

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Dr. Clifford and the School Board.

ON Thursday next London voters will be called upon to select a School Board for the ensuing three years. The people in whose hands the educational welfare of over half a million of children is to be placed will then be selected, and, when we bear in mind that their period of power covers about one-third of the child's school life, the occasion is certainly not lacking in importance. But for the one fatal flaw in the Act of 1870, which, in spite of the admitted failure of the religious parties to adequately conduct educational affairs, yet gave them an altogether unjustifiable influence in the schools, the issue before electors would be a simple one. The whole discussion would resolve itself into one of educational aims and methods only; and, however conflicting opinions might be on this subject, voters could at least feel that the selected candidates went to the Board with a single-hearted desire to promote the educational interests of the children, and ultimately of the nation.

In place of this desirable consummation, each of the principal parties on the Board is dominated by one motive—the desire to exclude one form of religious instruction by the introduction of another. Under whatever election cries Progressives and Moderates work, this is certainly the principal object with the leaders of these parties. The leaders of the Moderates confess, in a more or less oblique manner, that their cry of Progressive extravagance, etc., is but a subterfuge to secure a majority, and so introduce a form of religious instruction more in harmony with the teachings of the Church of England. And one need not read many of the productions of the Progressive leaders to see that they are using school improvement as a convenient means of retaining their position, and continuing a religious teaching that is wholly profitable to dissenting Christianity. How much better the leaders of the Progressives would be than their opponents, if once these latter were decisively wrecked without any possibility of succor, is open to question. For myself, I am pretty confident that the men who do not hesitate to call in the assistance of the State to perpetuate old-fashioned Sunday laws, or to protect their religious beliefs from open assault, would hardly hesitate to introduce their own sectarianism into the public schools if they thought they could safely do so.

The electoral "boss" of the London Progressives is the Rev. Dr. Clifford. Necessarily he figures largely in the machinery of the elections, and, in a circular letter to the press, he has recently pointed out what he conceives to be the duty of the electors on November 29. This is, at all costs, to keep the "priest party," the "sleepless foe of popular education," from coming into power. From my point of view, the advice is excellent, and I wish him all success in this portion of his propaganda. But if Dr. Clifford means—and of this there is little or no doubt—that we are to keep one body of parsons, or parsons' puppets, out by putting another lot in, then it is a matter of absolute indifference which succeeds. If the children of this country are to have their young minds perverted by religious instruction, given in a place where it has no defensible right to exist, then it matters little whether the teachers are made the cat's-paw of Dissenting minister or Episcopal clergyman. From a broad and comprehensive point of view, there is no difference between them. They bear different labels, true; but tear these off, mix them well up, and it would puzzle any specialist in

sociological abnormalities to detect any difference. All we are concerned with is that the schools shall be restricted to their legitimate function of imparting such secular knowledge as we are agreed upon is essential to the child's welfare, and, therefore, whether the religious instruction be definite or indefinite, it is equally objectionable.

All talk of "indefinite" or "unsectarian" Christian instruction is pure humbug—mere phrases that serve to quiet the minds of careless or timid thinkers. All religious teaching is definite, and all Christian teaching is sectarian. To give children lessons in the existence and goodness of God, to nourish it upon so-called prophecies that are afterwards utilised by the parson as references to Jesus, to dose it with all the supernaturalism of the first twelve chapters of *The Acts of the Apostles*, and call this unsectarian religious instruction, is a mere play upon words. Christianity itself is only a sect—the most powerful one in this country, but a sect all the same. The plain truth is that the real policy of Dr. Clifford and his followers is precisely that of the people he is attacking—to get as much of the religion he believes in introduced into the schools as he thinks the general body of ratepayers will put up with. He quotes Sir John Gorst, appreciatively, to the effect that the Bible teaching in the Board schools is superior to that in the Voluntary schools. Perhaps so; and if it is so, the injustice inflicted on those who do not believe in the Bible is so much the more pronounced. It shows, too, how much concern Dr. Clifford really has for the conscientious scruples of those who do not agree with him. "Do not permit the Church of England to teach its principles in the schools: I do not believe in them, and it is an outrage on my conscience," he shrieks; "teach only such religious formulas as I believe in." Well, Dr. Clifford, but there are many who do not believe with either of you. What then? "Oh," is the ready reply, "let them be—". They are not Christians, and, therefore, have no right to a conscience at all; or, if they will possess one, they have no right to argue that its possession entitles them to any consideration."

Dr. Clifford complains that the priest is anxious to capture the children. Very true; but what is *he* after? Is he not playing exactly the same game? Is not his chief complaint against the "clerical" party that they are seeking candidates for their Church in the public schools? And is not Dr. Clifford, in excluding from the schools everything that Dissenters disagree with, and keeping there only what they believe in, pursuing the same object? At bottom the objects of both parties are alike. At bottom the great issue is whether Church or Chapel is to utilise the schools for its own sectarian interests; and in this contest all other elements in the educational fight are only used as so many strategical moves.

There *can* be nothing but this at issue between the two parties. Dr. Clifford and those with him have talked much of the moral value of religious beliefs. But the Church party are as ready to give moral instruction, based on the Bible, as are their opponents. Only they desire to teach certain doctrines connected with the trinity, etc. Dr. Clifford asserts that their return to power will ruin the cause of education. What is it that will stand in the way of education—the moral teaching or the doctrine? Dr. Clifford can hardly mean the former, so that, as both are agreed upon that, there is only the latter to quarrel about. It is, I repeat, entirely a question of rival dogmas—the

dogmas of the Church or the dogmas of the Chapel; and, so far as we are concerned, the sound policy to pursue at such an election is to support only such candidates as are in favor of keeping both religious parties outside, and of secularising the schools in the interests of a larger individual and national life.

Dr. Clifford observes that "Biblical instruction was not introduced into the schools of the people without grave misgivings on the part of many advanced educationalists; but thirty years' experience has completely vindicated the wisdom, the fairness, the justice, and the usefulness of the London plan." But thirty years' experience has "completely vindicated" nothing of the kind. Jews, Positivists, Agnostics, Atheists, Secularists, and others, are emphatically not convinced of "the wisdom, the fairness, the justice, and the usefulness" of compelling all to pay for teaching the religious opinions of a section, and obstructing education by endless squabbles concerning religious beliefs. Even Dr. Clifford ought to be able to see that the bare fact of his frantic appeals to keep the Moderates out, on the ground of their desire to upset the compromise, is proof positive that *they* are not contented with the justice, etc., of the existing arrangement. And if *they* were content, there are others whose principles pledge them not only to reopen the question, but to keep it open until the Bible is swept out of the schools altogether.

All that Dr. Clifford means is that *he* is satisfied with matters as they are. Naturally. At the opening of the struggle for National Education the Dissenters stood for Secular Education. It seemed to them that, if the State taught any religion in the schools, it would naturally be the State religion. Sooner than allow this, they were willing to do without any religious teaching in Board schools. But when the compromise was effected, and the Dissenters saw that there would be taught in public schools a form of Christianity that was practically of a dissenting character, the champions of Disestablishment, whose cry had been "Keep the State and religion apart," lent their heartiest support to this new form of State patronage. They accepted it as a step towards the disestablishment of a rival Church and the establishment of their own. The Dissenters gained everything and lost nothing. But of the injustice inflicted upon a large and growing section of the community by teaching religion in the schools Dr. Clifford says little and cares less: *his* religious interests are served, and it would be a historical anomaly to find a religious leader whose thoughts went beyond that.

In supporting a definite religious instruction, the Church party have at least been true to their professed principles; it is the Dissenters who have sacrificed every shred of principle they possessed, and, in the name of liberty of conscience, trampled the rights of the minority underfoot. The chief difference between Moderate and Progressive in this matter has been that, while one has been moderately consistent, the other has been progressively inconsistent and hypocritical.

Fortunately, the attention of the country is being directed more strenuously to the importance of perfecting our system of national education, and with this increased attention there must come a growing dislike to seeing one of the most important of all elections turning constantly upon the question of whether Church or Chapel is to be uppermost. And so long as the Bible is retained in the public schools this quarrel will continue, to the injury of genuine educational interests. It is the presence of the Bible in the schools that gives each party the occasion for trying to force its views on the minds of children. It is useless talking of fresh compromises, or of maintaining old ones. In this matter there should be, and can be, no compromise. It is the true function of a School Board to prepare boys and girls for the solid duties of life, not to act as referees in a series of religious fights. Let electors insist upon this before all else; let them insist upon a clean sweep being made of both Dissenting minister and Church parson, and, if they have done naught else, they will at least have cleared the way for an educational policy that shall be equally just to all, and thus promote the real interests of all concerned.

C. COHEN.

Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ.—II.

MARIE CORELLI'S re-incarnation of Jesus Christ—"a poor thing, but mine own"—is quite up to the lady novelists' standard. The boy Manuel is all that is charming. There are frequent references to his beautiful figure, his beautiful face, his beautiful hair, his beautiful voice, and his beautiful eyes. His hair is curly, of course—for a straight-haired hero would never do, much less a bald one, like poor Julius Cæsar. And then his eyes! We all know them. The orthodox eyes of the heroes of cheap romance—now keen and piercing, like an eagle's—then large, lustrous, and melting with poetic emotion. The sort of eyes you read about, but very seldom see.

This wonderful boy is found one night, homeless and friendless, by the good Cardinal Bonpré—a benevolent old priest, altogether too good for this world; which, by the way, he quits in an astonishing manner before the novel closes. The Cardinal sticks to the boy, and the boy sticks to the Cardinal. Nothing is able to part them. Even in death they are not divided. When the world-weary servant of God has to give up the ghost, he is engaged in a sort of Christian Socialist work in London. There is, indeed, a Socialist church in this metropolis—such as we may see Mr. Keir Hardie trying to establish if he goes on at the present rate. It is not a nominal church, but a real church, with altar and crucifix, and everything elegant. To this church Cardinal Bonpré is beckoned forth one night through the darkness and rain by the boy Manuel, who has afforded many strong hints of his superhuman personality, and is now going to treat his aged friend to a complete manifestation. They enter the church together. The Cardinal hears miraculous music, and sees a vision of angels standing by the "symbol of salvation." The boy Manuel goes up to the Cross, stretches out his arms, and grows (to slow music) into the crucified Savior (aged thirty-three). Whereupon the worn-out old priest drops dead—and no wonder.

The boy Manuel—Jesus Christ, to wit—works several miracles, which we dare say are as authentic as those that were recorded by his earlier biographers. He cures a crippled lad, with twisted spine and distorted limbs, so that in a few minutes he is skipping about like a lamb. He pops up in a Paris church, when an illegitimate son tries to shoot his priestly father, and diverts the bullet, so that it hits something even more wooden than the heads of believers. On another occasion he apparently restores to life a young lady painter, Angela Sovrani, who has been stabbed to death by her affianced lover, Florian Varillo. Angela has painted the picture of the century—perhaps of the ages—for Marie Corelli is nearly always superlative; and Florian is maddened by the thought that she, a mere woman, is a greater painter than he—a lordly man. So he gives her one, two, three in the back with a dagger he has handy for such performances. Now we take it that this is very absurd. A fellow engaged to a girl who had painted a picture worth thousands of pounds would hardly kill the fine bird that laid such golden eggs. He would rather pat her on the back and say "Do it again, my dear."

Marie Corelli, we may remark, in passing, labors under the curious notion that men cannot abide clever women. "There is nothing," one of her crowd of high-born ladies says, "that frets and irks some male creatures so much as to see a woman attain, by her own brain and hand, a great position in the world." This is fantastic enough, but the novelist herself improves upon it. "All men," she says, "hate the woman who is intellectually superior to themselves." This is, perhaps, a consolatory theory to the novelist, who knows that her work is more or less despised by leading critics. These critics are men, and she is a woman, and that accounts for their depreciation! But is not this stuff and nonsense? Do men hate Jane Austen, or Elizabeth Barrett Browning, or Charlotte Brontë, or George Eliot? Let a woman display real genius, and she will not lack appreciation. We should say that the point is rather strained in favor of women writers. We could mention a few who receive from male critics much higher praise than they deserve. Sex tells, even in

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criticism. That is to say, in *current* criticism; but not in *lasting* criticism. Just as a dead lord ranks with commoners, so a dead woman ranks with dead men. There is no sex in the grave. What work a woman has left will be judged by the common standard. The final decision is passed by the impersonal intellect.

But to return to young Manuel. His age, as far as we can make it out, is eleven. Miracles are as easy at that age as at any other. But listen to his talk! Here is a sample:—

"You are thinking of the wonderful plan of the world, of all the fair and glorious things God has made for those who love him. Of the splendor of Faith, and Hope, and Courage—of the soul's divine origin and responsibility—and all the joy of being able to say to the Creator of the whole universe, 'Our Father!'"

Here is another sample, *apropos* of St. Peter's, at Rome:—

"Surely you know that there is nothing of the living God in the vast cruelty of a place where wealth and ostentation vie with intolerant officialism, bigotry, and superstition.....What has the Man of Sorrows to do with all the evil splendor of St. Peter's?—its bronzes, its marbles, its colossal statues of dead gods, its glittering altars, its miserable dreary immensity, its glaring gilding and insolent vulgarity of cost."

What talk for young eleven! What would he be at twenty-two? The world would have to suppress him as an intolerable nuisance. It seems to us that any boy of eleven who vomited up the dictionary, as Manuel does, should be taken in hand by his father, or perhaps by the family doctor. Dealt with in time, the malady is often curable; neglected, it generally leads to the lunatic asylum. The French call it by a high-sounding name. The Americans call it "swelled head."

The principal persons in this novel are "preachy." They spout whenever they find an opportunity; and they all spout alike. Whether it is the grand old Cardinal Bonpré, or the eloquent reformed Abbé Vergniaud, or that miraculous orator, Gys Grandit, the French Christian Socialist, or that still more miraculous orator, Aubrey Leigh, the English Christian Socialist, or the boy Manuel, who is no less a person than Jesus Christ himself, reincarnated to make Marie Corelli's financial holiday; no matter which of them it is, the spouting is always of the same brand. All of them talk pure Corelli. Every one delivers a bit of the lady's Christian Socialist sermon. And what is her Christian Socialism? It is neither Socialism nor Christianity—it is nothing but cheap clap-trap and vague sentimentality. Nobody can tell what the lady would be at; probably she does not know herself. She takes the "pathetic exaggerations" of the Sermon on the Mount, dilutes them with unlimited gush, and deluges her readers with the "weak, washy, everlasting flood."

We beg pardon for mentioning Shakespeare in this connection, but he could introduce a crowd of men and women and make them all talk in character. We know them, not by what is said about them, but by what they say and do themselves. This is the art that vies with great creative nature. But inferior writers too often come to grief when they work their puppets. It is so easy to describe your hero as wise and witty; it is so hard to make him talk wisdom and wit. When he opens his mouth he is apt to prove a fiasco. In the same way, the wonderful orators—they are all "wonderful"—in Marie Corelli's novel can only be accepted as such until they begin business. From that moment we recognise them as the most ridiculous frauds. We sicken at their insufferable tirades. They give us words, words—without a grain of substance. Their creator is unable to supply them with anything else. For, while Marie Corelli has a certain capacity for writing "taking" fiction for pious sentimentalists, when it comes to real brains she is as shallow as a saucer. In the whole of this book there is not a definite idea, nor a single sentence worth remembering.

Fancy, then, the "cheek" of this lady in putting Jesus Christ—a reincarnated Jesus Christ, a second advent Jesus Christ—into a popular novel. With all her affected reverence, the act is sheer blasphemy. How any sincere Christian can tolerate it is past our comprehension. From the artistic point of view her offence is still greater. It would take a bold writer to put Shakespeare into a book and make him talk.

Landor did it, but he was a man of genius, and he had the sense to take Shakespeare as a lad in the deer-stalking period. He did not assume to put words into the mouth of the greatest of poets at the full maturity of his powers. But our lady novelist is quite capable of doing this. Indeed, she does worse. She brings on God Almighty and makes him talk. Her apologists may say that it is a juvenile God, for Manuel is only a boy. But a God is a God. There is no gradation, because there is no development. Now the question would arise in a serious mind, How shall I make Omnipotence act? How shall I make Omniscience speak? Clearly the task is impossible. Milton essayed it, and *he* came to grief. His real hero, Satan, is always magnificent. The poet's genius dilates to its utmost capacity in dealing with that tremendous (but finite) figure. His angels and demons—especially the demons—are splendid successes. But his God the Father prates and quibbles "like a school divine," and the other persons of the Trinity are no less dismal failures. From the nature of the case this was inevitable. And if the mighty Milton failed, how should poor Marie Corelli succeed? Her very attempt is a piece of intolerable impudence. We may add that the boy Manuel is an unwholesome little prig. He is not a boy at all. Neither divine nor human, he is merely a walking phonograph. The lady novelist talks into him, and he talks it out again.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

If not Christianity, What?

THE majority of those who profess Christianity entertain remarkable views as to the nature and efficacy of their faith. They not only deny that the evils and defects of society are the result of their system, but they credit their religion with all the progress that has been made in modern times. It has been truly said that, as a rule, a man is supposed to know himself better than anyone else knows him. But there are many important instances where other people can estimate a person more correctly than he can estimate himself. They will take a less passionate view of his character. They will be in a better position to compare him with others, and thus judge more accurately of his relations to, and of his comparative place in the scale of, humanity. As with individuals, so it is with systems and with generations. An age is incapable in many respects of properly knowing itself. It has only one test by which to estimate its merits and demerits. It cannot compare itself with future ages, which lie in the womb of the unknown. It can only judge of itself by times gone by. And as every age, even the darkest and most lethargic, is, in some instances, more advanced than its predecessor, a survey of itself is extremely apt to assume the form of self-gratulation.

Orthodox Christians are so possessed with this self-gratulation as to the supposed influence of their faith that they arrogate to themselves the delusion that it is the only force capable of regenerating society. Hence they repeatedly ask, "If not Christianity, what?" The interrogation is usually put thus: "If you take away Christianity, what will you put in its place?" Now, to the superficial thinker no doubt this inquiry appears unanswerable. Upon reflection, however, it should be seen that it is based upon the assumption that Christianity is true, and suited to remedy the evils which mar the happiness of the human race. But it should be remembered that this assumption has not been proved, and therefore the question is by no means a pertinent one. If by the "truth" of Christianity is meant that it is a system superior to all others, and that its origin was unique, then, instead of being true, it is absolutely false. It cannot be too often repeated that there is nothing unique in the origin and nature of the Christian religion, and, moreover, that its teachings contain nothing useful that cannot be found elsewhere. These facts are so evident that their foremost exponents now admit that their inculcations are not original. It is also quite evident that Christianity is not suited to meet the demands of modern life. The

principal factors that have promoted human progress are: (1) The development of the intellect—this practically rules the world; (2) the expansion of mechanical genius—this provides for the ever-increasing needs of mankind; (3) the extension of national commerce—this furnishes an opportunity for the interchange of ideas; (4) a knowledge of science—this reveals the power and value of natural agencies; (5) the possession of political and social rights—this is the best means of securing just government, and of realising the equity of societarian life; and (6) the spread of scepticism—this maintains the right of mental liberty.

Now, these factors are not to be found in Christianity. Christ, in teaching persecution, retarded rather than aided intellectual freedom; in ascribing disease to the possession of devils, he ignored the facts of physiology; in demanding that man should give his first and principal attention to heaven, he caused the neglect of the duties of earth; in teaching the "divine government" of the world, he made political efforts comparatively useless; in extolling the virtues of poverty, he depreciated wealth, which, when properly used, is of an undoubted service to man; and his advice to his disciples, that when they appeared before the "magistrates and powers" they were to take no thought how or what they should say, "for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke xii. 11, 12), was no encouragement to educational training. To those who hold that Christianity is a secular regenerating force, we ask: What science did Christ initiate? What hospitals did he establish? What libraries did he institute? What societies for social reform did he organise? What association did he form to obtain the domestic rights of women, the political equity of man, and the kind treatment of the lower animals? What movement did he originate to relieve the world of the pangs of poverty and the curse of slavery? Finally, what principles did he lay down to inspire within man the spirit of self-help and of self-reliance, which are the basis of all personal and general improvements? Is it not the fact that reforms connected with all the above subjects have been won since the alleged death of Christ?

While, therefore, answering the question, "If not Christianity, what?" it is necessary to bear in mind the above facts as to the non-value of Christianity as a practical factor in modern progress. If it is destitute of the required remedial power to cure the evils and wrongs which abound on every hand, the sooner that fact is known the better; and even if we have nothing to replace it, the world will lose nothing by its removal. The fact is, error must be destroyed before truth can take its place. It would be useless to sow grain in a field covered with thistles and weeds. Any proficient cultivator of the soil knows that he would be wasting his time in such an operation. His first work would be to clear the ground of all useless and injurious material, and then to prepare it for the reception of the new seed. So it is with the human mind; while it is crowded with foolish and erroneous notions it will be impossible to invest it with correct conceptions of things. Besides, those who are the victims of traditional error have no desire, so long as they believe it to be true, to get rid of it. Hence, the necessity for destroying whatever prevents the recognition and acceptance of that which is true. The Christian who believes in the alleged truth and consolation of his faith does not want anything in its place. He is quite satisfied that that which he has been taught is the right thing. Those who adopt their religion in the ordinary manner, without inquiry, feel no need of change. They may believe the most palpable error; yet, if they feel it to be true, it appears to them a verity. Until, therefore, the fallacy of their opinions is made clear to them, there will be but little hope of their seeing "the error of their ways." People do not, as a rule, go to the exchange mart to do business if they are already satisfied with what they have. Those only patronise such places who require something different from what they possess. Hence the question, when asked by a contented believer, "What will you give me in the place of my religion?" is an idle one, and is often put to avoid the discussions of the merits or demerits of the religion itself. Of course, it is a personal matter whether one will discuss the subject or not, but it is an indisputable fact that he who knows only one side of a question is less capable of judging upon which side

lies the truth than the man who has examined all that can be said on both sides.

It is quite true that there may be many aspects of probable truths, and it is only by comparison that a sensible and defensible conclusion can be arrived at. A person may change from one religion to another as easily as he can change his style of dress, but a change from Christianity to Secularism involves a process of thought, an investigation of evidence, an inquiry into the basis of authority, and into the validity of the conclusions of reason. This may be the study of months or years, for sound conclusions cannot be hastily reached. Moreover, any well-grounded opinion must be the result of the study of the inquirer himself, just as the acquirement of knowledge is the result of the student's own efforts, and not of those of the teacher, who is only an aid in intellectual pursuits. We have no confidence in so-called conversions when suddenly brought about. Such changes are generally the result of emotional supremacy unaided by the dictates of reason. A great drawback of Christianity is that most of its adherents have been secured either through unquestioned acceptance of opinions submitted to them or through an appeal to their fears about a future existence. Secularism, on the contrary, has no such objectionable methods. Its appeal is to reason, not emotion; to facts, not fears; and to argument, not blind faith.

The question still remains, "If not Christianity, what?" The answer shall be given in my article next week.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Listless Lord.

Through untold æons vast
She [Nature] let him lurk and cower;
'Twould seem he climbed at last
In mere fortuitous hour,

Child of a thousand chances 'neath the indifferent sky.
—WILLIAM WATSON.

A NOTABLE article appears in the *Christian World* from the pen of "J.B." It is headed "The Divine Indifference." If it stopped at that heading, it would probably be all right, for all the facts of nature seem to point to the conclusion which these words express. But the writer evidently means the heading to be a question, and he deals with it in that sense, to the extent of two columns of the *C. W.* But he does not remove the impression created by the words with which he starts. On the contrary, after considering all that he has to say, one is still inclined to think that the "Divine indifference" is a fact, if we go so far as to admit the existence of any Divine being at all.

The writer in the *C. W.* acknowledges that there are "times in history when a mortal chill seems to fall upon the human soul. A deadly suspicion spreads abroad that man is, after all, in a universe that is deaf and dumb to his prayer."

That "deadly suspicion" exists in the minds of many thoughtful persons, who are very much disposed to think that it is even more than a suspicion. If one regards the facts of life as they are, it seems difficult to resist the conclusion that the universe is deaf and dumb to prayer. The ordinary newspaper press supplies, almost every week, a multitude of instances which distinctly negative any idea that prayer, in itself and in its results, is more than the mere expression of a desire. It has no potency in the sense of eliciting a definite response—no ultimate result which may be distinctly traceable to a spiritual reply to a human supplication.

"Men argue that our moral code is provincial" is the next assertion of the *C. W.* contributor. "Its writ," he says, "does not run beyond given boundaries. It is valid for certain spheres of human conduct." But how far does this carry, as related to the immeasurable realm outside? He admits that "Nature appears to know nothing of our morality. She slays wholesale, and in her slaying takes no heed of ethical distinction. When the ship goes down, or the earthquake engulfs the city, the pious and prayerful are swept away just as remorselessly as the murderer and the thief. People living sheltered lives may dream of love as at the heart of things; but the man on a raft in the pitiless Atlantic, or staggering, lost and hopeless, to his death in the

Australian bush, finds no suggestion of this friendliness."

There are still stronger considerations which indispose people to "trust in the Lord." Their life's experience is probably quite convincing that either the Lord does not exist, or that he is listless, languid, and inactive. According to the *C. W.*, the earthquake at Lisbon made multitudes of people Atheists—as well, indeed, it might: "We should not wonder if the survivors of the recent tidal wave at Galveston found their faith as well as their property submerged. At such times men echo Carlyle's outburst, 'God sits in heaven and does nothing!' And history often staggers us as much as nature. We picture to ourselves what happens in a single twenty-four hours on this planet—hideous massacres in China, the kidnapping of slaves in Central Africa, the brutal orgies repeated every night in the great cities, with their engulfments of virtue—these things happen, and there seems no outside response, no faintest sign that any moral sensitiveness beyond our own has thereby been touched."

What does this supposed evidence about "Divine indifference" amount to? asks the Rev. J. Brierley. He argues that, looked at narrowly, it resolves itself into a series of surface appearances of really no weight as against the other side. But is this so? He appears to think that, if we grumble because the good man as well as the evil perishes in a shipwreck or falls from a precipice, we are simply impeaching the results of Nature's laws. No rational person would impeach Nature's laws. It is because it is pretended that there is a Providence behind them, and a Providence who invites and listens to prayer, and responds, that we offer objection—not to Nature's laws, but to priestly false pretences.

This *Christian World* writer would have us hold our tongues about the physical evils he enumerates. The reason he assigns for them is the uniformity of natural law. But that excludes Providence and disposes of prayer. The *C. W.* contributor continues in the same line of argument, observing that what to the modern conscience is, perhaps, the greatest stumbling block, is what seems to be the Divine indifference to man's moral and religious aspirations: "Earnest men watch with dismay the immoralities around them, the orgies of lust and crime, the prosperity of villains, the grinding of the poor, and in their struggle against it they seem to get no help. They read of earlier revelations and interpositions, but the events of to-day appear to carry 'no revelation, except that nobody cares.' At times the dumb silence of that outside universe to which we turn our eyes seems almost maddening."

Yes, says "J.B.," this may seem a ground to complain of the Divine indifference, but it is not a real ground. Well, all it is possible for a plain person to say is that he follows what seems to be the dictates of common sense, founded on his personal observation and experience. Certainly he is not at all inclined to accept paradoxical explanations such as those presented in the article referred to.

Everything points to the conclusion that the Lord is deaf, listless, indifferent to human wants, complaints, appeals—so completely that religious advocates and controversialists insisting on the doctrines of Providence and prayer are likely to achieve no purpose than that of driving rational persons into Atheism.

FRANCIS NEALE.

A Handful of Epitaphs.

I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain. —Gray.

Death, not armed with any dart,
But crowned with poppies. —Julian Fane.

FROM the earliest times men have sought to express their loves and joys, their sorrows and hatreds, in epitaphs and epigrams, and to inscribe them on sepulchral urns, tablets, or gravestones, as memorials of their pleasure or their pain. It is certain that inscriptions on remarkable, and to commemorate extraordinary, events, were in use many centuries before the alleged birth of the mythical Christ. One of the most ancient epitaphs is that which Assyria's

last king, Sardanapalus, about 876 B.C., ordered to be engraved on his tomb, which was to be seen at Anchiæ five centuries later:—

"Sardanapalus built Anchiæ and Tarsus in one day.
Go, passer, eat, drink, and rejoice, for the rest is nothing."

It is, however, among the Greeks that we find epitaphs properly so-called; and these, in many instances, of a very high excellence. Among the most famous is the inscription by Simonides for the heroes of Thermopylæ:—

"Stranger, tell the Lacedæmonians that we lie here, in obedience to their commands."

The propensity for writing punning epitaphs existed at a very early period. The inscription on the tombstone of Pausanias, the Greek physician, contains a pun on his name. The first two lines have thus been translated:—

Pausanias, not so named without a cause,
Who oft to pain has given a pause.

The Romans do not appear to have indulged much in epitaphs of this description. They preferred a more serious note. Who ever wearies of Martial's *Erotion*—so prettily Englished by Leigh Hunt?—

Underneath this greedy stone
Lies little sweet Erotion,
Whom the Fates, with hearts as cold,
Nipped away at six years old.
Those, whoever thou may'st be,
That hast this small field after me,
Let the yearly rites be paid
To her little slender shade,
So shall no disease or jar
Hurt thy house or chill thy Lar,
But this tomb be here alone
The only melancholy stone.

In England, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tombs seem to have been thought the proper place, not only for puns, but for anagrams, acrostics, chronograms, Irish bulls, and similar curiosities. Many of them seem to have been written as if meant solely to excite ridicule and laughter. For example:—

ON A MAN NAMED FISH.

Worms bait for Fish; but here's a sudden change,
Fish's bait for worms—is not that passing strange?

ON MRS. DEATH.

Here lies Death's wife; when this way next you tread
Be not surprised should *Death* himself be dead.

ON ARCHBISHOP POTTER, OB., 1747.

Alack, and well-a-day.
Potter himself is turned to clay!

ON R. BUTTON, IN A CHURCHYARD NEAR SALISBURY.

Oh! sun, moon, stars, and ye celestial poles!
Are graves, then, dwindled into *Button* holes?

ON JOHN PENNY.

Reader! of *Cash*, if thou'rt in want of any,
Dig four feet deep, and thou shalt find a penny.

The complimentary epitaph seldom pleases. To lie like a tombstone has become a proverb. Pope's famous epitaph on Newton,

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light,

is a typical example. It is hyperbolic, and entirely out of character with the man it was intended to honor.

The tender and emotional epitaphs have a tendency to become either insipid or silly. But Herrick has shown us how to rival Martial:—

UPON A CHILD THAT DIED.

Here she lies a pretty bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood;
Who, as soon fell fast asleep,
As her little eyes did peep.
Give her strewings, but not stir
The earth that lightly covers her.

Ben Jonson's beautiful epitaph on a child beginning—

Weep with me all you that read
This little story;
And know for whom the tear you shed
Death's self is sorry,

is fine poetry; but it is not Death as known by mourners.

The tendency of the present day seems to be to do away with epitaphs, and merely inscribe on the grave the name and age of the deceased, with the addition of a tag from the Bible, or a verse from a hymn, which may or may not be poetry. But, apart from the conventional texts, the note of Christianity is seldom struck

in these inscriptions. There is a deep-rooted Secularism in people which is for ever bubbling up and asserting itself in the most unexpected ways. That there are so few inscriptions, other than religious, is to be attributed to the prejudice of the clergy, who object strongly to anything that clashes with their own views. Literary inscriptions are rare. We noticed a tombstone in Nunhead Cemetery with the dying words of Hamlet, "The rest is silence," and a gravestone in Lee Cemetery with an entire poem by Longfellow. Personal inscriptions are to be found scattered up and down our churchyards and cemeteries. On a tombstone in Norwood Cemetery one reads, "Poor Old Granny."

Byron mentions two touching epitaphs which he saw at Ferrara: *Martini Luigi implora pace* and *Lucrezia Picini implora eterna quiete*. Small wonder they struck a responsive chord in the world-worn heart of our English Catullus.

Keats desired that on his grave should be written:—
Here lies one whose name was writ in water.

Water! Say rather in fire. In place of Keats's modest epitaph we have that glorious elegy written by his greater contemporary, Shelley, that perfect poem *Adonais*, perhaps the finest elegiac poem in the English language, not even excepting Milton's *Lycidas*. Nor will it be forgotten how, a few years afterwards, in the same burying ground was placed another stone, recording that below rested the passionate heart of Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Shakespeare's lines on the dead Duncan are a model of simplicity and elegance:—

Duncan is in his grave;
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor prison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further.

Catullus has written one of the finest epitaphs. It is in every way admirable. The lines are in memory of his brother:—

O'er many a realm, o'er many an ocean tost,
I come, my brother, to salute thy ghost!
Thus on thy tomb sad honor to bestow,
And vainly call the silent dust below.
Thou, too, art gone! Yes, thee I must resign,
My more than brother—ah! no longer mine,
The funeral rites to ancient Romans paid,
Duly I pay to thy lamented shade.
Take them—these tears their heart-felt homage tell;
And now—all hail for ever, and farewell!

To such a voice the poetic ear still listens, and will listen ever, in preference to more religious harmonies. The fancy recognises in the splendid poetry of this old-world Secularist a symbol of the old Romans, whose splendid physical organisation and perfect ideals made them, indeed, "Masters of the World."

MIMNERMUS.

Brotherly Love in Christian Scotland.

A Scotland without its U. P. and its Free Kirks is a changed land altogether. Very beautiful and comforting at first sight is that union consummated at Edinburgh recently of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches. It would take many columns of print to explain the origin of these bodies, and the result would not be satisfactory in itself, or salutary as a lesson in Church governance. But the fact that they did exist, and were inimical, was writ large in Scottish life. The U. P. and the Free Kirk ministers would not exchange pulpits. Either would preach in the Established Kirk, but not for each other. Their jealousies and rivalries in little towns and villages formed the staple of the local gossip. At the curling or the bowling the Free Kirk and the U. P. ministers stood aloof, and would rather play against each other than on the same side. At the golf it was the same. The caddies partook in the rivalry. "Dod," said the Free Kirk caddie, as the minister's put, badly hit, managed somehow to reach the hole, "that was a real U. P. shot, that yin!" Their wives would not speak; their families passed by on opposite sides; they never dealt with the same baker or drank the same whisky. And is this for ever gone—gone in the name of peace? What is peace when fifty years of national humor is tumbling about one's ears? If this goes on much longer, we shall soon see but one creed in Scotland, one Kirk, and one deity. Each body had its own deity in the old days—a deity whose denominational attributes they defined every Sunday in long prayers and longer sermons, lest he should forget, and attach himself to another body. "Send rain, O Lord, send rain," prayed the U. P. elder; "an' if ye could send it afore John Cameron gets the roof on his byre it wad remind him o' his backslidin'." For John Cameron had gone over to the Free Kirk, tempted by a fee to ring the bell and sweep the pulpit.—*The Outlook.*

Acid Drops.

AFTER displaying his "want of administrative capacity," as Lord Roberts called it, at Spion Kop, Sir Charles Warren has returned to England, where he will always be known as the hero of "Bloody Sunday." When he is elevated to the peerage he should take the title of the Duke of Trafalgar Square. Meanwhile he is at his pious old tricks. If he could not beat the Boers, he can at least serve the Lord. Some people think that is all he is fit for. He might have made a passable clergyman. At any rate, he is great at religious meetings. The other night he presided at a gathering of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and told the audience—or congregation, or whatever it was—of the glories and beauties of fighting. And the good Christians listened and applauded. After which they went home, and, before lying down to sleep, offered up their prayers to the Prince of Peace.

Lord Rosebery is amongst the prophets. In his Rectorial address at Glasgow he brought the "divine finger," nails and all, into his peroration. Is this the result of his studying Cromwell? Or is it the result of his studying Napoleon? Perhaps he has laid to heart the lessons of Mr. Gladstone's life, and has come to the conclusion that a reputation for piety is indispensable to a Liberal leader. That might account for the "divine finger" as well as the sale of his lordship's racehorses.

Mr. John Burns has been singing (to an interviewer) the praises of Puritanism. When we are engaged in a death-wrestle with a powerful enemy, or a combination of powerful enemies, it is the Puritans, in Mr. Burns's opinion, who will have to save England. Only the Ironsides, he says, will be able to do it. "Honest John" forgets that the Cavaliers fought just as well as the Puritans. What they lacked was a leader of genius like Cromwell, and the Cromwellian organisation and discipline. The Puritans made no particular headway as Puritans. They were routed again and again until Cromwell's mind and hand, backed up by adequate resources, shaped them into an invincible army. We refer to this simply because we don't like to see Mr. Burns playing so much into the hands of the political Non-conformists.

Mr. Graham Wallas and the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam must surely wince at the praise showered upon them publicly by the Rev. Dr. John Clifford. It was so good of them to "stick to the Compromise"—that is, to stick to what Lord Salisbury well called Nonconformist Religion in the Board Schools. Mr. Headlam is a Churchman, and Mr. Graham Wallas is reputed to be an Atheist. No wonder Dr. Clifford is proud of their support. But how the "Progressive" Pope must chuckle to himself, and perhaps his Dissenting "pals," in his own sanctum!

South Wales has suffered a terrible shock. Lots of the natives hardly know whether they are on their heads or their heels. The Rev. E. Treharne-Jones, curate of Treherbert, has turned Secularist, and publicly recanted Christianity. This gentleman is a native of Merionethshire. Born in 1853, he is still comparatively young. He was educated at St. Bee's College, Cumberland, and was ordained in the diocese of Norwich. According to the *Rhondda Leader*, which interviewed him, his doubts were first aroused by the hypocrisy he witnessed in all Christian denominations. Then he began to give up doctrine after doctrine, until at last he was constrained to say that he "believed in nothing outside the working of the ordinary laws of nature." Like a man, he engaged the Public Hall, Treherbert, for Sunday evening, and lectured on "Christianity a Myth." Before doing so, he inserted the following letter in the *Rhondda Leader*:—
"Sir,—A short time ago 'Secularist' advised your readers to pull for the shore of Secularism. This, of course, called forth a number of so-called replies. I followed the discussion with interest, as I have done others before, to see if any solid reason was advanced whereby the truth of that fossilised creed called Christianity could be established. As usual, it was all in vain. Since that time I have ceased to be one of the paid defenders of that self-same creed, and am free to give unto others the honest convictions of my own mind. Being the paid servant of an organisation for the promulgation of the views and opinions of men who lived many centuries ago, I could only speak the hackneyed lesson which had been put in my mouth. I have now been emancipated from that slavery, and my mind is free to wander wherever my reason, observation, and experience may lead me. I would feel thankful if you could allow me a little of your valuable space to re-echo the sentiments of Secularist, and to advise Christians to take off the bandage of reverence from their eyes, drive the phantoms of fear from their hearts, and push from the throne of their brain the cowed form of superstition. Then to read their Bibles as they would any other book, and see how many of the Jewish fables contained

therein they are able to believe. I shall be at the Town Hall, Treherbert, on Sunday night, to point out a few of the impossible and incredible passages contained in that book that we have been taught to be above all doubt and criticism. Should any of the paid defenders of this antiquated creed desire to meet me in a public and friendly discussion of this question, I shall be very happy to make arrangements with them.—Thanking you in anticipation, I am, etc.”

It is evident from this letter that Mr. Treharne-Jones has been reading Ingersoll. It is also evident, from what he told his interviewer, that he has begun to feel the force of Christian bigotry. “I know,” he said, “I shall be subjected to tremendous persecution. The forces of the Church organisation will be brought very strongly to bear against me. I have already had to change my lodgings at almost a moment’s notice.”

Mr. Treharne-Jones delivered his lecture on “Christianity a Myth” on Sunday evening. The spacious hall was nearly filled with a mixed audience of Freethinkers and Christians. A correspondent informs us that the ex-reverend gentleman gave “a most powerful and elaborate address.” He is no compromiser. He has made a clean sweep of his old faith, and is now a full-fledged Secularist. At the close a vote of thanks was proposed to the lecturer. An orthodox bigot opposed, but the vote was carried by an overwhelming majority. Several questions were asked and satisfactorily answered. We expect to give a report of Mr. Treharne-Jones’s lecture next week.

The *Church Gazette* has been discussing in a leader “The Mind of the English Cleric.” The subject, though not a great one, is open to searching comment. The *C. G.* says: “It is asserted, and, we believe, fairly well made good, that, taking things on the whole, and not counting exceptions, the general tendency of clerical sentiment and opinion has been in one direction, while that of the bulk of the Church laity has been in quite another, which, if not precisely opposite, is at any rate in a totally different direction. Put briefly, it comes to this—that the priests are all going one way, and their people are all going the other way.”

“No church,” says the *C. G.*, “can do without its laity, and even with a laity that is cool and alienated any and every church must speedily come to nothing.” It goes on to describe the difference between the parson of a hundred years ago and the cleric of to-day. The “old-world parsonship,” it says, “has gone away, perhaps never to be seen again. In place of it we have a specialised type of cleric with its special views and interests, and one, too, which does not seem to understand the thoughts of the people it undertakes to direct. This is, perhaps, somewhere about where we are just now.”

“What trouble,” says Dean Pigou, “my surname has given, as it is!—Pigue, Peikew, Bigout, Peggue, Pigout, Ligou, Picue, Pigoe, Puegou (very ingenious), Pico. In schooldays it gave no trouble. ‘Ou’ was considered superfluous by my schoolfellows. It says much for the authorities of the Post Office that a telegram addressed to the ‘Rev. Mr. Puggie’ eventually reached me. I was introduced in a drawing-room in Belgrave-square as the ‘Rev. Mr. Pickles.’ In vain did I endeavor to impress on James Plush that my name was Pigou. He recklessly abandoned himself to ‘Pickles.’ It must have been he who announced the archdeacon and his wife as ‘the Archdeacon and the Venerable Mrs.’ etc. What most hurt me was, after forty years in the Christian ministry, to have a letter addressed to me the ‘Rev. Mr. Pagan!’”

We seem to suffer from no lack of busy-body organisations at the present time. The Lord’s Day Observance Society—which we could very well spare—is trying to justify its existence and its claims to subscriptions. Just now it is renewing the agitation against the letting of Board schools on Sunday evenings for secular purposes. As if, indeed, the ratepayers had no right to their own schools. Regard, of course, would be had to the caretakers in the Sunday use of the schools by some provision for extra assistance. But to say that the schools are not to be used when a legitimate application is made for them is a monstrous piece of nonsense. The motive of the objection is obvious. Parsons and ministers are afraid of rival attractions to their church and chapel performances.

So it seems that it is wrong even to look at chrysanthemums on a Sunday. Perhaps the next thing will be that the Sabbatarians will want to shut out a glimpse of the sky. At a recent chrysanthemum show at Middleton a letter was read from a Rochdale firm of solicitors, threatening the committee with prosecution under the Lord’s Day Observance Act if they kept the exhibition open on Sunday. The committee decided to keep it open, but not to charge for admission. When will the silly, vexatious, and obsolete law relating to Sunday be repealed?

Lady Harberton has been drawing argumentative support for the rational dress this week from the garb of our bishops, says the *Topical Times*. But this is putting our episcopacy to base uses. Besides, the bishops wear aprons. If the bloomer girl would do the same, all might yet be well; and the edge would doubtless be taken off the satire of the small boy.

Dean Ramsay used to relate an amusing tale about one of the Earls of Lauderdale. His lordship was taken very ill, the worst symptom being insomnia in an aggravated form. His little son, hearing that recovery would be impossible without sleep, said: “Send for the preaching man frae Livingstone, for fayther aye sleeps when that minister is in the pulpit.”

A Paris correspondent reports a strange case of religious madness which occurred at the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette. A woman, Mdme. de P., had for some time past been suffering from neuralgia, and her mother, notwithstanding her great age of seventy years, came from the provinces to nurse her. She only became worse, however, and showed signs of mental weakness, speaking constantly of God, the saints, and her eternal sojourn. The concierge and the neighbors heard fearful cries early on Wednesday morning. Mdme. de P. was found standing over her mother with her hands at her throat, and holding on so tightly that the old lady could scarcely breathe. The daughter was invoking the Virgin Mary, and then she stopped her prayer to ask her mother to join her in heaven. The police had great difficulty in getting her away from her mother, whom she nearly strangled.

The Emperor of Germany is not peculiar in his dislike for long sermons, but every victim of the long-winded preacher is not privileged to speak his mind so freely as William did on one occasion. His Majesty, a few weeks ago, said to a celebrated, but rather showy and conceited, German preacher: “Herr Pastor, please do not be offended when I tell you that your sermons are too long!” “But, your Majesty,” replied the pastor, “when I get warmed to my subject I forget everything and everybody, and get quite carried away, your Majesty!” The Kaiser, who had had an hour’s torture from the reverend gentleman that very morning, curtly answered: “Like you, sir, in one way; when you preach I forget everything; but, unlike you in another respect, I am not fortunate enough to get ‘carried away.’”

“On principle,” the members of a chapel in the Llangollen district have denounced dancing. They regret that “another dancing class” has been commenced in the district, but their regret and remonstrance have not prevented the class going on. Why should Bible-believers object to dancing? It seems to have been not unknown in early Biblical times, and there is nothing in Scripture that condemns it.

The Isle of Man, like the soldier in Jacques’ familiar speech, is “full of strange oaths.” Mr. Shee, Q. C., before beginning his judicial duties as special commissioner in connection with the Dumbell case, was required to swear that he would administer justice as impartially “as the herring’s backbone doth lie in the middle of the fish.” The Isle of Man is not the only place in the world in which the animal kingdom plays a part in the making of oaths. One of the many modes in which Chinese witnesses are impressed with the importance of telling the truth is slicing off the head of a fowl—a ceremony which is supposed to represent the unhappy fate of the perjurer.

Many Indian witnesses are sworn on tigers’ skins, in the belief that if they defile their lips with lies their bodies will become food for tigers; while others stand on lizards’ skins, and ask that their bodies shall be covered with the scales of the reptiles if they fail to tell the truth. A Norwegian witness asks that his meadows and cattle shall be cursed if he swears falsely. “Cursed be my cattle,” he exclaims, “my beasts, my sheep, so that after this day they may never thrive or benefit me; yea, cursed may I be and everything I possess.”

A census was taken on Sunday, October 13, of the attendance at sixty-six churches in Wigan, with the result that only 10,954 persons were found to be present. Of these only 3,228 were men, the rest being women and children.

Five people, four of them belonging to the choir, attended on Sunday (Nov. 4) evening’s service at the parish church of Melplash, a Dorsetshire village. Undisturbed, the vicar preached an elaborate discourse, the service lasting fully an hour and a half. Dorsetshire has not the only parish church in which a congregation of one person only has attended the service. Mr. K. Harrington writes that at a church in Deal, where choral evensong is sung on Wednesdays, on one evening the parson, verger, organ-blower, and organist were the only officials in their places, and the reverend gentleman

went through the whole of the service and preached an eloquent sermon to a congregation consisting of one lady.

An accommodating gentleman was Colonel Skinner. We learn that at Delhi there are three places of worship raised to immortalise his name. His first wife was an Englishwoman, and persuaded him to build an Anglican church there. Then he married a Mohammedan, with the result that he built a mosque in the same street, opposite the church. Last of all he married a Hindoo, when he could not do less than pay for the erection of a Hindoo temple, which now stands a little way off from the others.

An advertisement in a morning contemporary propounds a nice metaphysical question under the guise of a domestic want: "Can any lady recommend a cook who would value Christian principles?" Are the Christian principles of the mistress or the servant? And what is to prove the basis of valuation?

The *Church Gazette* comments on the complaint that the diocese of Llandaff has "recently been informed, on the authority of the Bishop and one of his archdeacons, that Sunday-schools are a failure." The *Church Gazette* says: "We agree in the fact of comparative failure, but we think that it is due to the other simple fact that, for the most part, they are ill-conducted, exert no discipline, and have very little to teach."

Thus the sage editor of the *Sunday Companion* admonishes a correspondent who appears to have found more in Holy Writ than it is advisable he should know: "The Song of Solomon is a portion of Holy Scripture which should be read with discretion, W. J. B. It has always been considered the inspired composition of the Royal poet (1 Kings iv. 32) whose name it bears, and in authority equal to the other Books of the Old Testament. The most judicious and serious commentators for ages have regarded it as an allegory setting forth the spiritual union between Christ and His Church. Such a view (which was held by the late C. H. Spurgeon) may be said to tone down some of the figurative expressions occurring in it that seem too luxuriant for Western taste. The Rev. Dr. Joseph Angus, Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, points out that several terms in the passage you mention belong properly to the dress, and not to the person, while nothing is described save chaste affection. Yet, as I have already observed, the Song is not to be examined 'rashly, thoughtlessly, or lightly,' but 'advisedly, reverently, and in the fear of God.'"

It is hardly necessary to say that there is not the remotest reference to Christ and his Church in the Song of Solomon. The headings in the Bible are mendacious to the last degree. The Song is simply a love-poem.

In a pensive tone of regret, the *British Weekly* observes: "One cannot read *Vanity Fair* without seeing the concentrated bitterness with which Thackeray regarded evangelical religion, and sorrowfully recognising that he had something to justify him."

The Rev. R. C. Joynt, vicar of Gipsy Hill, feels that the clergy are not above reproach in regard to their protestations as to the sanctity of the Lord's Day, and the fact that some of them do not hesitate to travel on that day. He tells us that he was saying good-bye to a friend of his who had just preached a sermon in the church. His friend entered a hansom whilst a group of young fellows stood near the churchyard gate. "Their observations were not intended for either my friend's ear or mine, but they will probably never be forgotten by either of us."

The *Freethinker* has indulged in an ill-informed and ill-natured assault upon Spiritualism and its mediums. Its remarks upon Henry Slade are especially foolish. In no particular is it accurate. We admit that Mr. Watts has fairly well stated the popular opinion, and the prejudiced version of the facts; but he ought to know better than to retail these for real Freethinkers. There is no bondage so bad as bondage to popular opinions and prejudiced versions. The usual lying about the trial of Henry Slade and what followed is "enough to provoke a saint."—*Light*.

Our Spiritualist contemporary makes a considerable mistake. Mr. Watts is not the *Freethinker*. He is one of its valued contributors, and is responsible for what he says in his own articles, which are always signed. Nor do we think that Mr. Watts's articles on Spiritualism were at all ill-natured. He simply spoke the truth as he saw it, and it would be better to answer him than to call him names. With regard to Henry Slade, we remember quite well his being sentenced to imprisonment as an impostor. The case occurred in London. We were editing the *Secularist* at the time, and Slade's trial was made the subject of an article by our then colleague, the distinguished poet James Thomson ("B. V.").

"Mayor's Sunday" at Blackburn was marked by a special sermon in Clayton-street Wesleyan Chapel, the preacher being the Rev. S. Forrest. In the course of his exhortation he echoed the remark, "I never take my politics into my religion, but I always take my religion into my politics." When this is worked out in practice, it means that the politicians must not meddle with the clergy, but the clergy must meddle with the politicians. The men of God are to keep a sacred preserve, and every poacher is to be shot at sight.

Harry Alfred Long has been anecdoting. Some of his little stories are published in the *Glasgow Evening Citizen*. One of them is full of true Christian taste. It is about the late Charles Bradlaugh, who cannot now defend himself. Of course, it is an abominable falsehood. But it hardly does to be angry with this old mountebank. He is a notorious liar, and nobody takes him seriously.

The new century is to be inaugurated—and we hope it appreciates the compliment—by a series of "important services" at St. Paul's Cathedral on New Year's Day. But the Catholics don't mean to be left behind. They are getting up a pilgrimage to Rome, where the Pope is to stand in St. Peter's at midnight "during the hour that will attach the twentieth century to the nineteenth." His Holiness is to be surrounded by "representatives from all parts of the Church." No doubt it will be a big show, and will make the poor Protestants look green with envy.

The Rev. John Marsham, writing to the *St. James's Gazette* from Barton Segrave Rectory, Kettering, contends that flogging certain criminals is justifiable even if it does brutalise them, provided it is a means of protection to the helpless and weak. The reverend gentleman does not stop to ask himself whether brutalising a criminal, and then turning him loose upon society again, is really any sort of protection to anybody. We should say that the presumption would be all the other way. Nor does the reverend gentleman propose to extend flogging to women, who are sometimes more brutal to "weak and helpless" children than are the worst of men.

John Smith, of Trinity-street, Southwark, is a leather dresser. He is also a street preacher, especially to children, whom he appears to take into a corner for the purpose of imparting to them "certain truths." A number of mothers in the district are not at all in love with his method of instruction, and some of them kicked up a row, which resulted in an "assault" being committed upon the preacher by a "powerful" bystander named Mark Shaw. Magistrate Slade sentenced the assaulter to forty shillings or a month. This was received with marks of disapproval by several Borough matrons at the back of the Court.

Rev. W. Graham has been fined at Wilmslow for riding a bicycle on the footpath. He claimed that he was privileged as a parson attending to his parochial duties; which really means that a man of God should ride where and how he likes. Happily the magistrates took the view that laymen had as good rights in the public thoroughfares as the clergy.

It is suggested by R. Hannell, in the *Daily News*, that, if missionaries must go to China, they should leave their wives and children at home; or, better still, take and practise the vow of celibacy. But this will not suit the Protestant missionaries, who are too fond of their comfort. Their idea of martyrdom is a good salary, a good position, and pleasant domestic surroundings.

Moody's successor at Northfield is to be the Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, Congregationalist, of Tollington Park, London. This gentleman has refused other offers that would have removed him from his present congregation; but he recognises this as "a clear call from God." Why, certainly. It is always a clear call from God when it fits in with the minister's wishes and ambitions.

The late Lord Bute's heart is probably by this time buried in secret on the Mount of Olives. A family party went out to place it there, accompanied by the Catholic Bishop of Galloway, who would hardly trouble himself about any portion of the corpse of a poor believer. "It is desired," we read, "that the spot where his lordship's heart is buried should remain unknown to the world." Well, the family need not worry. The world is not likely to exhibit much curiosity as to the whereabouts of Lord Bute's heart, or liver, or anything else that was his.

Say what is Honor? 'Tis the finest sense
Of justice which the human mind can frame,
Intent each lurking frailty to disclaim,
And guard the way of life from all offence,
Suffered or done.
—Wardsworth.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 25, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "Lord Rosebery's 'Divine Finger.'"

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

We have received a long letter, written on both sides of the paper, from W. H. Nash—the correspondent who accused us of falsification and other things in relation to the *Annals* of Tacitus. He now admits that the charge of falsification is untenable, but he evades an apology by pretending that falsification need not be "intentional." The rest of his letter is of the same pettifogging and contemptible character, and we will not waste our space, and insult our readers, by printing it. We shall be happy to discuss the Tacitus question with a reputable controversialist. It is idle to discuss with one who answers what we never said, and who seems incapable of understanding our language, or even his own.

F. MALSMO.—There is nothing to prevent the Salvation Army from holding meetings and "begging," as you call it, in the streets. They call it "collecting." They are within the law.

W. PUGH.—Much obliged. See "Acid Drops." Send on the report by all means.

D. FRANKEL.—Miss Vance has told us what happened. See "Sugar Plums." Thanks all the same.

G. PORTER.—You should not have put the cap on. How on earth could it be meant for you?

A. D.—See Genesis xiv. 18, and Hebrews vii. 1, for Melchizedek.

J. TITHERINGTON.—Thanks for your letter and cuttings.

W. H. MOORE.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

F. E. WILLIS.—Glad to have your cuttings. We share your hope for Mr. Percy Ward's success.

EMANUEL HOPES.—Our interest is in "Secular Education." You say nothing about this in your address to the School Board electors in Marylebone. How, then, can we invite our friends to plump for you? We should have been glad to do so had it been possible.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always welcome.

J. STANLEY.—We have answered your letter by post, as the case seemed urgent. We wish, however, that all whom it concerns would take a note of the matter. The law, as laid down by Mr. Justice Collins, is this. Sunday Lectures and Concerts—and Christmas Day counts as a Sunday—are legitimate, even with a charge for admission, provided there are some free seats. We believe that Mr. Justice Collins's judgment would be upheld, but, of course, we are not sure.

MINNIE and WILLIE HUTTY write to Mr. Neale: "My mamma is a great reader of your esteemed friend Mr. Foote's *Freethinker*. A few weeks ago appeared an article in it entitled 'Echoes from Olympus,' by yourself. Do you think you can write some 'Echoes' and oblige a little girl and boy?"

G. T. HALL (Hull).—Sorry to hear the bigots are now trying to get your Branch turned out of St. George's Hall. Perhaps it would be prudent not to distribute any more of your bills at other meetings there. It is sometimes better to bend than to break.

W. MUMBY.—See paragraph in "Sugar Plums." We shall push the Fund again, and vigorously too.

MEMBERS of the Tir-Phil and New Tredegar Branch are earnestly invited to attend a meeting at "Bon Marche" Buildings, Tir-Phil, on Monday evening, November 26.

J. RANKIN asks whether Mr. Watts will answer the letter from G. Vaughan in the *Freethinker* of October 21.

C. W. HECKETHORN.—You see the Spiritualists are sore already.

J. DAVIDSON.—Your letter shall be considered.

A. J. WHITE.—It is a little out of our way—is it not?

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Mrs. B. E. Marks, £1; A Lady Friend (per J. G. Bartram), 10s.

SHILLING WEEK.—Mrs. B. E. Marks, 5s.; R. Lancaster, 2s.; W. Robinson, 5s.

E. R. WOODWARD.—Miss Vance says that a contents-sheet has been forwarded regularly to your newsagent. Perhaps he repents his promise.

G. E. PEARCE.—Wallace's *Darwinism* is the best single volume we know. It is published at 7s. 6d. Aveling's *Darwin Made Easy* (1s., at our office) is a good compendium.

J. G. DOBSON.—In our next.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Acknowledged as desired.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—Torch of Reason—Light—Leeds Mercury—Glasgow Herald—Boston Investigator—Freethought Magazine—Huddersfield Chronicle—Ethical World—Truthseeker (New York)—Glasgow Evening Citizen—Lucifer—Rhonda Leader.

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 3s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE had a capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Mr. Samuels occupied the chair, and there were several questions and some discussion after the lecture. This evening (Nov. 25) Mr. Foote speaks again from the same platform. His subject will be "Lord Rosebery's 'Divine Finger.'" Freethinkers should try to give special publicity to this lecture amongst their friends and acquaintances. It will be physical, geographical, historical, and economical, as well as anti-religious.

Mr. Foote has to "apologise" for the delay of his promised statement concerning Shilling Week and the Twentieth Century Fund. No doubt he will be able to present it in next week's *Freethinker*, and also a full list, up to date, of the direct subscribers. The truth is, he has been very busy, seeing the *Almanack* through the press, and arranging (with Miss Vance) the new courses of lectures in London. The second matter has been one of great difficulty. Other pressing business has also crowded in, including the preparation for the Annual General Meeting of the Secular Society, Limited.

The *Secular Almanack*, issued by the Executive of the National Secular Society, and edited (as a labor of love) by Mr. G. W. Foote, is now on sale. Of course we mean the 1901 number. It is really a cheap publication. "Chilperic's" article alone is worth all the money—and more. It contains information which every Freethinker should keep constantly by him. There are other articles by G. W. Foote, C. Watts, C. Cohen, Mimnermus, A. B. Moss, and W. Heaford; besides a well-stocked Calendar, and a mass of facts about Freethought Societies in all parts of the world. Whatever profit accrues from the sale of this publication goes into the N. S. S. exchequer, to be spent on Freethought organisation and propaganda. That should be enough to clear out every copy of the *Almanack* before Christmas.

Members of the Secular Society, Limited, will have received legal notice of the Annual General Meeting, which is to be held at the Manchester Hotel on Friday evening, November 30, at 8 o'clock. A report and a balance-sheet accompany the notice, and will probably be published later on in the *Freethinker*. Proxy forms have also been sent to members. These should be filled in and forwarded to the Society's registered office, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C., at least two days before the meeting. Those who wish to place their votes in Mr. Foote's hands will insert his name as their proxy. Those who prefer someone else will insert another name.

The Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, consisted of twelve members; but Mr. George Ward resigned in consequence of his inability to attend, and Mr. Forder fell out by virtue of the Society's Articles. Of the ten members left one-third had to retire by ballot. This was three, as near as possible; no Director consenting to be sliced into thirds. The lot fell upon Messrs. Foote, Hartmann, and Warren, who stand, and are eligible, for re-election.

A sixpenny edition of Paine's *Age of Reason*, well printed on good paper, has never been placed on the market. But it is going to be. The Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, considered the suggestion from the Chairman at the last meeting, and resolved to issue the *Age of Reason* at the same price as the cheap novels which are commanding such a large sale. Wealthy people can buy as much expensive heresy as they please. There is plenty for them in the booksellers' shops. What is wanted is cheap heresy for the million, and this projected edition of Thomas Paine's masterpiece will be a bold step in that direction. This is to some extent a propagandist effort, and rightly devolves upon the Secular Society, Limited. But there is good reason to believe that the Society will, in the long run, be more than

recouped for the outlay, as the sale of the volume should run into tens of thousands.

This is to be called "The Twentieth Century Edition" of the *Age of Reason*. Mr. Foote has undertaken to supply a Biography of Thomas Paine, and such Notes as seem necessary (but no more) after the lapse of a hundred years and in the light of present-day Biblical criticism.

The Secular Society, Limited, has voted a grant of two guineas in aid of the expenses of each "Secular Education" candidate in the London School Board elections—Messrs. Barwick (Finsbury), Hewitt (Tower Hamlets), Jones (Chelsea), and Quelch (East Lambeth). It is to be hoped that Secularists will plump for these candidates in those divisions.

Mr. F. G. Jones, B.A., The Trade Unionist and "Secular Education" candidate in Chelsea, said at a recent meeting, as reported in the local *Advertiser*, that "By secular education it was not to be supposed that he wished to substitute the doctrine of Mr. G. W. Foote, of Freethought fame, although many persons would probably between now and the election say that is what he did intend to do. He held that the churches and the chapels were the places for religious instruction, and the schools of the Board for secular instruction; that is, such instruction as will fit them for the future citizenship of this great Metropolis." The reference to Mr. Foote is not too neat, but Mr. Jones is sound enough substantially.

On Wednesday evening, November 28, the night before the poll, Mr. Watts is to speak on behalf of Mr. Barwick's candidature in Finsbury, at the Wordsworth-road Board school, Stoke Newington.

On Monday evening (Nov. 26) Mr. Cohen delivers the second of the course of free lectures at the Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street, Islington. The local "saints" should do their best to fill the hall—if possible with Christians.

The Aldgate Baths experiment was not a striking success at the first venture. Miss Vance went down there from the Athenæum Hall, arriving about 8 o'clock, in company with Mr. Leat, and found the door, which was barred on the inside, surrounded by a howling mob of young male and female Hooligans, many of whom were obviously Jews, who displayed a quite astonishing interest in Jesus Christ. Mr. Leat had to fight his way to the door, Miss Vance following him, and getting her clothes torn in doing so. When they could persuade those inside to open the door a little, they crept in amidst a shower of biscuit tins, oily sardine boxes, and other unmentionable articles. Inside they found a small, nondescript gathering, whom Mr. Cohen had been trying to address. No doubt a good many intending auditors had been kept out by the barred door and the disgusting mob in the street. Unfortunately, it had not occurred to anyone to send for the police. This was done by Miss Vance, and the Hooligans were cleared off, after one constable had been badly hurt on the knee with a brickbat. This evening (Nov. 25) police will be engaged to keep order at the door all the time, young boys and girls will not be admitted, and walking about in the hall will not be allowed. Mr. Charles Watts is the lecturer, and we call upon the East London "saints" to rally round him. For the rest, it must be distinctly understood that the *arrangements* will be in Miss Vance's hands—absolutely. She knows what should be done, and discipline is necessary to counteract disorder.

We understand that Mr. Cohen, who stuck to his post, with his chairman, Mr. Victor Roger, got through his lecture, although by instalments; and that he was opposed by the Rev. Mr. Alcock in a very gentlemanly manner.

The Paddington Public Baths, Queen's road, Bayswater, close to Whiteley's, has been engaged for one week-night, Tuesday, December 4. Other nights have to be determined later. Mr. Foote will take this first night himself. His subject will be "Secularism and the Bible." Handbills of this meeting can be obtained of Miss Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court; or of Mr. B. Munton, 10 Uxbridge-road, Notting Hill.

Application has been made for the Battersea Public Baths on Sunday evenings, December 2, 9, and 16. We expect to make a definite announcement next week.

The *Midland Free Press* gave a brief, but bright, report of Miss Goyne's lecture on the late Grant Allen in the Leicester Secular Hall. Miss Goyne is a Birmingham schoolmistress, and a member of the local N. S. S. Branch. Londoners will remember her pleasantly as one of the speakers at the fine Queen's Hall meeting after the N. S. S. Whit-Sunday Conference.

Characteristics of St. Mark.

THE Second Gospel deserves attentive study, for it is now generally admitted to be the earliest of the four. It is called the Evangel "according to St. Mark"; but who Mark was nobody knows. Two or three persons of that name occur in other parts of the New Testament, but there is nothing to show that any of them wrote this Gospel. In the Acts we have mention of John surnamed Mark, and of Mark plain and simple. Now, scholars of every shade of opinion are agreed that the Acts of the Apostles was written *after* the Gospel of St. Luke, and that St. Luke's Gospel was written *after* Mark's. Therefore, if John surnamed Mark, or plain and simple Mark, had either of them written any Evangel, then it would certainly have been known to Luke at the time he composed the Acts; and it is incredible that he should have omitted to mention the fact if he had known it.

It is usually stated, on the authority of the ancient fathers, that Mark was a disciple of St. Peter, and that he wrote his Gospel in Rome, appealing to 1 Peter v. 13 (which, by the way, does not mention Rome at all, but Babylon; and which does not speak of a disciple, but a son). Eusebius says that Papias wrote that Prester John told him that Mark composed his Gospel from the preaching of Peter. This succession of names recalls the narrative of the *House that Jack Built*, but it is all that orthodoxy can tell us of the composition of the Gospel under consideration; and, in fact, it is quite useless to refer to these ancient fathers, for they can give us no information as to the personality of the Evangelist Mark, or his qualifications or trustworthiness in dealing with matters of history.

Now, the Gospel of Mark is written in Greek. But it contains several Syriac words and several Latin words. The Evangelist is careful to translate his Syriac, but does not think it in the least necessary to explain his Latin. In vi. 27 a soldier of the body-guard is called a *speculator*—a word which does not convey any military meaning to us, but which in Latin meant a scout or sentinel. In vii. 4 the word translated "pots" is a corruption of the Roman measure, the *sextarius*. We are actually informed in v. 9 that the devils in Galilee spoke Latin, and called themselves "Legion"! Not to mention such words as *denarius*, *centurion*, *pretorium*, etc., which are likewise found in the other gospels.

But, although Mark expected his readers to be perfectly acquainted with Latin, he did not suppose that they understood Syriac. In orthodox commentaries we usually find it stated that "Mark has preserved a few words in the mother-tongue of Jesus." But the learned commentators carefully avoid discussing whether Mark himself really understood Syriac. In the time of St. Jerome it had already been pointed out that the Evangelist was often incorrect, and Jerome was obliged to argue that "Maiden, I say unto thee arise" was merely a free translation, as opposed to a literal rendering, of *Talitha cumi*. *Ephphatha*, again, is unintelligible. It should have been *Ithpethach*. Golgotha should be *gogoltha*. And what shall we say of x. 46? The word *bar* means "son" in Syriac, so that *Bar Timæus* would mean "son of Timai." Yet Mark is so ignorant of the rudiments of the language, that he actually writes "the son of Timæus, Bartimæus," without recognising the identity of the two phrases. It is still more important to observe that, when Christ on the Cross cries out *eloi eloi lama sabachthani*, Mark implies that the bystanders did not understand him; so that it is perfectly evident that the Evangelist was of opinion that Syriac was *not* spoken at Jerusalem; or, in other words, that the alleged "mother-tongue of Jesus" was unknown in the land of his birth.

But the reader may inquire why Mark took the trouble to insert these unintelligible words in his Gospel and make such a parade of their interpretation. The answer is simple. They are magical formulæ. At *Talitha cumi* the dead arises. At *Ephphatha* the eyes of the blind are opened. At *Eloi lama sabachthani* Jesus miraculously gives up the ghost; for death by crucifixion did not usually supervene for two or three days. Similarly *Abba*, *Boanerges*, and *Golgotha* are all mystic titles, like

the Syriac and Coptic words found on the Gnostic gems and in early Christian formulas of exorcism. It has often been remarked that this Gospel is almost entirely occupied with narratives of the miracles wrought by the supernatural powers of Christ; and, while we are on this subject, it should be remarked that xiv. 3 speaks of Jesus being anointed with "pistic nard," concerning which, it is amusing, if not instructive, to read the marginal note in the Revised Version; for *pistis* means "faith." It is by *pistis* that the followers of Christ are to heal the sick, handle serpents, cast out devils, and remove mountains. So that *Pistic Nard* was evidently a composition of magical efficacy, and that was why it was used as the chrism of the Christos.

It is not clear whether St. Mark possessed any intimate knowledge of the geography of Palestine, as his mention of localities does not present any definite features. It is true that in viii. 10 he speaks of Dalmanutha, which is otherwise totally unknown, and which in Matthew is replaced by Magadan (or Magdala in some MSS.); but it is somewhat hypercritical to insist on such a fact, seeing that, after all, our own knowledge of the geography of Galilee is by no means complete.

But if we cannot decide anything about his knowledge of geography, we can at least decide upon his knowledge of Jewish history; for he knew little or nothing about it. In ii. 26 he cites Abiathar instead of Ahimelech (see 1 Samuel xxi. 1), and the Authorised Version attempts to wriggle out of the difficulty by inserting "in the days of" Abiathar. In vi. 14-29 he continually calls Herod the Tetrarch a "king"; and it is noteworthy that Matthew, in copying this narrative, silently corrects the mistake by writing "tetrarch," except in Matthew xiv. 9, where the word "king" is retained by an oversight.

If Mark was unfamiliar with Jewish history, he was also unfamiliar with Jewish customs, and thinks it necessary to explain them at length whenever he has occasion to mention them. Thus in vii. 1-5 we have a statement about the ceremonial ablutions of the Jews. In xii. 18 he thinks it necessary to inform his readers that the Sadducees said there was no resurrection. In xiv. 1 we are told that the Passover was the feast of unleavened bread; in xv. 42, that the Preparation was the day before the Sabbath. All these labored explanations reveal the fact that the author was not a Jew, and that Jewish customs were foreign to him and to his prospective readers.

In style Mark is somewhat theatrical. He is continually striving to be vivid. And, as is usual in uneducated people, in striving for vividness he is often ridiculous. In vi. 39 he tells us the people sat upon the green grass, as though anyone expected grass to be red. In vii. 26 he tells us that Christ met "a Greek, a Syro-Phenician by birth." If the woman were a Greek, she could not have been a Syro-Phenician; and, therefore, the Revisers have a marginal note to the effect that Greek meant "Gentile," oblivious of the fact that when Mark wishes to mention a Gentile he used an entirely different word, as anyone may see by referring to x. 33. A Syro-Phenician was a Phenician of Syria, as distinguished from a Libyo-Phenician, or Phenician of Africa or Carthage; so that "Syro" is a redundancy in Syria. In iv. 36 we are told that there followed him other little ships. In the same way, in xiv. 51 we have the famous young man in the linen garment, who has exercised the minds of generations of commentators who have not recognised that this is one of Mark's usual irrelevancies which are intended to be graphic, and lend an additional air of reality to the scene. These irrelevant touches are omitted in the parallel passages of Matthew and Luke.

The date of the Gospel seems to be very clear, for xiii. 2 points conclusively to the destruction of the Temple by Titus in A.D. 70. On the other hand, xiii. 30 shows that Mark expected the Second Advent to take place in the lifetime of some of those who had heard Jesus preach; and in xv. 21 he mentions Simon of Cyrene as the father of two well-known persons—Alexander and Rufus. Both these latter names appear in the Epistles of Paul; but of course there is no certainty that they represent the same persons. At any rate, Mark must have been conversant with the generation after Jesus, so that we shall probably be justified in placing his Gospel between A.D. 70 and A.D. 100.

We have already remarked that Mark is the eldest of the Evangelists; and our survey of him would be very incomplete if we failed to notice his omissions—or, rather, the additions that the later writers make to the Gospel story. In the first place, Mark knew nothing of the alleged virgin birth or regal genealogy of Jesus; because, if he had heard of these, there was no reason why he should have omitted them. Then, again, Mark was quite ignorant of the details of the temptation in the wilderness; for, again, it is incredible that he should have left them out if he had known them. Several things in Mark are evidently the germs of later amplifications. One of the most striking is xiv. 57, 58. The statement that Jesus would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days is there treated by Mark as a falsehood concocted by his enemies. Yet in John ii. 19 this same phrase has become a part of Christ's teaching. What is described as a falsehood in one evangelist is narrated as an observed fact in another. But the omission which is most noteworthy is the alleged teaching of Jesus. Modern controversialists are always raving about the Sermon on the Mount, and what they vainly suppose to be the novel doctrines of Jesus. St. Paul's Epistles know nothing of these sayings of Jesus. Mark's Gospel knows nothing of these teachings. They first appear in the Gospel of St. Matthew, which is nothing more than Mark, augmented with a lot of fresh matter. The Evangel of St. Mark merely presents Jesus of Nazareth as a somewhat bumptious individual performing sundry wondrous feats, and asserting his superiority over Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and the like; and the relation of this Gospel to Matthew and Luke should be carefully studied by those who wish to comprehend the process by which the Christ story was gradually evolved.

CHILPERIC.

Freethought in France.

AMONG the symptoms of the decay of religion in France is the constant leakage going on within the Church, whereby many of its most honest representatives are drifting away into the great stream of that world-wide sceptical movement which is destined to submerge all the creeds and gods in ruin and destruction. In one of the smallest dioceses of France—that of Marseille—alone, no less than twenty priests are known to have plunged out of the Ark of God into the surrounding waters of unbelief during the first half of the present year; but throughout the country the number of those who made public their relinquishment of the priestly office is small as compared with the number of those who make no public announcement of their disgust and contempt for the creed which formerly they preached, but quietly leave the Church to its fate. One of the chief apostles of Freethought in France—Monsieur Victor Charbonnel—only recently ministered at the altars of the Great Lying Church—that Church whose lies are white as compared with the blackness of its innumerable murders. Some of the priests who have found the light do not hide it under the bushel of obscurity. Many of them, before quitting the sacred show, address a stinging letter of renunciation of religion to their several bishops. In some cases they read out their valedictory letter to their congregation, and at the same time ask pardon of their parishioners for having confirmed them so long in superstition. M. Charbonnel's letter, which was addressed to the Archbishop of Paris, was reproduced in nearly all the French journals, and its publication had the effect of a weighty manifesto, inasmuch as more than thirty priests quickly imitated his courageous example, and left the Church. M. Charbonnel has since been active as a propagandist throughout France and Belgium, and was one of the clearest heads and cleverest speakers at the recent Paris Congress of International Freethought. He is immensely popular wherever he goes, and counts for one of the great personal forces of Freethought in both countries, where his labors are so highly appreciated.

This sceptical process within the Church is helping forward the popular aggressive movement outside. The organised Freethought Party in France to-day is widely distributed over the country, and hundreds of local

societies exist, principally in the towns and large centres of population. From a detailed list, now before me, of these societies, published in the *Almanack* for 1894 issued by the French Federation of Freethought, it would appear that no less than 570 Freethought groups or societies, many of them aggressively active, are, in their different localities, carrying on the work of rescuing humanity from the ravening wolves of superstition. I find that in Algeria no less than twenty-eight societies are enumerated, and over thirty groups are placed to the credit of Paris. It is not clear how many of these societies are affiliated to the French Federation, as I read in the annual report, presented last Easter Monday, that the actual number of its Branches is 210, in addition to 260 individuals unattached to societies. The Secretary of the Federation is Monsieur Paul Dobelle, 98 Boulevard de l'Hôpital, Paris.

There are three features in connection with French Freethought which are worthy of special notice, as evidencing the activity and zeal of the members.

I.—*The Good Friday Banquets.* The Catholics make it a special point to eat fish instead of meat on this day, in commemoration of the fishy story of the crucifixion of a Jew who posed as a god. The abstention from butchers' meat is supposed to be specially gratifying to the blessed Trinity, and on that account every good Freethinker in France, even though he be a vegetarian, eats his beef, pork, or mutton on Good Friday in memory of the crucified Lamb. Banquets are organised in the different groups, and the rallying of the friends around the festal board is made the occasion of encouraging speeches and convivial rejoicing. Whilst the Christians monopolise the blessing of mourning on the day when Jesus "died" to make them happy, the Freethinkers eat and drink and make merry, to the great scandal of the godly.

II.—*Civil Marriages.* Special functions organised on the occasion of the union of members of the Freethought bodies do much to redeem the civil ceremony from the charge of coldness. The friends rally round the happy couple at the Town Hall, and speeches of congratulation are delivered by chosen orators. On the most solemn day of one's life the fatal plunge is taken amidst every token of sympathy and respect, on the part of one's associates in the work of social redemption, and a distinctively Freethought tone is given to all the ceremonies surrounding the momentous event. There can be no doubt of the wisdom of expelling the cold-blooded red-tapeishness of a frigidly official tying of the matrimonial knot, and of imparting some rational warmth of human feeling into a function whereby society formally recognises the union of two citizens as man and wife.

III.—*Secular Funerals.* Every number of the *Bulletin* (the official organ of the French Freethought Federation) records some imposing mark of respect paid by the groups on the occasion of the burial of one or other of its members. Under the French law every citizen is guaranteed the right of making a testamentary declaration determining whether his or her burial shall be of a civil or of a religious character, and penalties are imposed for any infraction of such testamentary disposition, save only when such disposition shall, for special and well-understood reasons, be set aside by the legal authorities. These Secular funerals really partake, sometimes, of the nature of big Freethought demonstrations. I take one out of fifty similar cases before me at the present moment. At Valenciennes, on August 5 this year, a large crowd gathered to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of Madame Emilie Pavot, the Secretary of the local Freethought Society, and wife of one of the most active Freethought speakers in that part of the country. The funeral *cortège*, consisting of 2,500 people, marched solemnly to the cemetery, led by the bearers of the flags and banners of several Freethought societies. Floral crowns and wreaths, presented by different groups, were borne on the bier. Delegates from more than thirteen Secular societies, and a delegation from a local anti-clerical boarding school, besides those from several other special bodies, preceded the funeral car, and, on arriving at the final resting place of the deceased, one of the members delivered a touching address, full of dignity and quiet pathos. Judging from the verbatim report, I should imagine that the address must have created a deep impression on

the mind of the large and sympathetic crowd which gathered around the open grave. The French Freethinkers are not, I think, unwise in thus making public and impressive display of their love for the worthy dead who have finished their life's labors, and so manifesting their devotion to the principles which inspired the fortitude and sacrifices so often involved by the open profession of anti-Christian beliefs. Each such demonstration we make of the solidarity of our sympathy on occasions, either of great personal joy or sorrow, unifies and strengthens the force of that growing volume of enlightened public opinion which shall ultimately sweep away the immoral stupidities of the Christian superstition.

Limits of space enjoin me to be brief, otherwise I should like to linger over the "Feast of Childhood and Adolescence," or (so-called in certain localities) the "Feast of Youth." I referred to a similar institution as existing in Freethought Switzerland in my article of November 18. In Belgium, too, the "Feast of Youth" largely flourishes. These *fêtes* are designed with the view of preventing the rising generation, sons and daughters of Freethinkers, from drifting away from the principles of Freethought through the mere indifference or want of organisation of Freethinkers themselves. The Church has recognised that men, and especially children, are gregarious animals having a sentimental as well as a sanctimonious side to their nature, and these *fêtes* seem admirably adapted to initiate the dawning mind of the young into an ever-growing understanding of the great social and personal interests underlying the doctrine of Freethought. I propose later on to devote a special article to these and similar institutions in connection with continental Freethought.

The French Freethought party has worthy speakers in its ranks; but its cry goes up for more and more lecturers, to meet the wants of its numerous Branches. Several of its clever and eloquent orators were present at the recent Paris Congress. The women are as zealous, as fiery, and as learned as the best men amongst them. The emancipated priest, too, is on the war-path, brandishing the intellectual tomahawk over the heads of the faithful. Charbonnel is not the only priest who recently has flung down the altar and derided the gods. The ex-Father Duhamel declares that, since he has divested himself of the sacerdotal garb, the whole business appears to him a piece of criminal buffoonery.

Many priests are now awakening to this truth. During the last two years more than three hundred French priests have left Rome for Rationalism. Whilst M. Charbonnel was studying as a priest at Saint Sulpice thirty-five priests confided to him that they had lost their faith. Most of these still remain in the Church—liars ministering at the altar of lies; but the day cannot be far distant when a Church whose prophets are self-consciously the apostles of imposture must crumble to the ground by the mere weight of its own frauds and crimes. All the Churches to-day are similarly honey-combed with unbelief—so much so that no one knows whether it is an honest fool or a dishonest knave who is speaking the inspired platitudes of the pulpit. The salvation of France against pious fool and pious knave alike will spring, not from Rome nor Judæa, not from a dead Christ nor a living priest—for all these represent and embody the slavish superstitions and holy crimes of the past—but from that healthy humanistic spirit of scepticism which breathes through the writings of a Rabelais or a Voltaire, and became incarnate in the lives of many a hero and martyr of progress and Freethought.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

"Mother," said a sick girl, "'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth'; is that so?" "That is what Paul wrote," replied the mother. "Well, the Lord must love me, then, for he is just giving me fits."

"I know all about you," remarked the detective, with absolute conviction, to the unfortunate cashier he had been called in to interrogate; "you are a Sunday-school superintendent, and a most regular attendant at church." "Heavens! How did you find that out?" gasped the unfortunate one. "Easily," remarked Hawkshaw, in a superior manner; "your accounts are short."

Correspondence.

THAT WHALE STORY ONCE MORE!

"He lies like Genesis."—JEZEBEL PETTIFER.
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—No doubt a sperm whale *could* have swallowed Jonah, since the arnis of squid, thirty feet long, and thicker than a man's body at their widest part, have—*vide* Herman Melville, Mr. Bullen's great forerunner and master—been taken from the stomach of captured sperm whales. The "right whale, however, would be choked were he to try to swallow a penny roll." Still, sperm whales are unknown in the Mediterranean. However, granting the necessary sperm whale—and *what* would not one grant to so excellent a lie as the Jonah chestnut?—at the necessary spot at the necessary moment of time, and granting that Jonah really succeeded in joining the *squids arnis* and other consominations in the intestines of the whale, and granting that the action of the poor whale's gastric juices was stayed and Jonah left unassimilated; and granting, too, that he was not crushed to death in the poor animal's attempt to get on with its digestive business; granting, also, that Jonah was able to live without air of *any* kind, to say nothing of fresh air; granting, indeed, everything else that can be granted in reference to Jonah's three days' residence at the whale's centre of digestion, there still remains a little problem which, although that whale *may* have solved it, yet requires to be solved by us. The sperm whale, we grant, then, has got Jonah safe in his digester, and got him there in the neighborhood of Joppa, in the Mediterranean. How is he to spew up Jonah at Nineveh on the Tigris within seventy-two hours? His only route is *via* Malta, Gibraltar, the Gold Coast, the Cape of Good Hope, Zanzibar, and the Persian Gulf. This route, at a modest computation, would involve the whale in the record run of some 350 miles an hour, without any interval for refreshment or meditation, for 72 consecutive hours. On reaching the Tigris, however, that whale would have a still bigger job on hand—or on flipper? The Tigris would not float him, so he'd have to *walk* to Nineveh to deliver Jonah as per address and instructions! Would that whale, after sprinting at the rate of 350 miles an hour for seventy-two hours on end, be in a fit condition to undertake a walking tour, I ask? Where were the local inspectors of the S. P. C. A., I'd like to know, if the whale did try to walk? Any whale, no matter how big, caught trying to walk, say from Chelsea to the Strand, even without a tummy full of live prophet, would be inconspicuously arrested for attempted suicide! No, sir; I believe that whale story up to a point; I believe the sperm whale swallowed Jonah without first masticating him, and without after digesting him; that Jonah lived without air for seventy-two hours, and resisted all the efforts of the whale's intestines to crush him ready for digestion; that the whale did that 350 miles an hour—on his head, so to speak—for seventy-two hours on end; for all these things I could do myself with the requisite means; but I don't believe in that walk of the whale to Nineveh; like the Scotchman, "I'm a bit of a leer, my sen," and you can't expect me to believe everything. The German's idea, that "the whale" was a "pub," and that Jonah drank there for three days until, drunk and penniless, he was chucked out by the barman, is too natural to be worthy of belief by any self-respecting liar.

R. R.

THOSE BIGOTS!

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The reason Mr. F. Wood and myself were defeated at the recent Borough Council Election was that we were the victims of a Christian conspiracy, all the more odious because it was carried on by the very people who were represented at the meeting where we were adopted as candidates long before the election took place. We were well known as Freethinkers, and had been returned before at previous elections. But we had committed the unpardonable sin of voting in favor of our Public Baths being let to the National Sunday League on Sunday evenings. Two Independent Progressives (!) (a Baptist parson and a rabid Sabbatarian) were nominated at the last moment, and we had also the misfortune to have a reverend Wesleyan parson added to our Progressive list, to fill a vacancy. The list consisted of three Wesleyans, one Free Churchman, and two Infidels. Meanwhile a *United Manifesto* had been issued by the "Christian Stalwarts," "Free Church Council," "Christian Endeavorers," etc., recommending as men of sterling character a list of candidates in each ward. Singularly enough, in every other ward but "Bishop's," the list was identical with the Progressive list, who were all Bethelites, or reputed to be so; but in our ward they had taken *four* from the Progressive list, and the two Independent Sabbatarian Progressives. A circular was also issued, stating that, in voting for the Sunday League, "Messrs. Wood and Roger voted for Sunday labor." The result of it all was that, partly on account of the Progressive list containing a Wesleyan parson, partly on account of the "United Manifesto," an active canvass was carried on among the Bethelites, which resulted in an

extraneous vote of about 250 being brought into the field; so that, while my colleague and I polled more than the usual party vote, the two Independent Sabbatarians had polled enough votes to keep us out, and also from being at the top of the poll. They afterwards boasted that they had done what they were put up for—viz., "knocked Roger and Wood out." With these people nearly nine years of solid work on the Lambeth Vestry, during which time I had filled many important positions, counted for nothing. Belief in a world I did not know was better than working for this world, which I did know something about.

V. ROGER.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As your paper is open to discussion on important matters, permit me very briefly to say, you mistake the Old Testament doctrine on human sacrifice as much as I did the marriage views of the Secular Society. Thus, in this week's article, on "Jephthah's Daughter," you say "Jephthah's fulfilment of his vow was in accord with the text in Leviticus (xxvii. 28-9)." Your view is that he burned his daughter in sacrifice—an idea I have no wish to controvert, as you candidly say many think he only devoted her to virginity.

But I wish to state this passage cannot refer to human sacrifice; first, because the only kinds of animals to be sacrificed are expressly given by Moses; and, second, because the entire Old Testament denounces human sacrifice (see, for example, Deuteronomy xii. 31 and Jeremiah vii. 31). Persons in the text you quote given as "devoted" were criminals set solemnly for death by responsible authority. Such are in Deuteronomy xx. 17, where the margin gives "devote"; or Joshua vi. 17, where we read Jericho and its people were "devoted" (Revelation's version is quoted in each case). Numbers xxi. 2, 3 is similar, or 1 Samuel xv. 3. This "devoting" could not be enacted capriciously by any individual; and if Jephthah acted thus, he was very ignorant.

Professor Souryis all wrong in saying, "Like Moloch, Jahveh claims his first-born." Moloch claimed them to be burned; Jahveh ordered them to be spared. Thus we read, "All the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem" (Exodus xiii. 13).

(REV.) HENRY J. ALCOCK, M.A.

[Mr. Alcock writes as though the Old Testament were all of a piece, whereas it contains many different strata of doctrine, ritual, and ethics. Perhaps it will occur to him, on reflection, that the order to redeem the human firstborn, devoted to the Lord, is itself an indication that they had formerly been sacrificed. Why else should they be redeemed? The redemption, in this case, was clearly blood-money.—EDITOR.]

Public Libraries and Freethought Works.

ONCE more a good opportunity presents itself for Freethinkers to give the public a chance of scrutinising their works. Will they accept it? In the parish of Bow, a short time ago, Mr. Passmore Edwards laid the foundation-stone of a Public Library for the district. All honor, I say, to such benefactors of the human race as men like Mr. Edwards, who devote such valuable assistance to the cause of truth in general, and our cause in particular, in regard to Municipal Libraries. No good work has been accomplished without effort, and it is always best to clamber at the commencement of an institution to obtain its *modus operandi* in respect to our works. At the present day our strength lies in our combination, because men are attracted more towards a number of their class banded together for a special purpose than when there are only a few here and there "crying in the wilderness," as the present state of affairs warrants me in saying. Well, then, can we not join hands now and make some kind of a stir in this sleepy parish of Bow? Letters to the local press, announcement at meetings, distributing Secular literature, talking about our rights in reference to our numerical power, etc., are one or two means of getting Freethought works in the contemplated library. No rushing like a bull at a haystack, but calm, steady action, giving consideration to all concerned, is the acme of procedure, and will procure respect for our principles, even if our endeavors are not crowned with success. Now set to work, ye Freethinkers in London; spare not your powder and shot, but direct it rationally, opportunely, and with your ablest effect. I am willing to do my share; but if I am left in the cold, as I have been in regard to this matter in the Shore-ditch Libraries, then our movement suffers, and we will have lost an occasion of rendering such good to mankind that is not often presented.

H. R. MARCUS WRIGHT.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Lord Rosebery's 'Divine Fnger.'" ALDGATE PUBLIC BATHS (Goulston-street): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Science of Life." CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt's Elocutionary Recital. SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "State Control of Education."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards. BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. MILE END WASTE: 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Freethought in the Nineteenth Century."

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall); Dec. 1, at 6.30, A. M. Craig, "The Law of Progress." BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, Particulars in *Daily Mail*, Nov. 24. CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Farical Comedy in two acts by the Society's Amateur Dramatic Class, "Paul Pry." GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class, Mr. Strathearn; 6.30, A. G. Nostic, "The Ancient Mariner," with lantern illustrations. LEICESTER [SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, C. Cohen, "The Significance of Evolution." LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Stanley Jones, "Law and Civilisation." MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, R. C. Phillips, "Our Slums." NEWCASTLE (Westminster Hall, Picton-place): 7, Discussion between Messrs. J. Boyce and Mitchell, "Is there a God?" SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. Percy Ward—3, "Witches and Witchcraft"; 7, "The Gospel of Secularism." Nov. 26 and 27, Debate between Messrs. Ward and Marklew on Spiritualism, etc. SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A reading; 7.30, Important business meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—November 26, Wellington Hall, Islington.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—November 25, Sheffield; 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Manchester; 10 and 11, Debate at Manchester.

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