

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Fooling Round Shakespeare.

Shakespeare Sermons. Preached in the Collegiate Church of Stratford-on-Avon. Edited by the Rev. George Arbuthnot, vicar of Stratford-on-Avon. (London: Longmans, Green, & Co.)

HAMLET advised that Polonius should play the fool nowhere but in his own house, and someone should advise the parsons to play the fool nowhere but in their own pulpits. Immemorial usage will plead for them there, and to be hard upon them in that environment would be downright cruelty. But the case is altered when they go outside their churches and challenge the world's attention. Criticism is then just, and sometimes even necessary, as we take it to be in the present instance. We have read this volume of sermons on Shakespeare, by preachers of considerable eminence, with far greater attention than it deserves; not because we had the slightest pleasure in the task, but because we wished to be entirely fair to our intellectual opponents. Having perused the book in this spirit, we have no hesitation in saying that it is almost beneath contempt. We did not think it was possible to be so dull and vapid on such a subject. There is a magic in the very name of Shakespeare that should lift the heaviest soul, and quicken the steps of the dreariest plodder. But it fails to produce any such effect upon the clerical collaborators on this miserable abortion. Nothing could more decisively show the depth of ineptitude to which the modern pulpit has descended. "The brains are out" of Christianity, which is now living on its inherited spiritual capital. Its ministers remind one of Carlyle's "Dead Sea apes," sitting round a fire that was kindled by others, without the ability to replenish it with fresh fuel. The fire is slowly but surely dying down, and they are already beginning to shiver. "Poor Tom's a-cold" might be the cry of every one of them. Certainly it might be the cry of the seven preachers who have sent forth these wretchedly feeble addresses on the mightiest genius "put a spirit of life in everything" that retained a spark of vitality.

Let these seven—it is a sacred number—be immortalised, even as the peddlers and drivellers were immortalised in the *Dunciad*, or as the prince of dullards was embalmed in *Mac Flecknoe*. Here they are, in their own order of publication:—Dr. G. F. Browne, Bishop of Bristol; Rev. R. S. de C. Laffan, rector of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, London; Rev. Alfred Ainger, Master of the Temple and Canon of Bristol; Rev. Dr. A. Nicholson, vicar of St. Alban's, Leamington; Very Rev. C. W. Stubbs, Dean of Ely; Very Rev. F. W. Farrar, Dean of Canterbury; and Rev. George Arbuthnot, vicar of Stratford-on-Avon. The last, who is the most foolish of all, edits the volume, and contributes two sermons—all the others contributing one. Mr. Arbuthnot's second sermon is nearly all about Moses. Shakespeare has a look in at the finish, where his "patriotism" is hitched on to the doggerel of "God save the Queen," which is enough to make him turn in his grave; and where we are seriously informed—by a parson!—that to honor and obey the Queen (King now) and all who are put in authority under her is taught in "the fifth Commandment."

First of all, to get rid of this feature at once, let us note some of the abject follies of this book. Two of the preachers choose their text from the story of Balaam and his talking jackass. One of them records his

personal conviction that Shakespeare's story is just "as interesting and as fascinating." Another remarks that "Shakespeare knew the Bible"—which would naturally be true, considering the transcendent importance of the book in those days. Not satisfied with this, however, he delivers himself of the fatuous observation that the "phraseology" of Shakespeare and the Bible "is alike," and then accounts for it by "the contemporaneousness of the Authorised Version and the plays." Now the Authorised Version was not published till 1611, and the last of the plays was written in 1612. Shakespeare had thus been writing dramas for twenty years, and had produced all but the very last of them, before King James's Bible saw the light of day. After this nonsense, it is not surprising to hear that "It surely was not by an accident that his two daughters bore the names of the two chief women mentioned in the Apocrypha." Doubtless it was no accident, but we daresay that Mrs. Shakespeare had more to do with it than her husband. One daughter was christened Susanna, probably without reference to the Jewish lady whose chastity was impregnable to the assaults of two old men—although, as a French wit said, it might have been in greater danger from the attack of a single young one. The other daughter was christened Judith, after Judith Sadler, as her twin brother was christened Hamnet after Hamnet Sadler—two inhabitants of Stratford, who were lifelong friends of Shakespeare. It does not seem necessary, therefore, to drag in the Apocrypha as an explanation. And when we are told that Shakespeare "in its sacred pages met the Lord," we can only shrug our shoulders and pass on, for articulate speech is not equal to the expression of our feelings.

The preacher who is responsible for this last absurdity says that we may congratulate ourselves on the fact that, although Shakespeare sometimes uses words that cannot be spoken now, and even paints vice in startling colors, he never makes it victorious, and "on his pages virtue always triumphs." Is it possible, we ask, for Shakespearean criticism to sink lower than this? The perpetual triumph of virtue is a falsehood of the pulpit. It is not one of the truths of nature—or of Shakespeare. Such facile optimism was not for his sagacious intellect. Never for a moment did he pander to this weak delusion. Othello is caught in the toils, and kills himself after slaying Desdemona; Hamlet is treacherously done to death after the sad ending of poor Ophelia; and Lear draws his last breath of torture upon the lips of the murdered Cordelia. Is *this* the triumph of virtue? Vice and crime do not escape their natural penalty, but virtue is too often involved in their doom. This is, indeed, the very essence of tragedy. Not the cheap tragedy of "good, improving" literature, but the tragedy of nature, the tragedy of Shakespeare; the tragedy that appals, that touches emotions too deep for tears, that clutches the heart in a spasm of pity and revolt, and prompts the terrible cry—

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.

We will now notice some of the exhibitions of slipshod in this volume. It is not astonishing to find preachers loose and inaccurate, for they are accustomed to speaking like oracles, and have seldom to face questions or criticism. But they might be expected to take more care when addressing the general public on themes outside their scriptures and religion. No such effort, however, is made by these gentlemen. The trick of the pulpit clings to them, and they seem to

think anything is good enough. "An American writer" is cited by Dr. Farrar as saying that, "of all great personalities, Shakespeare is at once the least known to us and the best known." *Who* was this American writer? Had he no *name*? Why drag him in anonymously? Why not say "Emerson" at once? It is both shorter and more precise. "Somebody says" is another vile expression, and all the viler when it relates to "a trite quotation." No wonder such men cannot quote correctly. There is a shocking blunder in a verse of Sterling's on page 73; Shakespeare himself is insulted on page 118, where "shall" is substituted for "must" in the lines—

And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

"The" is substituted for "our" in Macbeth's exclamation that—

this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips.

All the peculiar force of the idea is lost by this carelessness. And the culprit in both these manglings of Shakespeare is Dean Farrar. Another distinguished preacher, Dr. Stubbs, quotes some lines of Wordsworth's on page 81; but, instead of giving the poet's name, he refers us to page 270 of a book by the late Walter Bagehot! Yet people still wonder at the laxity of the Christian Fathers nearly two thousand years ago.

It was natural that these clerical critics should advert to the occasional "indelicality" of Shakespeare. Bishop Browne deals with this point gingerly. "He lived in an outspoken age," the prelate says, "and he spoke out. The coarser part of his writings we can avoid." Canon Ainger remarks that the worthy Bowdler would have accomplished "a laudable and useful task" if he had confined himself to excising "every coarse and indelicate jest" in Shakespeare's dialogue. "For," the Canon says, "we wish Shakespeare to be in the hands of our women and children." Bless his innocence! Does he think the women are such simpletons after all? Before he repeats the suggestion of a castrated edition of Shakespeare for ladies, we advise him to go and hear Marie Lloyd. As for the children, we doubt if there is really anything in Shakespeare to hurt them. Ruskin's opinion was that the daintiest girl might be allowed to pasture freely in the Master's pages. We admit, however, that the point is debateable; only we venture to suggest that if *clergymen* want a Bowdlerised edition of classics for children, they should begin with the Bible. Meanwhile we may be permitted to observe that Shakespeare is wonderfully free from "grossness" if he is judged by the standard of his time. He has none of the rollicking indelicacy, or the wallowing obscenity, of some of his contemporaries. Jack Falstaff himself is only once as freespoken as several of the women, and even a few of the high ladies, in Massinger, and Webster, and Beaumont and Fletcher.

These parsons had better have left Shakespeare's "indelicality" alone. "God commissioned him to speak," says Canon Ainger. He was therefore *inspired*. In that case, his "indelicality," like the filth of the Bible, is chargeable upon the Holy Ghost, and censure is an unardonable sin.

Editor Arbuthnot shares this view of Shakespeare's "inspiration." "The Lord met Shakespeare," he says, even as the Lord met Balaam—though the bard was not found in company with a jackass. Balaam was inspired, at least for once in his life; and so was Shakespeare, always. And what is "inspiration"? Mr. Arbuthnot tells us: "It is God by his Spirit urging and forcing and driving the man further than he would otherwise be carried." Does this account for the warmest passages of *Venus and Adonis*? Was the Bard of Avon urged, forced, and driven on by the Spirit that "inspired" the Song of Solomon? Were the most daring expressions of Jack Falstaff due to the Spirit that "inspired" Ezekiel to depict the libidinousness of Aholah and Aholibah? We presume so from what is said by Canon Ainger and Mr. Arbuthnot. They throw a really fresh light upon the subject. Thanks to their help, we begin to understand it. But will they kindly tell us why Shakespeare forgot to say, "Thus saith the Lord"?
G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Is Religion Necessary?

THE answer to the above question will depend upon the meaning attached to the word "religion." If by that term is meant the Christian faith, my reply is decidedly in the negative. The avowed object of religion is to induce the living of noble and useful lives, in which truth, honor, and justice shall be active factors. Now we learn from history and experience that these virtues have abounded, and still abound, apart altogether from Christianity. There is not one moral principle taught in the New Testament that was not in force long before the dawn of the Christian era. In fact, ethical conduct in Rome was far more pronounced before than after the advent of Christianity. No sooner was the religion of the Cross partially established than its devotees proved themselves inimical to personal and general progress. The Christian Church delighted in the worst kind of persecution; its weapons were the rack and other tortures for men's bodies, and curses and damnation for their supposed souls. Bigotry and fanaticism were its legitimate offspring; it sought to bind the human mind in bands of iron, and whipped its victims with lashes like scorpions.

Even from a religious point of view the Christian faith was in some respects vastly inferior to the one which immediately preceded it. Paganism was the most tolerant of all religions; she enjoined upon her devotees strict adherence to her forms and ceremonies, but left others at liberty to worship as they thought fit. Christianity appeared, and, not content with attending to its own business, began to vehemently denounce all who differed from it, and thence came what is called the persecution of the early Christians. However, the religion of Jesus paid back with a vengeance all the persecution it had received at the hands of others, when it obtained the power to do so. And even at the present day, if the laws are not enforced against unbelievers, it is not because Christians want the will, but because they fear popular opinion. They hurl their anathemas abroad as freely as ever, and use for their weapons slander and calumny in place of the rack and the stake. They destroy reputations instead of taking life, and blast men's prospects in lieu of burning their bodies. Popular religion is now but little more than a bundle of absurd creeds and dogmas, while the profession of them is a gigantic hypocrisy. England's so-called National Religion, with its foolish and inhuman doctrines of Original Sin, the Fall, the Atonement, and of the devil and hell, is based upon the belief in a God who is an angry, wrathful, and exacting judge. The cross of Calvary stands out before all the ages of its existence as an emblem of anger and inutility. If Christ be a type of love, he is shown subordinated, in his own proper person, to wrathful justice. One may see, in imagination, the blood-drops trickling down his fevered brow in the Garden of Gethsemane, and recognise in them the price of the Atonement, the carefully-exacted expiation of an offence said to have been committed ages before his life upon earth. Christianity is a religion of rigor, of servitude, and of fear. Such a religion is not necessary for the welfare of the human family; on the contrary, its absence is a benefit to thousands who have escaped its allurements, and its entire obliteration would be an unspeakable advantage to the world in general.

Of course, if the term "religion" is accepted in its etymological and ethical sense rather than in that of the alleged supernatural; if it is taken to mean a binding system between man and man for secular purposes, and the inculcation of ethical truths free from all theology, then no doubt such a religion is necessary. But all this is really Secularism, a term which appears to me to be more appropriate than the name religion, because the latter word is likely to be associated with the speculations of supernaturalism and the formalities of the Churches. It is only fair to say that there is a great difference between orthodox believers and such men as Theodore Parker, Foxton, Froude, Fox, Francis Newman, Renan, the late Professor Momerie, and others of that school, who, whilst rejecting the barbarities of the so-called orthodox faith, still clung to a sentiment which they called religion. Their views, however, on this point,

right or wrong, can be of little interest to society, since any emotional feeling must be felt, not preached, and hence the inutility of advocating it to those not susceptible of it by experience. The believer in what is called natural religion as a rule eschews theology, and, as a matter of course, does not acknowledge sacred books. Hence dogmatism forms no part of his teaching, and hurling anathemas at the heads of his opponents is foreign both to his feelings and his faith.

That ethical religion can be distinguished from supernaturalism is evident, inasmuch as there are systems based upon truth, virtue, and love, apart from any supernatural hypothesis. If we go back nearly six centuries prior to the Christian era, we are confronted with Buddhism in its very origin. That it is a religious system no one denies, though it postulates nothing respecting God, devil, heaven, or hell. Its specially religious doctrines are—right teaching, right purpose, right discourse, right behavior; and it aims at removing selfishness, falsehood, hatred, sensuality, error, and pride. This is also the object of Secular philosophy, and we accept the teaching from Buddha without having any sympathy whatever with the mystic Theosophy which has crept into his system. Secular discrimination appears to me to be the "one thing needful" in reference to all the religions of the world. There is much in most of them that is necessary to well-doing, and there is also much in them that is not only unnecessary, but decidedly undesirable. For instance, the humanitarianism of Auguste Comte is commendable, but his teaching as to the worship of humanity is not, to my mind, either sensible or useful. So it is with Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable. Although it contains a self-evident truth, it is of no value as an active factor in daily life. That of which we have no knowledge is to us non-existent, and therefore, so far as we are aware, it has no ethical influence upon our conduct. With regard to Christianity, its orthodox believers talk of Jesus as though he had more than human love for man, and a superhuman desire to effect his welfare. The Secularist, instead of this, maintains that the same high and lofty feeling of philanthropy, of brotherly love, may beat in every human bosom, and needs only wise and patient cultivation to bring forth golden fruit. The religion of Secularism declares that there can be no grander impulse, no loftier, more animating incentive than an honest, steadfast desire to benefit the whole human race. It does not reach to the clouds, or attempt to penetrate behind the veil of nature into the region of the unknown and unknowable; but it aims only at instructing and inspiring human nature, so that there may be perfect harmony between that and external nature, and absolute peace, concord, and kindness between man and man.

In this article my principal object is to enforce the truth that man can be moral without possessing what is generally called religion, and, therefore, the only guide required for the formation of the best possible character is reason aided by experience, which Secularism offers as the greatest known monitor in the cultivation of the human mind and the proper regulation of human action. This, in my judgment, makes it superior to Christianity, with its moral degradations and its perplexing theological teachings. Secularism is not called upon to reconcile irreconcilable antinomies; has no need to palter with the standard of right and wrong, truth and falsehood; does not ask for pretence of belief where there is no assurance; does not fetter the reason and mutilate the conscience. It recognises abundant evil and misery in the world, and endeavors by hard work to decrease and, as far as possible, to destroy them; it recognises much good and happiness, and endeavors by wise work to increase and extend both; untrammelled in either case by obsolete myths or incredible dogmas. The Secularist loves and reveres his fellow men whom he knows, not a phantasmal God of whom he knows nothing. Upright, as an honest man who respects himself and his fellows should be, he does not abase himself, and crouch down, crying that he is a miserable sinner, and that there is no health in him. The only religion which he deems necessary consists in being honest, truthful, temperate, and just, and in striving to live a life of enduring service to the cause of individual and national redemption.

CHARLES WATTS.

Christianity and Civilisation.—X.

MAGIC AND MEDICINE.

(Continued from p. 51.)

AND now, from this brief review of the position of medical science in antiquity, let us turn to an estimate of Christianity's influence on the progress of the healing art. So far as the Old Testament is concerned, there does not occur a hint that disease is at all due to natural causes. The boils that troubled Job, the leprosy that afflicted Uzziah, the plagues that were sent upon Egypt, are all directly due to the action of God; while in the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus we are gravely informed that the method of cleansing a person from leprosy is for the priest to take some oil and blood from the trespass offering, and place a little of each "upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot," pour all that is left of the blood and oil upon his head, and the operation is over. If the efficacy of the method only equalled its simplicity, it seems a pity it was ever allowed to fall into disuse.

The New Testament can hardly be said to improve on the Old. Where disease is supernaturally caused, it seems only logical to look for a supernatural cure. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away" is applicable here if anywhere; and, as Lacroix says, "Christ healing the sick by the laying-on of hands, restoring sight to the blind, making the lame to walk by an appeal to God, and raising the dead to life in the name of the Father, seemed to intimate to the world that prayer and faith were the best remedies for human ills."* Peter's mother was cured of fever by a touch, a servant was cured of palsy with a word, a man was cured of deafness by a touch and a prayer, the High Priest's servant had his ear stuck on again after Peter had cut it off. Paul also cured fever by a laying-on of hands and prayer, and raised Eutychus to life, after his preaching had caused him to fall down dead. Peter also raised Dorcas from the dead. The New Testament is perfectly explicit on this point; its teaching is "The prayer of faith shall save the sick," and its practice exemplifies the teaching.

There is little wonder, then, that under the influence of Christian teaching the medical science of antiquity languished and died, and was replaced by a host of senseless superstitions and practices identical in kind with those existing among savages. Jesus, it is true, told his disciples that they should cure the sick; but how? "In my name." By the methods of the Peculiar People, whose peculiarity consists, not in *believing* in the New Testament, but in trying to carry out its teachings. Jesus gave his disciples a medicine-chest that was filled with—Faith; and if his teaching, and the teaching of the Apostles, be correct, medical science is useless. If medical science is of use, the teaching of Jesus must be dismissed as pure fantasy.

Christian influence on the treatment of lunacy was still more disastrous. Nowhere is there the least indication that mental disorder or weakness is due to any other cause than that of demoniacal possession. Some demons obediently left people's bodies on being told; others, with less politeness, went not out save by prayer and fasting. To-day there does not appear the least doubt among educated believers even that the demoniacs of the New Testament were people suffering from epilepsy or some neurotic disorder. It is a nice question, as Dean Trench remarks with unconscious sarcasm, if one of the apostles "were to enter a madhouse now, how many of the sufferers there he might recognise as 'possessed.'"† On this subject the believer is in a sad dilemma. Either he has to admit that Jesus was mistaken as to the nature of the disease that afflicted the "demoniacs"—an admission that strikes a heavy blow at his divinity—or he has to assume that he deliberately used language with the misleading nature of which he was thoroughly acquainted, and thus make him responsible for all the evils that afterwards resulted from the belief in "possession."

Without discussing this aspect of the matter, the

* *Science and Literature in the Middle Ages*, p. 134.
† *On the Miracles*, p. 168.

plain historic fact is that coincident with the rise of Christianity there was a decline of medical science, and that the Christian Fathers showered some of their choicest vituperative morsels upon such as were impious enough to attempt to banish disease by natural methods. St. Augustine denounces "men called anatomists who inhumanly pry into the secrets of the human body to learn the nature of disease, its exact seat, and how it might be remedied."* St. Ambrose declares that the "precepts of medicine are contrary to celestial science." Tertullian denounced the surgeon Herophilus as a "butcher" because he had been guilty of the crime of dissection. Only one cause for disease was admitted—the agency of demons. Thus Origen says: "It is demons which produce famine, unfruitfulness, corruptions of the air, pestilences; they hover concealed in clouds in the lower atmosphere, and are attracted by the blood and incense which the heathens offer to them as gods." St. Augustine said: "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to these demons; chiefly do they torment fresh-baptised Christians." Tertullian was convinced that an evil angel was in attendance upon each person. Gregory of Nazianzus declared that bodily pains are provoked by demons, and that medicine was therefore useless; while other Saints and Fathers are equally at one in denouncing all those who trust to the aid of medicine instead of trusting to prayer and the intercession of their priestly leaders.†

With such teachings concerning the uselessness, if not the sinfulness, of natural methods of combating disease as those I have given, institutions for the cultivation of medical science were anomalies. The Temple Hospitals were closed and the chief avenues of medical knowledge destroyed. The Barbarians, in their repeated invasions of the Empire, had respected the existence and objects of the medical schools situated at Trèves, Arles, Bordeaux, Alexandria, Athens, and elsewhere; but they were either closed or their usefulness destroyed by the Christian rulers of the fifth and sixth centuries. At a time, too, when the treatment of disease had been practically restricted to the religious orders, decrees of Church Councils were passed prohibiting the practice of surgery or the study of medicine. Thus, as samples of many similar instances, the Council of Le Mans, 1248, and the Council of Rheims, 1119, interdicted the study of medicine by monks. In 1246 the Council of Bezier prohibited Christians applying to Jewish physicians, when the Jews had, in Christian Europe, the monopoly of medical science, and at a time when pope and bishops maintained their private Jewish physicians. The Dominicans, in 1243, banished all treatises on medicine from their monasteries. Innocent III. forbade physicians practising save under the supervision of an ecclesiastic. Honorius, 1222, forbade priests studying medicine; and at the end of the thirteenth century Boniface VIII. interdicted surgery as being Atheistical.‡

The methods advocated by the Church were of a much simpler kind than those followed by the physician, and more profitable—to the priest. For each particular disease the Church had a special saint. Thus, St. Blaise cured sore throats; St. Polonia looked after toothache; St. Domingo attended to fever; St. Rogue cured the plague; St. Gervaise monopolised specifics for rheumatism.§ As a further effort of specialisation, the body was carefully mapped out, and each joint placed under the charge of some one. The procedure was consequently plain. Once the disease was identified or the injured part located, all that had to be done was to consult the chart of the celestial college of surgeons, and supplicate for a cure. There was a trifling *et cetera* in the shape of a fee to the priest; but this, of course, was a mere incidental.

Not that the clerical curative treatment was limited to prayers. What one may call positive medicines were plentiful, if not pleasant. The Rev. Baring Gould says that, if Paul had consulted St. Luke in his capacity as a physician, he would have recommended "against fever the burning of incense in the hollow of a canine tooth

of a crocodile, and an application of crocodile fat. For headache he would prescribe the rust of door-hinges dissolved in vinegar, the touch of an elephant's trunk, or the rope with which a man has been hung.....for epileptic fits.....then the infallible recipe was the sloughed skins of newts."* A thousand years later the Christians were still cheerfully travelling along the same road. Water in which the hair of a saint had been dipped was used as a purgative. The saliva of saints was a powerful cure for numerous disorders, and, as this method of curing blindness had been sanctioned by Jesus (John ix. 6), it was in great demand. The parings of saintly nails, remnants of saintly clothing, pieces of saintly bones, were extensively used. For certain complaints people were told to take a number of plants, "put them into a vessel, set them under the altar, sing over them nine masses, boil them in butter or sheep's grease, add much holy salt, strain through a cloth.....If any ill-tempting occur to a man.....smear his body with this salve, and put it on his eyes, and cense him with incense, and sign him frequently with the sign of the cross. His condition will soon be better" (White, ii., p. 39). In his day Montaigne describes doctors as using "the left foot of a tortoise, the stale of a lizard, the dung of an elephant, the liver of a mole, blood drawn from under the right wing of a white pigeon, and, for us who are troubled with the stone, some rats pounded to small powder, and such other foolish trash, which rather seems to be magic spells or charms than effects of any solid science" (*Essays*, bk. ii., ch. xxxvii.). For scurvy or scrofula the king's touch was all-powerful. Charles II., a particularly delicate instrument for the divine influence to filter through, is said to have touched and cured over 100,000 people.

From the point of view of general hygiene the influence of Christianity was equally disastrous. The abstention of the early Christians from the social life of the Empire, the conviction of the approaching end of the world, and of the sinfulness of all pleasure as being so many wiles of the devil, led to a neglect of the ordinary decencies of life, and finally culminated in a perfect epidemic of asceticism. From the fourth till the tenth century the clergy were busily engaged in preaching the sanctity of dirt. Maceration of the body, an absence of cleanliness, disregard of all the normal affairs of a healthy social life, were looked upon as certain signs of Christian excellence. "A hideous, sordid, emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture..... had become the ideal of the nations that had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato."†

The behavior of these self-appointed leaders of society almost passes comprehension. St. Jerome narrates that he knew one monk who for thirty years lived on nothing but a piece of bread and a drop of mouldy water per day; another who only cut his hair on Easter Sunday, who never washed his clothes, and who starved himself until his flesh grew like a pumice stone. Some carried heavy iron weights about with them, and found their dwellings in old wells, holes in the ground, or caves. Others threw off all clothing and ran about like wild beasts. In Syria one sect existed who spent their time on the mountain side, and ate grass like cattle. St. Athanasius says that St. Anthony, the leader of this movement, had never been guilty of the crime of washing his feet. One famous virgin never washed any part of her body except the tips of her fingers. St. Euphrasia belonged to a body of nuns who "never washed their feet, and who shuddered at the mention of a bath." St. Abraham, however, came out an easy first in this race for uncleanness, since he never washed either face or feet. St. Simon Stylites is said to have lived for over thirty years on the top of a pillar, his body covered with hideous ulcers, while his biographer "stood by his side to pick up the worms that fell from his body, and to replace them on the sores, the saint saying to the worm, 'Eat what God has given you.'"‡

* *City of God*, bk. xxii., ch. xxiv.

† See White's *Warfare of Science with Theology*, ii., p. 27.

‡ For numerous illustrations see White's *Warfare*, Fort's *Medical Economy during the Middle Ages*, and Buckle's *Posthumous Works*, ii., 302.

§ For a lengthy list of saints and the diseases under their control see Pettigrew's *Superstitions Connected with the Practice of Medicine*, pp. 37-8.

* *A Study of St. Paul*, p. 208.

† Lecky, *European Morals*, ii., p. 107.

‡ See, for fuller particulars, the list compiled by Lecky, *Morals*, ii., pp. 110-12, and Gibbon, ch. xxxvii.

Nor was this filthiness confined to a few individuals; it was fairly general. The wearing of linen was prohibited among all the monastic orders. Bathing was also prohibited as a heathenish custom. For nearly seven hundred years there was not a public bath in Christian Europe, while the Mohammedan city of Cordova possessed nearly nine hundred. The highest dignitaries of the State were often in a filthy condition, as, for example, Thomas à Becket, who, after his murder at Canterbury, was found to be wearing a hair shirt that was literally covered with vermin. The following is a picture of European cities in the sixteenth century, as drawn by Draper:—

"In Paris and London the houses were of wood daubed with clay, and thatched with straw. The luxury of a carpet was unknown; some straw, scattered in the room, supplied its place. There were no chimneys; the smoke from the ill-fed, cheerless fire escaped through a hole in the roof. No attempt was made at drainage, but the putrefying garbage and rubbish was simply thrown out of the door. Men, women, children, slept in the same apartment; not unfrequently domestic animals were their companions; in such a confusion of the family it was impossible that modesty and morality could be maintained.....Personal cleanliness was utterly unknown.To conceal personal impurity, perfumes were necessarily and profusely used. The citizen clothed himself in leather, a garment which, with its ever-increasing impurity, might last for years.....The streets had no sewers; they were without pavements or lamps. After nightfall the chamber shutters were thrown open, and slops unceremoniously emptied down, to the discomfiture of the wayfarer, tracking his path through the narrow streets, with his dismal lantern in his hand."*

When one considers all that has been said above, with all its implications, there is little need for surprise that during the Christian ages plagues were such frequent and such deadly visitors. And while Christianity had, on the one hand, suppressed the medical science of antiquity, it had, by its teachings, encouraged the growth of all conditions that would give disease a sure foothold. Nearly all the plagues and manias of the Dark and Middle Ages were closely connected with religious festivals or movements. Where religious extravagance did not initiate a disorder, as in the case of the dancing mania, it aided its spread by the methods adopted, as when Clement VI. called the faithful to Rome during the Black Plague, and thus caused a new eruption of the disease.†

In the matter of mental diseases the evil influence of Christianity is clear and unmistakable. I have already mentioned the fact that the New Testament everywhere treats this class of disorder as being due to demoniacal possession. This of necessity marked out the method of treatment for all good Christians to pursue. The early Christians prided themselves on the power of expelling demons, and challenged the Pagans to set contests. There were set forms through which the priest went. The lunatic was prayed over, washed with incense, evil-smelling drugs burned under his nose in order to drive the demon out, and a set form of abuse—lean sow, greedy wolf, Tartarean boor, entangled spider, lousy swineherd, etc.—hurled at the indwelling spirit. Whipping-posts were set up, and a severe whipping administered, with the object of making the demon's dwelling-place uncomfortable. Here is a specimen recipe of this class: "In case a man be lunatic, take a skin of mere swine, work it into a whip, and swing the man therewith; soon he will be quite cured. Amen." In Scotland, as late as 1789, lunatics were placed in the churchyard all night, bound hand and foot, covered with hay, and with a holy bell on their heads. In Cornwall they were pitched up and down in a pool until they were cured—or killed.‡ Even the embraces of prostitutes were recommended as a cure for insanity.§

For centuries there was not a voice raised against these ignorant and brutalising practices. Nor were

they peculiar to one body of Christians; they were common to all. Luther, Calvin, and Beza were as firm in the belief in their utility as any Catholic priest—the latter declaring that the idea of insanity as a natural malady was "refuted both by sacred and profane history." In the face of such teaching there is something peculiarly sarcastic in the claim of Christians to have built the first lunatic asylums. It invites the retort that there are few religions that needed them more, or did more to fill them. But they were not the first. The Mohammedans led the way in building homes for lunatics, as they did in a saner method of treating them (Lecky, *Morals*, ii., 88-9). And, curiously enough, the first home for lunatics ever opened by Christians was in Jerusalem, to accommodate those monks who had driven themselves insane by their barbarous penances (Gibbon, ch. xxxvii.).

The gradual growth of a saner method in the treatment of disease tells the usual tale of Christian obstruction and brutality. Until the fifteenth century medicine maybe said to have been exclusively Arabic. While Christians were suppressing, the Mohammedans were developing, medical science; and all those in Christendom who practised medicine until the end of the fifteenth century were taught, directly or indirectly, by the followers of the prophet. There is no more sickening chapter in the history of mankind than the opposition of the Churches to those men who were risking and spending their lives in the attempt to lessen the ravages of mental and bodily disease. The chief cause of the expulsion of the Jews from France in the early part of the fourteenth century was that their use of the Arabic medicine was interfering with the profits of the Church arising from prayers, relics, and pilgrimages. Roger Bacon spending fourteen years of his life in prison; Arnold De Villanona, the greatest physician of his day, driven from pillar to post like one unfit for the company of humankind; Vessalius, the founder of modern anatomy, who risked his life over and over again among the charnel houses of infected cities in seeking for a knowledge of disease; are a few instances among many that help to point the real influence of the Christian faith on the world's destinies. Opposition to inoculation and vaccination, which, in the opinion of some, might be justified, was based, not on their being useless or dangerous, but on the grounds that it was bidding defiance to the will of God; while one divine asserted that "Job's distemper was smallpox, and he had been inoculated by the devil. Disease was sent by God as a punishment for sin, and the attempt to prevent it is a diabolical operation." Even the use of chloroform in obstetrical cases was denounced from hundreds of pulpits as an impious attempt "to avoid one part of the primeval curse on women."

Space prevents my giving any further illustrations of even modern opposition to the improvement of our knowledge concerning the nature and cure of disease. Had the Churches been strong enough, we should still have been governed by that teaching expressed in the articles of the Established Church, that "Whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly that it is God's visitation"—an expression of belief not by any means confined to one sect, as daily experience demonstrates. For, great as the victory of science over superstition has been, it is far from complete; perhaps it is not even safely assured. The prayers offered up for recovery from sickness, the suggestions made for days of humiliation and fasting, show that, much as has been done, more still remains to be accomplished. Not that these expressions of prayer and fasting and humiliation are not strictly and logically Christian. Christ healing the sick by faith, and casting out devils by prayer, in the first century, and the Peculiar People in the twentieth century, form the beginning and end of Christian medicine. What the effect of the Christian conception of disease has been I have, all too briefly, indicated. Against this spirit of supernaturalism science has urged a long and bitter warfare; and, although the steps of science may be slow and cautious, yet an advance once made is seldom lost; ultimately reason and humanity vindicate its supremacy, and demonstrate that there is no disease which afflicts mankind that may not be weakened or destroyed by experience and common sense.

C. COHEN.

* *Conflict between Religion and Science*, pp. 264-5.

† For full treatment of the connection between religious movements and epidemics see Hecker's *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*.

‡ Space will not permit detailed accounts of the priestly methods for the cure of lunacy. The reader will find ample illustrations in White's *Warfare*, ch. xv., and Tuke's *History of the Insane in the British Isles*, ch. i.

§ Fort, p. 345.

Acid Drops.

"God save the King!" is the cry now. "God save the Queen!" is all over. On Sunday, January 20, Christian congregations all over the Kingdom were praying for Queen Victoria's recovery. On the Tuesday following she died. That was God Almighty's answer (on their theory) to their united supplications.

It was difficult to understand why the Christian royalists prayed so hard. In the first place, the Queen was dying of senile decay; and if she had recovered temporarily, she would only have survived as the wreck and ruin of herself. Surely it was better for her to die when she did. In the second place, the Christian royalists do not really believe in prayer. They only play at believing. They asked God Almighty to work a physiological miracle in the case of Queen Victoria. Yet when an honest member of the Peculiar People asked the Lord to work a physiological miracle in the case of his sick child, and then piously left the matter to Omnipotence, his fellow Christians sent him to gaol with hard labor like a common felon. But his child died, they will say. No doubt. And so did the Queen.

It appears that Queen Victoria had been breaking-up for six months. To conceal this fact there was a general conspiracy of silence. That is how the royal lady's death came so suddenly to the nation. It must be admitted that the conspiracy of silence was well kept up. But it suggests that there may be another conspiracy; not a conspiracy of silence, but a conspiracy of loquacious flattery. It is just as easy to deceive the people in one way as in the other.

Queen Victoria was doubtless a good woman. We had not the honour of her personal acquaintance, but those who knew her better than we did say that she was an admirable wife and mother, and we will take what they say for granted. She was a good woman, That is all right. Still, we hope this is not a distinction in England. We believe there are hosts of good women in the country. Indeed, we are sure that there are. Ay, and hosts of good women in every country. There *must* be, or the world would go to pot. Men may go wrong and do a lot of mischief, but if the women went wrong it would be all up with the race.

As a good woman Her Majesty made a very successful Queen. Public life is carried on (at present) almost exclusively by men, and they were willing to bow to a woman on the throne. There was something even maternal in her case as she grew older. Indeed, if the nation must have a sovereign, it seems to us that the sovereign should always be a woman, and if possible an old one; a woman in whom, so to speak, the passions are extinct and the affections still living.

"Soldiers of the Queen" was a catching phrase. It was a god-send to the military spirit which has been carefully fanned ever since the 1887 jubilee. Soldiers are all men, and there was something natural (as the world goes) in fighting for a woman. When she was called the Widow of Windsor, a still more sympathetic cord was touched in her breasts. But there is no such magic in "Soldiers of the King." Many a man who looks at Edward the Seventh will probably say (or think), "Fight for him? Not I. Let him fight for himself."

Her Majesty made a good queen because she was a good woman. But it is absurd to call her a *great* queen. There is no longer any room for a great queen in the British Constitution. The sovereign is the head of the State in name but not in fact. The governing *power* lies in the Cabinet—which, in turn, represents the majority of the electors of one way of political thinking. Practically, the sovereign has no direct political power. True, the government is carried on in the King's name; but so is the business in the law courts. What was once a fact has now become a fiction. We are really living under a veiled Republic, and the position of the sovereign has entirely changed. Once the King was at the helm of the ship of State; now he is at the bows. Once he was the pilot; now he is the figurehead.

It is nonsense to compare Queen Victoria with Queen Elizabeth. The virtues of the one were chiefly negative; the virtues of the other were chiefly positive. Elizabeth was not a good woman, in the common meaning of the words. She appears to have been far from chaste, although they called her the Virgin Queen; and she was vain and vindictive. But she had brains and courage. She was a real ruler. In her time the Crown was nearly absolute; the Parliament counted for next to nothing. The policy of the State was her policy, and the men who carried on its affairs were of her direct choosing. There is thus no analogy between the two reigns; and where there is no analogy there can be no comparison.

With regard to the "national grief" at Queen Victoria's

death, we are bound to say that it is very largely insincere. She had attained to a great age, and her death was to be looked for in the natural course of things. Yet a stranger would imagine that she had been cut off in her prime, and that the public loss was startling and irreparable. The nation is indulging in an orgie of sorrow. Some time ago *Khaki* was the only wear; now lads of sixteen go about smoking cigarettes and wearing black neckties. The very theatres are closed. It is felt that it would be disloyal to see even a play of Shakespeare's until after the Queen's funeral. The music-halls, however, are all open. Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, and Dan Leno are in full swing. And crowds of loyal people laugh and clap. They wear crape on their arms and a grin on their faces. And we fancy there is more truth in physiognomy than in millinery.

The newspapers have been "going it blind." Even the *Star* has shed tears enough to float a ship. Unlimited gush has been the order of the day. It could hardly have been worse if the Crucifixion had just taken place, and no one had received a tip about the Resurrection. We are glad, however, to note a signal exception in the case of *Reynolds's Newspaper*. Mr. Thompson is to be congratulated on his immunity from the prevalent fever.

One Radical paper—heaven save the mark!—ended its article on the death of Queen Victoria by the solemn declaration, which was no doubt also meant to be affecting, that she had "gone to face her God." Probably the writer would have been puzzled to say what he meant. God is said to be everywhere, and therefore everybody faces him always. Look straight in front of you, and you face him; turn round, and you face him still. Perhaps the writer in question had a vague feeling that the arrival of the Queen would be a signal event in heaven, and that the Almighty would feel considerably honored by her visit. It did not occur to the Radical gusher to reflect that the British Empire is a much bigger thing than Queen Victoria; that it is nevertheless by no means all the world; that, even if it were, the world itself is as nothing in the universe; and that the Governor of Infinity could hardly be expected to attach much importance to the exit of one "distinguished" insect from this insignificant spot in space.

Of course the "poets" have been turned on like watertaps. The Poet Laureate was naturally well to the front, having to maintain his position and earn his £100 a year. We have seen his verses—long ones—in the newspapers. But we have not read them. Our sins are many, but not heavy enough to call for such a penalty. Still, we have glanced over Poet Austin's word-spinnings for this occasion, and we are satisfied that they are the same old stuff, and up (or down) to the same old level. Let the Poet Laureate pass then; and let us look more closely at a brand new poet who has suddenly sprung to light in the pages of the *Referee*. This is no other than Mr. Wilson Barrett, who has grown wonderfully pious since he found there was a pot of money in the *Sign of the Cross*, and has recently informed the world that his great object in composing that sublime masterpiece was to counteract the "infidel" teaching of Ingersoll. We have heard it said, by persons who affect to know Mr. Barrett's private opinions, that he believes in Christianity just as much, and just as little, as Ingersoll did; but we reject this slander as scarcely short of blasphemy. Mr. Barrett's poem on the dead Queen shows him to be a true Christian. It is full of the wildest sentimentalism. All the poetry in it consists in the heading, which is a quotation—"He giveth his beloved sleep"; and in the last line of the last couplet, where God is said to have "closed the tired eyelids o'er the tired eyes." Although not printed in inverted commas, this is also a quotation, and a spoiled one. As the image appeared in the *Lotos Eaters* it was lovely—

Music that gentlier on the spirit lies
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes.

That is how Tennyson wrote it. Mr. Barrett reproduces it in his own fashion. And what a fashion, to be sure!

The most obvious thing to say about the Queen is "Mother," and Mr. Barrett works it for all it is worth. Here is a sample:

Thou, great Mother of the nations, gave the nations peace.

"Thou gave" is beautiful grammar to begin with. But let that pass. What we want to know is the meaning of "Mother of the nations." What the devil *can* it mean? England has been called the mother of free nations—such as Canada and Australia; and perhaps Mr. Barrett remembered it and said to himself, "That's a good phrase; I'll stick it on to the Queen."

Mr. Barrett might also tell us *how* and *when* Queen Victoria "gave the nations peace." We cannot see that it was in her power, or in any one person's power, to do anything of the kind. And, as a matter of fact, she did not do it. All the great wars since Waterloo have been fought in her reign. The wars with China, the wars with Afghanistan, the Crimean War, the war in India, the war with Abyssinia,

the war between North and South in America, the war between France and Austria, the war between Prussia and Austria, the war between France and Germany, the war between Russia and Turkey, the war between Turkey and Greece, the war between the United States and Spain, and the war still raging between Britisher and Boer in South Africa, to say nothing of the "punitive expedition" to China, with all its horrors of rape and massacre. Really, the editor of the *Referee* should have been ashamed to insert such rubbish; and we suggest that if Mr. Barrett is to write any more "pcems" for that journal, he should be presented with an elementary text-book of modern history.

The *Sunday Sun* was bound to come out with something striking. "Victoria the Good" was the title of its effort, and the first line ran, "The greatest monarch of the ages sleeps." Not the best, but the greatest. The Edwards, the Henrys, and Elizabeth are nowhere; and Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon hide their diminished heads.

Right under this wonderful "poem" is the beginning of a long laudatory article on Queen Victoria. The writer starts by airing his literary knowledge. He refers to Shelley's statement that we look before and after. Well, Shelley did say in the *Ode to a Skylark* that "We look before and after." But, bless this writer's soul, Shakespeare said it more than two hundred years earlier. It is really too bad to leave this sort of literary censorship to the editor of a vulgar, illiterate journal like the *Freethinker*. We love Shelley much, but we love Shakespeare more; so we refer the *Sunday Sun* man to the end of the fourth scene of the fourth act of *Hamlet*, where he will find these words, which we dare say are not in the "stage" editions:—

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused.

There, thou *Sunday Sun* man, whoever thou art, we make thee a present of that, as cheap as we got it, free, gratis, for nothing.

Now for a few words about the Queen's funeral. It seems to us the gratification of a very morbid taste, unless it be another bit of imperial stage-management, to keep her dead body about for the best part of a fortnight, and then to drag it for a show through the streets of London. The first idea of the royal family, to do them justice, was more natural and dignified. The Queen's remains were to be laid as privately as possible beside her husband's at Frogmore. But the newspapers got up an agitation for a public display, and the authorities have yielded to it; for are not the anonymous and irresponsible journalists the masters of England to-day?

Charles Darwin's dead body was taken silently through the streets of London in the dead of night, for burial in the morning in Westminster Abbey. There was no press notification, no procession, and no crowd. The transit through London was almost stealthy. Yet when the death of Queen Victoria has ceased to be a nine days' wonder, when all the dust of the funeral crowds has long since settled, when the verdict of Time is passed, when history has separated the grain from the chaff, it will not be the name of any sovereign of the second half of the nineteenth century that will stand out eminent and conspicuous, but the name of that modest and sweet-natured genius who, in the quiet of a little Kentish village, matured the ideas that were to revolutionise the thought, and indirectly the practice, of the whole of the civilised world.

"God Save the Queen!" is all over now, as we have said; and the cry is "God Save the King!" It is amusing to note how Albert Edward has suddenly become another person—though it is not he that has changed, but his situation. Already we see the hand of loyal tradition weaving him a new robe of character. The whole process reminds us of the origin of the Gospel history. Presently the ex-Prince of Wales will become quite a mythical new personage as King Edward the Seventh. We see the myth growing already under our very eyes.

"God Save the King!" When Byron heard that cry on the death of George III. he sat down and wrote his masterpiece of satire, the *Vision of Judgment*. George III. was a "good" king, in the ordinary sense of the word; that is, he was endowed with the domestic virtues, and even with "constancy to a bad, ugly woman." But from the point of view of statesmanship, he was blind, stupid, and mischievous. Anyway, Byron, the Republican, was not going to sing his praises. He sang something else. He made Satan claim the soul of George III., not because they were short of kings in hell, but because justice was justice. The old king got into heaven all right at the finish, but he slipped in while Southey, the Poet Laureate, played Old Harry with the

hosts both of heaven and hell by reciting his own verses. And, says Byron,

When the tumult dwindled to a calm
I left him practising the hundredth psalm.

Here is a special verse of Byron's great satire:—

"God save the King!" It is a large economy
In God to save the like; but if he will
Be saving, all the better; for not one am I
Of those who think damnation better still:
I hardly know too if not quite alone am I
In this small hope of bettering future ill
By circumscribing, with some slight restriction,
The eternity of hell's hot jurisdiction.

"God Save the King!" Well, if there be a deity, God save all of us! Why concentrate his attention on kings? There are wiser and more useful persons in existence. God should extend the scope of his attention. As Ebenezer Elliott sang:—

When wilt thou save the people?
O God of mercies when?
Not thrones, O Lord, but nations;
Not kings, O God, but men?

The *Sunday Strand*, it seems, has taken to the re-telling of Bible stories "with much elaboration." We don't object to this reproduction of fiction, but it appears that the *Rock* does. It says that this kind of thing is a "startling innovation." And it goes on to explain that in the January issue of the *Sunday Strand* "the story of the Garden of Eden is put into the mouth of Eve, becoming a realistic and sensational narrative. Does there not seem something presumptuous in this freedom of dealing with the sacred books? There can be no living writer qualified to add to the stories told us in Scripture; and if the public will not read these in their right place, why should the same tales be dressed up in a spurious and tinsel manner? Many will sincerely hope that the popular magazine will quickly drop this 'startling innovation.'"

If it is possible to impart a "realistic" appearance to any of the Scriptural narratives, we should not complain, nor should Christians, who ought rather to rejoice that there is a chance of making these stories look something like the truth. As for "freedom in dealing with the sacred books," we have quite outlived any feeling that desecration lies that way.

Western civilisation is making rapid strides in some parts of Palestine. Jerusalem has got the electric light as well as a railway, and two post-offices have been opened for the Germans and French respectively. A carriage road to Nablous, the ancient Shechem, is in course of construction, so that it will soon be possible to drive to the neighborhood of Jacob's Well. And yet some of the old customs live on side by side with modern novelties. An architect who journeyed lately in a carriage from Gaza to Beersheba had the way prepared for him by men sent on in front to smooth the rough places.

The Rev. Blakeney, M.A., has offered to the world a review of religious belief in the past century. He doesn't think that scientific thought has affected belief in the Bible—an opinion to which he is quite entitled, though it is absurd. He is obliged to admit, later on, that "critical investigations" have had some influence on religious thought.

And then he has the impudence to say that Agnosticism is "the easy resort of uneasy thinkers." He probably fancies that this is what is commonly known as a "fetching remark." But nobody is likely to be disturbed by it. We rather think that we have seen this observation applied, not to Agnosticism, but to Roman Catholicism. Any way, there is nothing original about it except its impudence.

The *Christian* is up to one of the hackneyed tricks of modern orthodoxy. It rejoices over the death of Secularism. Of course, it knows very well that Secularism is not dead, but it is policy to bamboozle the Christians who fancy it was long since buried. The more they are kept in ignorance, the easier it is to practise upon their credulity. Our contemporary says that Secularism "made a great noise for many years, and claimed a large following, especially among working men," but "at the beginning of the new century it finds itself in a poor plight on both sides of the Atlantic." In justification of this statement some nonsense is quoted from an American Christian paper on the late Secular Congress at Cincinnati. We will not condescend to reply to such stuff. Let the *Christian* deal with England first. We invite it to give its readers some evidence that Secularism is dead in this country, and then to publish our reply.

So ignorant is the *Christian* of the history of Secularism that it puts "Hyndman and Bradlaugh" together as two of the "gifted and determined minds" under whose "inspiration" it made great headway in England. As a matter of fact, Mr. Hyndman never had any sort of connection with

the Secular Movement, although we believe he is a Free-thinker and even an Atheist. There is, indeed, something very comical in coupling his name with Mr. Bradlaugh's, for they were very much opposed to each other on most subjects, and to all appearance there was little love lost between them. It is said that adversity makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows; but the *Christian* has gone one better than adversity itself in this direction.

After airing its ignorance, or doing something still worse, the *Christian* displays another orthodox virtue. "It is a remarkable fact," it says, "that when men revolt from Revelation, on the ground that it is unreasonable, they often gravitate either towards immorality or superstition." Mrs. Besant is cited as an instance of the gravitation towards superstition—just as though nearly all the mysterious nonsense she now teaches could not be found within the covers of the Bible! Nobody is cited as an instance of the gravitation towards immorality. This is at least discreet, for the less evidence you adduce on behalf of a lie the better.

The Fatal Opulence of Bishops is the title of a book just published by the Vicar of St. Thomas's, Camden Town, N.W. The subject is one on which much might be said that would hardly be agreeable to the Bench of Bishops. The author had better look out for squalls.

Writing in the *Guardian of Hymns Ancient and Modern*, the Rev. A. Sloman, of Godmanchester, cites as objectionable the following lines, which appear in a well-known hymn in that volume:—

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee,
Repaid a thousandfold will be;
Then gladly will we give to Thee,
Who givest all.

Another choice excerpt made by this clerical critic is the following:—

Christian, dost thou see them
On the holy ground,
How the troops of Midian
Prowl and prowl around?
Christian, up and smite them;
Counting gain but loss;
Smite them by the merit
Of the holy Cross.

He objects that "prowl and prowl around" is both ludicrous in sound and inaccurate as Scripture history, for the troops of Midian did not prowl around; other troops prowled around them. Then he argues that "counting gain but loss" is an inversion to find a rhyme with "Cross," and that it ought to be "count loss but gain." Mr. Sloman does not like—

Give us Thy grace to rise above
The glare of this world's smelting fires,

which appears in the hymn for St. Matthew's Day, and most people will sympathise with his distaste for the couplet. Of another verse:—

And he, whom yet we look upon
With comfort and delight,
Will quite depart from hence anon
And leave us to the night,

Mr. Sloman asks—"Could baldness further go?" We might add many instances of the lack of poetry in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.

The late Bishop of Worcester (Dr. Philpott) used to express his inability to understand the popularity of the Hymnal. He attributed it mainly to the few striking tunes which belong to the selection.

The recent Theosophist Convention at Benares serves to remind us what a long time it is since people used to talk about Mahatmas, and precipitation, and astral bodies, and all the rest of it. Fashions have changed since then, and Theosophy has been followed by many other forms of amusement. Who would to-day desert an exciting game of ping-pong in order to talk about Karma Rupa and the rest of it? Really, we cannot be so decadent after all.

The Nonconformist section of the members of the Wivelsfield (Sussex) School Board object to the children being "coached up" in the observance of Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and other Church festivals, on the ground that it is using the thin edge of the wedge to introduce sectarian instruction. There is surely a great deal of much more useful information which it is possible to impart to children.

The following is rather a good story of a pious and canny Scot. One Sunday, writes a correspondent, I called at a cottage in the south of Midlothian and requested a measure of milk, which was promptly handed to me. I offered the woman who attended to my wants a few coppers, but she curtly responded, "I canna tak siller on a Sawbath!" I thanked her, and was turning away, when she whispered, "Mon, ye can drap the bawbees in that tub wi' the graith (soap-suds) in't. I'll get them oot the morn!"

Not to be outdone by the Free Churches, the Bishop of Ripon has started a new Century Fund of 1,000,000 shillings. Likely enough, he will get that amount, for even at this time of day the Church can collect money if it can't do anything else.

The Church Army has now commenced a "Twentieth Century Million Shilling Fund." Two friends have already promised to give 10,000 shillings each, provided the 1,000,000 shillings be given or promised before the close of the year. These provisional promises do not look altogether right. They may, of course, have the effect of winning additional subscriptions, and just as much of course they may have the effect of stopping them, for no one likes to be absolutely dragged into contributing even for his dearest object on earth or heaven, if he believes in it.

The superintendents of the seven Buddhist sects in Japan administer a sharp rap on the knuckles to the missionaries in China of all denominations, who, they allege, "have stepped beyond the legitimate sphere of religion," and given the Chinese reason to regard them with suspicion as "intimately connected with the foreign policies of their own countries." The Buddhist heads an appeal to the Christian missionaries, in conjunction with themselves, "to devote their energies to formulating some plan by which the suspicion as well as the indignation harbored by the Chinese against the foreign missionaries may be removed." Missionaries should, for instance, be hindered from inducing their Governments to carry out schemes of aggrandisement against China, on the plea that they have been persecuted; and the missionaries should be prevented from doing anything that might be construed as disturbing the social institutions of China.

Recently Canon Gore admitted that the Bible narratives "prior to Abraham can no longer be received as historical." This truly alarming admission seems to have much disturbed the Rev. James Silvester, rector of Nympsfield, Gloucestershire. He addressed a protest to the *Church of England Pulpit*, which reported the sermon; but that paper does not appear to have been willing to open its columns to the indignation of the rector. Perhaps we should never have known of his protest but for the *Rock*, which is gracious enough to print it. He has some suspicion that he will be regarded as "narrow and one-sided," and will be ranked amongst those who are "incapable of thinking for themselves." Still, he insists that "if there is one principle enforced by our Church, it is that of the authenticity of the Bible." Indeed! Then the practice of many leading lights of the Church is quite contrary to the principle enforced, for there are few portions of Holy Writ which have escaped damaging clerical criticism.

This Gloucestershire rector admonishes all whom it may concern to "supple," in the words of a well-known homily, "our hard, stony hearts," and take care that we be not "contemners and deriders of God's infallible word." Of course, we should not become anything so impious if we were assured that a God exists, and that the miscellaneous collection of writings called the Bible are indeed his "infallible word." But these initial propositions will take a lot of proving.

Mr. W. T. Lee, Christian Evidence lecturer, is referred to in the *Christian World* in connection with a series of addresses he has recently delivered at Manchester. The title of the concluding lecture was "Nazarene, Thou hast Conquered," which, to say the least of it, is somewhat of an assumption. The *C. W.* correspondent says: "A good many Secularists attended several of the lectures, and, although the organisers were quite prepared to see no visible results, it is gratifying to be able to record that such results have been achieved. Mr. Lee, who is still a young man of forty, has had a long experience of Christian evidence work, reaching back now for twenty years. He debated with Mrs. Besant shortly before she abandoned Secularism, and has debated ten or a dozen times with Mr. Foote. He is thoroughly familiar with Secularist literature and the Secularist point of view. His lectures have thus an appositeness which is often absent in certain types of apologetics. He is much better read in the best modern apologetics than I should imagine to be the case with many lecturers on Evidences."

This, after all, is not very high praise for Mr. Lee. To be in any way an improvement on the bulk of Christian evidence lecturers does not necessitate or indicate much. The *C. W.* correspondent concludes with these significant words: "I could very much wish that the Churches would take more seriously the duty of meeting the Secularist propaganda, which is playing such deadly havoc in so many workshops of our land."

With the heading, "Good Enough for the State Church," *Reynolds's Newspaper* says that the Archbishop of Canterbury has just presented to the living of Ashurst, in Kent, a gentleman who was sentenced, when a curate of thirty-six, to six months' imprisonment for a criminal offence of a grave character.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

February 10, Glasgow; 17, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

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

T. PACEY.—See acknowledgment. Of course it is better late than never—as other readers are recommended to note. Thanks for your good wishes.

SOMEONE has sent us 4s. for Shilling Week. He begins his letter with "Dear Sir," but forgets to add his signature. We have acknowledged as "No Name."

T. WILLIAMS.—Your letter *re* literature for distribution at Mr. Treharne-Jones's lectures has been handed to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. Secretary.

W. MUMBY.—(1) During the editor's indisposition it has been impossible for him to write more than his ordinary copy for the *Freethinker*, which is always a good deal. He will resume the Twentieth Century Fund appeal as speedily as possible. Thanks for your generous offer of another £5, or even £10, if others show a disposition to subscribe more liberally. (2) Much obliged for the Huxley extracts. (3) What you say is precisely what we told the Moral Instruction League. It is impossible to keep the Bible in the schools as *literature*. It was put there as a *sacred book*, and would never have been put there otherwise. We think you are right on the matter of the policy. (4) Moral instruction has become established in the Board schools by the action of the Education Department, under the Act of 1870.

J. BRIERLEY.—Sorry we cannot undertake to answer legal questions, and yours is rather complicated. If you wish to apply to a solicitor, we can recommend Messrs. Harper & Battcock, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C.

R. CHAPMAN.—Glad to see the South Shields friends bestirring themselves on behalf of "Shilling Week." We hope to see you all soon.

T. HUNT.—There are various ways, of course, of helping the cause. Thanks for the copy of your well-written, vigorous, and effective letter to the Chairman of the Watch Committee of the Stockport Borough Council on Sabbatarian persecutions. We are very glad to have your opinion that the *Freethinker* is "a splendid educational medium."

G. CALCUTT.—Yes, we are winning, as you say; that is, our principles are permeating the public mind. But it is hard work for the pioneers, all the same.

MRS. GARDNER, of the Hull School Board, desires to correct an "Acid Drop" in our January 20 issue. We seem to have got hold of the direct opposite of what she said, doubtless through a brief, misleading report. Her resolution was carried in spite of the opposition of three clerical members. What she objected to was "male" and "female" teachers, those terms being obsolete and suggesting the animals that went into the Ark.

W. GARNER.—Unless you have a great deal of time on hand, we cannot advise you to spend any of it on the writings of Swedenborg. There are good things in his many books, but the digging out is a long and heavy work, and comparatively unremunerative. Perhaps the *Divine Love and Wisdom*, translated by Dr. Garth Wilkinson, would be the best for you to attempt. It is a small volume, cheap, and largely characteristic.

H. PERCY WARD.—Mr. Foote is writing you.

H. VICKERS.—Your long letter on the Drink Question shall be read carefully with a view to insertion.

J. ROBERTS.—The personal matter is hardly worth pursuing further.

E. BOWEN.—The matter has been attended to. Pleased to have your strong approval of our reply to Dr. Coit. He certainly seems a bit hazy on the "religious" side, though an able and, we believe, an estimable man.

J. PARTRIDGE.—The subject of your letter shall be duly considered. Mr. Foote will write you on the matter shortly.

W. P. BALL.—Always glad to receive your cuttings.

T. ROBERTSON.—Subjects to hand and noted. Shall be glad to receive a bill in due course.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Democracy—Crescent—China Mail—Life and Beauty—La Raison—Boston Investigator—Torch of Reason—Secular Thought—Hornsey Journal.

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

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE had a crowded audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when he lectured on "The End of 'God Save the Queen.'" He was followed with the closest attention, and was very warmly applauded. Some points of his lecture are reproduced in this week's "Acid Drops."

Mr. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Feb. 3), taking for his subject "Religion and Insanity." We hope he will have a good "congregation," including some of the religious people. The insane are too far gone for Mr. Cohen's treatment, but the half-way people would be benefited by listening to him.

Mr. Foote is taking a Sunday off to-day (Feb. 3), with a view to getting into perfect trim again for the rest of a hard winter's work. A large program for the next few months lies before him, and he is anxious to do it justice. With just a little rest and change he expects to be once more in first-rate fettle. He is already much better bodily, though still somewhat troubled with insomnia, and is just beginning to feel his absolutely necessary work less of a burden. In ordinary circumstances his work is a pleasure; chiefly, of course, because it is a labor of love.

On the following Sunday (Feb. 10) Mr. Foote delivers three lectures at Glasgow, and on the Sunday after that three more lectures at Manchester. He hopes also to visit the Tyneside, including South Shields, during February.

Mr. E. Treharne-Jones, late Church of England minister, continues his campaign against the faith from which he seceded on account of its falsity. He lectures to-day (Feb. 3) at the Long Room, Temperance Hall, Wetherall-street, Aberdare. His subject at 2.30 is "Priestcraft," and at 6 "Is the Bible out of Date?" All the Freethinkers in the district should make a point of rallying round the ex-reverend gentleman.

Pontypridd and district Secularists are requested to attend a meeting to-day (Feb. 3) at the City Restaurant, Pontypridd, at 6 p.m. The organising committee will report progress in regard to the local Freethought propaganda.

Mr. Percy Ward informs us that the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch can no longer retain his services as organiser. The difficulty is a financial one, and is much regretted by the Branch, as we learn by another letter from Mr. Partridge, the secretary. Mr. Ward has engaged himself, however, to lecture for the Branch every other Sunday. This allows him to lecture for Branches in other parts of the country, and we hope he will receive plenty of invitations. Mr. Ward still means to devote the whole of his time to the Freethought cause, if it be possible to do so. All he asks in return is to make both ends meet; a thing which is so difficult, alas, in the service of Reason, and so easy in the service of Faith.

According to the *Life and Letters* of the late Professor Huxley, edited by his son, Leonard Huxley, it is quite certain that Dr. Stanton Coit has misunderstood his position with regard to the use of the Bible in Board schools. "He supported," his biographer says, "what appeared to be the only workable plan under the circumstances, though it was not his ideal; for he would not have used the Bible as the agency for introducing the religious and ethical idea into education if he had been dealing with a fresh and untouched population." It always remained his belief that "the principle of strict Secularity in State education is sound, and must eventually prevail."

Writing to a correspondent in 1894, Huxley referred to the Compromise as "an armistice 'between' contending parties who were absolutely irreconcilable." On the whole, he rather hoped that the Clerical party might upset the Compromise, in order that "the sweep into space which would befall them in the course of the next twenty-three years might be complete and final."

Mr. J. M. Robertson delivers three lectures for the Glasgow Branch to-day (Feb. 3). There can be no question as to his ability, and we hear that he has become a very effective public speaker. He should have good audiences in a city like Glasgow.

A Great Poet's Exile.

THE story of Victor Hugo's exile gives dignity to his life. For nineteen dark years he ate the bitter bread of banishment. They were years of exile, but also years of glory. Exiled by fate that he might do his work.

As one who has suffered shipwreck upon the stormy waters of life, and bravely struggles to the shore, so did Victor Hugo reach the island of Jersey on August 5, 1852. The house which the Hugo family occupied in the island stands on the low shore, a little way out of St. Helier. It is an ordinary seaside house, with a slight French appearance from its green shutters. Along the back lies the garden, some of the contents of which, with an exile's tenderness, had been brought from France and planted there by Hugo himself.

A sandy ridge hides the sea from the lower rooms. Beyond this stretch the sands, and then come the encircling waters. Well had this eagle chosen his eyrie. One likes to think of him watching the continual pageant of old ocean. Its vastness, its freedom, its joy, and its beauty must have impressed the poet's mind. Sometimes shining in the sun, an expanse of shimmering silver. Sometimes, instinct with wrath, its huge masses rising and clashing together, and breaking into crests of foam, a very witch's caldron. Now, grey and quiet as if in sleep. Anon, shrouded with a white mist, deepening the sense of mystery by which it is ever enwrapped. At night, rolling gently under the soft light of the stars, save where beneath the quiet moon, a glorious pathway, broadening to the far horizon, allures and seems to point to "fairy lands forlorn." Or, maybe, a wilderness of burnished gold, as its billows are furrowed with phosphorescent fire.

Transportation from Paris produced a vast change in the lives of the Hugo family. How dull the gaieties of St. Helier must have seemed to the young Parisians. But they accepted the inevitable cheerfully. They worked, rode, fished, fenced, bathed, and took photographs. Charles, who had been a Boulevard Adonis, now dressed manfully in homespun. Miss Adèle gladly accepted the Jersey dances in default of more brilliant assemblies. Victor Hugo did a great deal besides contemplating the beauties of nature. He wrought without remission at prose and verse. The first fruits of his toil were a volume of poems, published in 1853. The title of the book frankly indicates its character. *Les Chatiments* deals with the misdeeds of "Napoleon the Little." These works furnished the strongest invectives ever uttered against "the man of December." They exhibit a man of supreme genius expending all the wealth of satire and denunciation in the white heat of passion. A terrible book, well named "The Chastisements," and written by perhaps the finest purely literary genius that France ever produced.

Did ever despot suffer such an impeachment as Napoleon the Third? Was ever monarch attacked in such grand and sonorous lines, with such sinewy rhetoric, sounding declamation, pictorial richness? Lyrics, written for the political purposes of the moment, for ever echoing in the heart and present in the memory of the people who read them. The Empress, of whom he always spoke with courtesy, saw the volume. After reading it, she observed: "M. Hugo must hate us very much." So he did. He hated the Emperor with a perfect hatred—as a dangerous reptile, to which no "quarter" could possibly be given.

After all, the Government of "Napoleon the Little" was destined to ruin. In the *Coup d'Etat* lurked the germs of the *Débauche*. Therefore history, for all her large tolerance, will refuse to obliterate Victor Hugo's terrible impeachment. It lives by its literary power and by its truth.

The illustrious exile was not long allowed to remain at Jersey. The French exiles in the island were, intellectually, miles above the natives. They issued a newspaper, *L'Homme* ("Man"), to which they confided the story of their wrongs and hopes. Sooner or later a collision between them and the ignorant and prejudiced islanders seemed inevitable. The end came in a mob attack on the publishing office. The town was in an uproar, the exiles were in peril, and Victor Hugo sent his manuscripts into hiding. Whereupon the Governor

ordered the editorial staff of *L'Homme* to leave the island. Hugo and his friends were expelled, and left by the steamer for Guernsey.

Toleration was hardly to be expected in Jersey. Hugo was a Republican and a Freethinker, and the island was a hotbed of piety and loyalty. Almost every action and every word of the exiles must have run counter to popular sentiment. According to tradition, a goodly number of saints have visited Jersey. One and all assisted to convert the natives to Christianity and to bigotry. St. Helier, after whom the town of St. Helier is named, arrived on these shores early in the sixth century. High on the rocks, near Elizabeth Castle, is still to be seen his hermitage. Here he is said to have dwelt, and the bed he scooped out for himself in the solid rock shows that he was no sybarite, to complain of a crumpled roseleaf. To-day the odor of sanctity has departed from the cell, and given place to the more salubrious ozone. Holiest of all the saints, the Virgin herself is said to have honored the isle with a visit. At Havre de Pas formerly stood a chapel of Notre Dame de Pas, the name being derived from a legend that the dainty footprints of the Virgin remain discernible in the rock on which she appeared to a favored devotee. The name exists; the footprints and the Virgin are no longer to be seen. Maybe the proximity of the Fort Regent garrison may account for this bashfulness on the part of the august lady.

Not only have the saints from time to time honored the isle with their presence; the devils themselves have been here. At Samares Point, in the garden of a gabled house, is the Roberet, or Witch's Stone. It is believed to have been the meeting-place of uncanny persons, who had sold themselves to the Powers of Darkness for a consideration not specified. Legend tells us of a maiden rescuing her lover from destruction by bearing aloft the sacred emblem into the midst of a circle of witches. Indeed, Jersey was one of the last places where laws against witchcraft remained in force. A still more important member of the Christian mythology came to Jersey. Satan, who has facetiously been described as "the fourth person of the Trinity," did not wish to leave this favored isle unvisited. North of the Isle of Plemont is the Devil's Chair, located on the verge of a precipice with a sheer fall of a hundred feet or more to the shore beneath. From this seat one obtains a clear view of the rocks facetiously named the Paternosters. A few miles eastward of Plemont may be seen the Creux du Vis, or Creux Terrible, popularly known as the Devil's Hole. At the present day, on payment of the modest sum of twopence, His Satanic Majesty himself may be interviewed. He is of swarthy complexion, and armed with the needful toasting-fork and two formidable horns. How are the mighty fallen! He, who once contended with Omnipotence, is now chained in a kind of fowl-house. He creates much amusement among the excursionists, who are privileged to inspect him through a wire netting. Satan must be as gifted as his mighty adversary. Or, maybe, he had an understudy. On being expelled from France in 1880, the Jesuits made their headquarters in Jersey. Opposite the residence of the members of the Society of Jesus is a nunnery. The nuns are known as "Auxiliaries of the Souls in Purgatory." Although the excursionists may smile at the devil at Creux du Vis, the Great Lying Catholic Church still considers His Satanic Majesty a valuable asset in its attempt to deceive humanity.

MIMNERMUS.

Shilling Week.

Third List.

T. Hopkins, 1s.; J. Baker, 1s.; T. Dunbar, 1s.; Martin Weatherburn, 2s. 6d.; Members of West Ham Branch, 16s.; J. Brierley, 9s.; D. R. Bow, 2s. 6d.; J. O. Bates, 3s.; T. Pacey, 2s. 6d.; No Name, 4s.; Jennie Smith, 1s.; E. Chapman, 1s.; T. Hunt, 2s.; G. Calcutt, 1s.

CORRECTIONS.—T. Wigham, 1s. (in last list), should have been 2s. 6d.

The Household of Faith.

THERE is a continual effort in the mind of man to find the harmony that he knows must exist between all known fact. It is hard for the scientist to implicitly believe anything that he suspects to be inconsistent with a known fact. He feels that every fact is a key to many mysteries—that every fact is a detective, not only, but a perpetual witness. He knows that a fact has a countless number of sides, and that all these sides will match all other facts; and he also suspects that to understand one fact perfectly—like the fact of the attraction of gravitation—would involve a knowledge of the universe.

It requires not only candor, but courage, to accept a fact. When a new fact is found, it is generally denied, resisted, and calumniated by the conservatives until denial becomes absurd, and then they accept it with the statement that they always supposed it was true.

The old is the ignorant enemy of the new. The old has pedigree and respectability; it is filled with the spirit of caste; it is associated with great events and great names; it is entrenched; it has an income—it represents property. Besides, it has parasites, and the parasites always defend themselves.

Long ago frightened wretches, who had by tyranny or piracy amassed great fortunes, were induced in the moment of death to compromise with God, and to let their money fall from their stiffening hands into the greedy palms of priests. In this way many theological seminaries were endowed, and in this way prejudices, mistakes, absurdities, known as religious truths, have been perpetuated. In this way the dead hypocrites have propagated and supported their kind.

Most religions—no matter how honestly they originated—have been established by brute force. Kings and nobles have used them as a means to enslave, to degrade, and rob. The priest, consciously and unconsciously, has been the betrayer of his followers.

Near Chicago there is an ox that betrays his fellows. Cattle—twenty or thirty at a time—are driven to the place of slaughter. This ox leads the way—the others follow. When the place is reached, this Bishop Dupanloup turns and goes back for other victims.

This is the worse side. There is a better. Honest men, believing that they have found the whole truth—the real and only faith—filled with enthusiasm, give all for the purpose of propagating the "divine creed." They found colleges and universities, and, in perfect pious, ignorant sincerity, provide that the creed, and nothing but the creed, must be taught, and that, if any professor teaches anything contrary to that, he must be instantly dismissed—that is to say, the children must be beaten with the bones of the dead.

These good religious souls erect guide-boards with a provision to the effect that the guide-boards must remain, whether the roads are changed or not, and with the further provision that the professors who keep and repair the guide-boards must always insist that the roads have not been changed.

There is still another side.

Professors do not wish to lose their salaries. They love their families, and have some regard for themselves. There is a compromise between their bread and their brain. On pay-day they believe—at other times they have their doubts. They settle with their consciences by giving old words new meanings. They take refuge in allegory, hide behind parables, and barricade themselves with Oriental imagery. They give to the most frightful passages a spiritual meaning; and, while they teach the old creed to their followers, they speak a new philosophy to their equals.

There is still another side.

A vast number of clergymen and laymen are perfectly satisfied. They have no doubts. They believe as their fathers and mothers did. The "scheme of salvation" suits them because they are satisfied that they are embraced within its terms. They give themselves no trouble. They believe because they do not understand. They have no doubts because they do not think. They regard doubt as a thorn in the pillow of orthodox slumber. Their souls are asleep, and they hate only those who disturb their dreams. These people keep their creeds for future use. They intend to have them

ready at the time of dissolution. They sustain about the same relation to daily life that the small boats carried by steamers do to ordinary navigation—they are for the moment of shipwreck. Creeds, like life-preservers, are to be used in disaster.

We must remember that everything in nature—bad as well as good—has the instinct of self-preservation. All lies go armed, and all mistakes carry concealed weapons. Driven to the last corner, even non-resistance appeals to the dagger.

Vast interests—political, social, artistic, and individual—are interwoven with all creeds. Thousands of millions of dollars have been invested; many millions of people obtain their bread by the propagation and support of certain religious doctrines, and many millions have been educated for that purpose, and for that alone. Nothing is more natural than that they should defend themselves—that they should cling to a creed that gives them roof and raiment.

Only a few years ago Christianity was a complete system. It included and accounted for all phenomena; it was a philosophy satisfactory to the ignorant world; it had an astronomy and geology of its own; it answered all questions with the same readiness and the same inaccuracy; it had within its sacred volumes the history of the past and the prophecies of all the future; it pretended to know all that was, is, or ever will be necessary for the well-being of the human race, here and hereafter.

When a religion has been founded, the founder admitted the truth of everything that was generally believed that did not interfere with his system. Imposture always has a definite end in view, and, for the sake of the accomplishment of that end, it will admit the truth of anything and everything that does not endanger its success.

The writers of all sacred books—the inspired prophets—had no reason for disagreeing with the common people about the origin of things, the creation of the world, the rising and setting of the sun, and the uses of the stars, and, consequently, the sacred books of all ages have endorsed the belief general at the time. You will find in our sacred books the astronomy, the geology, the philosophy, and the morality of the ancient barbarians. The religionist takes these general ideas as his foundation, and upon them builds the supernatural structure. For many centuries the astronomy, geology, philosophy, and morality of our Bible were accepted. They were not questioned, for the reason that the world was too ignorant to question.

A few centuries ago the art of printing was invented. A new world was discovered. There was a complete revolution in commerce. The arts were born again. The world was filled with adventure; millions became self-reliant; old ideas were abandoned—old theories were put aside—and suddenly the old leaders of thought were found to be ignorant, shallow, and dishonest. The literature of the classic world was discovered and translated into modern languages. The world was circumnavigated; Copernicus discovered the true relation sustained by our earth to the solar system; and about the beginning of the seventeenth century many other wonderful discoveries were made. In 1609 a Hollander found that two lenses placed in a certain relation to each other magnified objects seen through them. This discovery was the foundation of astronomy. In a little while it came to the knowledge of Galileo; the result was a telescope, with which man has read the volumes of the skies.

On the 8th day of May, 1618, Kepler discovered the greatest of his three laws. These were the first great blows struck for the enfranchisement of the human mind. A few began to suspect that the ancient Hebrews were not astronomers. From that moment the Church became the enemy of science. In every possible way the inspired ignorance was defended—the lash, the sword, the chain, the faggot, and the dungeon were the arguments used by the infuriated Church.

To such an extent was the Church prejudiced against the new philosophy, against the new facts, that priests refused to look through the telescope of Galileo.

At last it became evident to the intelligent world that the inspired writings, literally translated, did not contain the truth—the Bible was in danger of being driven from the heavens.

The Church also had its geology. The time when the earth was created had been definitely fixed, and was certainly known. This fact had not only been stated by inspired writers, but their statement had been endorsed by priests, but bishops, cardinals, popes, and œcumenical councils; that was settled.

But a few men had learned the art of seeing. There were some eyes not always closed in prayer. They looked at the things about them; they observed channels that had been worn in solid rock by streams; they saw the vast territories that had been deposited by rivers; their attention was called to the slow inroads upon continents by seas, to the deposits by volcanoes, to the sedimentary rocks, to the vast reefs that had been built by the coral, and to the countless evidences of age, of the lapse of time; and, finally, it was demonstrated that this earth had been pursuing its course about the sun for millions and millions of ages.

The Church disputed every step, denied every fact, resorted to every device that cunning could suggest or ingenuity execute; but the conflict could not be maintained. The Bible, so far as geology was concerned, was in danger of being driven from the earth.

Beaten in the open field, the Church began to equivocate, to evade, and to give new meanings to inspired words. Finally, falsehood having failed to harmonise the guesses of barbarians with the discoveries of genius, the leading Churchmen suggested that the Bible was not written to teach astronomy, was not written to teach geology, and that it was not a scientific book, but that it was written in the language of the people, and that as to unimportant things it contained the general beliefs of its time.

The ground was then taken that, while it was not inspired in its science, it was inspired in its morality, in its prophecy, in its account of the miraculous, in the scheme of salvation, and in all that it had to say on the subject of religion.

The moment it was suggested that the Bible was not inspired in everything within its lids, the seeds of suspicion were sown. The priest became less arrogant. The Church was forced to explain. The pulpit had one language for the faithful and another for the philosophical—*i.e.*, it became dishonest with both.

The next question that arose was as to the origin of man.

The Bible was being driven from the skies. The testimony of the stars was against the sacred volume. The Church had also been forced to admit that the world was not created at the time mentioned in the Bible—so that the very stones of the earth rose and united with the stars in giving testimony against the sacred volume.

As to the creation of the world, the Church resorted to the artifice of saying that "days" in reality meant long periods of time; so that, no matter how old the earth was, the time could be spanned by six periods—in other words, that the years could not be too numerous to be divided by six.

But when it came to the creation of man, this evasion or artifice was impossible. The Bible gives the date of the creation of man, because it gives the age at which the first man died, and then it gives the generations from Adam to the Flood, and from the Flood to the birth of Christ, and in many instances the actual age of the principal ancestor is given. So that, according to this account—according to the inspired figures—man has existed upon the earth only about six thousand years. There is no room left for any people beyond Adam.

If the Bible is true, certainly Adam was the first man; consequently, we know, if the sacred volume be true, just how long man has lived and labored and suffered on this earth.

The Church cannot, and dare not, give up the account of the creation of Adam from the dust of the earth, and of Eve from the rib of the man. The Church cannot give up the story of the Garden of Eden—the Serpent, the Fall, and the Expulsion; these must be defended because they are vital. Without these absurdities the system known as Christianity cannot exist. Without the Fall, the Atonement is a *non sequitur*. Facts bearing upon these questions were discovered and discussed by the greatest and most thoughtful of men. Lamarck, Humboldt, Haeckel, and, above all, Darwin,

not only asserted, but demonstrated, that man is not a special creation. If anything can be established by observation, by reason, then the fact has been established that man is related to all life below him—that he has been slowly produced through countless years; that the story of Eden is a childish myth; that the Fall of Man is an infinite absurdity.

If anything can be established by analogy and reason, man has existed upon the earth for many millions of ages. We know now, if we know anything, that people not only existed before Adam, but that they existed in a highly civilised state; that thousands of years before the Garden of Eden was planted men communicated to each other their ideas by language, and that artists clothed the marble with thoughts and passions.

This is a demonstration that the origin of man given in the Old Testament is untrue; that the account was written by the ignorance, the prejudice, and the egotism of the olden time.

So, if anything outside of the senses can be known, we do know that civilisation is a growth; that man did not commence a perfect being, and then degenerate, but that from small beginnings he has slowly risen to the intellectual height he now occupies.

The Church, however, has not been willing to accept these truths, because they contradict the Sacred Word. Some of the most ingenious of the clergy have been endeavoring for years to show that there is no conflict—that the account in Genesis is in perfect harmony with the theories of Charles Darwin; and these clergymen in some way manage to retain their creed, and to accept a philosophy that utterly destroys it.

But in a few years the Christian world will be forced to admit that the Bible is not inspired in its astronomy, in its geology, or in its anthropology—that is to say, that the inspired writers knew nothing of the sciences, knew nothing of the origin of the earth, nothing of the origin of man—in other words, nothing of any particular value to the human race.

It is, however, still insisted that the Bible is inspired in its morality. Let us examine this question.

We must admit, if we know anything, if we feel anything, if conscience is more than a word, if there is such a thing as right and such a thing as wrong beneath the dome of heaven—we must admit that slavery is immoral. If we are honest, we must also admit that the Old Testament upholds slavery. It will be cheerfully admitted that Jehovah was opposed to the enslavement of one Hebrew by another. Christians may quote the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," as being opposed to human slavery; but after that commandment was given Jehovah himself told his chosen people that they might "buy their bondmen and bondwomen of the heathen round about, and that they should be their bondmen and their bondwomen for ever." So all that Jehovah meant by the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," was that one Hebrew should not steal from another Hebrew, but that all Hebrews might steal from the people of any other race or creed.

It is perfectly apparent that the Ten Commandments were made only for the Jews, not for the world, because the author of these commandments commanded the people to whom they were given to violate them nearly all as against the surrounding people.

—R. G. INGERSOLL.

(To be continued.)

An Evangelical contemporary observes oracularly, apparently *à propos* of the Bishop of London's death, that "no one but a Bishop can tell what a Bishop's work is." Well, anyhow, Bishops seem to survive pretty well, whatever labors fall to their lot. Of Bishops at present on the Bench one, the Bishop of Gloucester, was born in 1819; two, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Llandaff, were born in 1821; the Bishop of Worcester carries us back to 1823; the Bishops of Ely, Durham, Oxford, and Bishop Bickersteth all date from 1825. The death of a Bishop who was only born in 1843 seems, then, premature and unusual. The Bishops of Chester, Salisbury, and Rochester were all contemporaries of Bishop Creighton at Oxford, and may be counted still amongst the younger Bishops. There are also three Colonial Bishops living who were consecrated in the fifties. Perhaps, after all, the strain on Bishops is not so terrible.

Taking Moody In.

WHEN D. L. Moody went to Bethany during his travels in the East he was very soft-hearted over all the multitude of beggars there, not only because the place is so unusual, but because he was moved by its traditions. He gave quantities of "bakshish," and then asked if any of the children had the names of Mary and Martha. Yes, indeed, they had. And that opened his pockets again.

The news of his generosity spread through the village, and new claimants came, until his visit seemed likely to result in a fight for existence. The case was getting desperate, and he told the dragoman to call for silence while he made an address. Then he said:—

"I have come six thousand miles to see this little village of Bethany. It was a place my Master loved to visit, and I have come to see it because he loved it. I am very glad to meet you all; but now I want to be alone. I have no more bakshish, and I bid you good-bye."

A fine-looking boy of sixteen replied to the address. He spoke fluently, and with the grace of an orator. Mr. Moody was delighted with the beginning of his oration, but not with its conclusion.

"We are glad to see the gentleman and his friends who have come so far. But the gentleman must not think that his actions are equal to the importance of his visit. Six thousand miles is a long way to come, and the gentleman must have sacrificed much to make the visit. In consequence it is natural for us to expect that he would be munificent in bakshish. This he has not been, and we now expect that he will give us a great deal more."

Mr. Moody was so disgusted that he abandoned the situation entirely, and hurried away with his friends.

"I did think," said he, "that boy had a soul above bakshish."

"And did you think, too, that some of the children were named Martha and Mary?" he was asked.

"Certainly. Why not?"

"Nothing; only they were all boys."

—*Youth's Companion.*

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Mr. Watts at Leicester.

SKIES as tearful as Niobe did not deter the Leicester Free-thinkers from greeting Mr. Charles Watts in large numbers, both morning and evening, last Sunday. "We want more like him," exclaimed an old Secularist at the close of the morning lecture on the question, "Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?" Mr. Sydney Gimson, who presided at the evening lecture on "Spiritualism," expressed the hope that some opposition might turn up to make a lively debate. Mr. Watts frankly credited Spiritualists with a desire for truth, and with having done much to advance freedom of thought. Everybody recognised the force of his claim to be heard on the subject, since he had devoted five years of study to it, attended hundreds of *séances*, and submitted to all conditions except that of having his arms and legs tied! Point by point, amid deep silences or uproarious laughter, Mr. Watts pursued his ruthless criticism of the "science" of the intangible and invisible spiritual existences. He concluded with enunciating six terse, crisp reasons for rejecting Spiritualism. A lively discussion ensued, but the speeches and questions of the opposition were of an extremely thin character. One of the critics took the lecturer's answers with so ill a grace that Mr. Watts had to invoke the presence of good spirits to assuage his irritated nerves.

Correspondence.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Kindly permit a short supply to Mr. Sanders. His scathing reflections on slavery in the Southern States only reiterate the sentiments of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that well-known production of an earnest Christian lady. These sentiments were endorsed by European Christendom, and by the Northern States, who at last combined to sweep away "the accursed thing."

But all this does not touch the argumentation of my letter. I contended that slavery solely perished through the realisation of doctrines taught by Christianity. Unhappily the vast amount of capital invested in the vile system stood between the Southern States and this realisation. The influence of Christianity may be judged from two facts. First, slavery has never perished in any country, ancient or modern, where the influence of Christianity has not been largely felt. Second, it was not science or philosophy which roused anti-slavery indignation, but the indignant remonstrance of Christian persons who revered their Bible and were prepared to stand or fall by its contents in this and every other particular.

This is my own attitude, and, therefore, I am astounded to read that your correspondent, "Dundonian," has objections which Christians cannot answer. I can only say for myself that (without setting up for a learned man) I think I could give a clear reply to any objection which might be urged against my Bible. If you will allow any of your correspondents to bring one forward, and be good enough to let me reply, I will try to make my words good.

HENRY J. ALCOCK.

"WE ARE ALL ATHEISTS NOW."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I. If Mr. Holyoake believes in astronomy, he dispenses with, "is wicked," and without (*a*, privative) the God hypothesis, like La Place; therefore he is an Atheist.

2. As he denies, has a contempt for, and actually and practically opposes the Christian, unscientific, anthropomorphic idea of a "gaseous vertebrate" (God), he is an Antitheist.

3. As he professes to be in ignorance of or rejects the doctrine of final causes and supra-sensual explanations of man and the universe, he is an Agnostic.

H. SEAL.

A Bogey Census.

A FEW years ago the fears of childhood afforded a foundation for theological teaching. To-day they have become material for the statistician. The Bureau of Education at Washington has been collecting reports of the interior of the child's mind, and has discovered that thunderstorms are its chief terror. Then come, in order, reptiles, strangers, darkness, fire, death, domestic animals, disease, wild animals, water, insects, and ghosts. That wild animals should obsess the juvenile imagination less than domestic animals—which probably means simply dogs—may perhaps be explained by the fact that in civilised parts there are fewer of them. It was found that where fear of ghosts existed at all it was very strongly felt. In most cases it had its source in stories told by other children; next, in stories that had been read; and after that in the tales of servants. The parent was directly responsible in less than one per cent of these instances.

—*Westminster Gazette.*

Obituary.

I AM sorry to record that the veteran Freethinker, Mr. John Titherington, who has been a member of the Blackburn Branch for over a quarter of a century, died on the 21st inst., after a short but painful illness. He had a purely Secular funeral, at which Mr. Austin Holyoake's Burial Service was very impressively read by Mrs. James Knowles, who had nursed him during his sickness.—J. E. HARLEY.

The sight of a pleasure in which we cannot, or else will not, share moves us to a particular impatience. It may be because we are envious, or because we are sad, or because we dislike noise and romping, being so refined, or because, being so philosophic, we have an overweighing sense of life's gravity; at least, as we go on in years, we are all tempted to frown upon our neighbor's pleasure. People are nowadays so fond of resisting temptations; here is one to be resisted. They are fond of self-denial; here is a propensity that cannot be too peremptorily denied. There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbors good. One person I have to make good—myself. But my duty to my neighbor is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy, if I may.—*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Religion and Insanity."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "Asceticism."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (The Victory, Newham-street, Queen-street, Edgware-road): February 7, at 9, Branch meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 7, F. Davis.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

COUNTRY.

ABERDARE (Temperance Hall, Weatherall-street): E. Treharne-Jones—2.30, "Priestcraft"; 6, "Is the Bible Out of Date?"

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, C. E. Farquharson, "Creeds and Deeds."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 11 and 3, W. Skett and H. Percy Ward, "Secularism or Agnosticism—Which?"; 7, Concert: Mr. Davis and party and Messrs. Terry Brothers and others.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Joseph McCabe, "Matter the Basis of Life and Thought."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): J. M. Robertson—11.30, "The Imposition of Christian Love"; 2.30, "The Darwinian Principle in Morals"; 6.30, "The Struggle in South Africa." With lantern illustrations.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. Brandon Medland, "A Continental Ramble." (Including the Paris Exhibition and the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play; illustrated by dissolving views and animated photographs.)

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. H. Barnes, "The Credibility of the Gospels."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Lecture or Reading. See Saturday's local papers.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "The Materialism of the Age"; 8, Important Business.

Lecturer's Engagements.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—February 3, Birmingham; 10 and 24, Birmingham. April 28, Glasgow.

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