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## Christian Beasts in China.

SIR ROBERT HART ended his first article on China, in the November number of the *Fortnightly Review*, with a sentence that was very significant to those who had enough information to be able to read between the lines. "Meanwhile," he wrote, "the once crowded Peking is a desert, and the first few days of foreign occupation have seen much that need not have occurred and will certainly be regretted."

Since then all the i's in this passage have been dotted with a vengeance. The whole truth has not been told—for, as one correspondent said, the English papers would not dare to print it; but enough has leaked out to damn the Christian Powers (who are pretending to school and punish China) as the vilest malefactors in the sight of civilisation and humanity.

In the first place, the armies of the Christian Powers in China have proved themselves well-practised thieves. They are not even at war with China, for war has not been declared. Ostensibly they are there to enforce certain laws of international morality, which they allege that the Chinese have violated. Yet the first thing they do, after shooting down the Chinese who stand in their way, is to indulge in unlimited looting. It is agreed on all hands by correspondents at Peking and elsewhere that temples, palaces, and private dwellings have been rifled with Christian completeness; and that what could not be carried away has too frequently been wantonly destroyed. And the cream of the joke, as far as it is a joke, is the fact that the Christian missionaries have had a good share in the plunder. Mr. Thomas F. Millard, the *Daily Mail* correspondent, says that, "In all the loot phases the missionaries have had their share. The day after the Legations in Peking were relieved a prominent missionary, accompanied by a large number of Christian Chinese, invaded the residence of a prince and made a big haul. Incidents like this were numerous. When the purchasing period came, missionaries not only attended the sales, but opened loot marts themselves, sending their Chinese converts out to provide the stock." Dr. E. J. Dillon, in the January *Contemporary Review*, says that, under the pretence that civilised rules of war do not apply to barbarians, the looting was continued until "there was nothing left worth carrying off." The Japs left off looting first, but they had got most of the gold. After them came the Russians. The "civilisers," as Dr. Dillon facetiously calls them, burst into the imperial apartments of the Forbidden City, and took away what they called *souvenirs*. "Coolies carrying coals," he says, "to steamers in Hong Kong could not be more expeditious than was this respectable gathering of military and civil officials in stowing away the most unwieldy vessels, images, and ornaments between their coats and their skins." The looting, in fact, was so profitable that it became quite a fashion. Not satisfied with pillaging the Chinese quarters of the cities they entered, the allied troops sometimes looted the houses of European residents, carrying every portable article away, and destroying what they could not carry. "Pianos," Dr. Dillon says, "were demolished with bayonets, mirrors shivered in a hundred fragments, paintings cut into strips. This," he adds, "was done by Europeans in the houses of the people whom they had been sent to protect." Some netted hundreds and some thousands of pounds. Common soldiers, of course, did not get as much, but they had their proportion of the spoil of the Heathen Chinese, who did not

know the bill he was running up when he shot a German Minister and sent a few missionaries to the kingdom of heaven.

It will not surprise any student of history, or of human nature, to learn that looting and destruction of property are by no means the worst inflictions upon the Chinese by the allied army of the Christian Powers. Sir Robert Hart only suggests the wholesale slaughter that has been going on. Dr. Dillon, however, does not shrink from telling the story. Mr. George Lynch, the special correspondent of the *Express*, had to some extent anticipated him. "The cry of 'Sha, sha!' (Kill, kill!)," he wrote, "which the Boxer mob shouted outside the Legations, has been answered from Europe by the German Emperor's speeches for 'Vengeance, vengeance,' and in paying a visit to the house of the prefect of the German section yesterday afternoon the effects of his speeches were everywhere apparent." "Woe to the vanquished men, women, and children," Mr. Lynch added, "during the next six months." Dr. Dillon is far more precise. He gives details which are enough to freeze the blood or make it boil, according to the reader's temperament. Here is his most general statement:—

"During the war which was waged, but not formally declared, no quarter was given to Chinese regular soldiers; in battles and skirmishes no prisoners were taken, and after easily-gained victories wounded enemies, instead of being cared for, were put to death like venomous reptiles; nay, thousands of defenceless and well-meaning Chinamen were slaughtered in cold blood, and not always, it is said, with the swiftness or the minimum of physical pain with which the man of average humanity would snuff out the life of a wild beast. In Tungtschau and Peking, Chinese girls and women of all ages were raped first and bayoneted afterwards by men whose governments were wrapping themselves up in the soft wool of Mary's little lamb."

On leaving Tientsin, Dr. Dillon passed through what had been a happy, smiling, and prosperous district, until the "civilisers" from Christian Europe fell upon it. The result is best told in Dr. Dillon's own words:—

"In the twinkling of an eye it had all been transformed, and fathers, sons, daughters, and mothers now lay hidden in the mould, covered with matting, buried in the rubbish or floating down the river. A wave of death and desolation had swept over the land, washing away the vestiges of Chinese culture. Men, women, boys, girls, and babes in arms had been shot, stabbed, and hewn to bits in this labyrinth of streets."

After relating a number of particular instances of wanton cruelty, Dr. Dillon tells us what he saw of the terrible massacre at Tungtschau.

"I speak as an eye-witness when I say that over and over again the gutters of the city of Tungtschau ran red with blood, and I sometimes found it impossible to go my way without getting my boots bespattered with human gore. There were few shops, private houses, and courtyards without dead bodies and pools of dark blood. ....No native's life or property was safe for an hour. Men I had been speaking to before lunch were in their graves by sundown, and no mortal will ever know the reason why. The thirst of blood had made men mad. The pettiest and most despicable whipper-snapper who happened to have seen the light of day in Europe or Japan had uncontrolled power over the life and limbs, the body and soul, of the most highly-cultivated Chinaman in the city."

The Japanese generals were the first to repress these bloody outrages. "In worldly wisdom," Dr. Dillon says, "as in their commissariat and hospital organisation, the Japs were considerably ahead of the best of



the Christian allies." The Russians seem to have been the worst, as might have been expected, and next to them the French. No quarter was given by them to the Chinese, whom they shot down like dogs irrespective of age or sex. "The British forces," Dr. Dillon says, and one is glad to hear it, "took prisoners when possible and looked after the wounded." But down to the end of October none of the other European troops "approved the principle or imitated the practice."

Up in far Manchuria, over which the grim paw of the Russian bear has been laid heavily, the Chinese have been massacred in myriads. "An Eye-witness," writing to the *Westminster Gazette* from Blagovestschensk, told a tale of horror that could scarcely be eclipsed by the worst records of the past. Whole towns were wiped out of existence. A district inhabited by at least 100,000 Chinese had been turned into a desert. Steaming down the Amour the ship's paddles were obstructed every minute by festering corpses of Chinese men, women, and children. "We shall never be able," this writer said, "to ascertain the exact number of those who perished by fire, by the sword, or by drowning; but we know now that nothing is left of those villages so animated a few days ago, and that a pall of deadly silence hangs over the whole countryside, which henceforth seems accursed for ever."

Students of Milton will recollect his terrible phrase of "Lust hard by Hate." The murderer and the violator are brothers, or at least first cousins. Where the Christian "civilisers" have gone they have paid no respect whatever to the Chinese women, whom they have too often treated like Jack the Rippers, violating them first and stabbing and slashing them to death afterwards. Let us hear Dr. Dillon:—

"Females of all ages have been abused to death..... Wives and daughters hanged themselves on trees or drowned themselves in garden-wells in order to escape a much worse lot. Chinese women honestly believed that no more terrible fate could overtake them than to fall alive into the hands of Europeans and Christians. And it is to be feared that they were right. Buddhism and Confucianism have their martyrs to chastity, whose heroic feats no martyrology will ever record. Some of those obscure, but right-minded, girls and women hurled themselves into the river, and, finding only three feet of water there, kept their heads under the surface until death had set his seal on the sacrifice of their life..... But a large number of ill-starred women fell alive into the hands of the allied troops. I saw some of them in Peking and Tungtschau, but already dead, with frightful gashes in the breast, or skulls smashed in, and one with a horribly mutilated body."

But the infamy of this treatment of Chinese women, guilty of no offence whatever against their outragers, is best seen in a specific instance. We quote from Dr. Dillon again:—

"'What in heaven's name is this?' I exclaimed one day, thumping with my knuckles a very big black box in the house of a rich man, who may then have been in Abraham's bosom or in Dives' company. The house was in Tungtschau, the sombre receptacle in one of the largest rooms, and a torturing stench proceeded from it. 'It is the girls, sir; three girls,' answered my attendant, who was a European. 'Their corpses are lying in the box there,' he explained. 'Who put them there?' 'Some officers.' 'Are you quite sure of it?' 'Yes, sir; I was here when it was being done.' 'Did you see the young women yourself?' 'I did. They were the daughters of the man who owns the house. The officers raped them, and then had them stabbed with bayonets. When they were dead they were put into this box, and it was covered up, as you see.' 'Good God, what a dismal state of things we are coming to.' 'That sort of thing happened before, sir. Very often, too, I can tell you. There were worse cases than this. These here were raped and stabbed; others have been raped to death, and got no stabbing.'"

Even in the month of September, Dr. Dillon says, three French soldiers entered a house in a respectable part of Peking which was then under Russian "protection." The father, mother, and daughter were all at home. Seeing the maiden, the scoundrels resolved to deflower her. First they shot the parents dead, to prevent their interference; but the victim's screams were heard by Chinamen next door, and they induced a European to go with them and see what was going on, and on the arrival of these unexpected visitors the three scoundrels decamped.

Mr. George Lynch says that when the French general was remonstrated with about the frequent occurrence of disgraceful outrages by his troops, he replied: "It is impossible to restrain the gallantry of the French soldier." Gallantry, forsooth! Was there ever a worse prostitution of the word than applying it to the deeds of men more brutal than wild beasts in a state of rut? For even those beasts practise a measure of courtship with their females.

Dr. Dillon exonerates English and German officers from blame in this respect. On the whole, however, he says that "To compare nationalities in respect of the guilt of their representatives would be at once misleading to the historian and prejudicial to the cause of humanity." Outrages on women were frequent and heinous, and continued to be perpetrated long after looting and massacre were checked by the generals.

"The policy of the Powers," Dr. Dillon says, "is a sowing of the wind, and the harvest reaped will surely be the whirlwind." Chinese men prize the honor of their women as much as we do, and Chinese women are as chaste as our own. The exploits of these Christian beasts in China will, therefore, dwell like a consuming fire of vengeance in the hearts of thousands of Chinese husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers. They will long for the day of retribution. And it may come a good deal sooner than many imagine. It is impossible to keep China from arming and drilling. Her population is too great, her territory is too vast, her resources are too prodigious. Christian Europe is driving her into militarism in mere self-defence. She has always desired peace, but she is being hounded into war. And when she realises Sir Robert Hart's prediction, and has twenty million soldiers, all equipped with the most scientific weapons of offence, let the Christians Powers look to themselves! For their own orgie of blood and lust may be repeated at their own expense.

Why is it, we have to ask in conclusion, that so little protest has been raised over here against the conduct of these Christian beasts in China? The first answer is that they *are* Christians. That fact seems to make all the difference in the world. It is only the sins of the "heathen" that stink in the nostrils of the devotees of the meek and lowly Jesus. The second answer is that the Chinese question is not being taken up by any great political party here for the sake of political capital. So slender is the real disinterested love of "righteousness" bred in the average Christian after nearly two thousand years of the "only true religion." This truth should be realised by Freethinkers, and it should make them more zealous than ever in attacking the Christian superstition. If we must have a religion, let us discard the Religion of Christ and try the Religion of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE

## What is Agnosticism?

I READ with considerable interest Mr. George Jacob Holyoake's article in the *Freethinker* of January 6, entitled "Agnosticism Higher than Atheism." Upon one point it was satisfactory to me, in that it showed that the veteran had not approached one iota nearer to Theism. To ascertain this was one of my principal objects in asking him to state why he had discarded the use of the term "Atheist" and adopted that of Agnostic. I was anxious that theological opponents should have no grounds for assuming that Mr. Holyoake had changed his opinions in reference to the question of the existence of God. It is gratifying to learn from his article that he is as firm as ever in his *dis*belief in all Theistic pretensions. However, it does not matter very much by what name you are called. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." If, therefore, Mr. Holyoake prefers to use the term "Agnosticism" instead of "Atheism" as representing his inability to believe in a deity, he has a perfect right to do so. The result is the same, at least in this case, inasmuch as both the Atheist and the Agnostic admit that they are "without God." In fact, Mr. Holyoake asserts, in his "Reply" to me, that his Agnosticism enables him "to recede further than ever" from the theologian. If this be so, his Agnosticism is really more "extreme" than Atheism, for he very



wisely and accurately says that "the very idea of an originating Deity has no place in the understanding." Atheism, as I understand it, goes no further than this. Christian opponents who have recently rejoiced over Mr. Holyoake's alleged "change of front" should remember that he as an Agnostic, and I as an Atheist, hold precisely the same views as to man's inability to know anything about the being called God. This justifies my opinion that, so far as *principle* is concerned, there is no essential difference in the meaning of the two terms. Hence my Atheism includes Agnosticism; and if Mr. Holyoake's Agnosticism causes him (as he says it does) "to recede further from" the Theists, then his Agnosticism includes Atheism. The question of *policy* is not now under consideration, but simply that of principle, upon which there is no radical disagreement between us. Therefore,

Strange all this difference should be  
'Twi'x Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

In penning this rejoinder to Mr. Holyoake's reply to me, it should be distinctly understood that I do so in no captious spirit, but solely from the desire to ascertain if his present attitude towards Theism is superior to his former. Being a controversialist himself, he has encouraged others in their free and honest criticism. Therefore, as one of his humble disciples, I strive to emulate him in this particular. It is to be hoped that the reader will follow me while I examine what Mr. Holyoake has said in his courteous, and in some instances facetious, reply to my recent article, "Principle or Policy: Which?" Frankly, it appears to me that his "reply" is not conclusive. He commenced by misunderstanding my meaning; he continued by indulging in a good-natured delusion; and he concluded by omitting to notice some essential points which were submitted to him, and by entirely misrepresenting my meaning—possibly through the defective manner in which I stated my case.

In his first paragraph Mr. Holyoake fails to understand me. I did not apply the phrase "change of front" to his "opinions concerning Atheism," but simply to the substitution of the word "Agnosticism" for that of "Atheism." He admits, however, that he has taken a "new attitude"—only the change, he says, took place "forty years ago." Yes, but he did not then take to using the term "Agnosticism," to which I was referring. The reference to Rip Van Winkle is not relevant to the case in point, if Mr. Holyoake's statement is accurate. The Catskill Mountains sleeper is said to have found, when awaking, that everything was changed; but Mr. Holyoake's position is that there has been no change in his attitude towards Atheism for forty years. "Bless his oblivious soul," I have been wide awake during the past forty years, for during that time I have noticed that until recently Mr. Holyoake employed the word "Atheism," as of old, without making any mention of "Agnosticism." He did this in 1870, in his debate with Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, which shows that it is less than forty years ago that he assumed a "new attitude." Besides, at that time the term "Agnosticism" was not in vogue. Let me assure Mr. Holyoake that I did not go up the Catskill Mountains to sleep for forty years. I remained wide awake, and watched the development of speculative thought. Hence, when Huxley introduced the term "Agnosticism," I at first thought that it did differ somewhat from Atheism, and I wrote in *Secular Thought* to that effect. I, however, kept sufficiently awake to study the subject, with the result that I have come to the conclusion that, except as a matter of policy, it is immaterial whether one calls oneself an Atheist or an Agnostic, inasmuch as in principle they both signify the same.

Mr. Holyoake fails to answer the following questions: (1) What does either the Atheist or the Agnostic know that the other does not or cannot know? (2) Do not both claim to have no belief in God? Mr. Holyoake says that, in substituting the term "Agnostic" for that of "Atheist," he proposes "an additional word for those who are something more." Now, what I wish to know is: "What is this something more?" We are told: "Agnosticism is a challenge. It says: 'I do not know; do you? Your assertions have no force. Evidence from the field of facts is wanted.'" But this

is precisely what Atheism says. Where, then, does the difference come in? In his debate with Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Holyoake said that he "always stated Atheism" to represent a mind "without that conclusive knowledge which the Theist assumes about Deity." Again I ask, Wherein does this differ from Agnosticism?

I am *not* puzzled as to the difference between knowing and not knowing, when these words are used in a general sense. It is only when they are applied to Agnosticism and Atheism, as Mr. Holyoake so applied them, that their meaning is obscure. The same vagueness pertains to his remarks as to disbelief and non-belief. My question was, not what the words mean, but what is the *essential* difference between them, so far as being "without God" is concerned? This is a very different question from the one Mr. Holyoake replied to, and I think that I have sufficient "discrimination" left to enable me to divine why he altered the sense of the question I put to him. I retain "discrimination" enough also to detect the inaccurate way in which Mr. Holyoake refers to what he said about the "ignorance, lust, drunkenness, gluttony," etc., of Atheism. I did not say, as Mr. Holyoake asserts, that he spoke of Atheism "generally." On the contrary, I distinctly put it that he alluded to what he termed "negative Atheism," the existence of which I denied, as described by him. As he once himself said: "Whoever sees in Atheism simply the development of a *negation* sees but half the truth." Moreover, it was of *Atheism*, and not of *Atheists*, that he spoke in words which it pained me to read. My contention is that there is no form of Atheism deserving the epithets employed by Mr. Holyoake. "Where has his discrimination gone" that he confounds principles with the weaknesses of some of those who profess them?

Possibly it will be as well to close this friendly controversy, as the difference between Mr. Holyoake and myself is more in respect to forms of expression than to principles. Perhaps, however, the brief "passage of arms" has stimulated some of our readers to think. If so, our labors have not been in vain.

CHARLES WATTS.

### Gold for God.

The faithful just now are very much concerned with finance. The religious weeklies are full of it. They positively bristle with figures. Pages are occupied with appeals and reports having reference to amounts required, amounts promised, and amounts paid. One or two journals have even found it necessary to issue supplementary sheets. There can be no doubt about it, huge sums are being raised. The totals of what has already been received are of truly remarkable dimensions, and they are being added to every day. What the aggregate of the various funds will be when closed it is too early yet to estimate, but it is certain to be something very considerable indeed.

These funds are being raised mainly by Nonconformist bodies—the Wesleyan Methodists, the Baptists, the Congregationalists, the Bible Christian Methodists, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, etc. Quite at the top of the tree, both in the amount aimed at and in the amount received, stands the Wesleyan Methodist body. Their requirement, or rather the requirement of those who have originated the fund, is merely the modest sum of £1,050,000. Towards this there has been £921,651 promised and £555,000 paid. The collection is still going on, possible sources being by no means exhausted. Next come the Congregationalists, who are aiming at £525,000, and have received promises in excess of that amount. The Baptists want £250,000, of which £163,318 has been promised. The Wesleyan Methodists of Ireland are trying to raise £50,000, of which £27,538 has already been paid. The Bible Christian Methodists aim at £25,000, and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists at 100,000, of which £90,000 is promised. A glance at these figures will show that not only are great achievements contemplated, but that they are in a fair way to accomplishment.

What is it all for? And what is the occasion? Well, it is hardly necessary to say the occasion is the twentieth century, which most people are by this time pretty



well tired of hearing about, though they continue to accord it a tacit recognition by living in it. The general object of the funds is open to various interpretations. The promoters, and those by whom they are officially supported, spend most of their eloquence in impressing their respective communities with the fact that it is "all for the glory of God." The donations are "gifts to God." These are frequent phrases in the appeals, and largely, if not entirely, account for the extensive response. What God wants with all this gold it is difficult to understand. But perhaps some explanation is afforded when the promoters of the funds get upon another tack, and urge the need for funds to improve the position and extend the operations of their respective church organisations. This latter object is intelligible enough, and is, of course, at the bottom of the financial movement. No doubt it will be said that these two objects are in reality one—that what is for God's Church is also for God himself. Perhaps so, perhaps not; for it all depends upon whether these Dissenting bodies are really God's Church or Churches. There is a very ancient and important ecclesiastical institution, with world-wide ramifications and a Pope at its head, which would distinctly declare that these Dissenting bodies are not included in God's Church, but, by reason of their heresy, are outside its pale.

However this may be, the Nonconformists who are raising these funds declare that they are doing it all for the glory of God and his work on earth. In order that that may be accomplished, the chapels, ministers, and chapel organisations must be supported. This resolves itself, after all, into pretty much the way that General Booth puts it: "Give the glory to God, and the cash to me."

Without doubt the vast bulk of the subscribers to these funds are influenced by the idea, constantly impressed upon them, that they are giving to God. They are not giving to Mr. Perks and Mr. Price Hughes, or to the heads of whatever community they belong to, or to the machinery of their sects, but to the Deity himself. And what a lot that means to the ordinary pietist! He feels that he is contributing to his eternal salvation; that he is at least taking one step on the road to heaven; that his munificence or his self-sacrifice will be recognised by the One Above; that the fact of his gift, great or small, will be placed to his credit in the heavenly registers; and he fully expects, having regard to the Scriptural promise, to be repaid a hundred-fold. He may disavow any such motives or expectations, and repudiate them as too mercenary to be entertained by a truly religious man; but he is influenced by them all the same. It is not in human nature to resist these promptings, given a firm belief in the Scriptures and a knowledge of the promises they contain. In his heart of hearts, he expects to make a profit by what he gives, and to make it, if not now, certainly in the heavenly hereafter. At the least, he believes he is, as Oliver Wendell Holmes puts it, "making friends in Influential Quarters."

Is it any wonder, then, that with these operating inducements there should be a ready and extensive response among the religious bodies in which the appeals for the Twentieth Century Funds have been made? We ourselves, as Freethinkers, have a Twentieth Century Fund; but we do not hope to derive from our contributions to it any heavenly reward or, individually, any personal earthly gain. The Funds of the religious bodies, however, are on a different basis, and are forwarded by appeals that must ensure the maximum of response as long as human nature, governed by religion, is what it is. We, therefore, see nothing surprising in the fact that the large sums mentioned above should be confidently asked for, nor that extensive promises and payments should be made.

It is, however, a lamentable circumstance that the new century should begin by the devotion of so much money to purposes which are so foreign to the real well-being of the community. It will be money devoted mainly to the bolstering up of forms of superstition of which we hope future centuries will see the end. If any defence be made on the ground of some proportion being allocated to educational and charitable purposes, to the improvement of people in purely secular directions, we accept the plea as an expression of regret that such an application cannot be made of all.

It is much to be hoped that in some future and happier century, if not in this, rational and utilitarian views will have so far progressed that, when huge funds are raised, they will not be devoted to so-called "gifts to God," who does not want them, but to human creatures who do.

FRANCIS NEALE.

## An Oriental Book.

DR. FARRAR stumbles, on one occasion, against the true theory of the Bible. Having to furnish an excuse, if not a justification, for the outrageous crudity of a good deal of its language, he reminds us that decorum changes with time and place. "The rigid external modesty and propriety of modern and English literature," he observes, "is disgusted and offended by statements which gave no such shock to ancient and Eastern readers." And he adds that "The plain-spokenness of Orientals involved no necessary offence against abstract morality." This is true enough, but the argument should be developed. What is urged in extenuation of the grossness of the Scripture is really applicable all round—to its mythology, its legends, its religion, its philosophy, its ethics, and its poetry. The Bible is an oriental book. And this one statement, when properly understood, gives us the true key to its interpretation, the real criterion of its character, and the just measure of its value.

It has been well remarked that the ordinary Christian in this part of the world appears to imagine that the Bible dropped down from heaven—in English. Even the expounders of the Higher Criticism, in our own country, read it first in their mother tongue; and although they afterwards read it in the original Greek, and sometimes in the original Hebrew, they are under the witchery of early impressions, and their apologetics are almost entirely founded upon the vernacular Bible. Thus they lose sight, and their readers never catch a glimpse, of the predominant element, the governing factor of the problem.

All the Bibles in the world, like all the religions in the world, came from the East. "Not one of them," as Max Müller remarks, "has been conceived, composed, or written down in Europe."\* He classes the *Pilgrim's Progress* among the "many books which have exercised a far greater influence on religious faith and moral conduct than the Bibles of the world"; but Bunyan's originality was artistic, and not religious; he absorbed the Puritanism of his age, and reproduced it in the form of a magnificent allegory. Religious originality does not belong to the Western mind, which is too scientific and practical. Every one of the fashionable crazes that spring up from time to time, and have their day and give place to a successor, is merely a garment from the old wardrobe of superstition. This is true of Theosophy, for instance; all its doctrines, ideas, and jargon being borrowed from India. "There are five countries only," Max Müller says, "which have been the birthplace of Sacred Books: (1) India, (2) Persia, (3) China, (4) Palestine, (5) Arabia." All come from the East, and all have a generic and historic resemblance. Not one of them was written by the founder of its religion. Moses did not write the Pentateuch, Christ did not write a line of the New Testament, Mohammed did not write the Koran, Zoroaster did not write the Avesta, the Buddhist Scriptures were not written by Buddha, and the Vedic hymns are far more ancient than writing in India. All these Sacred Books embody the accepted beliefs of whole peoples; all of them are canonical and authoritative; all contain very much the same ethical groundwork, in the form of elementary moral prohibitions; all of them are held to be of divine character; all of them become a kind of fetish, which is worshipped and obeyed at the expense of the free spirit of man, who is told not to be wise above what is written. Ecclesiastical or kingly authority has generally given these books their final form and character. Their establishment takes place in open daylight, but their origin is more or less shrouded in mystery. "It is

\* Max Müller, *Natural Religion*, p. 538.



curious," Max Müller says, "that wherever we have sacred books they represent to us the oldest language of the country. It is so in India, it is the same in Persia, in China, in Palestine, and very nearly so in Arabia."\*

Bring any oriental religion into Europe, and it must change or perish. Christianity is not true, as Mr. Gladstone and so many orthodox apologists have argued, because the Christian nations are at the top of civilisation. The Caucasian mind led the world before the advent of Christianity, and it is doing the same now. Christians are apt to forget that Greece and Italy are in Europe, and that Athens and Rome—two imperishable names in the world's history—were far-shining cities before a good deal of the Old Testament was written.

Keep any oriental religion in the East, however, and there is no saying how long it will last unaltered. Do not travellers talk of the unchanging East? The civilisation of China is almost what it was thousands of years ago. Syrian life to-day is like a picture from the Bible. And the old Orient, as Flaubert said, is the land of religions; and where Asia looks upon Europe, and the communication between them began of yore, you may sample all the faiths of antiquity. Flaubert remarked that the assemblage of all the old religions in Syria was something incredible; it was enough to study for centuries.†

The Bible, then, is an Oriental book, an Asiatic book, in spite of the Greek elements which are incorporated in the New Testament, notably in the fourth Gospel. It has never been in harmony with the real life of the West. When it has dominated the life of a particular locality, for a certain period, the result has been something typically non-European; as in the case of Scotland under the despotism of the Kirk, whose spiritual slaves prompted Heine's epigram that the Presbyterian Scotchman was a Jew, born in the north, who ate pork. Modern civilisation is mainly a return to the spirit of secular progress which inspired the immortal achievements of Greece and Rome.

Well, if we once fully recognise the Bible as an oriental book, we are on the road to its complete comprehension. Its grossness of speech, its gratuitous reference to animal functions, its designation of males by their sexual attributes even on the most serious occasions, its religious observances in connection with pregnancy and birth, its very rite of circumcision; all this, and much more, becomes perfectly intelligible. It is in keeping with all we know of the ideas, practices, and language of the East. Moreover, we perceive why it is that similarities to the theology, the poetry, and the ethics of the Bible have been so liberally disclosed by the progress of oriental studies. The Bible, being brought from the East, has to be carried back there to be properly understood. It is true that Christian divines have offered their own explanation of these similarities. At first they declared them to be Satanic anticipations, devilish pre-mockeries, of God's own truth. Then they declared them to be confused echoes of the oracles of Jehovah. Finally, they declare them to be evidences of the fact that, although God chose the Jewish race as the medium of his special revelation, he also revealed himself partially to other nations. But these explanations are alike fantastic. They rest upon no ground of history or evolution. The real explanation is that the Bible is one of the many sacred books of the East. Its differences from the rest are not of kind, but of degree; and any superiority that may be claimed for it must henceforth be argued upon this basis.

This oriental Bible is at utter variance with the vital beliefs, the political and social tendencies, and the ethical aspirations of the present age. Science has destroyed its naive supernaturalism; reason has placed its personal God—the magnified, non-natural man—in his own niche in the world's Pantheon; philosophy has carried us far beyond its primitive conceptions of human society; our morality has outgrown its hardness and insularity, however we may still appreciate its finer ejaculations; even the most pious Christians, with the exception of a few "peculiar" people, only pay a

hypocritical homage to its clearest injunctions; and the higher development of decency and propriety makes us turn from its crude expressions with a growing sense of disgust, while the progress of humanity fills us more and more with a loathing of its frightful wars and ruthless massacres, its tales of barbaric cruelty, and its crowning infamy of an everlasting hell.

—G. W. FOOTE, in "The Book of God."

## Acid Drops.

THOSE Catholic pilgrims from England to St. Peter's and the Vatican had better have stayed at home. Their leader, the Duke of Norfolk, had better have stayed at home, anyhow. This superstitious nobleman has been, and may be again, a Minister of the Crown in England. Yet he goes to Rome and talks more like a monk than a statesman to the Pope. "We pray and we trust," he said in reference to the New Century, "that it may witness the restoration of the Roman Pontiff to that position of temporal independence which your Holiness has declared necessary for the effective fulfilment of the duties of his world-wide charge." In other words, the Duke of Norfolk hopes that the Pope will once more become the temporal Lord of Rome, and as much surrounding territory as possible, as well as spiritual Lord of the whole Roman Catholic world. But it is quite clear that Italy wants, and means to keep, Rome as the capital of its Monarchy or its Republic—as the case may be. And as Italy will never give up Rome without a long and bloody fight, the Duke of Norfolk piously wishes for that calamity, just for the dear old Pope's sake. His Holiness wants to cook an addled egg, and the Duke of Norfolk would set fire to Europe to enable him to do it.

The Duke of Norfolk congratulated the Roman Catholics on enjoying "an ample measure of civil and religious freedom" in England. Yet, almost in the same breath, he expressed "indignation at the attempts of wealthy proselytising societies to corrupt the faith of the young and poor in this your city of Rome." This is always the Romish game. Heads we win; tails you lose. Where the Catholics are in a minority they ask for religious liberty. Where they are in a majority they deny it. Proselytism on their part is freedom; proselytism on the part of others is a crime.

Poor old Papa Pecci, in his reply to the Duke of Norfolk, harped upon the same string. "Under our eyes," he said, "in this holy city, which should be the inviolate centre of Catholicism, it is permitted to associations for religious propaganda to take advantage of the sad economic conditions of the country to corrupt the faith of our children in the name of the specious doctrine of judgment which pretends to leave each the right of interpreting in his own fashion the doctrines of Christ." Evidently the Pope thinks that the toleration of Catholics in London is all right, but that the toleration of Protestants in Rome is all wrong. We have no doubt whatever that the old gentleman would drench the earth with blood—not his own, of course—to recover his Church's former position. But fate is against him, and he would be wiser to yield with a good grace to the inevitable.

The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales has one bishop, twenty-five priests, and seven churches more than it had twelve months ago. The number of Catholic archbishops and bishops in England and Wales is nineteen, the number of priests 2,837, and the number of churches, chapels, and stations 1,536. In Scotland the number of archbishops and bishops is six; clergy, 461; and churches, 350. The Catholic population of Great Britain is estimated as follows: England and Wales, 1,500,000; Scotland, 365,000.

The statistical increase of the Catholic Church in this island is not alarming. Still, it goes on steadily, and should make Freethinkers pause and reflect. It is easy enough to talk about "the decay of superstition," but the hard truth is there are signs of reaction everywhere. We do not mean in the world of pure thought, whose inhabitants are few; but in the great general world, peopled by what Matthew Arnold called "the average sensual man." The same phenomenon is visible even in France, where the Catholic Church has gained tremendously in wealth and power during the last ten or fifteen years. It behoves Freethinkers to rouse and brace themselves for a big struggle, unless they are prepared to see the former conquests of Freethought submerged in a great deluge of revived superstition.

Some profane "chestnuts" appear in Mr. Thomas Newbigging's collection of *Lancashire Humor*, just published by Dent & Co. Several of them were printed, in slightly different forms, years ago in the *Freethinker*. Here is one that will probably be recognised by our older readers, though it may be new to the younger ones. An enthusiastic pigeon-fancier lay dying, and the parson paid him a visit and endeavored

\* *Natural Religion*, p. 295.

† Flaubert, *Correspondance*, vol i., p. 344.



to turn his thoughts to his approaching end. The casual mention by the parson of heaven and the angels interested the dying man. He had seen angels depicted in the picture-books with wings on their shoulders. An idea struck him, and he inquired: "Will aw ha' wings, parson, when aw get to heaven?" "Yes, indeed," replied the parson, willing to humor and console him as best he might. "An' will you ha' wings when yo get theer?" "Oh, yes, I'll have wings too; we'll both have wings." "Well, aw tell thi what," said the dying pigeon fancier, his eye brightening as he spoke, "Aw tell thi what, parson; when tha comes up yon, aw'll flee yo for a sovereign!"

Another "chestnut" is told in connection with Bishop Fraser, of Manchester, though it dates far before his episcopate. His lordship, it is said, came across two gutter urchins who were just finishing a mud house, and he asked them what they were doing. "We've been makin' a church," replied one of them. "A church!" responded the Bishop, much interested, as he stooped over the youthful architects' work. "Ah, yes, I see. That, I suppose, is the entrance door" (pointing with his stick). "This is the nave, these are the aisles, these the pews, and you have even got the pulpit! Very good, my boys, very good. But where is the parson?" "We ha' not gettin' muck enough to mak' a parson!" was the reply.

Someone has evidently been taking the *British Weekly* to task for its recent front-page article on unbelief as "The Sin of Sins." It now returns to the subject, and emphasizes its statements. It says that, "difficult as the doctrine is, its evidence is plain and commanding." The sin, it argues, consists in mistrusting and despising the love offered by Jesus Christ. "It may well be the sin that is beyond forgiveness." But suppose that, on intellectual grounds, we are forced to mistrust this alleged divine love. Are we, therefore, to be damned? If so, as far as we are concerned, Christ had better have kept his love to himself. At any rate, it would be absurd under the circumstances to describe it as infinite.

A quite exceptional experience is awaiting some lucky shorthand writer. He has been engaged to take down the contents of a book to be dictated to him by a spirit! The late Florence Marryat has several times communicated with the London Society of Spiritists, according to its hon. sec.—first on the day of her funeral, and at different times since. She has been invited to materialize, but declines to do so, on the ground that that is not part of her duty in the other world. She will, however, dictate a book of her experiences since she crossed the river. She wishes it taken down in shorthand, and arrangements have been made for that to be done.

It is to be hoped that the shorthand writer will be very careful what he is about, or there is the possibility that we may be misled on some important point. The transcript should be read over to Miss Marryat's spirit. Then we should feel quite assured as to her experiences in the "life beyond the river." We shan't at all mistrust the spirit. It will be the shorthand writer we shall be suspicious about.

The hon. secretary of this London Society of Spiritists, Mr. E. Gambier Bolton, has related to an interviewer a marvellous account of what happened when, on the night of Miss Marryat's funeral, some fourteen or fifteen people belonging to the society were present at a meeting. "We were not thinking for the moment about her when there came a voice saying: 'There is a woman here who was at Miss Marryat's funeral.' One of us, the lady in question, answered that she had been there. We—the rest of us—did not know, I think, that anyone present had been there. 'You saw a man alone in the gallery?' the voice asked, and the lady addressed replied that she had, but that only the fact of one solitary man being in the gallery had caught her attention. 'That was her husband,' said the voice, and when we inquired later we found that such was the case." "Was it Miss Marryat's voice?" asked the *Evening News* representative. "No, the voice was that of a man. He spoke in ordinary cultivated English tones. Now, our medium is a shoemaker. We brought him from the Midlands, and he is a man of no education; certainly he could not have produced the voice. It came from a spot within about six or eight feet of him, and was perfectly clear and distinct."

Wonderful! Of course, it is easier to believe in spirits than in ventriloquism. And quite impossible for a shoemaker to utter just twenty-three words "in ordinary cultivated English tones."

Professor Henry Jones, formerly of Bangor University College, has been lecturing on the prospects of religion. The chief dangers to religious life were, he said, indifference and Agnosticism, and in this connection he suggested that Mr. Balfour's "Foundations of Belief" ought really to be called "Foundations of Unbelief." The suggestion is rather rough on the philosophic Arthur.

The community of Vernon, on the bank of the Seine, has been scandalised by the behavior of a cow which escaped from a herd and was found on the roof of the church. We refrain from the obvious comment that beneath the same roof donkeys might perchance be found.

Dr. Andrew Wilson cites a capital example of Professor Huxley's caustic but genial wit. Speaking of the difficulty students experience in remembering the exact situation of the mitral and tricuspid valves of the heart, Huxley remarked that he remembered that the mitral (so-called from its resemblance to the headgear of the Church dignitary) must be on the left side, "because a bishop could never be in the right."

We didn't know that "Soldiers of the Queen" was a hymn, but so we learn from the conclusion of the following letter addressed to a City Missionary in the East End:—"deare Mishonairy,—i have the Sad plesure to rite an say that my husbud dide las nite so he wont nede the things you was goin to fetch Him today. I aint got no vail to ware to the funnyral, allso no black gluv's so if you pleze be so kind as to git Me some kidd ones number seven, allsoe a hankerchif with a wide black Border an black stockins i will be all fixed out for the funnyral wich i invite you to on wensday at too oklock. Allso is it the fashun now for the widdier not to Show herself to the funnyral while the performance is goin on? If it is i will stay in the kitchin but i peefer the other way of the morners bein whare they kin be seen. Allso if you send anny Flours roses will be peeferred, also a cupple of baskits of coal if it stays cold until wenesday. Allso would you pleze sing the 'Soljers of the Quene' to the funnyral? My husband was a soljer an that was his faverite him."

Henry B. Clarke, who was plaintiff in an action against the late Mr. Bradlaugh to recover penalties against that gentleman for sitting in the House of Commons without first taking the oath, has just died at Tottenham. He died with the agreeable knowledge that the bigotry of which he was the poor tool ignominiously failed.

An appeal to Christian missionary societies has been issued by the various sections of the Buddhist faith in Japan. They beg that all unnecessary offence to the prejudices and beliefs of the Chinese should be avoided, and they ask that no pecuniary compensation should be demanded for the attacks on Christian missionaries or on missionary premises. The *Methodist Times*, commenting on this appeal, endeavors to shift all the blame on to the Roman Catholics. "They have," it says, "always been a political curse in China, interfering with Chinese politics. The present outbreak is mainly due to their intolerable interference with the internal affairs of China."

Protestant missionaries, of course, have always been meek as lambs and mild as doves, never giving the slightest offence to the native population amongst whom they have installed themselves. This is probably why they have suffered. The dreadful Roman Catholics, who have done all the mischief, are not, of course, Christians. The only Christian missionaries in China are of the Protestant persuasion, and the exasperated Chinese ought to have known it, and drawn a proper distinction.

Another "clerk in holy orders" gone wrong. The Rev. David Hamer, rector of Thackford, who has been missing for some weeks, has been deprived of his living by the Norwich Consistory Court.

So the *Church Gazette* is dead. We thought it was too liberal and rational to live even in the Broad section of our beloved Established Church. Thank God, we have still left to us the sparkling *Church Times* on the one hand, and the amiable *Rock* on the other. The defunct journal made the mistake of supposing that there was a sufficient number of people in the Church who cared for common sense and plain-speaking, and were willing to support a bright and up-to-date organ. Those who were its readers up to the last will now have to turn to the *Freethinker* if they wish to know the truth on current religious topics. They didn't always get it in the unfortunate *Church Gazette*.

The proprietor of the *Church Gazette* seems to have lost so heavily on the paper that he has found his way into the Bankruptcy Court. He is Mr. William Routh, an M.A. of Cambridge, and formerly Master of St. Peter's School, York, and chaplain to the late Sir Frederick Milbank, of Bedain. He started the *Church Gazette* in 1898, having then a capital of £7,000. This has all been expended on the paper, which has never paid its way. The debts exceed £1,000, and the assets are returned at £700 odd. The case is in the hands of a trustee to wind up in bankruptcy.

A Christian turned heathen has been discovered in the person of William Klemmez, a citizen who lives at Reading, Pennsylvania. For the last fifteen years he has been making idols, which he considers sacred. He built a temple on



Mount Penn, where the images have been made and worshipped. There are rows of them, the largest being what he calls "The God of Silence." Some represent former well-known men of the city who have died. He thinks that, being residents of another world, they have as much power there as they formerly had in the city—which seems to be a quite too sanguine expectation.

According to calculations of expenditure on missions and the results, published in the *Sunday Companion*, the average cost of making a Christian convert on the Pacific Islands is £50; in the Black Continent of Africa, £70. South America stands next in difficulty of conversion. Most of the native Indians became Roman Catholics three centuries ago, under the rule of Spain. It costs a full £100 for every fresh convert to Protestantism. Rather more is the cost of the Red Indian, while the climax is reached among the Chinese, where nearly 2,000 Europeans and Americans do not make even their own number of conversions in a year, in spite of work which, for difficulty, is without parallel.

"The Divine Potter" is the term by which Hugh Price Hughes refers to the Deity in the *Methodist Times*. Of course, we know the origin of the allusion; but somehow it looks funny, especially from the pen of one who is so punctiliously reverent. The "Divine Potter," we may observe, has turned out a remarkable quantity of cracked ware.

*The Miracles of Unbelief* is the title of a pretentious volume by Frank Ballard, M.A., B.Sc., F.R.M.S., etc. We don't propose to criticise it. That, in a large measure, is done by some of the Christian reviewers, who do not spare it. For instance, the *Examiner* observes that, as Dr. Bruce described his volume on apologetics as "Christianity defensively stated," this book by Mr. Ballard might be described as "Christianity offensively stated." The title is bad, the tone is bad, and the triumphant logic defective. The reviewer points out a number of glaring errors of statement, some of which vitally affect the arguments advanced. And he adds that "so doughty a champion, who goes forth to battle with so fine a scorn for his foe and bold a boast of his own weapons, should have no weak joints in his armor."

There is a story going round the press in relation to St. Albans, Holborn. It is said the Duke of York is not infrequently a member of the congregation. On one occasion he requested that a pew might be reserved for him and the Duchess. He was respectfully informed that under no circumstances were seats reserved for anybody. The Duke was present at the service in spite of the refusal. We don't believe it. If the story is true, St. Albans is the only church in London that wouldn't toady to Royalty.

A curious sect, named Dyrniki, have settled in a village near Omsk, in Eastern Russia. They discard all churches, show contempt for sacred pictures, and conduct their services in the open air, with their faces turned towards the East.

Says Archdeacon Madden: "Take a walk some Sunday evening during church hours, and notice the thousands that are making the Sunday a day of pleasuring." Well, what of it? Why should not people get as much rational pleasure as they can on Sunday, which is the only available day for vast multitudes who need some relaxation from their daily toil? Parsons may easily eschew recreation on the Sunday, for many of them—we do not say all, but certainly a good number—contrive to be practically free during the best part of the week. They are the people, and not hard-working folks, to martyrise themselves on the blessed Sabbath.

The Ritualistic desire to shake off State control of the Establishment leads to some unexpected publications of truth. For instance, we find in a special sketch in the *Church Times* the following queries: "Is it not the verdict of history that the voice of the Bishops in legislative matters is ineffective, and their vote worthless? Was it not one Archbishop, with six Bishops, who first defeated Romilly's proposal to repeal the statute which punished thefts of the amount of five shillings with death? Did not the Bishops oppose Clarkson in his movement for the liberation of slaves? Has any Bishop ever originated any law which can offer a justification for the position of the Bishops in Parliament?"

A Russian bishop, the Very Rev. Seraphim, of Ostrojak, has written a book, entitled *The Soothsayer Balaam; or, The Transformation of a Sorcerer into a Prophet*. He says that the prophecies of Balaam constitute one of the most convincing proofs of the authenticity of the Pentateuch. Is this where the ass comes in?

Since the *Freethinker* has been located so near to St. Paul's Cathedral we naturally take additional interest in that colossal structure at the top of the hill. Imagine, therefore, our grief and pain to learn that a late internal embellishment in the form of a picture is little less than a scandalous outrage. In a letter to the *Rock*, it is pointed out that the picture represents "the Judge of mankind by the figure of one who appears

ashamed to show his face, and who carries a pair of equally-balanced scales, implying that men are to be judged by strict justice, and not 'with equity'—not with justice tempered by mercy. Time and Death (in one) are represented by an unbecomingly nude young man; Mortality by a hideous festering woman; and the Resurrection by cut, and therefore *perishing*, flowers. The picture would have done fairly well for an old heathen temple, but it is scandalously out of place in a Christian church."

According to Canon Driver, D.D., the Book of Daniel was written by an anonymous author. The aim of the first six chapters is not historic, but didactic, the miracles related in them being "imaginative anecdotes." The seventy weeks are a chronological error. The writer foretold the probable time of the death of Antiochus, but was wrong as to the place and manner of it. The "one like a Son of Man" in vii. 13 is the ideal Israel, not the Messiah, and the coming "with the clouds of heaven" denotes Israel's exaltation to supreme rule over the earth which was "to follow immediately upon the overthrow of the fourth empire in the person of Antiochus." Since the king died in B.C. 164 and was succeeded by his son, these predictions proved untrue almost as soon as they were made. Such are some of the conclusions arrived at in Canon Driver's lately-published work, *The Book of Daniel, with Introduction and Notes*.

*Apropos* of the Bishop of Worcester's suggestion that the Revised Version should be used in the Churches, an irate cleric writes to the *Church Times* in the following terms: "The real reason why it is impossible to give a hearty adherence to the Revised Version is that the work of Revision was preceded by a celebration of the Holy Communion in Westminster Abbey, at which one who openly denied the Godhead of our Blessed Lord was present, and partook of the sacred Elements. The man who allowed, if he did not even urge, that shameful act of sacrilege has gone to his account; and we need not judge him. But how could the Divine Blessing attend an undertaking begun with such a monstrous act of treachery to our Incarnate Lord? For that reason alone, no power on earth, in Church or State, would ever compel me, for one, to use the Revised Version in the services of the Church."

Is not the above a charming specimen of clerical bigotry and pig-headed obstinacy? Because one of the Revisers, who was a Unitarian, was permitted to "communicate," this cleric will not use a Revised Version, which admittedly corrects a number of errors in the old version in use, and is immeasurably superior in every respect.

Has the Bishop of Chichester been reading so-called "Church Defence" tracts? asks the *Christian World*. At the institution of the new vicar of Goring the other Sunday, his Lordship said that "they were often told the clergy of the Church of England were State-paid, and that the nation had a right to their endowments; but this was not so. The Church of England, as any student of history knew, was established long before either the Monarchy or Parliament had any existence, and *her endowments were the voluntary offerings* of her sons and daughters in past ages." The *Christian World* challenges him to produce a single instance of such "pious ancestors." No doubt there were such benefactions, but they are lost in the Church lands which were improperly bestowed on the nobility by Henry VIII.; whereas the Established Church is chiefly maintained, to between four and five millions a year, out of statutory tithe-charge, which both the late Mr. Gladstone and Mr. W. H. Smith concurred in holding "to be national property."

The *Rock* is not inclined to part with the doctrine of eternal damnation without a struggle. Canon Carmichael recently urged that the establishment of a system of interminable punishment for the miserable, ignorant fools that make up the ruck of humanity would be a waste of power unworthy of the wisdom of God. The *Rock* replies that the same objection would apply to the scheme of redemption. Quite so; both schemes are incredible.

Here is a little extract from a letter by Professor Huxley to Charles Kingsley, which appears in the lately-published biography of the Professor: "I know that I am, in spite of myself, exactly what the Christian world call, and, so far as I can see, are justified in calling, atheist and infidel. I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomena of the universe stands to us in the relation of a Father—loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts. On the contrary, the whole teaching of experience seems to me to show that, while the governance (if I may use the term) of the universe is rigorously just and substantially kind and beneficent, there is no more relation of affection between governor and governed than between me and twelve judges."

A proposal recently came before the Bexhill District



Council to defray the cost of consecrating the new cemetery out of the rates. To endeavor to tax the ratepayers for an absurd ceremony of this kind was a piece of cheek which the Nonconformists very properly and successfully resented. The local Churchmen have now been forced to raise amongst themselves a fund for the purpose.

Andrew Carnegie (the New York *Truthseeker* says) is a member of the Lotos Club of this city, and made a short speech when the Chinese minister was a guest of the club, telling this story: One day, when he was in China, his host, a Chinese nobleman, came to him in the morning in tears, and, upon being questioned, said that he had been sitting up all night with his wife, who was in a serious condition from grief and worry. She was prostrated, Mr. Carnegie said, because she had found that a missionary had obtained control over her eldest son and was teaching him to despise his ancestors and defile his family, and do all things that are repugnant to self-respecting Chinese. "Now," said Mr. Carnegie, "who has been doing this thing? Dr. Harper has been doing it. He was there in that city, living there with eight servants (the man had not been able to keep one servant when he was in Pittsburg; it was a wonder to me that he was even able to support himself), and he was there trying to teach religion to a Chinese whose ancestors had been civilised when his people were eating one another. Confucius teaches that no matter in what form worship may be offered, and no matter to what God, if it is honestly offered it will reach the supreme being. Let us let these people alone."

The Churchmen's Union have held a meeting to discuss the subject of hymns. They have felt, it was announced, "that the time has come when steps should be taken to provide a book of hymns which are not out of all accord with the best thought of the day." This shows that even in the Establishment things are moving.

Poison in the chalice. And the priest likely to get more of it than anybody else. This is the present aspect of the *Lancet* scare. The question has stirred up even the sedate and jog-trotting *Record*. It publishes some correspondence which is not at all of a reassuring character. One writer points out that the clergy have the first turn at the chalice and therefore a clean rim, whilst the congregation have less and less with each round. Another writer mentions the fact that the clergy are required to drink the last dregs of the wine, when all have communicated. They, therefore, run a greater risk than anybody. The same correspondent, however, piously adds: "I am prepared to trust the Lord to take care that his ordinance shall cause no harm to those who obey Him." This confidence is very well from the point of faith, but it is hardly justified by past occurrences—such, for instance, as the catastrophes which have happened to congregations who have assembled to worship "in his Name."

Some at least of the members of the Hull School Board require themselves a little more of the education they are engaged in dispensing. A discussion took place at a recent meeting as to the substitution of "man" and "woman" in certain minutes instead of "male" and "female." The proposal, having regard to the context, was a barbarous defiance of grammar, and was objected to as such. The greatest piece of ignorance, however, was displayed by a lady member, Mrs. Gardner, who argued that the terms "male" and "female" should be used because they occurred in Holy Writ in connection with the animals that went into the Ark!

What price this for a sample of Puritanical sourness? The *Church Family Newspaper* says: "Pleasure-seeking must be sternly expelled from the religious life. The clergyman must let it be known unmistakably that it is not his business to entertain his people either in church or out of it." But then, what about the unconscious entertainment so many clerics afford when they attempt to be most solemn and severe?

It was on January 14 that the annual "Festival of the Ass" used to take place as a commemoration of the Flight into Egypt. It was the most fantastic of the forgotten observances of the Roman Catholic Church, and not the least of its absurdities was the fact that the congregation was instructed to bray like an ass instead of answering with the customary responses.

*Reynolds's Newspaper*, in answering a correspondent who styles himself a "Freethinker, but no Atheist," says: "The grievance as to the Blasphemy Laws ought, of course, to be remedied; but these laws are, to all intents, obsolete." With the greatest respect for our contemporary, we venture to say that this is misleading. No law is ever really obsolete until it has been declared so by a bench of judges. Before our own prosecution for "blasphemy" the common law as to that "crime" had been declared to be "practically obsolete"

by the late Mr. Justice Stephen. But that was in a law book, not from the seat of justice. No one had been imprisoned under the Blasphemy Laws for more than twenty years, yet they were found to be anything but obsolete when we were prosecuted. As a matter of fact, we suffered the heaviest sentence passed upon any "blasphemer" during the nineteenth century, for we were not treated as a first-class misdemeanant, but treated like a common felon. Twenty years have not rolled by since then, the Blasphemy Laws still exist, and they may yet find another victim.

Long before our imprisonment, Charles Bradlaugh used to warn the Freethought party against treating the Blasphemy Laws as obsolete. He was constantly pointing out the necessity of agitating for their abolition. Many shook their heads and thought he was too anxious. But they knew he was right, after all, when they saw the editor of the *Freethinker* carried off in "Black Maria" to Holloway Gaol.

Charles Bradlaugh tried to repeal the Blasphemy Laws when he settled down on his seat in the House of Commons. He brought in a Bill with that object, but it was bitterly opposed by pious fanatics like Mr. Samuel Smith, and it was only supported on a division by forty-five members. Surely, after that definite refusal of the House of Commons to pass Bradlaugh's Bill, it is more senseless than ever to assert that the Blasphemy Laws have lost all their force and are no longer to be dreaded.

After the defeat of Bradlaugh's Bill, Mr. G. J. Holyoake formed a Liberty of Bequest Association, with a view to getting a Bill brought before parliament to legitimate bequests for free inquiry and free publication of opinion in matters of religion. Beyond getting printed, however, this Bill never made any progress, although it was backed by men like Mr. Samuel Storey, Mr. Henry Labouchere, and Mr. Lloyd George; and of late years it seems to have dropped out of the field altogether. Personally, we never thought such a Bill stood the remotest chance of being carried. Still, we felt that Mr. Holyoake was entitled to his chance of seeing what could be done; and we should have been greatly pleased if he could have associated his name with the triumph of such a measure. But when year after year rolled by, and nothing substantial was effected, we considered it madness to wait any longer, while thousands of pounds were being lost to our movement. We, therefore, set our own wits to work and devised the Incorporation which is known as the Secular Society, Limited. That Society secures for the Secular movement all that would have been realised by the carrying of the Liberty of Bequest Bill. The trick is done. The problem is solved. And heterodox bodies that wish to legalise themselves have only to copy our model, with whatever slight alteration they deem desirable.

Colonel E. H. Nicholson, J.P., has been ventilating his faculties at Newark, and talking on the subject of Education. He deplored the "divorce of religion from education," which he thought "a scandal and a curse." Considering that this military gent. was speaking at the annual dinner of a Church scholastic institution, it would seem that something stronger than soda-water had got into his head. Surely the "divorce" he complained of has not taken place *there*.

An article in the *Catholic*, headed "The Deluge," and dealing with "the late Bob Ingersoll," shows the ignorance and imbecility which Catholic writers feel they can safely presume upon in their readers. Ingersoll is taken to task for treating the Deluge as universal, whereas it was a local affair. When the Bible writer referred to the "highest hills under heaven" being covered with water, he meant only as far as you could see. But why not add that he wrote on a big plain, where the highest visible eminence was as lofty as a Dutch cheese? At this rate we shall hear that the Flood was a village catastrophe that drowned a dozen chickens and a litter of blind puppies.

The *Catholic* critic says that Joshua told the sun to stand still because he was a shepherd-soldier, and thought the sun went round the earth. What stopped was the earth itself, and not the sun. Indeed! Does this writer know what would happen if the earth stopped? Not a single human being would survive to tell the tale.

The older view of idealistic dualism is breaking up with all its mystic and anthropistic dogmas, but upon the vast field of ruins rises, majestic and brilliant, the new sun of our realistic monism, which reveals to us the wonderful temple of nature in all its beauty. In the sincere cult of "the true, the good, and the beautiful," which is the heart of our new monistic religion, we find ample compensation for the anthropistic ideals of "God, free will, and immortality" which we have lost.—*Ernst Haeckel*



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, January 20, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7-30 'The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic.'

**To Correspondents.**

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS—January 20, Sheffield; 27, Leicester.—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.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Thanks for the birthday message from Birmingham friends.

ADOLFO DE MAGLIA.—Your card to hand. We should be happy to see you again, either here or in Spain.

H. PERCY WARD.—Thanks for the volume. It is certainly odd, in more ways than one, to see the *Freethinker* article on the late Cardinal Newman reproduced in a collection of press obituary notices, edited by a Roman Catholic priest. Looking over the collection, we see that it was the *Freethinker* writer who best understood Newman; which is, perhaps, not so surprising, after all. The champions of Faith and Reason recognise each other over the heads of illogical intermediaries.

E. R. WOODWARD.—See "Sugar Plums." As to the other matter, we note what you say, but the distinction we drew remains.

F. J. GOULD.—Our compliments to Mr. S. Leeson. We remember him.

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks for cuttings. The other matter has been seen to.

A. E. WINDOW.—Thanks for your good wishes, but the "rank and file" are making a poor show in the January "Shilling Week." Perhaps the time is unfavorable, so soon after the holidays; but we hardly think this is a sufficient reason.

G. D. B.—We have no room to deal with him this week, so we leave him entirely to you—with perfect confidence.

S. WHITEWAY.—We warned Freethinkers week after week, and month after month, not to send orders for literature to Mr. Robert Forder. You and other persons still continue to do so; and if he neither executes your order, nor returns your money, nor even takes any notice whatever of your communications, you can hardly expect us to accept any responsibility. We are even ignorant of Mr. Forder's present whereabouts. The shop in Stonecutter-street has been closed since last April, but presumably letters addressed there for him are delivered elsewhere by the Post Office.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Benevolent Fund: C. Pottage, 10s.; General Fund: W. H. S., £1.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valued cuttings.

D. FRANKEL.—See "Sugar Plums."

A. GROVER.—You need not trouble to give authorities for the statement that the world was inhabited by human beings for ever so many thousands of years before the alleged creation of Adam and Eve. That fictitious event was said to have taken place about 6,000 years ago; and it is a commonplace of modern science that the human race is immensely older. See the "Creation Story" chapter in Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*.

J. FISIL.—Correction made as desired. Considering all we have to do with one pair of hands, it is surprising that mistakes are not more frequent.

T. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings.

G. MULLETT.—Cleverly put. But we cannot discuss the matter in this column.

A. G. LYE.—We hope so too.

"LIGHT" AND MATERIALISM.—Pleased to hear you consider our reply satisfactory.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Newark Herald—Crescent—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker (New York)—Freidenker—Searchlight—Secular Thought—Blue Grass Blade—Two Worlds—Empire—Free Society.

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.

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

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

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

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

**Personal.**

I HAVE still to ask the indulgence of my readers and correspondents. Owing to the variable, but chiefly foggy, weather in London my cold has proved an obstinate one, and I am quite unable to work at my usual high pressure. Robert Browning made Ronsard say of Clement Marot that

His faculties move in no small mist  
Since he versified David the Psalmist.

For my part, I have not versified the Psalms, but my faculties have been moving in a mist for another reason. There is nothing like a bad cold for making you feel as though your brains were clogged and wanted stirring up with a tablespoon. However, I am progressing towards my normal health, and I hope to be myself again in a few days. "Something too much of this," as Hamlet says, though I have said as little as I found possible.

G. W. FOOTE.

**Sugar Plums.**

MR. FOOTE lectured to a good audience at the Athenæum Hall, London, on Sunday evening, his subject being "Shakespeare and the Bible." His address on such a subject was, of course, very highly appreciated. This evening (Jan. 20) he lectures again from the same platform. His subject will be "The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic."

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, took place at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday evening. Nearly a hundred sat down to the tables, including most of the principal workers in the Freethought movement in London, and a very gratifying number of ladies. After the dinner, which was of the usual excellence in that establishment, the second part of the program opened with a pianoforte solo by Mr. Frank Merry. Mr. Rowland Merry then sang a humorous song, "Has it ever occurred to you?" Next came that clever and popular entertainer, Mr. John Warren, who gave a capital exhibition of his ventriloquial powers and native humor, with the aid of a colleague who travelled in his handbag. Madame Alice Lovenez followed with a song that enabled her to do justice to her fine, well-trained voice. Next came the Chairman's Address. Mr. Foote briefly reviewed the recent progress of the movement, and referred to its improved financial prospects. He alluded to the personal losses sustained towards the close of the last century in the deaths of Charles Bradlaugh and Colonel Ingersoll, and to a less degree in the deaths of J. M. Wheeler and S. Hartmann. Mr. Foote saluted the memory of the last-named as a true, valiant soldier of liberty and progress, amidst the heartfelt "hear, hears" of the whole company. Fortunately, good men still remained in the movement. There was his veteran colleague, Mr. Charles Watts, on the one side of him, and on the other side his younger colleague, Mr. C. Cohen, from whom he expected much in the future work of the Society. Mr. Foote having finished his address, Mr. F. Hermann obliged with a violin solo, which was accompanied on the piano by Mr. F. David. Next came the one Toast of the evening—"The Freethought Movement at Home and Abroad." It was ably proposed by Mr. Watts and very briefly seconded by Mr. Cohen, who said he would "spare" the company for once. Miss Jennie Atkinson then sang "Killarney," which admirably suited her sympathetic voice; and by way of encore she sang beautifully another Irish song, "The Wearin' of the Green." Mr. Will Edwards followed with two really humorous songs rendered with delightful verve. Finally, the company had the pleasure of hearing another fine song from Madame Lovenez. After which came "Auld Lang Syne" and the breaking up of the party, all of whom appeared to have spent a most enjoyable evening; a good deal of which, of course, they owed to the labors beforehand of the ever-active and capable secretary, Miss Edith M. Vance.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures to-day, Sunday, January 20 (afternoon and evening), in the Hall of Science, Rockingham-street, Sheffield. His subjects are new and appropriate to the times, and should draw large audiences.

Mr. Charles Watts is anxious to visit Bristol, Plymouth, and, if possible, other places in the West of England. This would be under the special Scheme, and the financial responsibility would be principally borne by the central authorities in London. It is very desirable that Freethinkers in the towns named and suggested, who are willing to co-operate in carrying out the local arrangements, should communicate



as soon as possible with Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C. Halls would have to be engaged, bills printed and posted, other advertising done, and provision made for the necessary business at the public meetings.

Plymouth lost two strong and faithful servants of Secularism by the death of Messrs. Barter and Smith, but there are a good many Secularists in the Three Towns, and some of them should be willing to do a little work for the movement. There are many Secularists in Bristol, too, and a good Branch ought to exist there. This would be quite possible if some of the better sort of Secularists would see to the organisation, instead of leaving it to any person of conceit, incapacity, and ill-manners, who may step to the front and do more harm in a month than could be undone in a year.

Mr. Cohen would follow Mr. Watts in the West of England, and Mr. Foote would probably come afterwards, so that the propagandist effort might be sustained.

Friends in Lancashire, Yorkshire, the Midlands, and the North of England, who are willing to assist in the arrangements for lectures in those districts, should also lose no time in communicating with headquarters.

Mr. E. B. Rose, an old member of the Camberwell Branch, lectured at the Hall last Sunday after an absence of thirteen years in South Africa. His subject, "The Truth about the Transvaal," attracted a large audience, who listened for an hour and a half with every appearance of interest and approval. Mr. Rose is a thoroughly capable lecturer, who should be an acquisition to the Secular platform.

Mr. J. D. Shaw, of Waco, Texas, had to discontinue the publication of the *Independent Pulpit*. He has now revived it, so to speak, under the title of the *Searchlight*. We have looked through the first number, and we feel justified in wishing the new venture all success. Unfortunately, over in America, as well as here in England, a Freethought paper takes a lot of running.

Mrs. A. Bradley, an elderly lady, keeps a newsagent's shop at 8 Robin Hood-lane, opposite the gates of the Blackwall Tunnel. She displays the *Freethinker* in her window, and persists in doing so though she has lost two or three of her best customers in consequence. We hope the local Freethinkers will patronise her shop as far as possible by way of compensation.

George Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*, lately said that he could not endorse the statement of another Freethought paper that "Dr. Roberts was the equal of Ingersoll." Dr. Roberts, some of whose addresses we have had the pleasure of reprinting in the *Freethinker*, has written to Mr. George Macdonald as follows: "Let me thank you again and again for the statement in clipping above. While I recognise the fact that such comparisons are made with kindly intent, yet they give me unspeakable chagrin, mortification, and pain. Mr. Ingersoll had no equal and has none. He was and he is peerless. He can have no successor. His mantle fell on no one. 'Great Achilles is dead and no one left in Ithaca can bend his bow.' Any man who calls himself 'another Ingersoll,' or the 'new Ingersoll,' or the 'Ingersoll of the West,' or uses that great name in any such way, of consent to its use, is guilty of an act of desecration."

Mr. Watts's new pamphlet, entitled *Spiritualism a Delusion*, is described by *Reynolds's* as "a masterly exposure of the follies and fallacies of this modern form of witchcraft."

Four soldiers in the First Essex Regiment send us 11s. for the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. Their spokesman, A. W. Stavers, sends us with the remittance a well-written, interesting letter. He and his three comrades hope the Freethinkers of England will make the Twentieth Century Fund a glorious success. A postscript to his letter runs as follows: "Mail just arrived. Newcastle friend sends *Freethinker* for November 18. Your article re Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ is much enjoyed. May you long be spared to contribute many more healthy articles to your ever-welcome journal."

### Shilling Week.

UNFORTUNATELY, we are unable to print any list of subscriptions this week. Our printers inform us at the last minute that they have not received the larger part of the copy we sent them under this heading. It is too late to remedy the matter; so, instead of printing an imperfect list, we prefer to hold it back altogether till next week.

### A Heathen Lady.

MRS. MARILLA M. RICKER has presented the Chamberlain Free Library of New Hampshire with the complete works of the late Robert G. Ingersoll (by whom she swears), and is ready to supply other libraries.

She calls herself a heathen, yet in her heart she is the opposite, for her nature is kindly, and her charities many; nevertheless, she is a disciple of Ingersoll. She is vice-president of the National Legislative League, the object of which is to obtain for women equality, municipal and industrial rights through action by the National Congress and the State Legislatures.

Mrs. Ricker is one of the best-known women lawyers in the land. She is the first woman who ever attempted to vote in the country—that was in 1870, when she fortified herself by preparing a constitutional argument for the selectmen of her town (Dover, N.H.), which closed with these words: "So long as women are hanged under the laws, they should have a voice in making them."

Mrs. Ricker was brought up on a New Hampshire farm, was trained to teach the young "idea how to shoot," graduating from Colby Academy, and beginning this work at sixteen. In 1862 she married, and became a widow in 1868, acquiring a large property from her husband. Her only brother was killed in the Civil War.

Left a widow at twenty-eight, and with means, she concluded to travel, and did, going to Germany and France, where she remained two years, and acquired the languages. She, too, has travelled over her own country, and is about to start for California to spend some months.

In 1890 she applied for admission to the New Hampshire bar, and was admitted—the first and almost the only woman to enter. Her fight against the directors of the Dover National Bank, and her success in that suit, is a matter of history. It proved her to be a woman of great acumen and persistency. She had a personal interest, too, being a stockholder; but her chief aim was to show up the real culprits.

—*Boston Sunday Post*, December 9.

### The Sphinx.

THE Sphinx sits ever by the stream of Life,  
Even as he sits amid the Pyramids  
Within the narrow valley of the Nile.  
We question ever: What is life and death?  
Who put us here? What keeps us? To what end?  
These questions ask we, and no answers come.  
Man builds his creeds; and each creed disagrees  
With all the rest; the old ones fade away,  
And new ones come instead; creed follows creed,  
Till in the endless maze we grow confused  
And turn and face again the silent Sphinx.

The brutes around us mock us with their forms,  
Saying: "You sprang from us—the stream can rise  
No higher than its source. Hold, hold, proud man,  
Amid your dizzy dreams. Do not forget  
Your kindred here, for you are one of us."

The earth, our mother, puts her silent force  
Upon us and restrains us to herself,  
Saying: "You are my children. You are made  
From out my elements. You rose from me;  
From me drew sustenance; and unto me  
You must return. My iron hand of law  
Is on you. You cannot escape from it."

The far-off sun looks at us from his throne,  
Saying: "I am your father. You have drawn  
Your life and light from me; the energy  
Coursing in thrills electric through your veins,  
You gained from me; the very tints you wear  
Upon your souls, these also came from me:  
All these must be surrendered once again."

The stars gaze on us from the shores of space,  
Like beacons o'er the sea, and seem to say:  
"We are the emblems of the Universe,  
The blossoms of Eternity; but you  
Are merely worms, and, like the worms, must die."  
And then our creeds all melted from our minds,  
As melts the dew on a summer morn.  
We turn and look once more upon the Sphinx,  
That sits like a mysterious question mark  
Before the portals of Eternity,  
That silent sits and nothing says at all.

—*Boston Investigator*.

ARTHUR EDGERTON.

At one of the primary schools in a Connecticut town a teacher put the following question to one of the boys in her class: "If the zenith is the point directly over our heads, what is the point directly under our feet?" The boy replied at once: "Hell."



Christianity and Civilisation.—VIII.

THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY.

(Continued from p. 21.)

It is at once a disproof of Christian claims and a profound satire upon them that slavery should have been unknown in North America until it was taken there by those most Christian of Christians, the seventeenth-century settlers. It was such a settled portion of their conception of things that none of them appear to have questioned either its social or scriptural validity. In some points their ideas on the subject underwent a change for the worse. In Europe there had been growing a feeling that slavery was only permissible so long as the slave was not a Christian. But in 1667 the Virginia Assembly ordained that conversion and baptism should by no means operate to set a slave free. To kill a slave was not murder, but felony, since he was a piece of property only. No slave could leave a plantation without written permission, and was forbidden to use force against a Christian, even in self-defence.

Nevertheless, as the economic reasons for slavery were not so pressing as they afterwards became, there was a growing pro-slavery feeling, even in the southern portion of North America. But at the end of the eighteenth century and the opening of the nineteenth the sudden development of English manufacturers stimulated the demand for cotton, and the economic advantages of slavery soon strangled emancipatory ideas. And, as the importation of negroes from Africa had then almost ceased, a new occupation, that of breeding slaves for the market, began to develop.\* From this we trace a steadily growing feeling in favor of slavery, and can see how that feeling was supported, ultimately perhaps from interested motives, but immediately on the ground of slave-holding being a thoroughly Christian and Biblical institution.

The whole history of the slave struggle does not concern us here, but only the part played in that struggle by the Christian Churches. And here there can be no doubt that, until public opinion had become strong enough to force the Churches to speak, religious organisations of all description, North and South, were, with very rare exceptions, either silent on the matter or anti-abolitionist. Lloyd Garrison's testimony on this head is emphatic and conclusive:—

"It is a fact, alike indisputable and shameful, that the Christianity of the nineteenth century, in this country, is preached and professed by those who hold their brethren in bondage as brute beasts.....Whether it be Unitarian or Orthodox, Baptist or Methodist, Universalist or Episcopal, Roman Catholic or Christian (a newly-formed sect by that name), it is full of innocent blood—it is the stronghold of slavery—it recognises as members those who grind the faces of the poor and usurp over the helpless the prerogatives of the Almighty."†

There is little wonder that he declared on another occasion that American Christianity was the main pillar of American slavery—a statement that is fully borne out by a study of contemporary sermons and resolutions of Church conferences. I have but little space for individual opinions, so I will take general resolutions, which are, perhaps, more conclusive. We will take the Presbyterians first.

In 1834 the Presbytery of South Carolina resolved that "Slavery has existed from the days of those good old slaveholders and patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (who are now in the kingdom of heaven)..... That as the relative duties of master and slave are taught in the Scriptures.....the existence of slavery itself is not opposed to the will of God." The Charleston Presbytery resolved that "The holding of slaves, so far from being a sin in the sight of God, is nowhere condemned in his Holy Word; that it is in accordance with the example, and consistent with the precepts, of patriarchs, apostles, and prophets." The New School Presbyterians decided that "As the Great Head of the Church has recognised the relation of master and

slave, we conscientiously believe that slavery is not a sin against God." Among the Old School Presbyterians, on a motion to make slaveholding among its members a matter of reprobation, 168 ministers and elders voted against the proposal, and 13 for it. Later the General Assembly, while resolving that "The Assembly do not think it for the edification of the Church to take any action" on the question of slavery, passed a lengthy and emphatic protest against "the fashionable amusement of dancing" as being "entirely unscriptural" and "wholly inconsistent with the spirit of Christ."

The Charleston Baptists declared that "The right of masters to dispose of the time of their slaves had been distinctly recognised by the Creator of all things." The Georgia body decided that "slavery, as it exists in the United States, is not a moral evil." The Protestant Episcopal Society issued a pamphlet containing the formal declaration that "Without a new revelation from Heaven no man was authorised to pronounce slavery wrong." Alexander Campbell, founder of the "Christian" sect, proclaimed the divine right of slavery. The Pittsburgh Assembly declined to express any opinion on the subject. The Maine Universalists followed suit.

The American Methodists, rejecting Wesley's well-known denunciation of slavery, were well to the front in supporting the slave trade. The Georgia Conference decided that slavery was not a moral evil, and declined to condemn it. The annual conference at Cincinnati declared itself "decidedly opposed to modern abolitionism," and disclaimed any desire "to interfere in the civil and political relation between master and slave." At the same time the conference issued a circular letter to the Churches, exhorting ministers to refrain from patronising the Abolitionist movement. The Baltimore Conference likewise disclaimed any fellowship with Abolitionists; while Wilbur Fiske, President of the Wesleyan University, Middleton, Conn., was described by Garrison as an "abusive and malignant opponent of abolition." And when, in 1845, the Northern Church showed signs of a better feeling, the immediate result was the secession of a number of organisations from the parent body, under the title of the "Methodist Episcopal Church, South." Fifteen years later (1860) an attempt was made to induce the clergy of the Methodist Church to sign a protest against slavery. Out of 14,000 clergy, only 241 would append their names to the document.

The Leeds Anti-Slavery Society's report for this year contains a letter written by the Rev. H. Mattison, or New York, travelling preacher to the Northern Methodist Episcopal Church, in which he says: "I am fully satisfied from figures that we cannot have to-day less than 10,000 slaveholders and 100,000 slaves in our Northern Methodist Episcopal Church, and the number is increasing every year. And, still worse, our people raise, and buy, and sell slaves as others do, without rebuke or hindrance." That this was no exaggeration is shown by the fact that at the Methodist Conference held at Buffalo in 1860, on one delegate suggesting a resolution against slavery, he was authoritatively informed that not ten delegates would support the resolution. It was just before this date that Garrison had written in the *Liberty Bell* that, "in England and Scotland especially, extraordinary pains have been taken in public and in private to hold up the American Anti-Slavery Society as unworthy of all countenance in any degree, on account of its infidel character."

Some of the methods adopted by different religionists on this question of slavery are exceedingly curious. Thus we find the Young Men's American Bible Association issuing a special edition of the New Testament, carefully annotated, as an Anti-Abolitionist pamphlet. The General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church seized a man's goods for debt, and some negroes being among the effects, these were sold, and the money devoted to *missionary purposes*. The Baptist Missionary Union furnished to the world, at one of its meetings, the picture of a clergyman offering to sell a slave for two hundred dollars if the buyer would send him to Africa to preach the Gospel to his colored brethren. The American Board of Missions rejected unanimously a resolution to the effect that "slave-

\* See Fiske's *Critical Period of Ancient History*, pp. 72-3, and Fisher's *Colonial Era in America*, p. 78.  
† *Life*, by his Children, i., p. 480.]



holding is a practice which is not to be allowed in the Christian Church." The American Bible Society declined to interfere with "the moral or civil rights of communities or individuals"; and, on one of its agents being arrested in New Orleans for distributing Bibles among slaves, declared that in so doing he was acting contrary to instructions. This society numbered hundreds of slaveholders among its published list of members.\*

It is useless to multiply quotations. Enough has been said to show that the support given to slavery was pretty common to all the Churches. And let it be borne in mind that this support was given to one of the worst forms of slavery the world has ever seen. I have already pointed out a number of the laws in existence in America prohibiting the slave acquiring an elementary education, which, unfortunately, is only one of the directions in which the condition of the modern slave was worse than that of his prototype in antiquity. Perhaps the best commentary, however, on the subject is that of the law of Louisiana, passed July 7, 1806, which stipulated that the slave shall have two and a half hours' rest in the twenty-four. A volume could not say more than this single measure discloses. One might defy, too, anyone to point to a condition of things in civilised antiquity such as is pictured by Mr. Weld in his *American Slavery as it Is* :—

"They are overworked, underfed, wretchedly clad and lodged, and have insufficient sleep; they are often made to wear round their necks iron collars armed with prongs, to drag heavy chains and weights at their feet while working in the fields.....They are frequently flogged with terrible severity, have red pepper rubbed into their lacerated flesh, and hot brine, spirits of turpentine, etc., poured over the gashes to increase the torture.....Their ears are often cut off, their eyes knocked out, their bones broken, their flesh branded with hot irons.....We shall show, not merely that such deeds are committed, but that they are frequent; not done in corners, but before the sun.....perpetrated by magistrates, by professors of religion, by preachers of the Gospels, by governors of States, by gentlemen of standing, and by delicate females moving in the highest circles of society."

I could, if necessary, quote yards of newspaper advertisements for runaway slaves which would amply verify the description given above. I will let the above stand alone as a description of what the Christian Churches in America were supporting and justifying—supporting it so steadfastly that in 1837 Garrison declared that not a single hall, or meeting house, or church, in the city of Boston, over which the religious organisations had any control, could be obtained for holding an anti-slavery meeting. The only hall that could be got belonged to, or was rented by, Abner Kneeland, an ex-clergyman, who had only recently served a term of imprisonment for blasphemy, and who was one of the "Infidel associates" whose company Garrison was charged with keeping.

Very much more might be said on the subject of Christianity and slavery, but I have said enough to show how fallacious is the plea that the disappearance of slavery was owing to the influence of Christian teaching. The old Bible admittedly teaches it, and the New Testament encourages habits of mental docility and passive obedience to which the slave dealer has always appealed for support; slavery lingered on long after Christianity was established, and even increased in extent; and, finally, the modern slave trade, which was, as we have seen, inaugurated by Christians acting under Christian governments, outdid in barbarity anything that antiquity saw. To-day Christians repudiate slavery; but this is not because of the influence of their religion, but in spite of it—because religious teachings, be they ever so powerful, sooner or later yield to the demands of a more rationalised social order and a more humanised common sense.

C. COHEN.

\* I can only mention generally the sources from which I have derived information, space forbidding details. My principal authorities are:—*Life and Times of Garrison*, 4 vols.; *Balmes's American States, Churches, and the War*; *Cairne's Slave Power*; *New York Anti-Slavery Society's Report*, 1859-60; *Leeds ditto for 1859-60-61*; *Stowe's Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*; *The Church the Bulwark of Slavery*, by J. G. Birney; *Slavery in America*, pub. Edinburgh, 1832; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vols. 10 and 22; *American Slavery as it Is*, by T. D. Weld.

## Religions, Priests, and Gods.

MAN is a being of many wants. Civilisation is a continual increase of the things man cannot do without. Savages are easily satisfied; the man of culture rarely, if ever. Religion is a thing of promises, elaborate and alluring. Man, full of ills, sorrowing, poor, and bereft, sought comfort in promises and hopes. Religion is a bill drawn on the future. It is like a life insurance policy, due and payable when you are dead, provided the company has not died first.

### "THE WORK OF THE GODS."

The wants of man upon the spiritual side came early, and have stayed. The ignorant man feared the unknown; he trembled before the mystery. He thought the air was peopled with invisible beings; that everything that happened upon the earth was the direct result of an acting god. He saw calamity; he felt pain; he was menaced by death; he was involved in disasters; and he said: "This is all the work of the gods." Then he began to make sacrifices to appease the gods. He feared, and from that fear religion had its birth. Later on he felt himself unworthy. His ideal was better than his attainment. His conscience troubled him. He worked out the speculative philosophy of sin—of a sin-hating God; and then he feared more than ever. That God could not look upon iniquity; could not look upon him, and would banish him from his divine sight forever. Not satisfied with that, and to make the place of banishment a place of pain and woe, religion—speculative, purely imaginative—having constructed this fear, constructed the manner of escape from it. Having ceased to fear this world, he began to fear the other world. Man had within his breast, as an inheritance from his early low estate, from the animal period of his life, the feeling of hatred and revenge. The fang was not yet aborted from his jaw. Sometimes, like a reminiscence of the distant past, he uttered the howl of the wolf, or the triumphant shriek of the beast of prey, when his fangs and claws are drinking the blood of the victim. Man had within him, from his early low estate, the instinct of hatred, the instinct of inflicting suffering and pain, and rejoicing in the agony of the thing that writhed. He wished to satisfy that feeling of revenge; he wished to make adequate the suffering with his larger thought. He felt incapable of inflicting the pain he dreamed of, and then he did this strange thing—he transferred to God the work of executing for him, the human being, satisfaction of his feeling of revenge, and he made the dogma of hell. That is precisely how it came.

### SOURCES OF RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE.

Our blessed and beloved doctrine of hell is the reminiscence of the animal in man. It did not come from the sky; it came from the earth; it came from the fang and the crooked claw, from the growl and the snarl. It is the unevolved beast. We seek to make it blessed and sacred by saying, "It is God's will." We profess to be very sorry that it is so, but we cannot change the nature of God. It is just the animal, the wolf, the tiger, the poisoned fang.

Then man was poor and also avaricious. All men that have ever lived have longed to be rich, and have struggled to be rich, and the majority of them have failed. That was one of the perpetual wants of man. The goods and chattels of this world being unable to possess himself of, the next best thing was the hope, the promise of riches beyond; and, when denied the possession of riches on earth, religion took advantage of that opportunity and pointed man to the promised riches in the sky. Gold, gold, gold, round and yellow, and hard and cold, that men fought and struggled for here, and few, wonderfully few, possess. It was then religion said: "Ah, wait; we will pave the heavenly streets with the precious stuff; the curb-stones and the hitching-posts shall all be gold." Then man, wearied, worn, over-burdened, and longing for a surcease of care and toil, wanted rest; he sought it here in vain; the burdens of life weighed more and more heavily upon him; he began to stoop with the number of his years, and to take the last painful steps with staff and crutch; he never found rest here, and religion said: "Wait; after a while, on flowery beds of ease, with never a



care, never a toil, nothing but a harp and a comfortable seat, shall eternity be spent." Those were some of the fundamental wants—the thirst for revenge, the lust of possession, and the longing for rest; it was the opportunity of religion. Superstition and priestcraft flourished; religion promised to satisfy every one of these needs. It had a way to escape the God that was represented as terrible; the God that goes up and down seeking whom he may devour; he has two names. Religion promised to do it, and its promises were effective.

THE OLD FORMS NO LONGER SATISFY.

Why, then, with its magic power, is not the old form good enough? It has been the corn and oil and wine. The oil and wine are the symbol by which poverty has represented its wealth that is to be. Its nutriment and its stimulant, denied here, are to be gained in some other world. Why does it not answer still? Why are not the old forms sufficient? One of the answers is, that they are not because they are not; it is a fact that we confront. The things that satisfied in the long ago satisfy no longer. The oil has become rancid, and the old wine is sour.

The conditions under which the old religion grew have changed. Man's environment, his intellectual horizon, has widened. A new being, a new human being, has come upon the earth, and the old things are no longer adequate; they do not satisfy. That is the fact, and the reason for the fact may be discovered in this, that the old ideas had their ultimate basis in an intensely narrow, dogmatic selfishness, and egotism incomparable in any other of the realms of human thought. The plan by which man was to escape the wrath of God was nothing less than by the death of a God that died for men. How is it to be accounted for that the human mind ever arose to such colossal altitudes of egotism as to imagine that a God should leave his throne in the sky, come down here in disguise of flesh, and be assassinated in order that man should escape the wrath of another God? It is past all comprehension. It puts everything we know of man, of nature, and of the universe at sixes and sevens. Reason, the sense of justice, of eternal right, our belief in morality, everything is violated, caricatured, ignored. The plan of religion to satisfy revenge by creating an endless hell, how is it to be accounted for that the human mind ever worked it out? If we came from the animals, what is the reason that the worst of the animals—the most vicious, the most cruel—uttered themselves in our religious dogma?

MAN'S MONUMENTAL EGOTISM.

The egotism is equally apparent that man should imagine that the infinite creator built a hell—a place of eternal pain—just to satisfy my revenge. That is the ultimate analysis of it. It is just our human feeling transferred to God. The God that we think of is never anything more than the enlargement of ourselves, and all the old doctrines that are a disgrace to human beings, and yet attributed to God, are only the carrying to infinite proportions the sentiment, the thoughts, the wishes, the desires of the human being. When a man on the street—a man of the world without religion—swears, and with language consigns a man to God's wrath and eternal punishment, he does not, in my judgment, do so odious, so hideous, so frightful a thing as does the man who piously believes in a place of eternal punishment for everybody that disagrees with him in religious thought.

That conception of the old religion that is to make us all rich in the future; that we are to live in palaces of amethyst and onyx and chalcedony, and all manner of precious stones, and have lawns of burnished gold, could never have been worked out of anything else than a heart that lusted so immeasurably and immoderately after wealth as to become insane upon the subject, and be satisfied with nothing less than the open door of the treasury of infinite wealth.

The old ideas do not satisfy. They are growing less and less potent; the oil and wine are becoming useless and unuseable. The criticism is made that the new religion is cold and colorless; that it has nothing to give in the place of the things it takes away; that it lacks spirituality; that it has no corn and oil and wine for the life that now is, and promises none for the life that is

to come. Let it be understood that, whatever the immediate or temporary result may be, this is forever true; that the removal of any falsehood is a gain to mankind; that, whatever the temporary results of that removal may be, no abiding and permanent good can come to a race by the perpetuation of a falsehood. Hundreds of thousands of people are persuaded that the old systems are based upon falsehood, and, therefore, their removal is an ultimate gain. We need not be concerned about what the consequences are; we know that that much of it is for the progress and betterment of mankind.

Moreover, let it be borne in mind that the old religion only saves us from the things that it conjures up. There would have been no hell to be saved from if the old religion had not conjured up a hell. There would have been no being of wrath to fear if the old religion had not conjured up a being of wrath to fear. Now those things it can save us from. That is a simple proposition. It created by its imagination anything it chose, then created by its imagination a plan of escape from that thing which it had made, and there you are. But suppose there is no hell; suppose there is no angry God, no variable, changing infinite to be saved from, then what becomes of the plan of the old religion? It should also be borne in mind that the things that religion does not conjure up it cannot save us from. It pretended to say at one time: "I have been young and now am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread." The man that said that was either a liar or blind. There never was an age when it was true, and very probably never will be.

Religion does not save us from poverty. It does not teach us how to shield ourselves from the men that have no regard for the sacred and eternal demands of honor and justice, who take advantage of us simple, confiding, trusting people to our great detriment. Religion itself, if it were deprived to-day of all the help, all the contribution from the people who do not believe in it at all, would have a harder struggle to exist than it does.

But the new religion, the religion that is swiftly taking the place of the old, is not forced into the attitude of apology. It does not have a God that it must make excuses for, nor a world over which it must piously despair. The religion that is taking the place of the old has for its first word, as the chief and grandest of its boons to mankind, "Emancipation." It makes men free. It teaches that he is free to be a part of this great proposition, the universe. He does not know much about it—he does not need to know—but he is a part of it, and as such he shares its dignity and freedom and power; as such, he has a right and claim to equity and justice that religion never dreamed of for this or any other world. (DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

KNICKERBOCKERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The remarks in your paper last week *re* suitable costumes for the N. S. S. dinner caused me a good deal of surprise, and must have done so to many others of your readers who I know, like myself, wear and advocate the wearing of Rational Dress.

That you should think it necessary to ask us not to wear knickerbockers at a public dinner seems to me about as necessary as to request us not to come in riding-habits or even in our nightdresses, garments which, like rationals, are suitable and even becoming in their right place.

It is surely little short of an insult to suggest that a woman who has sense enough to discard her skirt when it is obviously in the way, would have so little as to wear her knickerbockers when they are unnecessary, and could only call forth unpleasant comments from the many who, like yourself, are prejudiced against the costume. M. LOVELL.

[Miss Lovell is mistaken. We have no prejudice whatever against knickerbockers, or anything else the ladies choose to wear. A preference and a prejudice are two very distinct things. We are sorry, for the rest, that our joke miscarried, and that our intended butterfly has proved a mosquito.—EDITOR.]



## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

## LONDON

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Max O'Rell (M. Paul Blouët), "The Character of John Bull."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 11.5, Discussion opened by T. Gautrey, M.L.S.B., "Elementary Education in a Strait-jacket"; 7, F. J. Gould, "The Ethical Meaning of Hell."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "Mark Twain's Salutation to the New Century"; 7.30, J. W. Cox. BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

## COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): W. F. Barnard—3, "A Sociological View of Religion"; 7, "The Beauty of Death."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Famines in India."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Class—Open discussion, "Should Vaccination be Compulsory?"; 6.30, Social meeting in Commemoration of Burns and Paine.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Trumper, "Poverty."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. Mentor Gimson, "Novelists of the Nineteenth Century."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Cohen—11, "The Significance of Evolution"; 3, "Man: Whence and Whither?" 6.30, "The Foreign Missionary Question: Its Dangers and Delusions." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): C. Watts—3, "The Science of Life"; 7, "Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?" Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Debate on "Spiritualism v. Materialism."

## Lecturer's Engagements.

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