

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXI.—No. 4.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 27, 1901.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## Secular-Moral Teaching

AND

### DR. COIT'S ACROBATICS.

THERE is a curious article by Dr. Stanton Coit in the last number of his journal which is newly-christened *Democracy*. This gentleman has taken over the secretaryship of the Moral Instruction League, and he declares that it constitutes "distinctly a Rationalistic and a Secular party." Yet he says it is opposed to the policy of "the so-called Secular party," who have left the League in the lurch. Now this is very strange upon the face of it. How did it happen that the Secularists deserted a League whose members "have held their ground firmly on secular-moral instruction"? The answer to this question is extremely simple. Dr. Coit has got into a chronological muddle. When the Moral Instruction League was started, he and his obedient majority of Ethicists fought tooth and nail against the introduction of the word "Secular." They said it was a narrow, party word, and they would have none of it. Subsequently they passed a resolution on the Council in favor of retaining the Bible as a moral-lesson book in the Board schools. From that moment the National Secular Society lost all interest in the League; and its representatives on the Council—Messrs. Watts, Cohen, and Hartmann, and myself—quietly withdrew from attendance. Dr. Coit appears to have forgotten these facts. He is now shouting "Secular" against the Secularists. But he has only just taken to shouting it. He is claiming at present what he formerly opposed. And those who encountered his opposition are not likely to let him execute a right-about-face, and throw his own blame upon *them*, without a sufficiently emphatic protest.

Something has opened Dr. Coit's eyes. He has discovered that "Secular" is a word that cannot be dropped with impunity. He has also found that it is a winning word. Mr. F. J. Gould made it prominent on his program, and he won a brilliant victory at Leicester. Mr. A. T. Grindley has since secured a seat on the Plymouth School Board, and "Secular" figured in large type in his address to the electors. It is also noticeable that the one Socialist candidate in London who came near to winning a seat in the late School Board elections was precisely the one who gave the greatest prominence to "Secular Education." We quite understand Dr. Coit's change of front. It was dictated by stern experience. But why on earth does he pretend that he has never budged—and even that he has been holding the "Secular" fort all the time against those fanatical Secularists?

Dr. Coit's apology for himself and his League is distinctly amusing. He shelters himself behind the great name of Huxley. In doing this he may impose upon the Ethicists, but he will not impose upon any Secularist. It was the one great unfortunate thing about Huxley that, with all his splendid qualities and magnificent services to the cause of Freethought, he was capable at times of playing with words in a manner that delighted and served his intellectual enemies. This is what he did with respect to "religious education" in Board schools. His famous article in the *Contemporary Review*, in 1870, has been a god-send ever since to the reactionists. It is now quoted with great approval by Dr. Coit. Let us take a pregnant passage of it:—

No. 1,018.

"What the religious party is crying for is mere theology, under the name of religion; while the Secularists have unwisely and wrongfully admitted the assumption of their opponents, and demand the abolition of all religious teaching, when they only want to be free of theology—burning your ship to get rid of the cock-roaches.....If I were compelled to choose for one of my own children between a school in which real religious instruction is given and one without it, I should prefer the former, even though the child might have to take a good deal of theology with it."

"The issue," Dr. Coit says, "cannot be made clearer than in this passage." Indeed! Why it seems to us the veriest shuffling. It is another form of the three-card trick. "Religion" and "Theology" are two cards, and the third is left blank for "Morality." Huxley shuffles them to and fro, and gets whichever he pleases at the top. Surely he knew that the "religious teaching" the *Secularist* objected to was the very "theology" *he* objected to. Huxley himself meant no more by "religious" than the Secularist meant by "moral." But he played the game of the theologian by using "religious" as a middle term, representing something so vastly important that theology *with* it was better than morality *without* it. More candor, or more perspicacity, would have enabled him to see and admit that the Secularists and their "opponents" both meant the same thing by "religious teaching." It was he who was confusing the issue, and helping the wrong side in the quarrel.

Dr. Coit may fancy himself in good company. But good company is bad company when it is serving the cause of injustice. Huxley, he says, is represented by the Moral Instruction League. And this is the present situation. There are three parties in the field:—

"First, the party who wish to teach morality with theological sanctions implied, if not overtly inculcated; second, the party who, in order to get rid of the theological sanctions, wish no morality to be taught at all; and, third, those of us who advocate ethical instruction freed from all admixture of theology."

Angels and ministers of grace defend us! What does Dr. Coit mean? Has he patented morality? One might think so from the way he talks. "Bless his oblivious soul!"—as Mr. Holyoake would say—moral teaching was *in* the Board Schools, *legally* in, before he began to trouble his head about it. The only real question at issue is whether the Bible shall or shall not be used as the text-book for this moral teaching. The vast majority of Christians say "Yes." All Secularists say "No." And when the issue is thus narrowed down Dr. Coit agrees with the Secularists, although he is afraid or ashamed to confess it. But to this complexion he must come at last.

Whether morality, in the fullest sense of the word, can or cannot be taught at school is a very debateable question. But nobody denies that it can be taught to *some* extent. And as far as it *can* be taught the Secularists are as much in favor of it as Dr. Coit and the Ethicists. They are so, they were so, and they always have been so. It is Dr. Coit who has chopped and changed. They have been steadfast all the time. It is absolutely false that they turned their backs on the Moral Instruction League "because it refused to burn the ship of moral idealism in education altogether in order to be rid of the vermin that infested it." They wanted to burn nothing, but simply to clear the vermin out; and they found Dr. Coit and his friends shielding the vermin on the pretence that dealing with them endangered the ship.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Freethought Martyrdom.

PROFESSORS of Christianity are continually boasting of the martyrs to their faith, and of the proof which they allege such personal sacrifice affords of the truth of their religion. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that martyrdom proves anything beyond the sincerity of the martyrs. Probably there is no superstition, even of the lowest form, which has not had its martyrs. If suffering, and even dying, for a cause is evidence of its truth and justice, then Freethought can fairly claim these desirable virtues. In fact, Freethought is the very essence of true martyrdom, which really means the consequences of the vindication of personal thought against the many prevalent superstitions and traditional beliefs. The history of Freethought presents to our view a muster-roll of names that are an honor to the Pantheon of the world's freedom—such martyrs as Hypatia, Bruno, Vanini, Roger Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Tindal, Hobbes, Spinoza, Bolingbroke, Collins, Kepler, Volney, Priestley, Voltaire, Paine, Paterson, Southwell, Carlile, and a host of other brave men and women, who devoted their lives to the vindication of intellectual liberty. In Greece the heroic Socrates fought for this freedom despite the darts of ridicule, the pangs of exile, and the effects of hemlock. These martyrs were the real redeemers of humanity; they were all stars in the firmament of thought, and to their efforts we are indebted for much of the force we are able to exert to-day in consolidating the freedom they won and in extending the liberties they bequeathed to posterity.

Perhaps it may be right to here explain what is meant by the term Freethought. It does not signify, as the Rev. Charles Kingsley alleged, "loose thinking"; neither does it teach that thought is independent of conditions; hence it is opposed to what is termed the doctrine of Freewill. A Freethinker is one who claims the right to think according to the evidence presented to his mind, without having to endure social ostracism in this world, or being threatened with punishment in another one. With the Freethinker no topic is too sacred to be discussed, and no opinion is too extreme to be proclaimed, provided it has been arrived at by legitimate and cautious reasoning. He believes, as has been well remarked (I forget by whom), that all "opinions are to be examined if we will make way for truth, and put our minds in that freedom which belongs, and is necessary, to them. A mistake is not the less so, and will never grow into the truth, because we have believed it for a long time, though perhaps it is the harder to part with; and an error is not the less dangerous because it is cried up and held in veneration by any party." A Freethinker deems that man's duty is to use such faculties as he finds himself possessed of in an honest and earnest endeavor to learn the truth upon all subjects that fall within the scope of his observation. To pass carelessly over any field where he thinks some few grains of truth might be discovered he holds to be a crime against his own intellectual nature and against society; and to shrink from the investigation of any subject by the supposed sacredness of its character, or through the fulminations of men who have an interest in preventing free inquiry, he maintains to be sheer cowardice, of which no true man would be guilty.

It should, moreover, be remembered that Freethought, when properly understood, does not consist in a form of belief, nor in a code of unbelief, but in the right to think, and to give expression to his thoughts, without any kind of persecution following as the result. But it must not be supposed that, because a man is a Freethinker, he is indifferent to truth, and holds that all opinions are alike unimportant. On the contrary, he will be found contending as earnestly and as energetically for his views as any class of men, and will work as hard to promulgate what he believes to be true as the most enthusiastic religionist. But, having done that, he concedes to others the right which he claims for himself. Unfortunately, men and women whose honor and good taste could not be called in question have often been excluded from social and domestic gatherings simply on account of their Freethought principles. For the same reason, the services of literary men have been declined in quarters where, had

they professed the popular religious faith, their literary productions would have commanded ready acceptance. This exclusive policy, the outcome of sectarian prejudices, is not only petty persecution, it is unjust and detrimental to the progress of society, inasmuch as it tends to deprive the commonwealth of the services of some of the most useful and earnest workers for the public good.

There is, it should be observed, a difference between Freethought martyrdom and theological martyrdom. The Christian martyr had not only the prestige of fashion and the sanctions of popular belief to support him in his suffering, but he had—that is, he fancied he had—the assurance that the death of the martyr is the birth of a "glorious immortality." He is taught that this world is "a vale of tears," a probationary state preparatory to something superior in "a world to come"; "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If this is really so, to go to "the better land" should be "a consummation devoutly to be wished." Experience, however, proves that, despite the Christian's belief in this happy change, he is in general extremely anxious to delay the transformation; to him, indeed, "distance lends enchantment to the view." The case is very different with the majority of Freethinkers. They have to suffer for conscience sake in the cold shade of opposition, exposed to the misrepresentation of the bigot and to the active persecution of a prejudiced orthodoxy, without the consoling reflections furnished by faith in compensation hereafter. Buoyed up by the knowledge that his self-denial is undertaken for the benefit of his fellow creatures on earth, the Freethought martyr evinces a fortitude prompted by an unselfish nature that cannot fairly be claimed by the martyr of the Church. In so far it must be conceded that the Freethought martyrdom is the nobler of the two.

Among other beneficent results accruing from the devotion of the martyrs of Freethought, we may place the following:—The minimising of the once-dominating power of ecclesiasticism, the relaxation of various theological dogmas, the purification of religion, and the general discrediting of priestcraft in the minds of thoughtful men. The chief and most glorious results, however, have been those achieved in the emancipation of individual thought and reason from the thralldom of theological faith, and in the active fields of ethics, science, and politics. The services of these Freethought martyrs demonstrated the folly of supposing that the measure of one age should necessarily be the standard of all succeeding ones. Thus another barrier to progress was broken down, and the principle was established that as time rolls on, as man's requirements increase, and as human thoughts expand, an enlarged and more effectual test of action will become indispensable. The arbitrators of conduct in the past were theological decrees and priestly dictation; to-day the governing principles of our deeds are reason and utility. Herein lies the justification of Freethought martyrdom, and herein are manifested the excellent fruits of its endurance.

CHARLES WATTS.

## Christianity and Civilisation.—IX.

### MAGIC AND MEDICINE.

THE connection between the priest and the devotee of the healing art is an ancient, if not an honorable, one. In the most primitive times it is hardly a connection, but an identity. The priest is the primitive surgeon and physician, his medicine consisting largely of incantations and the like, which were, as Voltaire said, good enough, provided they were accompanied by the right kind of physic. In general, however, one may sum up the primitive notions concerning disease by saying that, in various forms, all disease (or abnormal states) is accounted for as being due to the operation of nature-spirits, or the spirits of dead people plaguing the living. The separation of the functions of priest and pathologist commences at a comparatively late stage in human history, and is only gradually consummated. How gradual is the development may be

guaged by the fact that even in civilised countries the practice of offering up prayers for the recovery to health of individuals, or for the removal of general disease, is far from uncommon.

The part played by Christianity in this process of separating medicine from magic is our chief concern here, although, in order to arrive at any correct idea on this point, it will be necessary to note the state of medical knowledge in civilised antiquity prior to the appearance of that religion. It is only to be expected, however, that there should still linger, even among the most advanced nations of antiquity, some amount of belief in charms and conjurations as a means of removing disease. But in Greece, Egypt, and Rome one can trace, at the opening of the present era, a healthful reaction against such beliefs, and an attempt to place the study of disease on a scientific foundation. In historic times the Greeks appear to have been comparatively free from the belief that all disease was due to the action of demons, but it was not until the time of Hippocrates that Greek medicine separated itself definitely from the theory of demoniacal possession. His theory of disease was clear and definite. He did not deny that there might be a divine side to disease; he insisted that there was *always* a natural side, and that this was the aspect of it about which we need feel concerned. His emphatic assertion is that each disorder "has its own physical conditions," and not one occurs without such physical conditions. He therefore laid down the general rule: "You ought to study the nature of man, what he is with reference to that which he eats and drinks, and to all his other occupations or habits, and to the consequences resulting from each."\*

With the impetus given to anatomical and physiological study by Aristotle, and the teachings of Galen concerning the functions of the nervous system—teachings that were definite enough to permit his curing a case of paralysis of the hand by "operating on those parts of the spine from which the implicated nerves took their rise"—we can safely assert that Greece was leaving behind it the magical theory of disease, and taking firm strides along a thoroughly scientific road. Moreover, each of these teachers left flourishing schools behind, which continued to practise until suppressed by the Christian Emperors.

In Egypt a department of the celebrated Alexandrian Museum was devoted to medicine, but much was included under that name that would now be excluded. Although the Egyptians had a strong repugnance to dissection, yet Ptolemy was strong enough to carry out his design that the teachings of anatomy should be based upon actual observation, and not on mere theory. Its two principal teachers, Herophilus and Erasistratus, made many important contributions to the knowledge of their day. They wrote of the structure of the heart, and described its connection with the veins and arteries, though the description was not free from error. The two kinds of nerves, motor and sensor, were described, as well as the influence of foods, etc., on the general health. Insanity was likewise treated as due to discoverable and uncontrollable physical causes; and the effects of color and sounds on subduing mania noted. The commercial position of Alexandria also gave this school the opportunity of becoming acquainted with many fresh drugs and herbs—a chance not at all neglected, as the remains of their writings prove.†

As is only to be expected, Rome reaped the full benefit of the scientific discoveries of both the Greek and Egyptian medical schools, although the Romans can hardly be said to have made much advance on their teaching. Still, there is ample evidence that among their principal writers the demoniacal theory of disease was discarded. The writings of Seneca, Cicero, Lucian, Celsus, Sextus Empiricus, and Lucretius are ample evidence of this. Indeed, in the second century the practice of magic was absolutely forbidden in Rome at the bedside of the sick,‡ a prohibition that was soon withdrawn under the first Christian Emperor. But, in dealing with Roman medicine, it must not be

overlooked that Rome's greatest physician was the bath. These were numerous, well appointed, and the charge—about half a farthing of present money—placed them within the reach of all. It was chiefly by the use of the bath that Rome kept her towns and cities tolerably clear of the ravages of disease—much more so than was done during the Christian ages, when, as we shall see later, filthiness and religious zeal came to be almost inseparable.

Before dealing with Christianity, it may be as well to say a word or two on the claim of Christianity to have originated hospitals. If the claim stood, it would not amount to much, since the important point is not whether refuges were provided for the sick, but whether the knowledge necessary to effect the cure of disease was encouraged under Christian auspices. And, like many other Christian claims, it proves to be suicidal on a slight examination. One may rest assured that, if antiquity were altogether deficient in provisions for the indigent sick, their numbers must have been considerable, since no society could exist in a healthy condition with large numbers of diseased people destitute of the necessary treatment. It might, therefore, be reasonably urged that, if the hospitals were fewer or non-existent, the need for them would hardly have been as great as at a later period. And there would be much truth in this aspect of the matter. The habits of life were so much cleaner and healthier, the knowledge of diseases and their treatment so much better in antiquity than in the Dark Ages, that disease was neither as common nor as widespread, nor as difficult to remove.

But the claim that Christianity originated hospitals is simply false; there were hospitals before Christianity, and there is no indication whatever that the means at hand for combatting disease were less inadequate than at a later period. In Persia hospitals existed before the birth of Christ. In India the Emperor Asoka, 300 B.C., established hospitals for both man and beast. In Mexico "hospitals were established in the principal cities for the cure of the sick, and the permanent refuge of the disabled soldier." In Rome there were hospitals for disabled soldiers, and frequent distribution of medicine among the poor in times of necessity. Finally, the temples of Æsculapius, Serapis, and Hygea, which were scattered throughout the Roman Empire, served a threefold purpose. They were hospitals to which the sick came for relief, colleges to which students came for knowledge, and temples in which people returned thanks for their recovery.\* It was the closing of these temple-hospitals that threw upon the Christian authorities the burden of providing refuges for the sick; hence the use of monasteries for that purpose,† although it may well be questioned whether the dispersal of the ancient medical colleges was atoned for by the institutions Christianity established in their place.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

### Thomas Carlyle.

"The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,  
Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might  
Of darkness and magnificence of night."

—SWINBURNE

At an age when Shelley's work was completed, Carlyle had written but a single original book, and that one of his least important, *The Life of Schiller*. Between the ages of thirty and forty he produced the *Essays* and *Sartor Resartus*. *The French Revolution* was only begun when he was nearing forty. This protracted preparation and late maturity were the prelude to a long-continued career of influence and literary sovereignty. When at length he steadily bent his energies to being "a writer of books," and took a survey of the

\* Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. i., p. 359; vol. viii., p. 232.  
† For general description of medical science in Egypt see Dr. Berdoe's *Origin and Growth of the Healing Art*, ch. on Egypt.  
‡ *Medical Economy during the Middle Ages*, p. 24, G. F. Fort (New York; 1883). See this author also for state of medical science in Rome.

\* For proofs see Rhys Davids' *Buddhism*; Wylie's *Hist. of Hospitals*, pp. 1-5; Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*, ch. 2; Fort's *Medical Economy during Middle Ages*, p. 144; Lecky's *Europ. Morals*, ii., p. 77; Grote's *Hist. of Greece*, i., p. 178; Draper's *Intel. Dev. of Europe*, i., p. 399.

† *Science and Literature in the Middle Ages*, Paul Lacroix, p. 136.

literary world, we know how little he found it to his liking.

Carlyle, like Rousseau and Shelley, was an imaginative exponent of abstract principles. One of his favorite ideas was the danger of shams—that is, of worn-out institutions and doctrines—and of mere blind amiability in human affairs. Another of his ideas was the doctrine embodied in the sounding phrase, "Might is right." These were Carlyle's weapons with which he laid about him among the shams—the deceptive, but enticing, ideals that floated over the world—smashing them unsparringly. Up to the time of his death his direct influence was steadily growing. That which he exercised indirectly was as wide. Many of his disciples were men of great power. Ruskin, at least, was his equal in his command of all the forces of the written word, and more than his equal in intellectuality.

Shakespeare has said that no amount of philosophy will make a stand against the torments of toothache:—

For there was never yet philosopher  
That could endure the toothache patiently,  
However they have writ the style of gods,  
And made a push at chance and sufferance.

Now, metaphorically, Carlyle had toothache or one kind or another all his life, and, in consequence, his philosophy suffered. Striving against current ideas, he himself lived in a balloon. With regard to Ireland, which he actually surveyed with his own eyes, he had no suggestion to make, except the absurd one of organising the population into regiments of diggers. He was no happier in England. In *Shooting Niagara* he was dangerously near intellectual suicide. His practical impotence may possibly be traced to the fact that he had no theoretical or philosophical sympathies with any party. Not—like Burke—a historical Constitutionalist, neither was he a mere Tory, and still less a real Radical.

He had no more vital connection with the politics of his day than if he had been a casual visitor from Mars. He never took out his naturalisation papers. Long as he lived he remained an alien. But, notwithstanding this, Carlyle did something of real importance. He introduced German literature into England. About the year of grace 1820 it was hardly supposed, incredible as it may seem, that Germany had a literature. Schiller was known vaguely; Burger's ballads were talked of; but the mediocre Kotzebue was considered the literary and intellectual representative of a country where Goethe, Lessing, and Richter were at the height of their renown. What Carlyle did in making known the power and beauties of these writers cannot be over-estimated. The Germans are essentially a nation of thinkers, just as the French are a nation of artists, and we English are a nation of amateurs. There was thus something congenial to Carlyle in the German writers, that it is not difficult to understand why one attracted the other.

Under the date of October 28, 1830, Carlyle has this entry in his diary: "Written a strange piece on clothes. Know not what will come of it." Eight years later, after many vicissitudes, much disappointment, the *Sartor Resartus* was published. Ostensibly a review of a book by one Professor Teufelsdröckh, it masks, under an assumed treatise on clothes, the transcendental philosophy of Fichte. In places the work rises to epic heights. With a wealth of singular expressions, of telling epithets, and of strangely coined words, he produces effects and images never before quickened by the hand of so potent a wizard.

*The French Revolution* was published in 1837, and marks an era in Carlyle's life. It shows Carlyle at his strongest, and also at his weakest. Magnificent as are the epithets with which he has filled the book, and for which reason Robespierre will ever be "sea-green" and Mirabeau always "swart, burly-headed," yet this very characteristic has given him an opportunity for unfairly painting the characters of those he dislikes, and adding glory to those he admires. To those who would know all the history of the Great Revolution, Carlyle's history will be insufficient; but to those who would see the actual scenes of that awful upheaval Carlyle's pages will always fascinate. As we read, we are among the crowd who rush "with a sound terrible and absolutely like thunder" from the death-bed of Louis, the "well-beloved"; we see the smoke and hear the rattle of the

"whiff of grapeshot" which heralded the taking of the Bastille; we shudder at "murder with his silent, bloody feet."

Carlyle rejected the claims of Christianity, but his prejudices were always those of a Puritan. Witness his treatment of Voltaire. In dealing with the great Freethinker he is frigidity itself. To him Voltaire was not earnest enough; he was merely "one of the best politicians on record—the adroitest of all literary men." This, be it remembered, was written of one who was a volcano of energy in the cause of liberty and humanity. And, insulting as Carlyle would have thought it, it is with this man that he is best contrasted. Their comparative merits are not unlike those of the seamew and the steamer. The one big and heavy, glowing with glare of furnace, and throbbing with the labor of engines, smoking, steaming, sputtering, cleaving its way through the sea with shock and roll, churning the water in its wake; while above floats the bird, white-winged, a marvel of lightness and swiftness, effortless, with supreme grace, master of the medium through which it moves.

Carlyle uniformly treats iconoclasts with scant respect. He considered Shelley's life "such a ghastly existence," and Heine was but a "blackguard." He is, indeed, surprisingly fair to Burns; but then the author of "Tam o' Shanter" was a brother Scot.

Carlyle took for his text that "all is vanity," and he acted up to it and wrote upon it all his life. "Man, by the nature of him, is a great owl," he once wrote. In another place he calls the public "a gigantic jackass." He was never happier than when administering the rod. But, with all his limitations, he was a great man. He stood like a Colossus peering into the dark night, and he saw all events hurrying past he knew not where.

MIMNERMUS.

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## Religions, Priests, and Gods.

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(Concluded from page 45.)

### THE FAILURE OF PRAYER.

THE difference between the two attitudes as a part of religion and as a part of nature may be seen best in the theory about prayer. The religionist believes that God hears and answers prayer, and he goes on believing that in spite of the fact that there never has been one single authenticated instance where prayer was answered. That does not make any difference; there is all the more merit in believing it if it is not so. The religionist thinks that God answers prayer—that is to say, the infinite wisdom, the supreme, the eternal, the unchangeable, the all-embracing, the all-informing one either forgets us, or, if he remembers, he is not quite sure that it is best for us, or else he is busy and cannot attend to it. And so the religionist has to pray and tell him what is necessary to be done, and the great, the infinite, the unchangeable, the one without parallax or shadow of turning, bends the listening ear, and, hearing the petition, answers it. Could there be anything more repugnant to the sense, the reason, and the intelligence of men? And I say to you that if such a thing was possible as prevailing prayer, such a thing possible as to change the will of the infinite, and I were to pray, my petition would be: "Make these lips dumb, lest, in asking anything, I blaspheme." I had rather trust the infinite wisdom, the over-mastering power, the almighty one, if such there be, than trust the most darling wish of this heart of mine. So then, if we take away this thing of beggary, this prevailing prayer, we have in its stead the consciousness that every one of us is held unchangeably within the purview of the infinite wisdom as a part of the nature of things. The whole, round, journeying world is doing his will. We stand always at the altar of the highest.

### RELIGION A KIND OF MENTAL DISEASE.

Religion has been selfish and narrow and blind, and has belittled God. Moreover, the religion that is taking the place of the old leaves a man free from religions, from priests, and from gods. It sets every human being upright and upon his feet. It does not

postpone the penalties nor the rewards. It keeps the eternal connection between the consequences and the deed as between cause and effect; and this world, here and now, and the next world, when we reach it, is our heaven or our hell, according as we make it. It leaves a man free to follow justice and the light of reason. It gives a man the opportunity to look at things as a rational being. I have sometimes thought that religion was a disease of the mind—a disease that infects generations and races, and will last with more or less virulence and contagious power sometimes for a thousand years, and even in its best form never escapes from the fact of being a disease—a mental disease. I cannot understand many things on any other hypothesis. I cannot understand how our neighbors can go along believing that we will all go to hell pretty soon, and yet be contented and happy and treat us generously and kindly.

## SPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

I think I have referred once before to a distinguished man who was a deacon in the first church of which I had the honor of being pastor. The man, the most religious of anyone in that part of the State of Illinois, and in some respects the most heartless, a banker, a plotter, a man who never forgave and never forgot an enemy, and yet a man who never missed a prayer-meeting and went to church every time the bell rang. When a new railroad had been finished out of St. Louis to some town in the State, and the initial trip was being made by distinguished citizens and invited guests, this deacon was one of the party. The train went out safely over the new road, and, while out, a sudden and protracted shower had fallen and weakened a bridge over a ravine. On the way back, with nine or ten coaches crowded, this gentleman of whom I speak was in one of the forward coaches, and a few minutes before they reached that bridge, obeying some impulse, he got up from his seat and went back through the train to the last car but one, and found someone he wanted to see, and was conversing with him. Then the train reached the bridge, and all but two coaches went into the ravine; and the coach in which this man had taken his seat came to the edge of the ravine and hung partly over it. There was something like a hundred people killed—I do not remember the number—but over and over again, years after it occurred, that same deacon would get up in church meetings and relate that incident, and affirm that it was a special act of a merciful God sending him back to that coach to preserve his life. There is no question that the man was sincere, but could any but a diseased mind make a conclusion like that? Could anything under the hospitable and kindly skies, but religion, make a man selfish enough, and fill him with egotism so full, that he could stand on the edge of an abyss in which a hundred or more people were killed or mangled and dying, and believe that the infinite God, leaning out of heaven, had sent him back to save his life alone? He would relate this as abounding evidence of the infinite loveliness of Almighty God. At the same time there were scores and hundreds of people in that county who knew that man, and had they been sent through the cars to save one man, that man would have been the last one they would have chosen. If God Almighty had the providence religion has claimed for him, then why did he not enter the cab of that engine and send the whole train back? No one but a mind diseased could believe these things.

## "QUO VADIS" AND "SAPHO."

The new religion leaves a man free to think that the infinite wisdom is at least worthy of homage and respect. Just now, in more languages than one, the world is reading *Quo Vadis*, and the whole American Christendom is crying out against the book *Sapho*. I will undertake to select from the first book passages that, for suggestiveness and sensuality, cannot be matched or equalled by anything in Daudet's *Sapho*; and yet the Christian seems not to have discovered or suspected it, and joins the hue and cry against the other book. Religion does not make intelligent discernment, nor does it leave the man free to judge in accordance with rational standards. In that book, *Quo Vadis*, is an illustration of the same thing. Possibly everybody has read it, and will understand

the reference without the details. When the Christians of Rome were suffering persecution by Nero, you will remember the last and most dramatic spectacle is reserved for the circus on a certain night. Even many nearest to Nero were not informed as to what the wonderful spectacle would be, but all knew it was something to bring deep agony upon Vinicius, who was one of the tribunes of Rome.

And so it developed that, when one of the gates opened upon the arena, the barbarian giant Ursus comes upon the sands, huge and patient and stolid and mighty, beyond the prowess of any man in the kingdom of Rome; but he is alone. Up to this moment he has been the devoted and loyal and loving servant of Lygia, the daughter of a barbarian king. He was with her in the house of the rich man, a hostage, a slave. He was with her when arrested and carried away to prison. He was with her when she was a guest at one of the voluptuous feasts of Nero. He was with her when with the Christians hiding in cemeteries. When she was a babe he carried her in his arms. A little after the giant enters the arena another gate opens through which there rushes a wild bull, and the maiden Lygia, naked and unconscious, lashed to the animal's back. Then that strange thing happens. The giant, seeing Lygia upon the back of the infuriated beast, rushes upon the animal and seizes it by the horns and stops it.

## URSUS, NOT CHRIST, SAVED LYGIA.

Then begins that monstrous struggle between the giant and the bull. The whole assembled Rome holds its breath. They look upon the giant with his hands upon the horns of the bull, the body of the beast shrunken, contracted like a gigantic ball. The man's feet sank in the sand to his ankles, his back bent like a drawn bow, his head drawn down between his shoulders; on his arms the muscles came out so that the skin almost burst from their pressure. The man and the beast remained so still that the spectators thought themselves looking at a picture showing a deed of Hercules or Theseus. Then Ursus gathers his strength for the one final, supreme effort. It is plain to all that the contest cannot last long; then they who are watching see the bull's head begin to turn, and his tongue, covered with froth, hang from his mouth; still the head turns more and more, and at last those sitting near hear the bones crack, and the bull falls upon the sand, his neck broken. Then the giant unbinds the maiden, and, moving about the amphitheatre, asks for her liberty. Vinicius, the tribune of the people, throws his tunic over the naked body of the maiden lying in the giant's arms. Then the enthusiasm passed everything seen in a circus before; mighty and vehement were the demands calling for the liberation of the maiden and the giant, and it is granted. Now, Vinicius has become a Christian; that is to say, he is no longer capable of looking at things from a rational standpoint, and he says then and afterwards that a miracle was wrought: it was Christ that saved Lygia. But I stand here to say that it was Ursus, the giant, that saved Lygia. There is no necessity in becoming a simpleton or a fool in order to be religious. It is no disparagement to God nor to Christ to be honest.

The world will be more religious when it has less religion and fewer religions. It will be a better place to live in when God is no longer a supernatural supernumerary, when he is one with us, and we with him, and both with the all. To join with the everlasting forces, to seek justice, and to follow reason, and trust the outcome of it all, is the supreme duty of man.

(DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

## The Curate.

With collar limp and wanton, with soiled and smudgy cuff,  
Meek-eyed, loose-lipped, and lanky, in pictures he's a Muff;  
With foolish speech and halting, girl's gait and idiot's frown,  
In comedy—what would you?—he's modern humor's Clown.

He's a booby, he's a noodle, he's a simpleton and ninny;  
Silly little curate, you are only food for fun!  
Was there ever such a nobby? Is there fool in such a body?  
Stupid little curate, with your stammer and your bun.

—*Harold Begbie, in the "Pall Mall Magazine."*

## Acid Drops.

PRAYER did not save the life of the late Bishop of London. We might even argue that it killed him. Special prayers were requested for him on Sunday, January 13, and were offered up in many Church of England and Nonconformist places of worship. Dr. Parker, in particular, wrestled with the Lord most energetically on behalf of "the great good Bishop." And what followed? Why, the very next morning Dr. Creighton died. We do not say that there was any connection whatever between his death and the prayers for his recovery. But according to the usual Christian method of reasoning there must have been. Had the Bishop of London recovered, they would have said that it was owing to prayer. Well, he died, and his death should be ascribed to the same cause—unless the ground of reasoning is to be changed altogether.

The present whereabouts of the late Bishop of London is not exactly a pleasant question. His friends and admirers assume with the greatest complacency that he is happy in heaven. According to the New Testament, however, he is more probably ascertaining by personal experience whether—as the late Professor St. George Mivart asserted—it is possible to be happy in hell. Jesus Christ did not say that a rich man could not go to heaven; but he said that it was just as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Now, if we pursue the metaphor, we should say that the Bishop of London is a good-sized camel, and that £10,000 a year should provide a very well-developed hump. We think it extremely unlikely, therefore, that Dr. Creighton has got through. He was a pushing man, but he can hardly have pushed through the eye of that needle.

Why does a journal like the *Daily News* continue playing to the religious gallery? When the French ship, the *Russie*, was driven on the rocks, it was found impossible to rescue any of her passengers or crew until the wind "dropped" and allowed the lifeboats to approach the fated vessel. Our contemporary refers to this as "a providential change of weather." If this means anything at all—which is rather doubtful—it can only mean that "Providence" kept the two hundred men and women on board the *Russie* in constant sight of death for nearly five days. Gallant Frenchmen were trying to save them, at the risk of their own lives; but "Providence" kept up the tragical pantomime until it got tired of the performance. And this is piety!

Many people were frozen to death during the recent cold snap in Paris. Far greater ravage was wrought by the intense cold in Russia. In America the weather has been too mild, and the Influenza Fiend has reaped a rich harvest of victims. The weather is all right in the main on this planet, but "Providence" distributes it rather badly.

A ghost has been haunting the lonely Gala Hill district of Dundee, but the other night a couple of lads blazed away at him with a brace of pistols, and he made off in hot haste—whether to heaven, hell, purgatory, or his own bed, is not stated.

Whether any revision will be made of the Church hymn-book, *Ancient and Modern*, remains to be seen. That an overhauling is necessary was made quite clear at a recent meeting in London of the Churchmen's Union. The Rev. W. Manning, who was one of the speakers, said the hymns used in the services of the Church of England were very often the embodiment of neurotic, sickly sentimentality and melancholic, monastical doctrine. The *Hymns Ancient and Modern* were as bad offenders as any, although they had, largely through the medium of the Oxford Movement, gained some considerable amount of prestige. For example, in No. 97 of that collection one was directed to observe the moral qualities of the tree upon which the Savior died. After remarking that it alone was "counted worthy," the hymn invoked the cross as being made of "sweetest wood and sweetest iron." Another directed the Christian to smite the powers of evil by the powers of the cross and the virtue of the Lenten fast. In hymn 223, again, the angels were invoked by Protestants, who, he thought, objected to the invocation of saints.

Other hymns, said the Rev. W. Manning, certainly inculcated non-Protestant doctrines, and some directly taught the old blood theology, as, for instance, one praising the "Fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins"; another where the blood of Christ was mentioned as "falling upon us drop by drop"; and a third where the Christian was asked, in imagination, to "See how the nails those hands and feet do rend, See down his neck and face the precious blood descend." Other hymns, such as 552 and 557, taught the doctrine of transubstantiation. He thought these errors were very largely due to the influence of Monasticism, which had persisted down to the present day, many of the hymns being translated from the old Monastic Latin. Clergymen often

bewailed the fact that their congregations consisted too largely of neurotic girls and ecclesiastical old ladies. He was bound to say that the reason many intelligent Christian men did not attend church so often was that they objected, and rightly too, to the sensuous, meretricious tone and sickly sentimentality of a large proportion of the hymns.

A *Daily Mail* writer points out how hymns are often made ridiculous by awkward breaks in the singing. Here is a sample:—

My poor pol, my poor pol,  
My poor polluted heart.

Here is another:—

And take thy pil, and take thy pil,  
And take thy pilgrim home.

Our contemporary might have given some racier illustrations. Here is one:—

Lord send down Sal, Lord send down Sal,  
Lord send down Salvation from above.

But this one takes the cake:—

Oh for a man, oh for a man,  
Oh for a mansion in the skies.

"Lo, He comes in clouds descending" is said to have been Queen Victoria's favorite hymn. The Prince of Wales is said to prefer "Rock of Ages." Is that because it affords "hiding" room?

The *New York Herald*, in its special twentieth century number, gives the portrait of a chubby little child, by name Charlotte Ingersoll Sparks, and of her parents—a good-looking young couple. Then follows a column of descriptive matter, with the following headlines, which are more amusing than accurate, being about as near the mark, we suppose, as a New York sub-editor of nothingarian persuasion could arrive:—

### HIS BABY GIRL TO BE AGNOSTIC.

Charles S. Sparks Purposes to Teach his Child to Pity Christians  
WILL LEARN NO PRAYERS.

Little One will be Taught that the Christian Religion is False  
and Gloomy.

TO BE GUIDED BY REASON.

Not to Associate with Children who Sing Religious Songs  
Otherwise than in Ridicule.

From the letterpress we learn that Charlotte Ingersoll Sparks is the infant daughter of Charles S. Sparks, a well-known Cincinnati attorney and an ardent follower of the late Colonel Ingersoll. He says that he and his wife have decided that their child shall be taught the plain truth, however objectionable it may be to the clergy. "Our child shall not be taught to believe in that which there is absolutely no evidence to substantiate, but shall be reared in the light of reason. She shall not be taught the 'Lord's Prayer.' It is suggestive of death, and therefore has a tendency to produce melancholy. It proclaims temptations, reminds one of evil and kingly power, and is altogether useless and harmful to the innocent mind. Trials, troubles, and responsibilities will come soon enough; therefore we have determined not to burden our child with them so long as they may be avoided..... Her mind shall ever be a receptacle for the truth, and not a waste-basket for superstition. She will be taught honor, virtue, and self-esteem, and to do all the good she may."

*Apropos* of the Duke of Norfolk's indiscreet address to the Pope, attention has been directed to the state of things which prevailed when Papal rule was in force in Rome. Macaulay visited Rome in 1838. This is what he says: "Every office of importance—diplomatic, financial, and judicial—is held by the clergy. A prelate, armed with most formidable powers, superintends the police of the streets.....Corruption above, liars and cheats below—that is the Papal administration. The States of the Pope are, I suppose, the worst governed in the civilised world....." (*Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, Longmans, Green & Co., 1889, pp. 361-2).

Other writers have described the wretched condition of the Pope's subjects. Cardinal Newman, in a sermon on "The Pope and the Revolution" (1866), said: "Not that I would deny that there are sincere Catholics so dissatisfied with things as they were in Italy, as they are in Rome, that they are brought to think that no social change can be made for the worse" (p. 30). Cardinal Manning would have deluged Europe with blood in order to regain the temporal sovereignty of the Pope! Papal misrule had been the order of the day for many a long, dreary year, so that in 1870 government by clerics was put an end to, once for all. In that memorable year the public votes of the Pope's own children were taken as to whether they would be ruled by Pope or by King. The following was the result of the *plébiscite*:—

Votes given.	In Rome.	At Umbria.	In the Marshes.
For the King ...	40,785	97,075	133,783
For the Pope ...	46	380	1,212

The vote in Osti was unanimous for the King.

"Playing this hole prohibited on Sundays." This, at the first glance, is a rather cryptic announcement. But it is all explained in the *New York Herald*. It seems that at New Haven a controversy has raged over Sunday golf between the New Haven County Club and the Whitneyville Congregational Church. As the result of a conference, an entirely new lay out of teeing grounds and greens will be made. Some bad bunkers—observe the selection of the bad ones—will be sacrificed to the Sunday question, and hereafter the players will be out of hearing of the worshippers. Hence the posting up of the above notice.

Canon Gore has been raising in Westminster Abbey the old cry of "spiritual destitution." What does he mean? Apparently he wants more churches built. But what is the use when so many are now half-empty? They are, he suggests, inconveniently situated. Very well, the obvious plan is to pull them down, sell the sites, and build churches with the proceeds where they are thought to be really wanted. That would be the sensible course to pursue, but this wail about "spiritual destitution" and demand for new churches is not a little sickening in view of the beggarly array of empty pews in so many existing conventicles.

A man, eighty-six years old, cut his throat at Homerton the other day as a result of religious mania. It was said that he read the Bible from morning until night. No wonder he made away with himself. A little Freethought literature might have kept him sane.

"J. B.," in the *Christian World*, writes about the "hopeless melancholy" of unbelief. As if happiness consisted in accepting the bundle of rotten dogmas and creeds yclept Christianity. If human happiness really depended upon that sort of belief, it would be, indeed, a sorry look-out for mankind. These Christians, in their self-complacent way, assume too much. They pretend that all who have discarded their pet notions must of necessity become victims of unutterable despair. This is a very silly and conceited notion. Freethinkers, as a matter of fact, rejoice that they have, once and for all, thrown off the thralldom of Christian superstition; and they feel better and happier for the riddance. Why should a man be "melancholy" because he has recovered from a malignant fever? These tales about depressed and unhappy unbelievers are pure inventions, which are simply kept alive to bolster up a decaying faith.

In Brooklyn, New York, a building once used as a church is now an auction room. In Hamilton Avenue a building, once the home of St. Bernard's Catholic Church, is now used as a concert and beer hall. Over the door is a beer keg of glass bull's eyes in various colors, which at night is illuminated by electric lights within, and in front is a bulletin board on which posters are displayed announcing for every evening a free show somewhat below the grand opera standard.

At a London church, where performances of oratorios are sometimes given by the choir, the congregation has been complaining that the church is on those occasions unbearably cold. Last Sunday the vicar announced: "On Tuesday next Spohr's 'Last Judgment' will be given in this church. The building will be specially heated for the occasion."

Wu Ting-Fang, Chinese minister, in reply to the inquiry, What will be the fate of Confucianism in the twentieth century? says: "My opinion is that Confucianism will not only hold its own ground, but spread to foreign lands, when its doctrines become more understood and better appreciated. But its spread will not be accomplished with flourishes of trumpets. It simply lays open its treasures and leaves it entirely to Truthseekers to accept or reject them. The world is full of Agnostics and Freethinkers to-day, especially among men of science. In their honest search after truth they have unconsciously entered the domain which Confucianism has marked out for its own. I have no doubt that, when they become better acquainted with Confucianism and its teachings, they will concede to it all the credit that is its due, and render honor to the Chinese sage who has shown them the way."

The parsonic agency which calls itself the "Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association" has issued a report in which it details its triumphs. A seven-day drink licence has been refused to the Crystal Palace, the Glasgow Corporation have refused to open the People's Palace on Sundays, the second reading of the Monmouthshire Sunday Closing Bill has been carried. At Barking and Ilford the local authorities have refused to sanction Sunday bands. These are great achievements. Needless to say, funds are invited for the attainment of other triumphs of a similar kind.

It is the custom in Scottish churches, where the prayers are always extempore, to include a petition for the Government while Parliament is assembled. A very Conservative

minister had two forms, which he invariably used according to which party was in power. If the Conservatives were in, he would say: "Bless our Queen's counsellors, and give her senators Thy wisdom." If the Liberals were in power, the form was: "Set wise and faithful men around the throne." This is quite the way in which one would address a wooden idol.

It often happens that people who sing jubilantly at church, "We shall know each other there," are exactly the people who refuse to know each other here.

Rev. Newton Ebenezer Howe, vicar of Swindon, has been sentenced at the Wilts Assizes to twelve months' imprisonment for obtaining £10 by false pretences. Having regard to the fact that the vicar had some time ago pleaded guilty to improper behaviour towards one of his Sunday-school scholars—for which he was suspended for three years—Mr. Justice Day said he was much shocked, and feared he could not have much respect for decisions of the Ecclesiastical Courts which allowed such a man to resume the charge of a parish after three years' suspension. Mr. Justice Day, in sentencing the vicar, said it would be to the benefit of the public at large, his diocese, and his benefice to be rid of his services.

Churches have an easy conscience when cash is knocking about. The town of Verona, in Pennsylvania, was stirred to its depths by the discovery of two oil-wells in the cemetery of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church. There was a great outcry at first against the pounding of the drill in the churchyard. But, when there was an offer to pay off the church debt, the bones of the departed and the sacredness of the spot went down in value to zero.

A minister was succeeded in his charge by his son, who, not having the energy or ability to write his own sermons, contented himself with preaching his father's. He declaimed these with much acceptance and effect, until one day, waxing very warm over an exhortation to repentance, he gave himself away by saying: "Forty years long have I labored amongst you, and to how little purpose."

Here is an advertisement from the *Times*:—"ADVOWSON FOR SALE.—Desirable living, within 50 miles of London. Average income £480. Yachting centre. Prospect of early possession. For particulars, apply, etc." This is simply delightful. What a flood of light it throws upon the clerical profession! Not a word is said about the *work* in that part of the Lord's vineyard; not a word about the number of *souls* to be saved. The advantages that are offered are all worldly. The living is within easy reach of London—when a night in town is wanted. There is yachting in the summer to make life tolerable. Finally there is an income of nearly £10 a week to soothe the poor parson as he plods through this miserable vale of tears. That, and the yachting, and the trips to London, ought at least to keep him from dying of melancholy.

Some readers will not understand that "Prospect of early possession" in this delectable advertisement. Church livings must not be sold; that is called simony, and is reckoned an awful sin—something like the sin against the Holy Ghost. But the Devil is dodged, and God Almighty too, by buying the *advowson*; that is not the living itself, but the right of putting in the next incumbent. "Prospect of early possession" means, therefore, that the *present* incumbent must soon die or retire on account of old age or disease; and that the *future* incumbent, who arranges for a friend or a patron to buy the *advowson* for him, will not have to wait long for a dividend on the investment.

We have had *The Master Christian*; we are now to have *The Master Sinner*. It is dedicated "to those inspired persons who quarrel amongst themselves whilst attempting to instruct the world by means of the religious novel."

The *Church Times* solemnly comments on a marriage at a Scottish Presbyterian church of a gentleman who has divorced his wife. The *C. T.* congratulates the parties that "they recognised the pain which would have been caused had any attempt been made to have the ceremony performed in an English church. The good sense which prompted the avoidance of such a scandal calls for recognition, and we trust that other parties who have been the subjects of proceedings in the Divorce Court will follow so good a lead, should occasion arise, and recognise that the English Church has its Canons, which the State is powerless to over-ride." If the "parties" had had any "good sense" at all, they would not have gone to any church whatsoever, but would have contented themselves with a Registrar's Office.

Precise instructions have been forwarded by the Holy Synod to every Russian bishop for securing full effect to

Tolstoi's excommunication. Among other directions, it is ordained that, in case of death, his body is to be "denied interment in consecrated ground, no priest may officiate at his obsequies, and requiem masses for the repose of his soul are forbidden." A lot Tolstoi will care!

That great missionary, the Rev. John McNeill, who appears to shine chiefly as an ignorant buffoon, has gone out of his way to talk about Freethinkers. In a recent sermon he said: "I would often rather have the careless men who never darken a church door, who say, 'I don't agree with you.' 'Well, with whom do you agree?' 'I would have you know I am a Freethinker!' 'Oh, glad to meet you. Freethinking—that is nice. 'I thought on my ways'—a Freethinker! When I talk to a man like that, instead of 'freethinking' meaning 'thinking freely,' it means 'free from thinking'." Very smart, is it not?

David Allport, of Bristol, has been charged with atrocious cruelty to his children. If half the accusations against him are proved, he deserves the severest punishment the law will allow. Apart from the charge now brought against him, he seems to be a hypocritical religious impostor. In 1888 he was in the Theological Training College at Hanley, and was photographed in his cassock, cross, and girdle. He had represented himself as the Rev. David Allport. There was no evidence of ordination; but Allport had been licensed by the Bishop of Lichfield, and had done duty as missionary, and attracted much attention by his preaching. He took cottage services at Handford, Stafford.

The Duke of York has contradicted the story told about him and St. Albans Church. We said at the time we didn't believe it. York says there isn't a word of truth in it.

Lynchings are becoming common in America. The latest is a very gruesome affair. Fred Alexander, a negro, at Leavensworth, Kansas, charged with an *attempted* assault on a white woman, and *suspected* of the murder of a white girl in November last, was taken out of the gaol in the presence of 5,000 free American citizens, and roasted to death, in spite of his protestations of innocence. His execution being finished, he now awaits his trial—which is presumably postponed till the Day of Judgment.

White men commit assaults on women in America as in other Christian civilisations. But we never read of their being lynched. In their case the law is allowed to take its course, and is held to be sufficient. But when a black man commits such a crime, or is only accused of it, the hand of justice is too slow to be allowed to deal with the matter. Lynching is so much quicker—and satisfactory. The victim may be innocent, but he must take his chance of that. The main thing is that the white Christian's feelings should be adequately satisfied. That is like charity—it covers a multitude of sins.

According to a current newspaper story, an East London "copper" found a man walking the street in the early morning clad only in a shirt. When the constable arrested him, the man in the shirt said: "You can't arrest me; I'm a somnambulist." "I don't care what religion you are," the officer replied; "you can't be allowed to walk the streets in this condition."

The venerable Miss M Betham-Edwards has been talking again to a newspaper interviewer. She still keeps her old hatred of the clergy. In her young days the country clergy detested education, and were far worse tyrants than they are even now. "My experience of the country clergy in those days," the lady says, "gave me that anti-clerical bias which has never left me." She once heard a Church clergyman declare that "the doors of the Methodist chapel were the gates of hell." Another time she heard a clergyman, addressing a gathering of agricultural laborers, say to them: "My friends, remember that your portion is not in this world, but you will get it in the next."

Miss Betham-Edwards says that the Suffolk people amongst whom she lived had very hazy ideas of religion, and were all in a muddle about the mysteries of a future life. Sometimes they expressed their views in a most familiar fashion. One old farmer put his hay out on the hedge, after a very wet season, with the remark that "God Almighty himself will be ashamed of it." Surely this was a remarkably neat and cautious bit of "blasphemy."

More children's piety. Mr. E. V. Lucas tells a story of a little girl who asked her mother what God has for dinner, and, on being told that God has no dinner, rejoined: "Oh, I suppose he has an egg with his tea."

Rev. G. W. Belsey is a Congregational minister, residing in Rosaling-street, Toledo, Ohio, U.S.A. His mother, an aged, infirm widow, lives in a workhouse under the charge

of the Medway Board of Guardians, England. Being requested to look after his poor old mother, the reverend gentleman blandly replies that he is now an American citizen, and is under no legal responsibility to do anything of the kind. "Feed my sheep," said Jesus. "Oh," says Preacher Belsey, "it's only mother."

Charles Harper has been fined £20 and costs for professing to tell fortunes by palmistry at an Islington waxwork show. This gentleman may be clever, but he is not quite clever enough. If he wants to get a living in that way, he should join the Roman Catholic Church, become a priest, and take money to pray dead people out of purgatory. This is just as great humbug as palmistry, but it is safe and respectable.

The Free Church Simultaneous Mission opened on Monday with an all-day prayer meeting at the Queen's Hall. From morn till night God Almighty's ears were battered with Non-conformist petitions. At seven o'clock in the evening the petitioners got tired of it themselves, and started an ordinary public meeting under the chairmanship of Lord Kinnaird, who evidently thought that a little comicality would be a great relief. He told a story of the late Mr. Moody, who went once into a cathedral and asked the verger if there had been any conversions lately. "Oh," said the verger, "you're makin' a mistake. This ain't a Methodist chapel; this is a cathedral."

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes spoke at this meeting. This gentleman said that everyone should do what he could in the good work of salvation. "God had already," he observed, "done great things with the jawbone of an ass, and he might again." Whereat there was much laughter—no doubt more or less sympathetic.

Mr. Hughes made a very striking admission. "The great majority of the people of London," he said, "knew nothing about Christianity, and three million never entered a place of worship." No wonder the Free Churches think it is time to wake up—ay, and to wake up the Lord too.

The most comical incident of the all-day prayer meeting at the Queen's Hall was this. While the Free Church ladies and gentlemen were wrestling with the Lord, thieves got into the anterooms and wrestled still more effectually with overcoats, wraps, ladies' bags, and purses. The religious folk were having a love-feast, and the light-fingered folk were having a beanfeast. And the Lord, of course, was present at both parties.

Mr. Frank T. Bullen, who knows the sea well, has been talking about it in the *Young Man*. One of his observations betrays the thoughtless Christian. "It is a very remarkable thing," he says, "that all good literature about the sea is strongly imbued with religion. It seems impossible for a man to be a scoffer and write feelingly about the sea." Indeed! Why, there are three poets during the last hundred years who have written supremely well about the sea, and all of them have been Freethinkers. Their names are Byron, Shelley, and Swinburne. We fancy that Mr. Bullen had better try again. This particular hit is extremely unlucky.

Few people have wider opportunities of studying human frailty in the matter of appetite than a bishop's butler. "Is your party to-day Low or High, my lord?" inquired a stately menial of one of the occupants of the Bench. "Why do you want to know, Gilkes?" inquired the bishop in astonishment. "Because High drinks and Low eats, m' lord."

## Shilling Week.

### Second List.

Mrs. Beard, 5s.; W. Rowland, 2s. 6d.; C. R. Vincent, 1s.; W. B., 3s.; S. Leeson, per F. J. Gould, 10s.; A. E. Window, 2s.; W. Waid, 5s.; D. Gillespie, 5s.; P. Fitzpatrick, 1s.; J. Smith, 1s.; W. Bowie, 1s.; H. Bennett, 1s.; S. M. Peacock, 1s.; T. Wigham, 1s.; J. and E. Fothergill, 2s. 6d.; H. Dawson, 1s.; W. Stewart, 1s.; W. Pugh, 2s.; W. Milroy, 2s. 6d.; J. Milroy, 2s. 6d.; C. Heaton, 2s.; W. H. West, 2s.; C. A. W., 2s.; T. M. M., 2s.; Mr. Ross and Family, 4s.; J. B., 1s.; H. Tongue, 1s.; M. Dye, 1s.; Dundonian, 5s.; W. and E. O., 2s. 6d.; W. H. Harris, 2s. 6d.; Perthshire, 2s.; H. Bishop, 1s.; R. Gloag, 2s. 6d.; W. P. Murray, 2s.; W. J. Bayley, 2s.; G. P. Whaley, 3s.; A. W. Stavers, 3s. 6d.; G. D. Wellingham, 2s. 6d.; F. Simmans, 2s.; Major Maxwell Reeve, 5s.; R. Richards, 2s. 6d.; J. W. P., 1s.; Mrs. Horne, 2s.; J. Bevins, 5s.; C. E. Hall, 5s.; J. Unsworth, 2s. 6d.; W. A. Argall, 2s.; W. H. Murton, 1s.

CORRECTIONS.—J. Fish, 5s. (in previous list) should have been—J. Fish, 2s. 6d.; T. Challoner, 2s. 6d. W. Rowland 2s. (last list) should have been 2s. 6d.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, January 27, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "The End of 'God Save the Queen.'"

**To Correspondents.**

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS—January 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.

D. W.—We did not deny the importance of the Drink Question. What we said was that it was *too* important to be dealt with in this column—not in the *journal*. We have no space to spare for mere lamentations over drunkenness. All sensible people are agreed in deploring its evils. The only question to be discussed is the remedy. We will gladly find space for a good article or letter on practical lines.

UNKNOWN.—Yes, we have seen that description of Spiritualism, but it is not very polite.

D. GILLESPIE, subscribing to Shilling Week, writes: "Allow me to congratulate you on the conduct and contents of your paper. It has a manly ring about it, which is in refreshing contrast to the weak and vapid stuff one has been accustomed to in Christian periodicals."

R. CHAPMAN.—See "Sugar Plums" and acknowledgments in list. The other matter is having attention.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—G. J. Warren, £1 (promise redeemed).

H. TONGE.—The names are much alike and when the writing is not too distinct a mistake is easy. It is curious, by the way, what trouble correspondents sometimes take to render their signatures illegible. Sometimes every word is perfectly clear until you come to the writer's name, and then you are confronted with a puzzle. Thanks for your good wishes. We are pleased to hear from one who has been so long a Freethinker.

M. DYE.—Glad to have your good opinion.

DUNDONIAN.—May your good wishes be realised! It is pleasant to know that the *Bible Handbook* has given you "lots of help in answering Christian friends," and that they "simply cannot get round it."

E. O.—No doubt most of our readers, like yourself, have "many ways" for their money. But most of them, like yourself, could spare something for the "good old cause," and if they all did so it would be a great help to our propaganda.

AGNOSTIC.—Why not disclose your identity? It is a poor cause that has to be fought for behind masks?

INGERSOLLIAN.—Your suggestion shall be considered. Some of Ingersoll's addresses were published by others in this country, and we were reluctant to interfere with their precedence.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings. We are sorry to see the Bishop of Coventry—the "blackguard bishop"—hoisted into the chairmanship of the Birmingham School Board. As he was defeated at the poll, it is to be concluded that the electors did not want him. He owes his present position to the trickery of the Church party, who have grossly insulted the electorate. We hope the honest members of the Board will give this bastard chairman all the trouble they can—of course, in a legitimate manner.

H. R. M. WRIGHT.—We are sorry to say that Mr. Foote is not yet "quite well again." A good part of the lecture you missed on Sunday, Jan. 13, will appear in the *Freethinker* shortly. Mr. Foote is going to write at some length on the volume of *Shakespeare Sermons* just published. These discourses were delivered at Stratford-on-Avon by Church clergymen, including Dr. Stubbs and Dean Farrar; and they are—well, you will see when they are reviewed.

W. H. HARRIS, a veteran Freethinker, who fought for the cause as far back as the days of Charles Southwell, subscribes to the *Shilling Week*, and writes: "Your position as President of the Secular Society is not an enviable one; but I have noticed with infinite pleasure that when you have had to face the most formidable of your opponents you have invariably displayed a magnificent fearlessness." There is no compliment that we could more wish to be true.

D. FRANKEL.—We are obliged to you for sending us the marked copy of the *Christian*. Some paragraphs on the subject will appear in our next issue.

JOHN PROCTOR.—Miss Vance has shown us your letter. We are pleased to see that you relished our article on "Christian Beasts in China." You rather mistake what we have said on the other matter. We have drawn attention again and again to the fact that the fighting on both sides in South Africa is done by Christians. The political questions that lie behind are, of course, not for this column.

H. KELLY.—Thanks for your letter. It shall be laid before the Executive. There certainly ought to be a good Branch at Nottingham.

W. A. ARGALL.—Glad to have your letter. It would be a capital thing to wake Cornwall up with some Freethought lectures. Kindly convey our compliments to Mr. Vincent, the Truro newsagent, who has the courage to place, and keep, the *Freethinker* on his counter.

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Leeds Daily News—The Challenger (Los Angeles)—Freidenker—Southport Guardian—Lucifer—Democracy—Freethought Magazine (Chicago)—Secular Thought (Toronto)—Liberator (Melbourne)—Crescent—Toronto Globe—Two Worlds—Blue Grass Blade—Edinburgh Evening News.

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.**

IN reply to many inquiries that have reached me, I am sorry to say that my cold and cough have not yet left me. Work and worry together had brought me to a somewhat "run down" condition before I caught that cold at Birmingham. I had been troubled with sleeplessness at night—a most unusual thing with me in my own home, though I had occasionally experienced it when travelling. This was a sign that I wanted rest and change; but I was not able to heed the sign except theoretically. The only medicine that ever does me any real good is sea air. When I sniff it I feel renewed, and could almost go buccaneering. And for the sake of my throat and chest I must breathe it if I can.

I have got through my ordinary work, but the extra work has to wait until I can attack it, which I have no doubt I shall do presently. Meanwhile I wish to say that I am disappointed at the result of my appeal for the second "Shilling Week." Too many Freethinkers have forgotten to send even a trifle, which in most cases they could spare easily, or at least without inconvenience. Part of January still remains, however; and as the "Shilling Week" has again become "Shilling Month," I once more invite my readers to respond before it is too late.

G. W. FOOTE.

**Sugar Plums.**

THERE was a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic." A French visitor in the meeting thanked "the orator" for his address, and said it was all "just the truth" as far as France was concerned.

Mr. Foote lectures at the Athenæum Hall again this evening, taking for his subject "The End of 'God Save the Queen.'"

This address of Mr. Foote's will differ very considerably from that of the mob of men of God who will be "improving the occasion" at the same time. For this reason, perhaps, if for no other, it might be well for Freethinkers to induce some of their more orthodox friends to come along to the Athenæum Hall and hear "what the Atheist has to say."

Mr. Charles Watts lectured twice last Sunday in Sheffield to good and exceedingly appreciative audiences. Friends were present from most of the surrounding districts. After the lecture a few questions were asked, but no opposition was offered. Mr. Watts was in his best form. There was a good sale of literature, every copy of the *Freethinker* on hand was sold, and there was a brisk demand for Mr. Watts's new pamphlet, *Is Spiritualism a Delusion?*

To-day, Sunday, January 27, Mr. Watts lectures morning and evening in Leicester. In the forenoon his subject will be "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" by the special request of the Leicester friends, as the local Spiritualists are numerous. An animating discussion is expected.

Mr. Cohen lectured to good audiences on Sunday at Manchester. On Monday evening he wound up the course of free lectures in the Temperance Hall, Blackfriars-road. There was only a small attendance. That course has been far and away the least successful of the recent special efforts in London.

There are still some copies of the *Secular Almanack* left, and we should like to see them all cleared off the Freethought Publishing Company's shelves. This publication is well worth—more than worth—the threepence it costs. All the work on it is done gratuitously, and all the profit arising from the sale accrues to the National Secular Society.

"Charles Bradlaugh" was the title of a recent sermon by the Rev. R. A. Armstrong in the Unitarian church, Portland-street, Southport. The reverend gentleman described Bradlaugh as "a typical iconoclast of the nobler type." He suggested that the great "infidel" had already heard the "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," in heaven; which is perhaps flattering, if rather speculative. On the whole, he thought Bradlaugh would be honored in the twentieth century for his "splendid advocacy of political and social justice." On the other side, there was "nothing in his account of the universe to satisfy the religious element in man"—which Unitarian and all other ministers are occupied in satisfying. Mr. Armstrong bears witness to Bradlaugh's "perfect and generous courtesy in debate." He also admits that "Atheism did not mean with Bradlaugh the actual denial of God," his position being that "we cannot know anything about God, whether he exists or not." There are Agnostics who would do well to remember this.

The following "warm" extract is from the *Edinburgh Evening News* of January 15: "Let us see what the Higher Critics have to say about the historical books of the Old Testament. The old view was intelligible. According to it, God kept the writers from error in committing to writing the history of Israel. The new view is that the historical books are quite unreliable as history. The Higher Critics admit the unreliability as history of The Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The books of Chronicles are admitted to have been written for the purpose of glorifying the priestly power, and have no authority as history. The book of Job is not now treated as a historical product; the Song of Solomon is a love story; the Psalms of David were not composed by David. Daniel meets with harsh treatment. The book is not the work of a prophet of the Babylonian captivity; indeed, the existence of Daniel is disputed. The story of Daniel in the lions' den is now on a level with Jack and the Beanstalk and similar legends of the nursery. This, and much in the same strain, used to be said by Tom Paine and Charles Bradlaugh. It is surely astounding to have such theories gravely set forth by distinguished teachers in the Christian Church. If Paine and Bradlaugh were alive today, they would probably be found occupying theological chairs in Protestant Churches. Not much longer will intelligent laymen allow themselves to be hoodwinked by a band of theological jugglers."

We have received the first two numbers of *La Raison*, the International Journal of Freethought which sprang out of the late Congress at Paris. It has two editors—Victor Charbonnel, representing France, and Léon Furnemont, representing Belgium. The price of the single copy is ten centimes = one penny, and copies can be obtained for three-halfpence at the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, in London. The first number of *La Raison* contains an enthusiastic, but somewhat curious, article by Mr. William Heaford on Freethought Propaganda in England. The second has a very spirited article by Victor Charbonnel, calling upon the French Freethinkers to organise themselves in opposition to the well-organised forces of Clericalism. This writer is an ex-priest, who appears to be conducting a Freethought propagandist campaign amongst the peasantry and village population of France, and with considerable success.

The French Minister of Marine, who has before incurred the enmity of the Clericals, has issued a circular to the heads of departments on the necessity of imposing the most absolute respect for liberty of conscience in the navy. There must be no compulsory observance of religious practices, and every man must be allowed perfect liberty in matters of religion. Something of this sort is highly necessary in the British Navy too. What with chaplains and pious officers, the minority of Freethinkers in our battleships have a very rough time of it, unless they consent to tell lies and play the hypocrite.

Mr. S. M. Peacock has been returned again on the South Shields School Board. Unfortunately, his poll was not as heavy as on former occasions; but we understand that this was mainly due to over-confidence on the part of some of Mr. Peacock's supporters. It was a very quiet election all round.

On Tuesday evening next (Jan. 29) a Freethought Demonstration will be held in the Stratford Town Hall, under the auspices of the Concentration Scheme, and in connection with the West Ham N. S. S. Branch. Mr. E. E. Sims, of that Branch, will occupy the chair. Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. C. Watts, and Mr. Cohen will address the meeting. The local "saints" are invited to do their best to get the hall crowded. The admission will be free, with a collection in aid of the expenses.

### A Rationalist's Creed.

I BELIEVE in one supreme, eternal Energy, impersonal but real, the sovereign Force underlying and manifest in all the operations of Nature and the universe.

And I believe in an Ideal of exalted human thought and character, the loftiest conception of our humanity, which, with reason, love, and truth, is worshipped and glorified. And I acknowledge that this Ideal has been manifested in human beings, is now, and ever shall be, not infallibly nor perfectly, but partially and helpfully, for us men and for our salvation from error. And I regard this Ideal as purely human, and in no wise supernatural.

And I believe in one holy spirit of goodness, righteousness, justice, and love, that should animate and control the world, proceeding from the noblest convictions and dictates of humanity.

And in one Holy Catholic Church, or Society of Humanity and Universal Brotherhood, holding and teaching all truth from all sources, creeds, religions, and nations; the highest spirit of truth always, everywhere, and for all.

And I believe in the supremacy of Reason as the true guide to the human mind and life, and that what cannot be proved thereby need not be believed.

And I believe in Free Thought, Free Speech and Opinion, on all subjects whatsoever, and in unfettered toleration. And I acknowledge the right and pursuit of health, happiness, and enjoyment, "now in the time of this mortal life."

And I believe in the immortality of Thought and the cultivation of Beauty, and in the law of cause and effect in all actions in every age. And I look for the constant Resurrection of Truth, and an endless existence of Human Love and in the life of the world that now is.

AMEN.

### The Poor Man's Prayer.

PROTECT me, Lord, from these thy saints, the sanctimonious few;

Oh, save me from their clutches when my mortgages come due;

Oh, put me not into the hands of these, the men of woe,  
Who call this earth "a vale of tears," and strive to make it so.  
Oh, guard me from the blue-nosed good who lend at ten per cent.

And take a thousand-dollar lien for ninety dollars lent.  
Make me instead the debtor of some man with human taints;  
At any rate, protect me, Lord, from these thy modern saints.

Their thoughts are far from mortal life; they never, never sin;  
They strive to bring to righteousness the very men they skin;  
They never go a step astray; they never deign to smile;  
They sin not, and they only aim to castigate the vile.

But, oh! why should they count it best, with cold and holy arts,

To rivet sheet-iron shields around their hard and stony hearts?  
Their ears are dead enough, God wot, to pleadings and complaints,

And so I pray, Protect me, Lord, from these thy modern saints.

Oh, save me from the sanctified, the too uncommon good,  
Who tell us what we shouldn't do and preach us what we should;

These saints who squeeze a dollar twice and wear cheap aureoles,

Will take our children's bread, and then attempt to save our souls!

Give me, instead, a worldly man, with some few healthy stains

That show he has the common blood of manhood in his veins,  
And heart that swells enough sometimes to overthrow constraints;

But in my need, protect me, Lord, from self-appointed saints.

—Judge.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing him against copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

Echoes from Olympus.

V.—THE MYSTERY OF THE DIADEM.

"In those everlasting gardens,  
Where seraphs walk, and angels are the wardens."

FROM a point not far from the great Marble Arch in the West-end of heaven there extends northward what is practically a continuous thoroughfare in the direction of the celestial Zoo, and of a palace known as the "Hall of Horrors," in which reside many of the repentant murderers from Earth. It has, in part, an unmistakable resemblance to Baker-street, W., though shorn of sordid features and spiritualised—if that expression may be applied to a street. In the row of heavenly mansions on the right there is one habitation at which there are many visitors—hurried, surreptitious callers, angels veiled and muffled, who "come like shadows, and so depart."

In an upper front apartment of this particular mansion, the windows of which command a good stretch of the thoroughfare, there sits an angel of remarkable individuality. He is tall, lithe, and, one would say, exceedingly muscular—clean-shaven, with clear-cut features, and short, dark hair. But his eyes chiefly attract one's attention—cold, penetrating orbs ordinarily, occasionally burning with a fierce fire, but always more piercing when apparently most quiescent.

"Ah, Doyle!" he soliloquised, as he took a cigar from a box of choice weeds on the table. "Ah, Conan, bosom companion of many a popular magazine story, my biographer, the very author of my being. Why *did* you kill me, and send me to this—I had almost said God-forsaken sphere? But that would be hardly correct. There are too many gods here to please me. I fondly thought when I was on earth, continually taking the rise out of Scotland Yard, that I was about as omniscient as they make 'em. But now, alas, I hardly have a look in with the divine Know-all up here. If it weren't that a lot of the saints and angels, whose limited powers are not worth a cent, are timid of approaching the one and only Omniscient in his three-fold personality, I should never have a solitary mystery to unravel. And what would be left to me then? Nothing but to pass eternity in listless inactivity—for damned if I care about singing hymns, and that's the truth!" And he dashed the ash from his cigar with infinite disgust. Then he rose from his seat, and strode restlessly about the room, at last pausing in front of one of the windows and looking out.

A few moments' inspection of the outer-heaven, and he resumed his seat, taking several fierce whiffs at his cigar.

A knock at the door. "Come in!" he cried, and there slowly entered a majestic angel of elderly, but resplendent, appearance. With some hesitation, the visitor looked to the right and to the left, and then, espying the angel Holmes, said with considerable timidity: "May I introduce myself? I am King Solomon, of whom you may have heard."

"All right, King," replied angel Holmes, with that easy nonchalance so characteristic of him; "take a seat."

Solomon sat down, and for a moment or two there was silence. It was broken by the angelic Sherlock.

"So you have come," he said, in a casual sort of way, "about the missing diadem."

Solomon stared in amaze. He could hardly believe his own ears. "How did you come to know that?" he inquired in a tone in which there were both astonishment and perturbation.

"I have never mentioned my loss to a soul."

"How do I know? Nothing easier," said the angel Holmes. "Let me explain. I saw you coming along the street. I noticed you take off the diadem you are wearing, and look inside. Then you put it on the top of that bald old cocoa-nut of yours, and tried to wriggle into it. But you couldn't! Then I saw your lips moving, and I knew you were saying 'God damn!' or something equally expressive. Naturally I concluded that you had borrowed that diadem or rummaged it up out of the lumber-room on an emergency. He has lost his own, I said, and, if he comes in here, it is for me to find it for him. The whole thing was as plain as a pikestaff—nothing, my dear sir, to my seats of divination on earth. Ask Conan Doyle."

"Well, really," said King Solomon, "I may say that I—I had some little reputation in the olden times for wisdom and perceptive ability. But, really, you moderns beat us old fogies quite out of the field."

"Thanks for the compliment, old fellow," said angel Holmes carelessly, as he threw away his cigar. "And now to business," he briskly added, glancing at his watch, "for my time is precious."

"Well," said Solomon, "I have lost my diadem in a most mysterious fashion. I wouldn't part with it—I was going to say for the world, but I don't exactly mean that, having already given up all worldly things. But I wouldn't really lose it for a good share of my heavenly possessions. It was bestowed upon me by One whom it is unnecessary to name, and I daren't present myself at Court without it. He'd spot its absence in a jiffy."

"I understand. Now, whom do you suspect? Any one of your seven hundred wives or your three hundred—well, your other female associates? Are they all up here?"

"Yes, more's the pity. Truly, I wish to God they weren't. Not a minute's peace of my life do I have —"

"Well, well," interrupted angel Holmes, fearful of a long diatribe from the old vanity and vexation tap, "let us inquire into this loss. Though I warn you that an angel with so lavish an *entourage* must naturally find it difficult to trace missing articles. Even I, when on earth, had a difficulty in dealing with cases in which only one or two women were involved, but when it comes to a level thousand *en masse*. Phew!"

"Yes, Mr. Holmes," said Solomon meekly, "I'm wiser now than I once was. I wish they wouldn't crack my wisdom up so much on earth. They don't know my present reflections."

"All right, King. Don't disturb yourself. They don't think so much about you as you imagine. Let's hear about your precious diadem."

Solomon pulled himself together. Then he said: "It was like this: the night before last we had a little supper at Moses's palace. It was the patriarch's birthday—I forget how old he was. But he runs into a few thousands, as you may guess. The party was a very quiet little affair—just a few old cronies —"

"Stop!" said angel Holmes imperatively. In three strides he had passed across to an escreteire and opened a secret drawer. Rapidly he consulted a book or document—King Solomon failed to see which, but he saw a flutter of hieroglyphics on faded parchment.

"H'm," said Holmes as he walked moodily back to his seat. Then, with clouded brow, he murmured to himself, "I thought as much," and fell to gazing at the ceiling. "Proceed!" he ordered at last in a sudden and resonant voice, which nearly lifted poor Solomon from his chair.

The obedient monarch in some trepidation continued: "Well, we had a little supper—quite plain, simply tripe and onions, with cow heels and sheeps' trotters to follow. Isaac was in the chair, and Daniel was the worthy vice."

"Was Jacob there?" asked angel Holmes quietly, and without moving a muscle of his stern, impassive face.

"Yes, he was there in great form, and wanted to —"

"That will do." And Holmes made a careful note on a white feather of his left wing. "Who else?"

"Noah and David and Aaron and Ezekiel and—let me see; well, there were a few others that I can't remember just for the moment. After supper Isaac proposed the health of Moses, which we sung with musical honors and 'three times three.' Moses replied in most feeling terms. I'm sure, Mr. Holmes, if you had only been there, and had heard —"

"Never mind. Go ahead with your story."

"Well, we had various other toasts and a number of songs with brilliant performances on the harp by David. Habakkuk obliged with a clog dance on one end of the table, which we cleared of the glasses for him. Then David went out, and came back as the 'White-Eyed-Kaffir.' We always rely upon him for this at social gatherings. He's immense fun. Makes you die of laughing."

And Solomon rolled on his seat in ecstasy at the recollection.

"You seem to have forgotten all about your priceless diadem," observed angel Holmes with some asperity.

"So I had, Mr. Holmes. Beg pardon. But it's a rare treat to hear David when he's merry."

"Is there any cigar ash left?"

"Cigar ash! Yes, there was plenty of it, but it's all swept up now."

"Curses!" exclaimed Holmes between his set teeth. "If I could but have secured some of that ash, and brought it home and analysed it!"

"But it isn't beer," mildly expostulated the monarch.

"Dolt! Idiot! Go on. I suppose you had, in short —"

"Merely a quiet convivial party suitable to the place in eternal life to which God has called us. No, I assure you, Mr. Holmes, on my word of honor, and as the author of a few little trifles which you may have read in the Scriptures, it was the quietest affair imaginable. I have been to a few birthday celebrations I'll admit, when —"

"Never mind, King. You say there were some songs. Now, what were they? This is most important—absolutely vital."

And angel Holmes, apparently moved by that subtlety or deduction by which he achieved all his greatest triumphs on earth, turned towards his visitor to listen with the keenest attention.

"But what have the songs to do with it, Mr. Holmes?" timidly inquired the King, with looks that betokened bewilderment.

"King Solomon," said angel Holmes, rising to his feet and speaking in his severest tones, "our interview is at an end. If you have not sufficient confidence in me to answer my inquiries, pray do not seek my services. Besides, at this moment a recently-arrived Duchess is anxiously awaiting me."

"Accept my sincerest apologies, Mr. Holmes. I assure you I meant no offence. I will at once tell you the songs, as far as I can remember them. Joshua gave 'The Boys of the Old Brigade,' and we all joined in the chorus. Oh, didn't we howl it out! Ha, ha, ha—he, he, he! —"

"Steady, King, steady," said angel Holmes, fearful that the old chap in his cachinnatory ebullition might be seized with apoplexy.

"Well then," continued Solomon when he had regained his breath, "Jeremiah, 'Dismal Jerry' we call him, sang 'The Heart Bowed Down with Grief and Woe.' Isaac—or was it Job?—obliged, as a welcome relief, with 'Hi-tiddley-hi-ti.' Noah, who is great on Bacchanalian ditties, sang 'Simon the Cellarer,' and for an encore 'Pour out the Rhine Wine,' and afterwards, 'Landlord, Fill the Flowing Bowl.' Ezekiel said he would sing 'Knocked 'em in the Old Kent-road,' but could only remember one verse. Balaam was called upon by the company to sing the 'Vicar of Bray' by way of allusion to his famous quadruped."

"All this," said angel Holmes, "is *most* important. Now answer this question, and think well before you reply—Did anyone sing any song of Arthur Roberts's?"

The monarch reflected for a few minutes. He had a dim idea that Isaiah contributed something of the sort, but was not quite sure. It was very late in the evening.

"That will do," said angel Holmes decisively. "We are nearing land now. I see my way now." Whenever Holmes said this, success was tolerably certain.

But Solomon, once started, was not to be stopped. He insisted upon explaining that, at a late hour, the sherbet ran short, and someone expressed a wish that they might have a miracle similar to that performed at the marriage feast at Cana. Whereupon Moses said he could do a thing of that sort as well as anybody, and sent for his magic rod. On its arrival, he turned two hogsheads of water into wine amidst the plaudits of the company, and the jollification proceeded. It all ended up with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne."

"And who took you home?"

"Took me home! Of course, I went home on my own. What do *you* think? Jacob came with me, and David as well."

"One on either side?"

"Really, I don't know."

"And the next day, when you were awakened, your diadem was gone?"

"Yes, that's it, and I wouldn't lose it for a kingdom."

Angel Holmes offered no observation, but, looking as it were into vacancy, cogitated profoundly for the space of five minutes. Not a sound was heard in that room save the hard breathing of the agitated King and the ticking of the clock on the mantleshelf. Outwardly Sherlock Holmes exhibited no sign of the processes by which that master mind was slowly, but surely—yes, surely evolving the solution of this mystery.

Suddenly he sprang up. "I have it!" he exclaimed in a voice and with a mien that electrified his open-mouthed visitor. "I have it!" he repeated in calmer tones as he walked to an ebony cabinet of curious Indian filigree workmanship. Flinging open a door, he brought out an object, and held it in front of the monarch.

"Is this your diadem?" he asked.

The King stared and stared again. Then he said in the simple language of absolute astonishment: "Well, I'm damned!"

It was the diadem, and he clutched it with feverish eagerness.

"But how—how did you get it?" he ejaculated in hurried, broken accents, whilst he felt all over the precious object with trembling hands.

Angel Holmes gazed at him with one of those calm, sweet smiles so familiar to all who knew the Prince of Detectives on earth. "I picked it up in the street."

"Picked it up in the street!"

"Yes, just where you had let it roll off—you and your companions as you were going home. I happened to kick it with my foot as I came along a little afterwards, and I picked it up. I knew it would be inquired for."

"Well, that wins it!" gasped the aged monarch, and a little later he shuffled off with his recovered treasure under his arm.

The angel Sherlock sat down and calmly smiled. As he took another cigar and leisurely lighted it, he murmured to himself: "I wonder whether dear old Conan could make anything of this? What a pity he isn't here!"

FRANCIS NEALE.

Sunday-school teacher: "God first made the world and all the beasts and the birds. Now, what was the last thing he created?" Willie Green: "Why, I guess it's the brand new baby that came to our house Friday. I ain't heard of anything later."—*Philadelphia Press*.

A little girl, who was repeating Dr. Watts's hymn,

Let dogs delight to bark and bite,  
For God hath made them so,

astonished her mother by saying: "But how could dogs *sew*, mother?"

A fanatic is a man that does what he thinks th' Lord wud do if he knew th' facts iv th' case.—*Mr. Dooley*.

## A Message to Mars.

(To be sent in Hebrew.)

MARTIANS, if our signals reach you,  
Throbbing through the ether cold,  
Answer, as your sense must teach you,  
In your Maker's tongue of old.

Adam's speech was purest Godish,  
As our Maker's Scriptures tell;  
And 'twould seem a little oddish  
If it weren't yours as well.

We have all our Maker's features;  
Parsons, still, His language teach;  
Doubtless you, our fellow-creatures,  
Also have preserved his speech.

Even snakes and donkeys chatted,  
Sometimes, in their Maker's speech,  
Say the priests, both lean and "fatted"—  
Knaves whom noodles pay to preach.

If you never built a "Babel,"  
Godish, *still*, your tongue must be,  
Else the story is a fable  
Parsons tell us—for a fee.

God who made us by his fiat  
Never formed your ruddy sphere  
Merely for the Earth to spy at  
When the Winter nights are clear.

He whose famous six-days' labor  
Made the Earth and all the stars,  
Surely had a reason, Neighbor,  
For your nearness, Brother Mars.

Think you, you're the static focus  
Of the Earth, the Sun, and Stars?  
Are there holy hocus-pocus,  
Creed-besotted priests on Mars?

Were your primal parents tested  
By a God who planned their fall?  
Are you, thence, by sin infested?  
Did His youngster "die for all"?

Are you gluttons, or ascetics?  
Tell us how you live and die;  
State your "records" in Athletics—  
Running, Pole-jump, "long," and "high."

Did you like a thief to felly you,  
And to give you murderous stabs,  
Till some laws were sent, to tell you  
Not to like it, scratched on slabs?

Have you Priests who lie for wages,  
Robbing fools of time and gold?  
Do you read in sacred pages  
Fibs are facts, when very old?

Have you, Martians, ever read of  
Bigger fools than those who made  
Sundays *once* a week, instead of  
*Twice* a week, to rest from trade?

Have you reasoned from our "transit"  
To your distance from the Sun?  
But, perhaps, Religion bans it,  
As our earthly one has done.

Has your God a "chosen" nation  
Famed for brutal, savage deeds?  
Did He write a "Revelation"  
In a book that no one heeds?

Do you alway place reliance  
On a prayer, when you're ill,  
Or, like us, depend on Science,  
And the Atheistic pill?

If, on Mars, a *poor* fanatic  
Says that *all* should wealth eschew,  
Does a *wealthy* rogue, prelatie,  
Preach as though he thought it true?

Send a list of your diseases;  
We have cancers, priests, and kings;  
Tell us all that helps and pleases;  
All the good that science brings.

Do your statesmen swear by "Jingo,"  
When the foe is small and weak?  
Have you in your Martian lingo  
Such a phrase as "Eat the leek"?

Do you "drink," or do without it?  
Do you ever laugh and cry?  
Tell us, Martians, all about it;  
Thrill your answers through the sky.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Correspondence.

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A great deal sometimes. The religious world has applied the term "Atheist" to those who investigate their doctrines and have come to the conclusion that they are not true—are inconsistent with their conclusions on what they know from an investigation of what they do know of nature. The investigators so dubbed have accepted the opprobrious term, which I think is one mistake.

I have been more or less—more than less—for some seventy years a Freethinker, and for forty to fifty years an out and outer, as has been George Jacob Holyoake for a longer period. I knew him as a public orator when I was quite a young man in Scotland. Since I came to London I have known him more intimately and personally, and during thirty to forty years I have esteemed him as a clear-headed, excellent man; and, as he is now eighty to ninety years of age, I think it is not kind or just of younger—much younger—men to write disparagingly of him in the *Freethinker*.

What has he done? He drops the term "Atheist" and adopts that of "Agnostic." And quite right too. I have done the same since the term was invented by Professor Huxley. According to my idea of these terms, the Theist asserts that there is a God, the Atheist that there is not; but both assertions are premature, for, though we cannot find in nature any of the numerous gods believed in, we have not as yet penetrated in nature so far as to know all it contains; hence it is unphilosophical to proclaim what one cannot prove.

The century just passed has told us many things in nature which we didn't know before—steam power, railway traction, electric telegraph, and, just recently, the latter without wires, etc. We cannot fly like a bird yet, but perhaps we will do so, and the sooner the better. I don't say I will take shares in the first company formed, though I may assist financially to exploit it; but, when accomplished, I will take a first-class ticket to and from London, and won't be Atheistical to it. I hope Freethinkers will all resent the term "Atheist," which has been applied to them by their ignorant religious opponents, and adopt the term which Huxley did, and which I have done since. Previously I adopted the old term "Materialist," which I still think thoroughly expresses my views, for I know nothing in existence outside matter. I therefore am an Agnostic willing to advance in truth, as I am sure is George Jacob Holyoake.

GEORGE ANDERSON.

[Mr. Anderson overlooks the fact that it was Mr. Holyoake who began the attack on "Atheism." Those who defend that term have only been replying to him. Is it meant that Mr. Holyoake, being over eighty, is so old that he is entitled to talk like an oracle; and that Messrs. Foote and Watts—the one turned fifty, and the other nearing seventy—are too young to be entitled to an opinion? Mr. Anderson overlooks another fact. Nobody objects to Mr. Holyoake's calling himself an "Agnostic" if he prefers it to "Atheist." That is a mere matter of policy and convenience. But this is not what Mr. Holyoake contends for. He asserts that Atheism and Agnosticism are not different words, but different things; and in doing so he misrepresents Atheism—first, by perverting its etymology; secondly, by flouting the definitions given by all the leading Atheists of the century—including the most hated and calumniated of them all, the late Charles Bradlaugh. It is really nonsense, and something worse, to take no notice whatever of the Atheists' protests and challenges, and to go on with a false definition of Atheism in spite of them. With regard to the "odiousness" of the word "Atheist," we venture to point out that this is due to the fact that "being without God" is odious to the great mass of believers, who will consider an Agnostic just as odious when they find him out. Mr. Anderson has no objection to the word "Materialist." Well, that is precisely the most odious term in the Christian's whole vocabulary of objectionable language. Generally the adjective "grovelling" goes in front of it. The Atheist is a rebel in orthodox eyes, but the Materialist is a beast. It was this very word that frightened the late Professor Tyndall into explaining away half the philosophy of his splendid Belfast Address. Huxley also repudiated this same word with great vigor. Finally, we think it right to deny that "Atheist" is an abusive term invented by Christians. Such a term is "Infidel." "Atheist" has sometimes been used abusively, but it has always had a philosophical standing. Charles Bradlaugh wrote *A Plea for Atheism*. Haeckel also accepts the term in just the same sense in his last exposition of Monism.—EDITOR.]

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Referring to the letter of the Rev. Henry J. Alcock, in your issue of January 13, permit me to ask whether Christianity in the Southern States acknowledged the complete equality of

all persons in its sight, and whether the distinction between "bond and free" is even now swept away there? It was to maintain and extend the diabolical system of human bondage that the Southerners rose in insurrection, and so much did British Christians wish to uphold the "peculiar institution" that they encouraged and supported the fratricidal struggle, in the hope that the down-trodden negroes might be held for ever in subjection. Did not the Christian clergy of the South glorify slavery as a "divine institution," and hurl the thunders of their wrath against the Abolitionists of the North? Were negroes allowed to worship in the same buildings as the whites, to ride in the same carriages, to walk on the same pathways, as their oppressors? That evil being, Jeff Davis, who boldly declared that slavery was the "cornerstone" of the Confederacy, was, during his accursed reign, the darling of English society. Christian ministers palliated the flogging and ravishing of slave girls as white as English maidens, but who were outside the pale of humanity because a particle of African blood flowed in their veins.

Anglo-Saxon Christians, to this very day, hold colored people in contempt, whilst Turks and other Moslems regard as brethren negroes who have embraced the religion of Mohammed.

If Jesus were to appear again, it is in Islam, and not in the orthodox fold, that he would find the majority of his true disciples.

S. SANDERS.

Bow Library and Freethought Works.

AN incentive to action is the result of observing the gradual erection of the building in Bow which, it is contemplated, will accommodate the ratepayers who desire to obtain knowledge usually contained in a Municipal Public Library. The aim to secure a due share of Secular works in this institution seems somewhat dormant. The mode of procedure, indicated in a letter of mine in a recent issue of this journal, dealing with the matter, has caused no comment; and a communication in the local press has not elicited any reply from the religious bigots. So the case now stands.

The Public Library demands the interest of all truth-seekers, combined with the toilers, for the welfare of mankind. What an excellent disseminator of teaching it can be made, considering the many classes of people patronising the establishment. The student, mechanic, public official, manufacturer, merchant, shopkeeper, and "retired gentleman," all come within its scope, irrespective of ability and means; and herein lies the value of strenuous efforts tending to ensure the adoption of Freethought works thoroughly, including our principles and aims, in these structures. Although we crave for Secular education in vain, that is no reason why public attention should be diverted from this splendid supplement of the Board schools. Rather should this stimulate our work in that direction, recognising that failure is the harbinger of success to enthusiastic coadjutors. To let the slightest opportunity vanish means an increase of power to the enemy, and it is almost needless to remark how keen the Church is to reap full advantage of benefits that may be conferred upon it.

The Bow Library is in the midst of a neighborhood ripe to receive Secular reform. Churches and liquor shops are almost on a par in number. Strike, then, while the iron is still hot. Let the people judge from our writings who are their true friends. Let them see that liberty is the result of Freethought, and not priestcraft, and then we shall be able to live consoled to the death that awaits all.

H. R. M. WRIGHT.

Religion.

I AM no priest of crooks nor creeds,  
For human wants and human needs  
Are more to me than prophets' deeds;  
And human tears and human cares  
Affect me more than human prayers.

Go, cease your wail, lugubrious saint!  
You fret high Heaven with your plaint.  
Is this the "Christian's joy" you paint?  
Is this the Christian's boasted bliss?  
Avails your faith no more than this?

Take up your arms, come out with me,  
Let Heav'n alone; humanity  
Needs more and Heaven less from thee.  
With pity for mankind look 'round;  
Help them to rise—and Heaven is found.

—PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR (*The Negro Poet*).

What we pray to ourselves for is always granted.—  
*Emerson.*

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

## LONDON

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, "The End of 'God Save the Queen.'"

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Dr. T. R. Allinson, "How to Live a Long, Healthy, and Happy Life."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Great Enigma."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 7.30, J. W. Cox.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

## COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, S. Kennedy, "What is Materialism?"

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward—3, "An Explanation of Hypnotism"; 7, "Who Made the Devil?" Music 6.30 to 7.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, R. P. Edwards, "The Unknown God."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Open debate, "Individualism v. Collectivism"; 6.30, Dr. Park, "The Present Status of the Idea and Term 'God,' and on Life and Substance."

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street: 7, W. Litchfield, "Slum Life."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): C. Watts—11, "Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?" 6.30, "Is Modern Spiritualism a Delusion?"

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Despres, "An Exposition of Anarchist Communism."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. A. Rogerson, "The Struggle for Existence." Lantern views by A. Flatters.

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

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Annual and Quarterly Meeting; 7, Extra Special Musical, etc., Evening. Collection for local hospitals. Jan. 31, Soirée and Ball in honor of Thomas Paine. Tea at 5.30.

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

## Lecturer's Engagements.

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