originated.

After all, the defenders of religion are fighting more than an individual or a society of individuals. An individual may be crushed, a society may be exterminated; but who can resist the slow, corrosive action of thousands of almost impalpable forces, all combining towards a given end? Mrs. Partington's endeavor to sweep back the Atlantic with a broom was child's-play compared to the task of trying to stop the march of civilisation with a sermon, or dam the stream of discovery with a text. Men and women have not lost their interest in religion easily or lightly. Their rejection has often been a process that has been fought against strongly, and only completed by sheer pressure of intellectual

and social developments. They have discovered, at the cost of hard experience, the truth of the bitter lament, "God does nothing"; that all they had, and all that they could hope for, had been, and must be, secured by human industry and human intelligence. "The declining interest in religion" is only the finishing touches to a process that commenced with the earliest questionings of religious doctrines. Men die of many diseases, religions principally of one—that of being found out. And men are finding out religion, its uselessness, its artificiality, its ruinous and wasteful expenditure of time and energy that might be usefully spent in the higher interests of the race.

C. COHEN.

Shakespeare: The Man.—III.

HIS VIEWS ON LIFE AND DEATH.

WE should like to follow Mr. Goldwin Smith through several other applications of his criteria, particularly as to Shakespeare's social and political leanings, and more especially as to his view of the natural and inevitable relation of the sexes. But we feel that our review must now be concluded, and we desire to devote the whole of this instalment of it to Shakespeare's views on life and death. This is a subject, no doubt, on which it is possible for different persons to hold a great variety of opinions. Just as Shakespeare has been shown to have followed a considerable number of trades and professions—which is a tribute to the universality of his information—so he has been argued to have been a Roman Catholic, a member of the Church of England, and a Nonconformist. Our own opinion, for which reasons will be given presently, is that he was neither. Some of the principal commentators have noticed, with regret and even with dismay, what they are pleased to call the levity with which he too often treats religious topics. Gifford, the zealous editor of Ben Jonson, called Shakespeare the coryphæus of profanity. He certainly put into the mouths of clowns and fools, for whom he could claim a traditional license, some remarkable thrusts at the tenets of the Christian religion. We intend to elaborate this point in our projected work on Shakespeare. For the present it must suffice to call the reader's attention to it. Those who have read the plays carefully will recollect many instances. We must likewise remark that more than one commentator has dwelt upon the great poet's scepticism. Mr. Green, the historian, for instance, admits that he stood outside all Churches and outside all religion. It will be apparent, therefore, that we are far from being alone in our opinion of Shakespeare's religious (or irreligious) convictions.

Mr. Goldwin Smith is very certain that Shakespeare was not a Nonconformist. He threw ridicule upon the Puritans. "Least of all," Mr. Smith says, "can it be maintained that Shakespeare was a Roman Catholic." His noble presentation of the friar in *Romeo and Juliet* only shows that he was "a large-minded artist." He was true to nature, and he knew that there were good as well as bad and indifferent in the army of priests and monks. Elsewhere he makes a character speak of something being as fit "as the nun's lips to the friar's mouth," and a host of similar things might be quoted if we had room for them. We are also glad to hear Mr. Goldwin Smith declare his view that "The ghost and the purgatory in *Hamlet* are evidently a mere part of the fiction." This is true all round. The supernatural in Shakespeare is mere stage machinery. It is never allowed to interfere really with the natural development of the plot and characters, or to precipitate a catastrophe. Even in *Hamlet*, where the ghost appears so decisively as a superficial reader might easily imagine, it will be found on a close examination that it does not actually hasten the natural progress of events. Further, we beg the reader to note that the supernatural which Shakespeare uses as stage machinery is never distinctively Christian. He introduces no angels or devils. Ghosts, fairies, and fates—for such are the so-called witches in *Macbeth*—belong to the immemorial primitive superstition of mankind; and, instead of being distinctively Christian, are distinctively anti-Christian.

Mr. Goldwin Smith says we may "safely" take it that Shakespeare was "a Conformist." But we may just as "safely" take the opposite. Whether he was a church-goer, Mr. Goldwin Smith says, we have "no means of telling." Nor does it very much matter. He may have gone to church to please his wife, or his relatives and friends, or to divert attention from his own convictions in an age when heresy was so dangerous. He was not an apostle, and could hardly be expected to graduate as a martyr. "Atheistical or irreligious," our author declares, "he evidently was not. His general spirit is religious." But this is a matter of opinion, and other critics have taken a very different view. What does Mr. Goldwin Smith mean by "religious"? If he defined the word, or his use of it, we might discuss the matter. But in the absence of definition we might simply answer what he would assure us that he never meant. For, at this time of day, the word "religious" has contracted a dangerous ambiguity.

After referring to the turbulence of that age in the religious sphere, Mr. Goldwin Smith remarks that difference of opinion on the gravest questions was not confined to the Catholics and Protestants.

"Religious controversies and wars had not failed to produce their natural effect in breeding among men of more daring spirit, or perhaps more libertine lives, total scepticism or indifference to religion. Among the Bohemians of the theatre this tendency was likely to prevail. Marlowe is maligned as a blatant atheist, an utterer of horrible and damnable opinions, who had written a book against the Trinity and defamed Christ. The imputation was extended to other Bohemians."

Reference is then made to Giordano Bruno, the great Freethought martyr, whose odyssey as a hunted heretic included a visit to England. He found much to disgust him at Oxford.

"But in London he found to his satisfaction comparative freedom of thought and speech. A circle, of which Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Fulke Greville were the chiefs, and of which Bruno was a member, discussed questions of science and philosophy with closed doors. So far as social position was concerned, Shakespeare might possibly have found his way into that circle."

One would like to know that Shakespeare and Bruno really met in London. Each would have felt the other's greatness. And what a thought, that the world's supreme poet had clasped the hand of the world's supreme martyr!

We have another quotation to make from Mr. Goldwin Smith. When he comes to Shakespeare's views of life and death, he is compelled to write as follows:—

"When Shakespeare touches the problem of human existence or that of the world to come, we cannot help feeling that we are in contact with a mind more like that of Giordano Bruno, or rather that of the Elizabethan liberals, than that of an orthodox Anglican Divine. The soliloquy in *Hamlet* presents nothing sceptical; yet it and Hamlet's general utterances are pervaded by the spirit of an unsolved mystery. We do not know 'in that sleep of death what dreams may come.' The world beyond the grave is 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.' To die is to 'go we know not where.' We are such stuff as dreams are made on; and our little life is rounded with a sleep.' This globe of ours, 'like an unsubstantial pageant, will vanish and leave not a wreck [rack?] behind.' That Shakespeare himself speaks in such passages cannot be affirmed, but may surely, without much improbability, be divined."

We think this is true as far as it goes. We also think it is far from being the whole truth. It seems to us that it can be proved that Shakespeare himself speaks in such passages. The very same sentiments about life and death are assigned to all his characters who are distinguished by intellectual power. Differ as they may in other respects; let them be mild or daring, noble or wicked, scrupulously just or recklessly ambitious; if they possess *intellect* they all speak essentially the same language in regard to death. Hamlet speaks like Macbeth, and Prospero like Cæsar. It may, of course, be replied that Shakespeare, as a great dramatic artist, only made these lofty ones speak in character. But that comes to the very same thing in the end. It implies that Shakespeare felt those sceptical sentiments about "the great perhaps" to be appropriate

to men of powerful intelligence. And what is that, at bottom, but a confession that those sentiments were his own?

No person in the whole gallery of Shakespeare's creations ever derives the least consolation from the thought of an after-life. More than one shrink from it in apprehension and terror. Shakespeare had looked into the great abyss, when the sun was shining and in the silent watches of the night, and he saw within it the doom of all mortality. That he was, nevertheless, the great poet of the joy of life, only proves that his colossal genius was wedded to invincible sanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity Unscientific.

IN my remarks upon the Christian and Scientist, which appeared in these columns last week, I showed that those who accept the revelations of modern science cannot at the same time be consistent believers in Christianity. I now propose to adduce additional proof that the Christian faith is thoroughly unscientific.

Science means verified truth; therefore all scientists must reject the Christian teaching of a general resurrection at the judgment day. To verify such teaching is, of course, impossible. The belief in it is based upon a conjecture which is at variance with scientific knowledge. For instance, it is now an admitted fact that the quantity of matter is always the same, and that after death the materials of which our bodies are composed will be used for other purposes. If this is so, the bodies cannot reappear at the supposed resurrection, inasmuch as their component parts will have been transformed to other forms of existence. A recent writer has put the case thus: "If all the human beings that have ever existed in the world have to rise again in their bodily form at the 'day of judgment,' it is quite certain that they cannot appear unless all the matter of their bodies can be found; and it is equally certain that the mass of matter composing the whole human race from first to last would exceed many times over the total quantity of matter on this earth of which the human body is composed. Organic matter is used over and over again in the formation of living bodies, so that, in raising the dead, it will be found that the same matter has gone towards the formation of countless human creatures. *Neither the same bodies, nor an equal number, can, therefore, ever exist again.* That is quite certain; and it effectually disposes of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body."

Of course, the orthodox Christian can fall back upon the theory of miracles, but the scientist, as such, cannot, for his science admits of no departure from natural causation. Whatever idea is attached to the term "miracle," it cannot be accepted by the scientist as something which interferes with the natural order of events. If it be said that a miracle is the effect of a supernatural cause, the scientist is unable to accept the statement, because, if it were true, it does not admit of scientific proof. He considers that any extraordinary event should be inquired into, and, if possible, compared with others. He does not designate all so-called miracles as intended falsehoods, for he is willing to grant that the notion of miracles might have had its origin in the imperfections of the human mind. We know from experience that the birth, life, and death of human beings depend upon natural conditions. The variations in the lives of those who are termed the upper, middle, and lower classes attest the existence of different causes producing different results. To me it appears inconceivable that a God who is all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful should allow such varied and opposite conditions to obtain as now exist among the rich and poor. On the one hand there are wealth and comfort, and on the other poverty and suffering. Now, the scientist recognises the fact that societary affairs are regulated by natural and economic causes, and not by any supernatural Providence in which Christians profess to believe. He must, therefore, if he is consistent, reject at least this feature of the Christian belief.

But the scientist not only excludes the supposed supernatural from the ordinary affairs of every-day life,

he also recognises the reign of natural law in intellectual and moral operations. He has learnt that reliance upon the "stability of natural law" forms the basis of general calculations in providing for man's future comfort and advancement. Our commercial, educational, and legislative enterprises are all carried on upon the belief in the regularity of nature's functions. Persons secure insurance policies upon their lives and property as though no causes were in operation that could affect them injuriously, except those that can be calculated upon. This is thoroughly opposed to the Christian teaching of "special Providence," and the capricious interference of a God in human affairs. The Bible records numerous instances where the known laws of nature were said to have been set aside, and where, in answer to prayer, the very opposite results happened to those which might have been expected from the operations of the regular order of nature. (See Genesis xx. 7; Exodus viii. 12 and 13; Numbers xi. 1 and 2; 1 Samuel i. 10-20; and James i. 5; v. 13, 15, 17, and 18.) No scientist can believe that what is stated in the passages here referred to is true, and therefore he cannot be a Christian. Furthermore, science teaches that there cannot be two opposite predominating forces operating at the same time in nature. If the one prevail, the other must be subordinate. The orthodox Christian alleges that the world is governed by a God and a Devil, both of whom are supposed to have unlimited power in influencing human actions. From a scientific standpoint, this dual existence is incredible. The reality of a personal Devil is as clearly taught in the Bible as that of a personal Deity; but no scientist at the present day would risk his reputation by avowing his belief in the existence of his Satanic Majesty.

It may be alleged that we have no right to say what a scientist may or may not believe. Upon some questions this may be so; but it does not apply to scientific subjects. The inductive method, the law of cause and effect, and the process by which scientific truth can properly be established, are generally considered as beyond dispute. Hence, while we may not be able to determine in every instance what a scientist should believe, we can safely say that, if he is consistent, he cannot accept as true that which is opposed to the demonstrations of science. Probably it will be urged that a scientist may be excused for accepting beliefs inconsistent with known facts, upon the ground that he is compelled to adopt such a course by the conditions of society. We read that Darwin confessed that in his early life the theological notions then prevailing induced him to adopt terms implying the very opposite to the conclusions at which his scientific studies caused him to arrive. In the case of Lyell and Hugh Miller the retarding influence of theology is said to have produced painful consequences. It should, however, be remembered that scientists are but men, and, like Christians, are amenable to the general conditions which affect our common nature. Moreover, the same intellectual discrimination which is shown in reference to scientific truths may not be so manifest when applied to religious subjects. The truth of this was illustrated by Newton and Faraday. Newton, when writing on prophecy, was a very different man intellectually than when he dealt with the law of gravitation; and Faraday, when talking to a congregation of a class of obscure Dissenters, differed widely from the able expounder of chemistry, which undoubtedly he was. It by no means follows that, because a man is great in one line of thought, he is equally so upon all questions to which he directs his attention. This was evident in the case of Gladstone as a statesman and as a theologian. The same may be said of Wallace and Crookes. In matters of science these two men rely upon demonstration, but in theories of speculation they are content to rest on emotional belief.

To sum up. The scientist relies upon nature and her manifold potentialities; upon the stability of natural law as the basis of all his calculations; upon the belief in the indestructibility of matter and force; upon the theory of evolution; and, finally, upon the fact that belief is the result of evidence, the validity of which can be tested by human reason during man's sojourn on earth. The Christian, on the contrary, rests his claims upon what he terms the supernatural; upon the interference of an "over-ruling providence" in natural affairs;

upon the assumption that the universe began, and that in due time it will end; upon the theory of special creation; and also upon the supposition that belief is voluntary, the ultimate result of which can be known only in some future existence.

Now, it will be seen that between the Christian and the scientist there is a marked divergence, and that the belief and method of the two cannot reasonably be accepted at the same time. It is to science that we are indebted for physical development, intellectual improvement, ethical culture, and the acquirement of social comforts; while the claims of the Christian make belief more important than demonstration, and the consideration of some imaginary future world of greater consequence than the study of our present existence.

CHARLES WATTS.

Maternal Piety.

"Children have a keenness of judgment and a delicacy of impression which would not be imagined unless one has studied them. Justice and equity are easily born in their minds, for they possess, above all things, positive logic."—GUSTAV DROZ, in *Monsieur, Madame et Bébé*.

A PRESIDING Member of the Mothers' Union contributes a lengthy article to the *Church Times* on "A Question of the Day"—the question for her being, of course, the religious instruction of children. Naturally one is inclined to read the contribution with considerable respect, which might be greater if there were not a latent suspicion that the article is not entirely, though ostensibly, a feminine production. Each year, according to the writer, brings its problems, which are mostly new phases of old thoughts, but have nevertheless to be confronted and solved. There is no doubt, the writer adds, that one of the most pressing questions which now puzzle thoughtful minds concerns the attitude that should be taken with regard to Biblical criticism—*i.e.*, How should our children be taught to study the Bible?

On this point the Mothers' Union representative is so "decided and emphatic"—to use her own words—that one rather trembles for the offspring under her care; which care may, of course, be tender and gentle to the extent of indulgence, but seems more likely, from the general tone of her article, to be of the stern and unflinching order.

With charming dogmatism she declares: "The Higher Criticism is for children unnecessary, dangerous, and injurious. A child should never be allowed to approach the Bible in a questioning spirit, or be permitted to ask, 'Is this true?'" Well, we will say nothing about the Higher Criticism as a part of the curriculum of children; but—a child not to ask questions! Why, the whole period of childhood is one long note of interrogation. How on earth are the little ones to emerge from childhood in the matter of information and reasoning faculty if they are not to be permitted to inquire and form their own little judgments, perhaps afterwards to be corrected by themselves or others, but still a strengthening and helpful and hopeful exercise at the time? Why may they not ask questions about the Bible which is forced upon them, and why may they not inquire, "Is this true?"

As we read on in this *Church Times* article we begin to build up in our mind's eye the kind of matron who has written it. Needless to say, our imaginative portrait is far, far different to that delightful sketch of maternity which Gustav Droz has drawn for us in his inimitable work quoted from above.

To continue. This very much "Presiding Member of the Mothers' Union" lays it down that, "whatever critics may say or may dispute concerning the dates, histories, miracles, scientific facts of the Old Testament, the Bible must be approached as the one Divine Book—the message of God to mankind." Well, if we were the lady's husband, perhaps by dint of long training, we might sit meekly down and accept this dictum, whether we liked it or not. But not being so, we may, perhaps, be permitted to inquire whether she has fully considered what she means by that "whatever." It comprises so much that it cannot be given away, even for the sake of argument, without the divine character of the book going with it.

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"Mistranslations do not affect its value." They do; and, when rectified, the Book is not very much the better. But "mistranslations" in themselves are a reflection upon the Almighty Author, who, with every possible resource at his hand, seems not to have been able to find a less clumsy method of conveying his all-important message to mankind.

"The Higher Criticism may be overturned and become obsolete twenty years hence." There is no probability of its being overturned, but it may become obsolete, in the sense that the bulk of rational people will by that time have discarded as of historical value the traditions and myths against which it is now directed.

"Meanwhile, the Word of God remains like a rock in the ocean, immovable, imperishable. It has been surrounded and assailed by storms and waves of criticism for hundreds of years. It has been attacked by Agnostics and Infidels, whose object is to undermine all faith by ridicule and false assertions. But the Bible has withstood learned criticism suggesting doubts and difficulties, and open attacks from unbelievers, and it will do so again to the end of time. It is the Voice of God for the healing of the nations. The harm done to individual souls by the doubts thrown on the miracles of the Old Testament is cruel, and may be irreparable."

This British matron, if she will forgive us for saying so, has obviously much to learn. It would be useless to reply to this fanfarade, which we are inclined to think is only an extract from her husband's latest and locally-praised sermon.

Later on, we are assured, on the same authority, that the danger of doubts aroused by the Higher Criticism concerning particular miracles of the Old Testament is that it leads to the questioning of *all* miracles. No doubt; the miracles are pretty much of the same class throughout the Bible; those recorded in the New Testament being not a whit more credible than those which are set forth in the Old Testament.

"And this attitude of mind is perhaps the most baneful, deadly, and fatal that can assail a human being, for it brings many a one to the utter wreckage of faith." What a dreadful climax and calamity! "Wreckage" sounds as if a man were utterly overwhelmed and dashed to pieces, and only bits of him left to be picked up afterwards as flotsam and jetsam. But as far as mere faith in the Scriptures is concerned, there may be a very happy *Resurgam*, and in most, possibly in all, cases there is.

The Presiding Member of the Mothers' Union is "well aware that those who are pained at the Higher Criticism of this age, and decline to teach it to their children, are stamped as behind the age, narrow-minded, and ignorant. We must accept this contempt, and have the courage of our opinions." Here we have a fine combination of the martyr-Amazon spirit, which, in some other cause, might be worthy of admiration.

The valiant lady asks, "What, for example, can be more dangerous to the faith of a child than the tone of some of the modern books which are put forth as aids for teachers and for pupils?"

"For instance, in one of the latest, *The Dawn of Revelation*, we find that 'the story of the ten plagues seems to express in an imaginative form an account of physical phenomena possible in Egypt'; that 'the crossing of the Red Sea was what we should now call *providential* rather than *miraculous*.'"

"Again, what can be more bewildering than to be told that 'the story of the smoking mountain seems to require a volcano, and as yet there have been no traces of volcanic action discovered there' (the Sinai of Exodus); 'consequently, that it must point to some spot in the Edomite hills not yet explored.' Or that 'the beautiful story of the manna is most likely an allegorical way of expressing how God gave them day by day their daily bread.' 'Manna is found in various parts of the Sinaitic desert; but it does not fall from heaven, but exudes from resinous shrubs which grow in some of the mountains.'"

In the same book, intended as an aid to teachers and pupils, Balaam's Ass is, alas, disposed of. It is said: "The story of the speaking ass' is plainly in the language of poetry; if put into prose, the ass would have been said to look round at her master with the 'speaking eyes' of remonstrance which we know so well in a dumb animal."

This evasion is, of course, absurd. We agree with the Mothers' Union representative when she says: "St. Peter certainly believed in the miracle as recorded in the

Old Testament, for he says: 'Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, was rebuked for his iniquity. The dumb ass, *speaking with man's voice*, forbade the madness of the prophet' (2 Peter ii. 16). Again, we are told that 'the story of the taking of Jericho must be looked upon as one of the national legends of the Israelites, and we cannot tell exactly what the facts of the siege of Jericho were in prose form.' 'Scientific men have discovered that certain sounds.....have the power of setting up vibrations so strong as to break down buildings.'"

The history of Elijah is disposed of in the same textbook by the observation that "the wonderful story of his departure is thought by some to be an allegorical way of representing that he died a martyr's death by fire."

This book, says the Presiding Member of the Mothers' Union, "is now widely used in some of our public schools. It is taught to many of our boys and girls, both at home and at school. It is in the hands of teachers. It has been much praised by notable persons. We find in it that the narrative of the Exodus cannot be considered as historical, and that when the Prophets foretold the future they were sometimes mistaken; but it is startling beyond words to come upon an intimation in a note in one part of the Prophecies of Isaiah to the following effect:—

"It seems not impossible that these short Anti-Babylonian prophecies may have been represented as prophecies of Isaiah to deceive the Chaldeans during the Exile, while the exiles themselves were quite aware of their source."

It may be "a grave responsibility to have thus sown broadcast the Elimination of the Supernatural in the minds of the young and uneducated, and to cultivate in them a doubting and critical spirit as regards the Bible." But the responsibility is not so grave, because the duty is incumbent to cultivate in the young a critical spirit, not merely as to the Bible, but all kinds of literature, ancient and modern, "sacred" or profane.

What is the use of trying, as this lady contributor to the *Church Times* would try, to prevent children asking, in relation to Bible narratives: "Is this true?" They will be sure to repeat the inquiry at a later stage in life, when they cannot be repressed, and when they will have a right to insist upon, and will find, an answer for themselves. Old Mrs. Partington tried to sweep back the waves of the Atlantic with a mop, but the effort was not attended even by partial success.

FRANCIS NEALE.

That Trip to England.

I COULD not visit England this year for several reasons:—

- 1st. Want of money.
- 2nd. Want of a substitute to do my work while away.
- 3rd. I was very ill in the early part of the year owing to the attempt of one of Carr's lambs to murder me. What may happen next year I cannot yet say.

I should not have mentioned the subject just now but for what appears in the *Freethinker*, June 10. Our friends in England held their annual Conference in London, June 3, and I find the following item in the report of the proceedings:—

"MR. JOSEPH SYMES.

"The President (Mr. Foote) moved, and Mr. Bater seconded, the following resolution, which was carried: 'That this Conference regrets to learn that Mr. Joseph Symes has been obliged to postpone his visit to England indefinitely, and that the Executive be authorised to raise a Special Fund to facilitate his visit in case of his being able to surmount the non-financial difficulties in the way of his temporarily leaving Australia.'"

"In the course of the discussion many kind things were said about Mr. Symes."

At present I can but say that I am extremely gratified and grateful for the altogether unexpected goodness of Mr. Foote and my other British friends. I have had to work so many years alone, and with very little recognition or outward encouragement, that this comes as a refreshing shower after a long drought.

I cannot yet say whether I shall be able to leave my work here, but I will certainly do my best to visit the old land next year. My one great difficulty will be to get a man to carry on the work during my absence. If that man does not turn up, I am at a loss to know how I can get away.

However, I beg to offer my sincerest thanks to my British friends for their extremely kindly action.

—*Liberator* (Melbourne).

JOS. SYMES.

Acid Drops.

ACCORDING to the *Daily News*, a clergyman's son fighting at the front in South Africa sent home for certain little comforts, and requested that the packet might be labelled "Religious Tracts," as it would be sure to get through quickly then, but otherwise nobody could tell when it would arrive, or whether it would arrive at all. What a commentary on the official methods of looking after poor Tommy Atkins!

Leniency versus severity is the subject of two notes in the *British Weekly*. In one note we are told that Lord Roberts has, by his leniency, followed the wisest course. In the next note we learn that the morning service in many London churches has been wisely shortened during the hot weather to an hour and a quarter. So that both the Church and the Army are disposed to manifest a little mercy just now. We are afraid, however, that the humor of placing the two notes together was unconscious on the part of the *B. W.*

"The oldest actual record of hanging," says *Pearson's Weekly*, "is the execution of his chief butler by Pharaoh, narrated in Genesis." We are sorry to correct our contemporary, but it was not the chief butler that Pharaoh hanged. It was the chief baker. Of course it doesn't much matter at this time of day which of them had his neck stretched, but it is just as well to be accurate. Above all, it is very bad form to let a Freethinker set a Christian right about the text of the Bible.

W. S. Lewis, of Canonbury, London, and J. Lewis, of Wakefield, both, it is stated, the sons of a Christian minister at Wednesbury, have been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for receiving a large quantity of stolen pills. Religious as they were, they were not foolish enough to swallow the pills themselves; their object was to sell them to their fellow Christians.

Catholic toleration is a noble thing, in appearance, when it is preached by Catholics who are in a minority and want the majority to give them equal rights. But how it changes when the Catholics are in a decisive majority themselves! Then they show that the historic, essential principle of their Church is the merciless suppression of "heresy." Recently at Rome, for instance, the Pope has shown what he would do in this line if he had the power. In a letter to the Cardinal Vicar he denounces the free propagation of Protestantism in Italy. Unfortunately, he says, it is permitted by law, and therefore it must be opposed by a counter propaganda. Yes, that is so; but it is pretty clear how soon it would be otherwise if the Pope could only have his way.

The following story is told of the recently-retired Irish Law Lord, Lord Morris of Spiddal, when acting as Judge of Assize in Ireland. A dispensary doctor proved that he had often given eight grains to a man, from which it was to be inferred that twelve for a horse was not excessive. "Tell me this," said the Judge. "The twelve grains—wouldn't they kill the Devil himself if he swallowed them?" The doctor was annoyed, and pompously replied: "I don't know, my lord; I never had him for a patient." The Bench: "Ah, no, docther, ye niver had; more's the pity. The old bhoy's still alive."—*Reynolds' Newspaper*.

The Wesleyan Conference is issuing a Pastoral letter, which will be read in the principal chapels in September. Meanwhile, the public are favored with a little "advance" information as to its character. This letter, we are told, after a suitable introduction, proceeds to point out "that in Secularism, not its theory, but its temper and habit, lies one of the chief dangers to religion. With multitudes of the peoples of Christian Europe, God and the eternal are mere nonentities. Art and science, literature and the press, are largely un-Christian in their animus." "The Secular atmosphere," it says, "is laden with the infection of materialism." Which means, we presume, that the people are more and more bent on making the best for themselves of this world, instead of feeding, clothing, and housing a lot of lazy priests for promising them splendid things in the world to come.

Are there dogs in heaven? This question has been ventilated in the *Westminster Gazette*. One correspondent, apparently a parson, thinks that there must be a future life for dogs, and a place where they will be compensated for their gratuitous sufferings here. Did I not think so, the gentleman exclaims, I could "never believe in a God of infinite love and justice as I do." In other words, there must be a heaven for dogs in order to allow this gentleman to retain his religious opinions comfortably. Finally, he says: "I can see immortality in my dog's loving eyes." Perhaps this is creditable to his feelings, but it is a very poor compliment to his intelligence.

Another correspondent points out that, according to Revelation xxii. 15, dogs are outside heaven; whereupon another

correspondent says that this "proves conclusively that dogs exist hereafter." But does the word "dog" in this text really mean the four-footed animal we are all familiar with? We think not. In the Old Testament, the price of a dog was not to be paid into the sanctuary. But scholars know very well what that means, and we venture to think that a similar meaning should be attached to the word "dog" in Revelation. Of course the subject is too scabrous to be dealt with in a journal like ours, which is read by old and young and by both sexes.

"Buy of Wiggins." This is the end of a very pious advertisement in the *Grays and Tilbury Gazette*. We regard the advertisement as extremely characteristic. The real upshot of most exhortations and services is "Buy of Wiggins." Take away the element of profit, and Christianity, like other religions, would soon collapse.

Every champion of anti-infidelity manages sooner or later to obtain his own special converted Atheist. There is no exception to the rule in the case of the Rev. A. J. Waldron. This gentleman relates in the *Sunday Reader* how "Tom Howard" drifted into infidelity, went to the Hall of Science, listened to the seductive eloquence of Mrs. Besant, and then fell into drunkenness and lust. But at length he found that "Atheism, drink, lust, failed to satisfy," and he was finally brought back to his mother's faith by Mr. W. T. Lee at Plymouth. We suppose this story may be regarded as a compliment to Mr. Lee; although, if there be any truth in rumor, Mr. Lee is not very likely to indulge in public praise of Mr. Waldron. Perhaps the story is intended as a peace offering. But that is a matter between the gentlemen themselves. What we should like to know is the present whereabouts of "Tom Howard." "To-day," Mr. Waldron says, "he is engaged in Christian work." Will he kindly give us this convert's real name and address?

Meanwhile we beg to record our high appreciation of Mr. Waldron's "Christian charity." His veracity, of course, has long been famous. Atheism, drunkenness, and lust, as all the world knows, naturally go together; and Mrs. Besant's Atheistic eloquence was just the thing to drive a young man down to the lowest stages of degradation. All the world knows that too. Indeed, it is almost a pity that Mr. Waldron does not go in for greater novelties. He might try his hand at an Atheist pickpocket or an Atheist burglar. But it may be that he is not so familiar with the vices of such artists, and is apprehensive that his picture might lack actuality.

"Christianity," says an official correspondent of the *Daily News*, "wears the aspect of a political conspiracy, hatched by foreign Powers and supported by foreign arms, against Chinese society and the Chinese government. It was forced upon the country by treaties which China was powerless to resist."

"The Chinaman," this correspondent continues, "sees in the missionary simply the advance agent of Imperialism, and in his propaganda only a cloak for a stealthy attack on the Chinese Commonwealth. And missionaries do not do everything they might to discourage the political aspect of their labors. They hold themselves above Chinese laws; some of them take on the swelling part of provincial Viceroy's. Their converts are often drawn from the worst possible sources. The dishonest debtor, the defalcating trustee, the social outcast, men who have nothing to gain by remaining Chinamen, are the first to become convinced of the beauties of Christianity. The missionary supports them with food and money, fights their legal battles for them, and as often as not secures for them a quasi-Consular protection. The missionaries and their converts constitute, in fact, an imperium in imperio, hostile to the governing classes and oppressive towards the poor."

Mr. Joseph Hatton states that he has received a number of letters remonstrating with him for his remarks in his weekly "Cigarette Papers" deprecating foreign missions. Bristol seems to be most concerned at his suggestion that Christian missionaries should keep out of India and China. On the other hand, he says he has received an equal number of commendatory letters.

He declines to withdraw "the ordinarily liberal sentiments" to which he has given expression, however much the ostentatious "religionist" may anathematise him. He says he knows many pious men and women who think that the money spent in China and Japan would be better laid out in home missions. And he gives his critics to understand that even a "cigarette maker" may have the courage of his opinions.

The Rev. H. R. Haweis says: "I am dead against missions to the Jews (which, of course, must always be absurd as long as we are indebted to them for the whole of the literature on which our religion is based), and against missions to the Hindoos, Mohammedans, and Chinese kept up by societies in the mother country."

A Sunday-school tea meeting took place recently at Nechells, Birmingham, to which the mothers of the children were invited. While the women were enjoying themselves, their babies were handed over to the care of the elder children, with the consequence that an extraordinary mixing up of babies ensued.

About ten o'clock the women departed with their families, and duly arrived at home. While undressing her infant one woman discovered she had become possessed of the wrong child, and forthwith commotion ensued. The little girl who had charge of it did not know the child to whom she had handed the right baby; and, although a return was made to the schoolroom, no trace of the other baby could be discovered. All night long the mournful mother continued her investigations without success. In fact, it was not until the next morning that the right baby was returned, the woman who had it, incredible as it may seem, having undressed it and slept with it the whole of the night without finding out the mistake.

If the occasion had not been a Sunday-school tea meeting, we should have suspected that something stronger than tea was imbibed. Perhaps the mothers were drunk "in the spirit" of the Lord, as John of Patmos appears to have been.

A Leeds vicar is much concerned about the indiscriminate baptism of infants. He seems to think that the holy rite is wasted on many wretched little mortals in our large towns who are evidently doomed to be brought up in heathenism. "The custom is," he says, "for parents and friends, who never enter any place of worship, whose children go to no Sunday-school, and who blaspheme God, to bring their infants to the font and go through a service of which they hardly understand a word, and listen to instructions to which they pay no heed. Are we right, in these days of heathenism at home, and of the alienation of the mass of the people from the Church, in continuing to adopt methods which imply that the whole nation is loyal to the Church of England?"

What does he mean? Has he the sinister design of endangering the "eternal salvation" of these poor mites because their parents blaspheme and do not attend church? The idea is too dreadful to contemplate.

Not piety, but pork. The following bit of racy humor appears in *The Farringdons*, the latest novel by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler: "They've no sense, men haven't," said Mrs. Hankey—"that's what's the matter with them." "You never spoke a truer word, Mrs. Hankey," replied Mrs. Bateson. "The very best of them don't properly know the difference between their souls and their stomachs, and they fancy they are a-wrestling with their doubts when really it is their dinners that are a-wrestling with them."

"Now, take Bateson hisself," continued Mrs. Bateson. "A kinder husband or better Methodist never drew breath; yet, so sure as he touches a bit of pork, he begins to worry hisself about the doctrine of election till there's no living with him. And then he'll sit in the front parlor, and engage in prayer for hours at a time, till I says to him: 'Bateson,' says I, 'I'd be ashamed to go troubling the Lord with a prayer, when a pinch o' carbonate o' soda would set things straight again.'"

The late D. L. Moody occasionally spoke with sturdy common sense. This was especially noticeable when he dealt with modern notions of prayer. On one occasion he delivered himself as follows: "There is a new kind of philosophy nowadays which teaches that it is a very healthy exercise to pray, because it teaches us submission. God doesn't change in His plans for us; we don't get anything more by asking, but then just ask—it is healthy exercise! Suppose that in the dead of winter, when the thermometer is down at zero, a man who has been stuck for twenty-four hours in a drift manages to get to my house at midnight, and rings the bell. I go to the window, and say: 'Who is there?' 'Mr. —, I have been in a snow-bank twenty-four hours, and I am dying. Won't you help me?' 'Well,' I say, 'I have a fixed rule never to open my door until morning, but you just keep on knocking; it will do you good; it is a healthy exercise.' That is a fair illustration of the way some people would have us look at prayer. Christ said, 'Ask and ye shall receive.'"

Being exhorted and instigated thereto by their pastor, the Rev. Gay Bryant, the Methodists of Shoal Creek, Cherokee county, N. C., assembled about the church of the Sanctificationists at that place on July 28, set fire to the edifice, and burned it to the ground. While the building was burning the Rev. Bryant preached a sermon to the infuriated crowd, exhorting them to continue the destruction of the property of the Sanctificationists, and endorsing their action in setting fire to the church. It is not reported that the authorities

took cognisance of this outrage by Methodist Boxers.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Poor Dr. Parker! He is now away on a holiday, and it is charitable to hope that he may not hear of the liberties taken with his name during his absence. But imagine his feelings if he learnt that the Institute of Journalists, who have invited him to preach to them in connection with their forthcoming annual Conference in London, have announced him on their program as "Dr. John Parker."

This should inspire him to an eloquent discourse to the budding "journalists" on the virtue of accuracy, though, by the way, he is no great shining light in that respect himself. He might take occasion to inform them that he has been known, in London at least, for many years as "Dr. Joseph Parker." Possibly they may not have been aware of it, for such is fame, but his Christian name has always been "Joseph." Furthermore, that, in common politeness, the least thing that can be done when you invite a celebrated Divine (oh, yes, Dr. Parker would so describe himself) to preach to you is to make yourself acquainted with his patronymic.

"Damn the Sultan!" said Dr. Parker on one memorable occasion in an access of indignation. May he not feel inclined to exclaim a little later on, when he hears of this almost insulting and quite inexcusable blunder, "Damn the journalists!"?

The Rev. Henry M. Wharton, D.D., who has been associated with the late Dwight L. Moody, the Rev. Dr. Munhall, and the Rev. Charles Yatman in evangelistic work, was arrested at Asbury Park last Saturday on a charge of obtaining 8,000 dollars by fraud. A woman gave him 6,000 dollars-worth of property with which to establish a home for the orphans of the Spanish war, and he at once mortgaged the same, raising 5,000 dollars on one mortgage and 8,000 dollars on the other. He did not tell the holder of the second mortgage that the property had already been plastered. Wharton is a Baptist. He says that the matter will be satisfactorily explained. His inability to realise the extent of his turpitude reveals a well-developed case of clergyman's mind.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Bramwell Booth, of Salvation Army fame, is given to heroic measures. He has noticed in the East-end the amount of courting that goes on between young lovers at street corners and in blind alleys. According to a writer in the *Examiner*, he has in this connection expressed his belief that it would be a good thing to have attached to every Salvation Army barracks "social parlors," where young people and old could come in freely for social intercourse with each other, and carry on their courting indoors.

Well, there are possible dangers about the project. Though all might be well if the "social parlors" were spacious apartments utilised by many couples simultaneously, with strict supervision over all. And then, of course, the thing would become a "dead letter."

We haven't yet heard the last of the gifted Sheldon in this country. A parting interview with him is published, in which he is good enough to say that, "in his judgment, it would be difficult to run a morning paper on perfectly Christian lines, because of the Monday morning issue, which involves Sunday labor." This is a knock at all the morning dailies. Still more at the Sabbatarians who rush with avidity to their Monday morning newspaper, after declaiming, it may be the previous evening, against the evil of Sunday labor.

A startling discovery has been made by the Rev. Price Hughes. He says that "the ceaseless attacks of the infatuated secular press upon the rest, quiet, and sacred leisure of Sunday have already produced their national results even upon the history of our lunatic asylums." Some medical superintendent of a lunatic asylum has told him that a large majority of the cases of insanity that have come under his care are due to the fact that the miserable men in question have worked seven days a week.

That may be so; but the "infatuated secular press" have never advocated seven days' work a week. Quite the contrary; they have insisted upon at least one day's rest in seven, and secular common sense has practically established, in addition, a half-day's rest on Saturday for most employees, and on Thursday, or some other day in the week, for shop assistants. There never was any danger of working-people losing one day's cessation from work in a week. The great trouble with Price Hughes, and others of the sky-piloting class, is that that one day is not invariably on Sunday. That is the day they have monopolised for themselves in the name of the Lord. They want everybody to be free on that day, so that they may be laid hold of and dragged to the various conventicles—Church and Nonconformist. But that is not at all the rational idea of rest and recreation.

If anything is likely to lead to insanity in connection with the Sabbath, it is the dismal, depressing dulness of the day as it is now observed. As for the patients referred to by the medical superintendent, they will probably be found to be persons who have voluntarily over-worked themselves in spite of the plainest demands of rational hygiene and the exhortations of their friends.

The *Congregationalist* notes that, of the outgoing class at Yale, the total number of graduates who will enter the ministry is very small in proportion to the size of the class, and the same statement holds good respecting the classes at Amherst, Williams, and the other institutions that have been feeders of the ministry. The *Watchman* is authority for the statement that there are now less than two dozen students to attend the instruction of nine professors at Andover Theological Seminary. The decline began soon after the retirement of Professors Park and Phelps, and the introduction of a more liberal theology.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A tremendous thunderstorm which recently burst over West Norwood supplied a preacher at the Chatsworth-road Baptist Chapel with what the *British Weekly* describes as "an illustration for a very beautiful sermon." Probably the preacher improved the occasion. His text was, "Is not God in the height of heavens?" So high apparently that he does not notice how often, when he arranges a big thunderstorm, his own "sacred edifices" suffer from his own lightning darts.

At Great Marlow a lofty church spire has just been restored after damage by lightning. Curiously enough, a local young lady imitated a steeplejack by climbing to the top of the spire. One of these days we shall hear of local young ladies climbing into the pulpits. Certainly they would be far more attractive there than the male "old women" who at present occupy many of the ecclesiastical rostrums.

An obituary appears in the *Methodist Times* of a lady worker in connection with the Methodist Church at Kettering. We are told that the following verse, which she quoted more than once, exactly expressed the state of her mind:—

What have I then wherein to trust?
I nothing have, I nothing am;
Excluded is my every boast,
My glory swallowed up in shame.

The natural rhyme in the concluding line is, of course, "sham." That seems to be a much more appropriate word in connection with this pious mock humility.

How good of the Rev. Dr. Amory Bradford to say: "I have seldom fallen in with a man who was a dishonest doubter." Even a burglar may have something good at the bottom of him. How nice to know that we can be incredulous, and still be credited with integrity. The *Christian World* suggests that Dr. Amory Bradford's declaration may be "very shocking to many who read it, but very helpful to some others." There is not much to be said for the observation and mental capacity of either the "many" or the "others."

That light and airy *littérateur*, Augustine Birrell, in his recently-published *Essays*, writes in the following shocking terms of the saintly Hannah More and the class she represented: "Hannah More was the first, and I trust the worst, of a large class—the ugliest of her daughters Hannah, if I may parody a poet she affected to admire. This class may be imperfectly described as 'the well-to-do Christian.' It inhabited snug places in the country, and kept an excellent, if not dainty, table. The money it saved in a ball-room it spent upon a greenhouse. Its horses were fat, and its coachmen invariably present at family prayers. Its pet virtue was church twice on Sunday, and its peculiar horrors theatrical entertainments, dancing, and threepenny points. Outside its garden wall lived the poor, who, if virtuous, were for ever curtseying to the ground or wearing neat uniforms, except when expiring upon truckle-beds beseeching God to bless the young ladies of the Grange or the Manor House, as the case might be."

Apropos of the not generally known fact that Colonel Legge, the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, conducted a prayer-meeting in a room in the House of Commons, a religious weekly alludes to the official prayers in the House itself. It explains that these are said by the Chaplain (Canon Wilberforce) kneeling beside the Speaker. Then it says: "They are conducted devoutly and solemnly, no strangers or reporters being permitted by their presence to divert the attention of the worshippers."

This is rather a funny allusion to the reporters. How would their presence in the gallery distract the members from their "devout and solemn" performance? Or is it an innuendo that they are a species of "unclean beast" who would defile

the atmosphere in these sanctified moments? Or is it feared that they would laugh and whisper and make fun of the solemn farce? It may be safely said that the members are fully entitled to their privacy during this preliminary as far as reporters are concerned. We should be very much surprised to hear that any pressman had expressed the faintest desire to be present at the function.

The religious scribe adds apparently with regret, and as a matter of reproach, what is well known—namely, that "many members attend not to pray, but merely to secure a seat for the remainder of the sitting."

The following is a fact. A party were driving in a brake to Hereford on a recent Sunday. One of them, a little girl, had been told by her mother to pray for a fine day. Coming home, the lassie said: "Ma, God has answered my prayers. He hasn't let it rain." "That's right," said her mother. "Oh but, Ma," said the child, who had evidently been taking the matter very seriously, "I had to give him a good talking to." Some Freethinkers who were present more than smiled.

Evangelist Bailey, a black servant of Christ, who preaches in the Parks, is evidently ill-acquainted with the English language in general, and with English orthography in particular. He signs himself "E. Bailey Evangelist." (Set it up precisely like that, please, Mr. Composer.) The handbill he distributes, announcing the sale of West Indies Cocoa Rock, West Indies Sauce, and West Indies Foreign Lavender, begs people to spend a penny on his goods in order to "rescue many from poverty." We presume the seller himself is included in the "many." "I call upon you," he says, "through Christ toward the poverty of Children and Adults." This is a curious piece of composition. It is to be hoped that his Rock and Sauce are of a better quality. Before signing his name, he says, "I kindly await your answer." Nice composition again! What he means is, "I await your kind answer." The kindness is not in the waiting seller, but in the expected purchaser. The black evangelist's friends should club together and send him to an evening school.

A young hopeful of ten thus replies in his school examination paper to the question, "Who were the Puritans, and why did they go to America?": "The puritans were a religious sect who left England because they were puriscytuid, they first went to Holland but left there and went to America because they did not want their children brought up boers and dutchmen. They were called puritans because they kept themselves clean in church and the king did not like this so they all went away."

The alienation of the masses from church is the subject of some editorial comments in the *Church Gazette*, which says that the working classes "attend church services less and less, and seem tending to forsake them entirely.....A still more lamentable feature, perhaps, in the case is provided by the fact that church congregations—such as they are—are nearly exclusively made up of women; and that, for some reason or other—we have very little doubt in our minds what that reason is—men are more and more utterly declining to go to church on any terms whatever."

Still more about the great fish story. A correspondent writes to the *Church Times* in support of the *Sheol* theory in regard to Jonah's strange adventure. He thinks that when Jonah was swallowed his soul entered *Sheol*, whilst his body remained dead in the fish's belly. When land was reached body and soul were re-united, and Jonah stepped out of the fish and on to the shore once more a live man.

There is just the little difficulty that the narrative says: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly"—rather a remarkable feat for a dead man. The *Sheol* theorist, however, is equal to the occasion. He says: "Jonah's prayer out of the whale's belly was probably a short precatory ejaculation, as he was gradually absorbed in the fish's bowels."

Isn't this too absurd for anything? Fancy describing thus a prayer extending over eight fairly-sized verses!

Mrs. Pew: "Oh, Dr. Proof-text, I was so edified by what you said this morning. I am sure your words sank so deep in my heart that I never shall forget them." Dr. Proof-text: "Indeed! What part of my discourse particularly impressed you?" Mrs. Pew: "That part of it where you spoke of the—about the where you referred to the—. Well, of course, I cannot repeat your words exactly, but the impression is ineffaceable."—*Boston Transcript*.

Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published 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. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 2, Freethought Demonstration, West Ham (3-30).
 September 9, 16, 23, London; 30, Glasgow.
 October 7, Manchester; 21, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—September 2, New Brompton; 9, 16, and 23, Secular Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell; 30, The Athenæum, 73 Tottenham Court-road. October 7, Glasgow; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton. November 4, Liverpool.—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.

THE Freethought Publishing Company, through Mr. Foote or Miss Vance, continues to receive a number of complaints from persons who have apparently not seen, or have disregarded, our continuous announcement, and have sent orders for this journal, or for books and pamphlets, to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., without being able to obtain any answer from him. We have already stated, and we repeat it, that the old shop in Stonecutter-street has for some time been definitively closed, that no sort of business is carried on there, and that Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, either as agent or otherwise. The Company cannot be answerable for anything posted to Mr. Forder, and it is practically useless to send the Company complaints concerning him.

UNIT.—Carlyle's *French Revolution* is the best graphic account in English. Mignet's (in Bohn's Library) is philosophical and excellent. The larger works on the subject by Lamartine, Thiers, and Louis Blanc—all written from different standpoints—might be read with advantage afterwards. Lamartine and Thiers have been translated into English. Louis Blanc's, we believe, can only be obtained in the original French.

J. W. WITTERING.—Ingersoll's *Defence of Freethought* is reprinting, and will be on sale again shortly. We overlooked dropping it out of the list for a while. You suggest that Mr. Foote should "make time" to write his contemplated volume on Shakespeare. Unfortunately, he cannot "make" time, but he will do his best to get the volume "through," as the Americans say.

H. DAWSON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

A. WEDDLE.—Miss Vance replied to your letter, as far as she could, in our absence. We now beg to inform you directly that the Christian who told you that the late J. M. Wheeler committed suicide has either an accommodating imagination or an easy way of repeating any "convenient" lies he happens to hear. Mr. Wheeler did not commit suicide. He died of acute mania complicated by pneumonia, as the medical certificate declared. The facts were published at the time (May, 1898) in the *Freethinker*.

ANGLO-INDIAN.—See paragraph.

W. P. BALL.—Always glad to receive your valuable batches of cuttings.

W. H. SPIVEY.—We had the greatest respect for the late Mr. Samuel Mitchell, and always looked forward to the pleasure of meeting him when we were going to visit Huddersfield. He carried in his very face the thoughtfulness and high character of his lifetime.

E. WRIGHT.—Paley's *Evidences* still survives as a text-book, because it was the work of a very skilful, if unscrupulous, special pleader. But not much value is attached to it now by the best teachers and critics, even in the Church of England. The official recognition of universities, in the matter of theology, amounts to nothing. Those institutions are always a long way behind, not only the best, but even the average, thought of the day.

A. H. TABRUM.—We have allowed the correspondence to proceed so far without interruption, but we must now tell you that we cannot let our limited space be wasted. Your fresh letter is no real answer to Mr. Cohen. It is simply nonsense to repeat that Dr. Horton's sermon may have been published without his knowledge or sanction in such a journal; and if you read Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God* you will see how little you know Churchman, you are either telling a falsehood yourself or carelessly echoing a falsehood by someone else. He was certainly buried in Westminster Abbey, but you forget that he was dead then. That farce was arranged by others.

M. E. PEGG.—Date booked. Details as to the proposed Demonstration in Manchester awaited. With regard to your kind inquiry, Mr. Foote's general health is excellent; but, unfortunately, he caught a very nasty chill at or after last Sunday's Demonstration in Brockwell Park, and the result was a swollen face and an agonising neuralgia—a thing he is quite unaccustomed to. As that was all the profit he derived from the Demonstration, it was amusing to hear from Miss Vance—or rather it would have been amusing without the neuralgia—that one of the Christian Evidence men, when she was helping to take up the collection, said "Oh, it's to keep him," nodding his head (or what passed for one) in the direction of Mr. Foote, who was then speaking.

F. GOODWIN.—See acknowledgment elsewhere. Glad to hear you much enjoyed the Freethought Demonstration in Victoria Park. We note your endorsement of T. Clark's suggestion that the *Freethinker* should be folded. This seems to be the general desire, and we suppose the extra cost must be incurred.

H. B. P.—Accept our hearty thanks.

H. PERCY WARD.—Mr. Foote will come to Birmingham himself for the Freethought Demonstration in the Town Hall on Sunday, October 21. He is writing you by post as to the details.

ESS JAY BEE.—(1) A different person altogether. (2) The poem you refer to, "An Atheist's Grave," was reproduced as from the New York *Truthseeker* during our absence from the editorial chair. We printed it some fifteen years ago as a *Freethinker* tract. It was first published about fifty years ago in one of the old Freethought papers. It was written by that fruitful author, Mr. Anonymous.

JAMES NEATE sends us the following towards the Children's Excursion, and we have handed the same over to Miss Vance:—Albert Simson, 5s.; James Neate, 2s. 6d.; Caroline Neate, 2s. 6d.; W. S. Clogg, 6d.; Button, 1s.; Brooks, 6d. Total, 12s.

PUZZLED.—You are quite right. When Jesus said "This is my body and blood," his body had not been sacrificed nor his blood shed. The Catholics make it a miracle, and believe in its perpetuity in the Mass. Protestants, as usual, are less logical, and accept a makeshift doctrine.

V. C. MARTIN.—Have written you on the other matter. We do not know of any definite "refutation" of the theory that the English people are the lost Ten Tribes. No serious ethnologist would consider it worthy of a refutation.

T. E. WILLIS.—Mistake rectified. Receipt follows.

N. S. S. CHILDREN'S PARTY.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Major John C. Harris, R.E., £1; C. J. Pottage, £1; J. R. Webberly, 2s. 6d.; F. Wood, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Horne, 2s. 6d.; Emma Bradlaugh, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Barry, 2s.; G. C. W., 2s.

T. BRADSHAW.—Many thanks. We do not require other dates. Donation acknowledged elsewhere.

T. AYLING.—It was a printer's blunder. The numbers should have been January 1 and 8.

E. SIMS.—Glad to hear the West Ham "saints" had such a good taste of heaven on earth last Sunday. It is such a lot better than waiting for the sweet by-and-bye. We should have liked to be with you; but we can't be everywhere, like a certain fabulous personage. Thanks for your kind inquiries. All are well in the editor's household, except (quite temporarily) himself.

L. ORGAN.—Thanks.

W. CHIVERS.—Much obliged. Yes, it was a misprint.

E. WEBB.—Received with thanks.

S. HARTMANN, the N. S. S. honorary treasurer, writing to us from the country, asks us to put him down for £1 towards the Children's Excursion and £8 towards the Twentieth Century Fund. He also wishes himself put down for eight copies of the *Freethinker* weekly, which he will have forwarded to various addresses. Mr. Hartmann says the President has hit upon another good idea in this Twentieth Century Fund. He hopes it will be as successful as the Freethought Publishing Company and the Secular Society, Limited; and he is good enough to say that the party owes the President a great debt of gratitude for his indefatigable labors. He hopes the President will prepare himself to fight for a seat in the House of Commons. Well, it would be a good thing to have a pronounced and militant Freethinker there; but would so many duties be possible to a single man?

RECEIVED.—Literary Guide—Truthseeker (New York)—Islington Gazette—Huddersfield Examiner—East Essex Times—Crescent—Two Worlds—Freidenker—St. Mary's Parish Magazine—Ethical World—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Yorkshire Evening Post—Edinburgh Evening Dispatch—Rushden Echo—Leeds Mercury.

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.

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

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

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 very successful Freethought Demonstration was held on Sunday evening in Brockwell Park. Mr. Wilson kindly provided a brake and pair of fine horses, as on previous occasions; the brake serving as a platform for the speakers. Mr. Victor Roger, the zealous and genial President of the Camberwell Branch, ably officiated as chairman, and Mr. A. B. Moss led off the speaking. He had to be brief, as the meeting, which began a few minutes after six, had to terminate at a quarter past seven. While he was speaking the audience gradually increased from the few who were present at the start, and the next speaker, Mr. Cohen, had a capital meeting to address. Mr. Watts, who followed, had naturally a still larger audience, for twos and threes kept swelling the outer circle of the crowd. Finally, when the band over the hill stopped playing, a lot more people streamed across to the Freethought gathering, and Mr. Foote spoke last to a really magnificent assembly. There were some ill-wishers in the crowd, and some Christian speakers who trade in the vilest personalities, but they were overawed by the vast number of people around them, who wanted to hear the speeches, which they evidently appreciated, and meant to have order maintained. Besides, a uniformed park constable was present, and previous experience had satisfied the rowdies that the officials did not mean to tolerate disorder in Brockwell Park.

The last of the Freethought Demonstrations for the present season will take place this afternoon (Sept. 2) at West Ham. The brake-platform will be pitched at Stratford-grove at 3.30 punctually. It is to be hoped that *this* time the rain will not be as punctual as the speakers. On the previous occasion, some weeks ago, the advertised Demonstration at that spot had to be abandoned. The rains descended, and the floods came, and beat upon the devoted band, in a fashion that might have astonished Captain Noah himself. All the other Demonstrations have gone off splendidly, and we want the West Ham one to crown the series. We therefore rely on our West Ham friends to settle it somehow with the clerk of the weather.

Mr. Foote intended to reopen the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, on the first Sunday evening in September, but circumstances have rendered this impossible. London Freethinkers, however, who wish to hear Mr. Foote lecturing again indoors may expect to hear him on Sunday evening, September 9. He will occupy three Sunday evenings in succession, with three new lectures. At the end of September he goes to Scotland, returning home by way of Manchester.

Mr. Charles Watts commences his winter lecturing engagements to-day, September 2, at New Brompton, when he will lecture in the evening, taking for his subject, "Secularism: Its Necessity and Superiority."

This week's *Freethinker*, though dated Sunday, September 2, will be in the hands of most of its London readers, as usual, a couple of days earlier. We therefore repeat a part of our last week's announcement as to the Annual Children's Excursion under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive. 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; 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.

Complaint has been made, surely by someone who does not understand the matter, that South London has been neglected. But it is clearly impossible to collect children from all parts of London, when the destination is so far north. As a matter of fact, the South-place brake was originally put on at the suggestion of the South London friends. They regarded that point as the nearest and most convenient. London is so huge a place that some such arrangement is quite inevitable.

Mr. T. Wilmot, secretary of the Camberwell Branch, asks us to state that he will personally see to the transit to the South-place brake of all children who assemble at the Camberwell Secular Hall not later than 9 o'clock. Parents who

send their children that way should be at the Hall again, about 9 in the evening, to receive them and take them home. They ought to be much obliged to Mr. Wilmot for his services in the matter.

The West Ham Branch had its annual excursion on Sunday. The party left Stratford Grove at 9.30 in three brakes for Stamford Rivers, took tea at the "Woodman" Inn, nearly sixty being present, and then walked in the meadows and woods, returning home in good time, after a most enjoyable day's outing.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch has arranged for a number of Sunday evening debates between Christian Evidence men and some of its own members, to take place at the Moor Edge, near the Recreation Ground. Mr. Mitchell champions the Secular side this evening (Sept. 2), and the subject for discussion is "The Deluge." His opponent must be pretty far gone to venture to discuss that topic, and the audience should derive a good deal of amusement from the encounter.

The Liverpool Branch has done good this summer by holding some open-air meetings, which used to be accounted a too risky experiment in that bigoted city. These meetings, however, have been fairly well attended and orderly. The last for this year took place on Sunday evening.

We desire to call special attention to the Application Form for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, which appears in the advertisement pages of this week's *Freethinker*. The vigor of the Company's operations, and consequently its success, depend upon the working capital at the command of its Directors. Those who have read our announcements from time to time, and particularly those who have read between the lines when we could not well say all that might have been said, must be aware that the Company had many difficulties to encounter before it could settle down to transact its own business. These difficulties were succeeded by others of a very trying character during the first two or three months of the Company's tenancy of the shop at 1 Stationers' Hall Court. Then came the summer, which is always a dull time in the publishing trade; and the *Freethinker*, of course, can do no more than hold its own when meeting-places are closed, and so many people are holidaying. It should also be borne in mind that the war has temporarily injured all advanced movements, and therefore the sale of all advanced literature. Considering all things, the *Freethinker* has weathered the storm wonderfully. But special efforts to promote its circulation must be made during the winter; indeed, a beginning is to be made in this direction very shortly. Several new books and pamphlets are also being prepared for publication. And as the larger the volume of business done the greater is the profit, while working expenses are not increased in proportion, it is obvious that a considerable working capital is highly necessary. Now this capital should be found, and found without any further delay, by the Freethought party. We have no hesitation in saying that a thousand fresh Shares ought to be taken up in the Company between this and Christmas. We have taken the trouble to put the publication of Freethought literature, including this journal, upon a sound business footing, quite independent—as far as it can be independent—of our own personality; and we feel that we have a right to ask the party to take advantage of this instrument for the good of the cause, not only in the immediate, but probably also in our distant future. There are a good many Freethinkers, to our knowledge, who have not yet given any support to this vastly important enterprise, although they could do so without any practical inconvenience to themselves. We beg these Freethinkers to delay no longer, but to fill in the Form of Application for Shares and post it (with remittance) to the Company's secretary.

The last number of the *Liberator* (Melbourne) to hand, dated July 14, reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "Room in Heaven" from the *Freethinker*. There is also a reference to Mr. Symes's proposed visit to England, which our readers will find on another page.

Obituary.

I REGRET to record the death of yet another of our old staunch and true Secularist members in Huddersfield, Mr. Samuel Mitchell, who died after a somewhat painful illness, aged eighty-five. He was a sterling Freethinker, and an ardent admirer of Charles Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote. The Society can ill afford the repeated loss of the veterans of the "Old Guard." His oft-repeated wish for a Secular funeral was faithfully observed, and his intimate friend, Councillor Owen Balmforth, read the Secular Burial Service at the interment in Lockwood Churchyard on Wednesday, August 22, in the presence of a goodly number of relatives and friends. The local press contained a fair review of incidents and events in the life of our deceased friend.—W. H. SPIVEY.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

Donation List to Date.

| | £ | s. | d. | | £ | s. | d. |
|--|-----|----|----|---|------|----|----------------|
| John Downing : "Liberty" As unfolded in Milton's <i>Arcopagitica</i> | 200 | 0 | 0 | A. F. Bullock ... | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| J. Umpleby Major John Harris, R.E. Horace Seal | | | | 20 | 0 | 0 | C. Handley ... |
| A Friend ... | 25 | 0 | 0 | W. M. Constant ... | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| J. C. Banks ... | 25 | 0 | 0 | W. R. Axelley ... | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| W. Mumby ... | 10 | 0 | 0 | D. Mitchell ... | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| J. F. Hampson ... | 5 | 0 | 0 | Mrs. Brown ... | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| D. Yule ... | 4 | 0 | 0 | H. Payne ... | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| James Neate ... | 10 | 0 | 0 | D. P. S. ... | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Mrs. Neate ... | 1 | 0 | 0 | J. E. Kins ... | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| R. Davison ... | 1 | 0 | 0 | C. D. Stephens ... | 0 | 10 | 6 |
| G. J. Warren ... | 2 | 0 | 0 | W. H. Spivey ... | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| T. P. Stewart ... | 1 | 0 | 0 | M. Dye ... | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| R. T. Nichols ... | 1 | 1 | 0 | F. W. Donaldson ... | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| C. Girtanner ... | 2 | 2 | 0 | A. W. Hutty ... | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| David Watt ... | 10 | 10 | 0 | Minnie, Willie, and Teddie Hutty ... | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| C. J. Peacock ... | 1 | 0 | 0 | R. Johnson... .. | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| A. H. Braine ... | 5 | 5 | 0 | H. L. | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| H. Trotman ... | 1 | 1 | 0 | W. Lamb | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| H. B. Dodds ... | 0 | 10 | 6 | L. Edmonds | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| W. Garthwaite ... | 0 | 10 | 0 | T. Robertson ... | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| J. G. Dobson ... | 0 | 10 | 0 | J. O. Bates... .. | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| J. Barry | 0 | 10 | 0 | H. Waller | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| T. H. Body | 0 | 2 | 6 | F. T. | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| J. Partridge | 0 | 10 | 6 | C. Newell | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Martin Weatherburn | 0 | 10 | 0 | F. J. Voisey ... | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| A. G. Lye | 0 | 5 | 0 | Monmouth | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| E. Self | 0 | 5 | 0 | C. Shepherd | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| L. Simpson | 0 | 5 | 0 | Samuel Hartmann. | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| T. Ollerenshaw ... | 0 | 5 | 0 | C. J. Pottage ... | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| W. Barks | 0 | 10 | 0 | T. Bradshaw | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| J. T. Ives | 0 | 10 | 0 | J. R. Webbley ... | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| J. Bullock | 0 | 1 | 0 | W. J. Barry | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| | 0 | 5 | 0 | F. Goodwin | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| | | | | Charles Pegg | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| | | | | Mrs. M. E. Pegg ... | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| | | | | Total to date | £383 | 2 | 6 |

The wretched cold I caught on Sunday evening, and the wearying neuralgia it entailed, took a good deal of "the work" out of me for a bit, and I must postpone for still another week the lengthy address to our party which I intend to write on this Twentieth Century Fund. Perhaps it is just as well postponed; for, in spite of the broken weather, a good many are still away on their holidays; and these are just the persons who can best afford to give. Mr. George Anderson, whose letter I promised to notice, is absent from London for a fortnight; and Mr. John Downing's letter, which I referred to last week, is one to be dealt with at leisure, rather than in a hurry. All I will add at present is that I hope all my readers will bear in mind that the first week in October is "Shilling Week," and that they are expected to send me (with a letter, if they choose to write one) at least one shilling, and as many more shillings as possible, towards this Fund. Meanwhile I am open to receive any number of names for inclusion in this special list.

G. W. FOOTE.

Death of Nietzsche.

Friedrich Nietzsche died on Saturday morning, August 25, at Weimar. Ten years ago his brain became affected, and he has since been dead to the world, under the care of his devoted sister. The immediate cause of his death was apoplexy. He was in his fifty-sixth year. Nietzsche was an ill-balanced, but still in many ways a remarkable, thinker. He despised Christianity as the religion of the unfit. He believed in the "realisation of the individual"—that is, in individual culture, self-respect, and self-assertion. He considered that, under the influence of Christianity, modern society is doing its best to defeat natural selection and to deteriorate the race. Nietzsche, like Feuerbach and Schopenhauer, was a pronounced Atheist.

SECULAR EDUCATION.—The National Secular Society's Executive has called a Conference of advanced bodies in London to consider the question of "secular education" in relation to the forthcoming London School Board elections. Various organisations have promised to send delegates. The Conference will take place on Tuesday evening (Sept. 11) at 8 in the large hall of the Club and Institute Union, Clerkenwell-road.

Doubt, and be Damned!

ON the 1st of the 1st of the 1st, A.M.,
The Lord began Creation;
On the 6th of the 1st of the 1st, A.M.,
He stopped for recreation;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
In the year Eighteen hundred, or less, A.M.,
The Lord was scared by builders
Who were climbing to heav'n on a pile of bricks;
A feat which quite bewilders,
But you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
In the year Forty hundred and four, A.M.,
The Lord became a fetus;
Like a pup and a sprat, he'd a tail and gills—
If parsons do not cheat us—
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
On the 1st of the 1st of the 1st, A.D.,
Th' Creator posed as creature,
By a navel disguised; for his navel was
His only godless feature;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
On the 8th of the 1st of the 1st, A.D.,
The Lord was vivisected;
It appears that himself he so badly made,
He had to be corrected;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
The Creator's a bachelor, sad to say,
A fact that painful, maybe,
To the purity folk, for he was, 'tis said,
The pa of Mary's baby;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
In the year three-and-thirty the Maker made
The Romans nail their Maker
To a post, which made Sol become black in th' face,
And earth a cracking quaker;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
When the Lord was sufficiently killed, *pro tem.*,
He left his corpse, "till called for,"
In a hole, while to hell went his corpseless ghost—
'Twas this "The Book" was scrawled for;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
When he called for his corpse, on the 2nd night,
Its heart resumed its pumping;
So he walked it away, took a snack of fish,
Then showed his skill in jumping;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
We are promised by God that believers all,
Through all the world, for ever,
Will be proof against damage from deadly drinks,
And need a doctor never;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
You are damned if you doubt, said the late J. C.
Of ev'rywhere, and Zion,
Who created the makers of beds, but yet
Had ne'er a bed to lie on;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
You are damned if you doubt; and the fact is clear
To those whom God engages;
For the proof of the fact is the fact that thence
The parson draws his wages;
And you're dull, if the fact seems doubtful!
If "The Book" seems devoid of the needful proof,
Of course you're forced to doubt it;
But your justified doubt will destroy your soul,
Say those that know about it;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
We are told that salvation's the work of Christ,
Who asks us to receive it;
But he left us the *worst* part to do ourselves,
For *we* must first *believe it*;
And we're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
On the last of the last of the last of all
The Lord Chief Judge will try us;
If we're lucky, we'll lie on an old Jew's chest;
If not, the Lord will fry us;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!
As the most of our race will be damned by God,
Who *wisely* planned creation,
And does "*all for the best*," through his *boundless love*,
Let's gladly greet damnation!
To be *lovingly damned's* delightful!
G. L. MACKENZIE.

First Delegate: "That was a fine prayer with which the convention opened." Second Delegate: "I don't know. It struck me the statistics were not presented in a way to give the Lord a clear idea of the political situation."—*Detroit Journal.*

Talmage on Books.

THE latest thesis of the one-and-only Talmage is worthy of him—worthy of a man who knows how to multiply his adjectives, and distribute his polysyllabic substantives with so lavish a hand. He has just favored the world with his opinion on literature; and his opinion, as might be expected, is more stringent than discriminating.

He takes for his text Acts xix. 19, where the Devil-frightened converts of Ephesus, "which used curious arts," burnt their books for the edification of the Ephesian public. It is currently assumed that the "curious arts" were those of magic, fortune-telling, and so forth. But, from what we know of the people and the period referred to, the assumption is not justified. The ignorant Christians of Paul's time attributed everything beyond their understanding to the agency of demons, and it is easy to appreciate their detestation of "curious arts" from their own narrow standpoint. The destruction of the famous Alexandrian library was doubtless due to the same prejudice.

Well, the books were burnt, and the fanatical Paul rejoiced; and the fanatical Talmage (who has not the Apostle's excuse of environment) rejoices two thousand years later. He even wishes us to repeat the performance. "One of the wants of the cities of to-day is a great bon-fire of bad books and newspapers. We have enough fuel to make a blaze two hundred feet high. Many of the publishing houses would do well to throw into the blaze their entire stock of goods."

Let no one hastily assume that the editor of the *American Christian Herald* intends to make a start with his own periodical. On the contrary, he assures us that "the Lord intends the printing-press to be the chief means for the world's rescue and evangelisation." If this be true, it seems a pity that "the Lord" did not think of it earlier. But Talmage wants to see the author and journalist take their orders from the pulpit; and, in the expected Elysium, no publisher will dare to look at anything transcending the scope of Christian ethics, art, or philosophy. He wants to put the clock back twenty centuries. He desires "a purified and Gospel literature triumphing over, trampling down, and crushing out for ever that which is depraved." Later he speaks of "an honest, intelligent, aggressive, Christian printing-press." Why not say "Christian" at once, and dispense with the other adjectives? But "Christian" is never good enough to stand alone, and in the course of this sermon we are asked to make "an intelligent and Christian choice," to read "novels that are good, pure, Christian, elevating to the heart, and ennobling to the life."

"What books shall we read?" is the Talmagian inquiry. And, by way of answer, he enumerates just eleven writers, chiefly Americans, and all fictionists. The one man who saved the United States from the reproach of a sterile literature, Edgar Allan Poe, was presumably too heterodox to be mentioned. The rev. Doctor's gallantry does not permit him to pass Maria Edgeworth, but he utterly ignores her greater sisters, George Eliot and Edna Lyall—perhaps because they were not found within "the fold." For pure decency's sake Dickens had to be recognised, Unitarian though he was. It was a pity, but it could not be avoided; and, after all, the majority of the congregation were probably ignorant of the fact.

But in the sphere of History, Poetry, and Science there was no escape. These departments of literature abounded in pit-falls of the most objectionable kind. "Infidels" like Gibbon, Froude, Lecky, Darwin, Spencer, Mill, Byron, Shelley, and Swinburne confronted De Witt's harassed gaze at every turn. So he gave the whole thing up, and confined himself to fiction.

Presumably all writers outside Talmage's cramped and arbitrary selection of novelists must be henceforth tabooed. If this were not his intention, he should have published an *Index Expurgatorius* including the most indecent and alluring volumes. But doubtless the astute Yankee knew that, had he done so, his excited followers would have straightway besieged the wicked publishers—and cleared off all their stock! The rev. incendiary has a sort of shrewdness.

Mr. Talmage begs his auditors not to read books of this and that kind. Then, for a moment, the illogic of the position is apparent, even to him. "But, you will

say, 'how can I find out whether a book is good or bad without reading it?' There is always something suspicious about a bad book—I never knew an exception—something suspicious in the index or style of illustration." The inquiring mind is apt to wonder how the speaker verified his suspicions, if he acted upon his own precept, and refrained from further examination.

Most of us will decline to admit that we are made of such flabby stuff as this. We shall continue to choose our own reading-matter without fear for the result. The next immoral work we chance upon will not launch us forth upon a career of profligacy. If there are men so weak and impressionable, they can never be safe in any case; they are always a menace to the common good; and the sooner they are started off upon their sky-rocket course of syphilis, religion, and death, the better.

Is it possible that the sermon will conclude without an "infidel" story? No; it is left for the finish—although it is the *pièce de résistance*.

"Beware of lascivious pictures, young man!..... Cherish good books and newspapers. Beware of bad ones. The assassin of Lord Russell declared that he was led into crime by reading one vivid romance..... But I need not go so far off. 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 awhile he gave up religion as a myth. He gave up God as a nonentity. He gave up good morals as being unnecessarily stringent. I have heard of him but twice in many years. The time before last I heard of him he was a confirmed inebriate. The last I heard of him he was coming out of an insane asylum, in body and soul an awful wreck. I believe that that infidel book killed him for two worlds."

Note how we are led up to the climax by easy and natural transitions. Lasciviousness, assassination, infidelity! De Witt has something of De Wet's tactical smartness. This, however, is the only gleam of genius in the story. There is the time-honored absence of names and dates, and the quick succession in the usual order—unbelief, immorality, insanity, and death. The rev. romancer is doubtless well advised in his suppressions; he has probably heard of a certain Atheist Shoemaker.

E. R. W.

What the Bible Teaches.

MATTHEW.

THAT a young woman and a ghost [never married] were parents of a child; that the mother of Jesus was no better than she ought to have been; that his "reputed father" was a muff; that he was easily imposed upon; that the writer was an unscrupulous quoter and perverter of the Old Testament (i. 22-3); that he was a romancer; that a star guided men even to a house in a village; that the birth of Jesus was surrounded by queer dreams; that the young God owed his safety from Herod's ire to his being shifted to Egypt; that John the Baptist was fool enough to think water might morally purify; that Jesus went to be baptised by one who baptised only the repentant; that, therefore, he must have been a sinner; that the spirit of God was like a pigeon; that "the spirit" was in league with the Devil, and therefore led Jesus up to be tempted by him; that Jesus was a good hand at fasting; that the Devil was far more polite than Jesus, and seemingly much better natured; that the Devil was an expert in aerial travelling, and could carry a man through the air [when the said man had been sufficiently reduced in weight by six weeks' fasting]; that the earth in those days was so flat and so small that the whole surface could be seen from the top of a mountain in a moment of time (iv. 8 and Luke iv. 5); that Jesus discouraged honest industry (iv. 18, 22); that the exclusive, particular, and persecuting Jews permitted Jesus to preach in their synagogues; that he must have cured sick people enough to have left all the doctors to starve; that

poverty of spirit is a blessing; that mourning, meekness, hunger, and thirst are ditto; that ignorant Jesus's cowardly disciples were the salt and the light of the earth; that the most natural, necessary, and innocent feeling is as bad as adultery (v. 28); that all swearing is a sin; that evil should not be resisted; that people should pray for daily bread and to be saved from the evil one; that it is right to play the hypocrite to prevent people knowing that you are fasting (vi. 18); that it is wrong to lay up treasures upon earth [see how the priests are grinning at that!]; that it is a sin to take any thought for the morrow; that it is as easy to add a cubit [18 or 21 inches] to your height by taking thought as to get food and clothes that way (25, 34); that Christianity cannot be good, for a good tree cannot produce evil fruit; that it is quite right to set Devils on to or into your neighbor's pig, and so destroy them (vi. 1, 28-34); that some Devils will not budge for you unless they see you starving yourself (xvii. 19-21); that Jesus sent out a set of beggars, of whom rich quacks are always boasting (x.); that Jesus came to send a sword and to set families by the ears (34, 35); that John the Baptist neither ate nor drank (xi. 18); that Jesus did both, and to such an extent that they called him a wine-bibber, etc.; that it is quite right to repudiate your mother and brothers, sisters (xi. 1, 46-50); that the kingdom of heaven contains much of the Devil's works (xiii. 33-44); that the heart is the seat and origin of all crimes (xv. 18-9); that Jesus called a poor, distressed woman a dog (26); that he insulted most who asked him questions (xvi.); that Jesus threatened or promised to come again in that generation (28; also xxiv.); that Jesus was on good terms with those old cutthroats, Moses and Elijah (xvii. 3); that his skin shone like the sun (2); that slavery is quite proper, and an owner may do as he will with his chattels (xviii. 23-35); that Christ's father was as bad, or worse, than the worst slave-owner (35); that male believers should mutilate themselves in a way not to be described (xix. 9-12); that a camel had a better chance of getting through a needle's eye than a rich man has of getting into the kingdom of heaven [this is not believed at present] (24); that an employer can pay whatever wages he likes, and pay one man as much for an hour as others for a day, and that no one has a right to complain (xx.); that it is quite right to steal an ass or two (xxi.); quite right to raise a riot in a temple (12-16); quite right to destroy a fig-tree that does not belong to you because it did not bear fruit at an impossible season; that it is right for a king to slaughter a whole population and burn a city where murder has been committed (xxii.); that the way to treat innocent opponents is to call them hypocrites, fools, and blind, serpents, brood of vipers, etc. (xxiii.); that God forsook Jesus on the Cross, or previously (xxvii. 46); that Jesus did not ascend to heaven (xxviii. 20).

MARK.

This book teaches that the unknown writer knew nothing of Jesus's birth or parentage, or deemed them unworthy of notice; that the disciples did not fast (ii. 18); that Jesus boasted of being a wilful and deliberate deceiver (iv. 12); that he promised his dupes a hundred-fold in this life for all they gave up, a hundred brothers, sisters, parents, wives, children for every one given up to him (x. 28-30); that none are Christians that cannot cast out Devils, speak with new tongues, handle serpents with impunity, drink deadly poison without hurt, and heal the sick (xxi. 17, 18).

LUKE.

In this book the Bible teaches that the original records by eye-witnesses of what Christians believed were either lost, destroyed, unavailable, or unreliable, and therefore this writer (quite unknown) produced this work (i. 1-4); that this gospel is legendary; that decency was unknown to the author and his characters (28-41); that John the Baptist was a wild boy (80); that all Jews, no matter what their age, health, etc., had to go from whatever parts they lived at to their native place to be there taxed! (ii. 1); that Mary was put through the "purification" farce just as if her son had been "conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity" (22); that Jesus was an impudent young pug (41-52); that the mythical Jesus was descended from the mythical Adam and the mythical

God (iii. 38); that Peter, the pretended first Pope, had a mother-in-law (iv. 38); that Jesus was a capital fisherman, and should have stuck to that calling (v. 4, *et seq.*); that to give away all you have is the way to be rich (vi. 38); that Jesus was fond of ointment, and dearly loved fawning women (vii. 36-80); that a Devil's name was Legion [an army]; that Mr. Legion made a barracks of one man [what he did for elbow room is not explained] (viii. 26-30); that missionaries should be spiteful (ix. x. 11, 5); that Jesus was still more spiteful and absolutely unforgiving (ix. 26); that those who are hurt by Chinese and others are not Christ's missionaries (x. 17, 19); that a love-sick, maudlin Mary is far superior to a hard-working and careful and well-behaved Martha (38-42); that Jesus boasted of being a horrid mischief-maker (xii. 46); that Jesus pretended to bewail Jerusalem, which he was plotting and intending to destroy (xiii. 34); that you must hate all you ought to love in order to be Christ's disciple (xlv. 25-33); that a sharp and embezzling steward is to be commended (xvi. 8, 9); that future bliss is prepared for those who have nothing and are totally destitute of humanity, and hell for the rich and benevolent; that the humane will be damned (xvi. 19, *et seq.*); that men ought to do nothing else but pray (xviii. 11); that all Christ's enemies were to be slain before his face (xiv. 27); that Christ's missionaries should never lose so much as a hair of their head through persecution (xxi. 18); that Jesus was coming again in that generation (25-32); that his disciples should be twelve kings, reigning over the twelve tribes of Israel! (xx. 11, 30); that Jesus, the unlimited boaster, was much frightened when his foes set upon him (xxii.); that the disciples, and especially Peter, were a set of cowards, like their master (54-60); that Jesus never attempted to defend himself, though Pilate gave him every chance to do so (xxiii.).

JOHN.

This book says nothing of the birth of Jesus or his infancy. It speaks of one Word or Logos [was it King Log?] who was both with God and *was* God (i.). It teaches that Logos made all things; this Logos was the light that lighteth every man—that is, the sun; that Logos was made flesh; and it indulges in plenty of jargon besides; that John the Baptist called Logos a lamb; that Jesus turned 140 gallons of water into wine for those who had already well drunk at a wedding feast (ii.); that he raised a riot in the temple (13-16); that he bamboozled Nicodemus over new birth, wind, "heavenly things," etc. (iii.); that he talked nonsense to a Samaritan woman (iv.); that an angel came down at intervals and stirred the dirty water in a Jerusalem pool, and any sick man who at once stepped in was healed (v.); that Jesus went one better and cut the angel out; that Jesus boasted that he would raise the dead (25-29); that Jesus disgusted his most civilised disciples by telling them they must eat his flesh and drink his blood (vi. 38, 41, 50-60, 66); that Jesus selected one devil to be his disciple (70, 71); that he deceived his brother by a falsehood (vii. 1-10); that Jesus, contrary to Bible command, screened a woman taken in adultery (viii.); that he grossly insulted the Jews by telling them the Devil was their father (37-42); that Jesus was the good shepherd [Mercury's title], and had to flee from the Jews (x.); that Jesus bamboozled Martha by declaring that whosoever believed in him should never die (xi. 25, 26); that he raised the perfectly useless Lazarus from the dead; that Jesus allowed himself to be treated as a king (vii. 12-19); boasted he would draw all men to himself (35); that he assisted Judas to betray him (xiii. 18-30); that, if all Jesus did could be written, the world itself would not be large enough probably to hold the books! (xxi. 25).

—*Liberator* (Melbourne).

JOS. SYMES.

For my part, I imagine that, if the Eternal in his severity were to send me to hell, I should succeed in escaping from it. I would send up to my creator a supplication that would make him smile. The course of reasoning by which I would prove to him that it was through his fault that I was damned would be so subtle that he would find some difficulty in replying. The fate which would suit me best is Purgatory—a charming place, where many delightful romances begun on earth must be continued.—*Ernest Renan*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Re-open September 9.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss.
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A. B. Moss.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack.
CLAPHAM COMMON: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. A. Davies.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, F. A. Davies.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.
HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, E. Pack.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, S. E. Easton.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; 7.15, A lecture.
September 5, at 8.15, R. P. Edwards.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, E. White.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, C. Watts, "Secularism: Its Necessity and Superiority."
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): H. P. Ward—11.30, "The Story of the Trial and Imprisonment of G. W. Foote for Blasphemy"; 2.30, "Did Jesus Christ Rise from the Dead?" 6.30, "Secularism a Better System than Christianity."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Stanley Jones, "Buddhism and Christianity."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): W. Heaford—11, "The Claims of Christianity"; 3, "The Philosophy of Secularism"; 7, "Woman and the Bible." Tea at 5. The first lecture to be given near the Monolith—weather permitting.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "How we Come by our Knowledge"; 7, Lecture arrangements.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—September 2, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—September 2, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, 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.—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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