

# THE Freethinker

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## Fooling Round Shakespeare.—II.

"SHAKESPEARE, the Prophet," is the title of the Rev. R. S. de C. Laffan's sermon. According to this preacher, Shakespeare "is supremely the prophet, the forth-teller of human nature, and of human life." Dr. Stubbs also calls him "a prophet" as well as "a religious man." "My friends," the preacher cries, "I should not care to speak of him in this place at all if I did not think that he was both." Now in the sense in which these gentlemen use the word "prophet" it is no great compliment to Shakespeare. They place him in the same category with Daniel, who interpreted a king's dreams; and with Jonah, who took a three days' trip on board a whale. Evidently it is these Old Testament characters, and not Shakespeare, that gain by this association. Calling him a "prophet" is giving them a friendly lift into good society.

Dr. Stubbs remarks how much Shakespeare has done "to humanise, nay, to Christianise mankind." One half of this remark is certainly true. Shakespeare, being the greatest of poets, has necessarily done much to humanise mankind. But no one ever said that he had done anything to Christianise mankind until Christianity, having become conscious of its weakness, began to seek patrons in the previously subordinate provinces of science, art, and literature. The champions of that faith go about like a press gang, and force every likely man into its service. Darwin himself, who rejected Christianity, and had no positive belief in God or a future life, is actually claimed as a "Christian leader" by apologists like the Rev. Dr. John Clifford. And now they are claiming Shakespeare, after six or seven generations of commentators have censured his irreligion and profanity. In one sense, of course, this is monstrous impudence; in another sense, it is pitiful humility. "Methinks sometimes," says Sir Andrew Aguecheek, "I have no more wit than a Christian." And really he seems to have understood the species.

But not to waste time too egregiously on these Shakespearean preachers, let us turn at once to the best specimens of their criticism. Two of them refer to Prince Hal and Jack Falstaff. When the Prince comes to the throne, he thrusts aside "poor Jack." And nobody thinks quite the better of him for it—except exhorters.

I have long dreamed of such a kind of man,  
So surfeit-swelled, so old and so profane;  
But, being awake, I do despise my dream.

So says the young King, and the first of our two preachers bids us watch Falstaff as he "goes out into rejection and contempt," and points gloatingly to "the end of these men." The second preacher (Dr. Farrar) refers to the same incident, makes the same quotation, and pours the scorn of a painfully good man on "the utterly worthless Falstaff." Moreover, he tells us that the "deliberate verdict" of Shakespeare's "moral sense" as to such a character is "uttered in the thunder-crash of reproof with which the depraved sensualist is dismissed by the young king after his conversion." Alas, how little do these professional moralists understand Shakespeare! They appear to think that Shakespeare spent all that wit on Jack Falstaff, and drew him with such sheer delight, only to bring him in at the finish as a frightful example. That roystering fat knight had, after all, what some preachers have wanted—a heart. When we first hear in *Henry V.* that Falstaff is "very sick, and would to bed," the former Mistress Quickly says, "The king has killed his heart." "I could have

better spared a better man," said Henry of him in a moment of candor. And then there is the monumental eulogy of Bardolph on "Jack's" death—"Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or in hell."

Dr. Nicholson, who gives the ambitious title of "The Man and the Poet" to his sermon, opens with a little dissertation on art that must have sounded rather oddly in a church. One expects to hear Moses and the prophets, and Jesus Christ and the apostles, quoted in such a place, but not Hegel and Michelet. After all, there was no necessity to show that Shakespeare was a supreme artist. It is known and admitted. Only the "moral teaching of the Poet," as Dr. Nicholson calls it, can have so much as an indirect relation to the purposes of the pulpit. On this point the saying of Dr. Johnson is quoted, that Shakespeare "seems to write without any moral purpose." Dr. Nicholson calls this an "amazing" judgment. But we believe that Dr. Johnson was quite right as he used those words. Shakespeare's moral lessons are like those of nature. They are indirect and implicit. Nature does not ruin a drunkard's liver in order to give the world a warning against drunkenness; but the lesson is there if we have the wit to learn it. In the same way, we can see what comes of jealousy in *Othello*, and what comes of reckless ambition in *Macbeth*; but most assuredly those dramas were not written for that didactic object. Shakespeare has no "moral teaching" in the pulpit sense of the words. In this respect, Dr. Johnson was right, and Dr. Nicholson is wrong.

Let us follow this preacher, however, and see what "moral teaching" he finds in the mighty dramatist. "With him," Dr. Nicholson says, "moral responsibility is a first axiom." But this may mean anything or nothing. No single word in the dictionary is more abused by orthodox writers than that same "responsibility." Nor is the matter much improved by the statement that "Man is endowed with a freedom of will, in relation to virtue and vice." You must tell us what you mean before you ask us to allow that this was the position of Shakespeare. As the theologians use the phrase "free will" there is not a trace of it in his dramas. Shakespeare was a moral causationist. He could not have been a great dramatist otherwise. Eliminate that element, and what you get is not drama, but melodrama. The development of the play must flow naturally and logically from the relationships and interactions of the characters in a common environment. Both the supernatural and the arbitrary are excluded. The law of cause and effect must obtain everywhere. We must perceive that everything has followed a strict necessity. The moment we see that this chain of fate has been broken, we recognise that we have been played with and deceived.

"Freedom of will," indeed! Yes, freedom to be oneself. That is the only freedom known to nature, and it was the only freedom known to Shakespeare. Nothing is more impressive in his great tragedies than the way in which good, bad, and indifferent are all swept along on one stream of doom—like a boatload of men, women, and children caught in the irresistible onrush of the river above the Falls of Niagara.

Dr. Nicholson tells us next that "One of Shakespeare's essential factors in human analysis is *Conscience*." But there is nothing mysterious or religious in that. We will therefore take the following statement, that "there is presented to us, in Shakespeare's ethics, the supreme rule of a just and retributive



*Providence.*" Dr. Nicholson adduces no proof, nor a single illustration; so we will flatly contradict him, and pass on.

Dr. Farrar's view is that, "So far as we can get any real light on the soul of Shakespeare, we must find it in the Sonnets." But he must know—at least, he *should* know—that this is a much controverted question. According to Wordsworth, the most impersonal artist in all literature unlocked his heart with the sonnet key. Did he? sneered Browning; if so, he was so much the less Shakespeare. The giants differ, and the pigmy sets them all right. And the acme of the joke is that Dr. Farrar is such a sworn disciple of Browning! Indeed, he refers to his Master in this very sermon as the poet of our own day who was "most akin" to Shakespeare in "his varied and powerful genius." But what on earth, except his own dull piety, or his pious dullness, prompted him to quote this terrible sample?

The acknowledgment of God in Christ,  
Accepted by the reason, solves for thee  
All problems in the world and out of it,  
And has, so far, advanced thee to be wise.

This is Browning at his worst, the preachy Browning, the Browning with all the poetry gone out of him—the Browning that Dr. Farrar appreciates. This poor bald prose, cut into ten-syllable lengths, is treated by the pulpiteer as "those strong words of Robert Browning." Yea, and he says that Shakespeare "would have subscribed them with his whole heart." Oh, ye gods! And oh, ye little fishes! Shakespeare would have smiled at the sentiment, and groaned at the verse.

This muddle-headed Dr. Farrar quotes a famous passage from Fletcher:—

Man is his own star, and the soul that can  
Render an honest and a perfect man  
Commands all life, all influence, all fate;  
Nothing to him falls early or too late:  
Our acts our angels are; or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.

Splendid poetry, and royal philosophy! And we are advised by Dr. Farrar that Shakespeare would have endorsed it. The poor man fails to see that this glorious outburst of Fletcher's is sheer Paganism.

There is no need to go farther. This is enough. When orthodox preachers do not understand the difference between Christian and Pagan philosophy—in other words, when they do not even understand their own religion, it is idle to listen to them on any other subject. And when they presume to talk about Shakespeare, in comparison with whom the greatest of the Bible writers is a tyro, they invite only contemptuous derision.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Authority in Morals and Religion.

IN taking a retrospect of the many changes which have taken place in human thought during the last century, we are forcibly reminded of the difference between the recognised authority in morals and religion of the present time and that which obtained, say, fifty years ago. At that period the popular notion was that both in ethics and religion the highest authority was what is termed the will of God; but, as no one can discover what that will really is, it has to be given up, for it is found that in the Bible—the only place where the record of the supposed will is—there is simply not one will ascribed to God, but many, and those of a most contradictory kind. Hence the "will of God" can be of no value as a standard of appeal to decide what is or what is not right. As time rolled on, therefore, this spurious authority gave way to one of a genuine nature—namely, utility. Among the superior intellects of our time the test of any faith or principle is its usefulness in developing in the proper direction personal character and national integrity. This is rightly regarded as more reasonable and serviceable than the old traditional notions associated with theology.

By the term "authority" should be understood the justification of an act or a belief; the reason for doing or believing a certain thing. Locke says: "All virtue lies in a power of denying our own desires where reason does not authorise them." It has long been known to the student of the great religions of the world that a

general unanimity exists among them upon the subject of moral obligations. Thus, in Brahmanism, Buddhism, Judaism, Paganism, and Christianity there has always been a consensus of opinion with respect to the mutual duties of man and man. We do not find, for instance, one system contradicting another upon the subjects of murder, adultery, theft, fraud, violence, and deceit. All of these vices and weaknesses are alike opposed (with one exception) to the ethics of each and all of the great religious divisions of the human race. This common agreement is the result of relying upon reason, which is founded upon natural rather than upon theological speculations, these being based on conjectures pertaining to the alleged supernatural. Of course, men are not wholly governed by reason, but by the allied forces of the intellect and the emotions. Religion is, in itself, an emotion, and when we find it stated that any particular action had the divine sanction, or was divinely inspired, it is only equal to declaring that it aroused the same emotions as those which have ever found expression in religious inventions, rites, and ceremonies. If, from the theological formula of duty—love to God and to one's neighbor—we eliminate the unknown quantity God, we need not necessarily diminish the affection which is due to our fellow-men. We do not love them because they were "made in God's image," but because our minds are attuned to sympathy with all who have passions, wants, joys, and sorrows like ourselves. Shakespeare says:—

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

If this is true, it should be equally so that one spark of manhood ought to make all mankind one in feeling, sympathy, and love.

The great fallacy that is apparent in the old notion of religious authority is that every ethical system lacks the keystone of authoritative sanction except it is based upon a belief in a Supreme Being. In the experience of every man there must, at times, be certain conflicts between the interests of the many and the gratification of the one. In all such crucial moments the welfare of the community, or the sociitarian interest, finds itself heavily handicapped as against individualism. "I see the better course, and I praise it; but I do not follow it," is the exclamation which the candid pursuer of self-indulgence would probably urge to the moral philosopher who should blame him for setting at naught the dictates and behests of a cut-and-dried, formal, and exact Utilitarianism. So, at least, argues the theologian, and he follows up the contention by deducing the corollary that a supreme authority, possessing the power of rewarding and punishing, is absolutely essential to the due observance of the moral rules which are acquiesced in by the enlightened reason in every region of the civilised world. "Thou, God, seest me" is, undoubtedly, a powerful thought in the minds of those who conscientiously believe that their every action is apparent to the vision of the Soul of the Universe; and surely no sane man will be so prejudiced as to deny that such a conviction has been, is, and long will be, most effectual in controlling the inclinations, curbing the passions, and guiding the actions of a certain proportion of the human family. Here, however, we are led to consider the case of the other proportion who cannot conscientiously avow such a belief. With them, this province of authority comes to an abrupt termination—that is to say, of the authority derived from considerations based upon the existence of a Deity interested in the actions of mankind. Nevertheless, as all such persons are but human, it is evident that they also must experience periodical conflicts between individual promptings and Utilitarian ethics. In the case of, let us suppose, a non-believer in the existence of a personal Deity, who finds himself strongly inclined towards a particular gratification which his reason tells him is more or less opposed to the well-being of his neighbors, is it not probable that individualism will prevail, even although the ultimate result will be sorrow and self-inculpation? This question is one of great importance, because, if it appears that the Utilitarian ethics are not supported by something potential enough to minimise the suggestions of individual desires, we shall be driven to conclude that, whether certain or uncertain, the supernatural authority in morals is clearly a necessary element for the maintenance of human society.



Fortunately, however, Utilitarianism contains all that is necessary for the proper regulation of human conduct. John Stuart Mill has pointed out that "The principle of utility either has, or there is no reason why it might not have, all the sanctions which belong to any other system of morals." As mentioned above, the exercise of the greatest of human passions is called forth by natural requirements, and they have their authority in the nature of mankind. This authority, be it observed, rests entirely upon utility, and by this test all actions should be judged. The useful man is the man whom society delights to honor; and very properly too, for he is the real benefactor of his species. To say that a thing is useful is to bestow upon it the highest praise, while no greater condemnation can be passed upon anything than to say it is useless. David Hume has written:—

"Usefulness is agreeable and engages our approbation. This is a matter of fact confirmed by daily observation. But useful for what? For somebody's interest surely. Whose interest then? Not our own only, for our approbation frequently extends farther. It must, therefore, be the interest of those who are served by the character or action approved of; and these, we may conclude, however remote, are not totally indifferent to us."

Here it will be seen that the authority for moral conduct is not the happiness and welfare of the individual only, but of the general community. Even self-sacrifice, which, perhaps, is one of the highest and noblest duties, receives its authority from the doctrine of utility and from the pursuit of happiness, which is a prominent feature of that doctrine. Whatever pleasures a man who practises self-denial may voluntarily forego, it is always with a view of procuring for his fellows some greater good. The martyr at the stake, the patriot in the field of battle, the physician penetrating into the midst of the death-breathing miasma with a view of alleviating pain, feel a sense of satisfaction in the act, which is really the intensest kind of happiness. It is not therefore individual, but general, happiness that the Utilitarian has to keep before his eye as the motive of all his actions. And so powerful an authority is this utility in the practical affairs of life that the various religionists of modern times are accepting it as theirs.

The readers of this article would be amply repaid by a careful study of Leslie Stephen's recently-published work, *The English Utilitarians*, in which the fallacy of the alleged "divine" authority in morals is thoroughly exposed.

CHARLES WATTS.

## Christianity and Civilisation.—XI.

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE JEWS.

It is not at all an unusual argument to hear the existence of the Jewish race adduced as strong evidence in favor of Christianity. That the history of the Jews does bear strong testimony concerning the influence of Christianity I am far from denying; indeed, I hope to show that a close study of Jewish history—particularly in modern Russia, one of the most Christian of countries—discloses more clearly, perhaps, than aught else the true character of that religion.

In what follows I have no intention of discussing the fantastical question of prophecy, or of the nature of the Bible. Modern criticism has made it tolerably clear that in the old Bible we have a number of documents of uncertain dates and mixed authorship containing legends that can be closely affiliated to the surrounding Semitic tribes. Whatever greatness the Jewish race possessed commenced at the very point the ordinary prophecy-monger marks as its decline. It was the destruction of Jerusalem which forced the Jew, by destroying his nationality, into taking a wider and healthier interest in the culture around him. In the light of his subsequent history, the most important thing achieved by the Jews before that date was the giving of Christianity its God. This was a species of revenge in anticipation, since, in inflicting Jehovah on the Western world, the Jews took a full measure of vengeance for all the ills they were to afterwards suffer.

A French critic—Renan, I think—remarks that the

history of the Jews is the history of a people sacrificed to an idea; and it is certain that the modern history of the Jews represents the persecution of a people resulting largely from a belief historically false and intellectually ridiculous. From the time of Constantine the Great, who called the Jews "the most revolting of all nations," they are everywhere kicked, cuffed, robbed, outraged, murdered. There is no persecution so religious as the one they were subjected to, and consequently there is none so pitiless. At the side of their long centuries of persecution the transitory punishments of religious bodies appear but as mere harmless episodes. "They show no signs of life," says Dean Milman, "but in their cries of agony; they only appear in the annals of the world to be oppressed, robbed, persecuted, and massacred." And, to render their oppression easier, they are compelled to wear a distinguishing mark, so that their tormentors shall not mistake them. Sometimes it is a badge, in the shape of a colored wheel, fixed on the breast; at other times a square mark, pinned on the shoulders. At Avignon the sign is a pointed yellow cap, at Prague a yellow sleeve, in Italy a horn-shaped red or green head-dress—all devised, like the blood-mark on the door-post of the Egyptians, to make their destruction the easier.

From persecuting Jews no Christian country is exempt; there is only a question as to the degree of the punishment inflicted. In England, so long as Roman power ruled the island, the Jews had what every people had under Rome—religious liberty. Their troubles commenced with the Christianising of the people. Under Canute they were banished, but returned with William I., and enjoyed a season of favor—of a questionable character; that is, they were regarded as the king's property, and no one was allowed, legally, to rob them—but the king. Until their expulsion in the time of Edward I. they were regarded as a species of property, which the king might use unwisely, but which he could not possibly wrong.

The Crusades inaugurated a period of popular persecution in England, as elsewhere. It was considered a meritorious beginning to the task of slaughtering unbelievers abroad to clear out unbelievers at home. Incited and led by monks, every Jew met in the streets was killed; houses were plundered and destroyed; and some indication of the ferocity of the followers of the Lamb may be seen in the single fact that at York the entire Jewish population preferred burning itself alive to falling into Christian hands. Edward I. expelled them from the kingdom to the number of 17,000. They were readmitted towards the end of the seventeenth century, very much against the will of the clergy; but not until 1846 were Jews placed upon a legal equality with their fellow-citizens in Great Britain.

Germany and Spain are the two countries chiefly noticeable during the Middle Ages for their Jew hunts, and it will be necessary to take a brief glance at both these places before dealing with more recent times. In Germany the outbreaks that occurred during the period of the Crusades reached their culmination with the spread of the Black Plague in the fourteenth century. I pointed out last week how great was the responsibility of the Church, through its destruction of ancient, medical, and sanitary science, for such terrible visitations. The Jews, owing to their superior medical knowledge, their seclusion, and probably from their dietary, were far more exempt than Christians from the ravages of the Plague, as they are from most epidemics. Their exemption was attributed to a much sinister cause. It was said they had poisoned the wells, and they escaped the disease by knowing which water was pure and which impure. Led on by the Flagellants, the mob put thousands of Jews to death. The clergy and nobility called upon the people to aid them in this work of exterminating the Jewish population.

"Wherever," says Hecker, "the Jews were not burnt, they were banished; and so, being compelled to wander about, they fell into the hands of the country people, who, without humanity, persecuted them with fire and sword. At Spire the Jews, driven to despair, assembled in their own habitations, which they set on fire, and thus consumed themselves and their families.....At Strasburg 2,000 Jews were burnt alive in their own burial ground, where a large scaffold had been erected.....In Mayence alone 12,000 Jews are said to have been put to



death.....At Eslingen the whole Jewish community burned themselves in their synagogue; and mothers were often seen throwing their children on the pile to prevent their being baptised, others precipitating themselves into the flames.\*

In instigating these persecutions the religious orders had a double motive. First of all, there was the purely religious one that they were Jews, and they not only believed with Luther that "Next to the devil himself, thou (the Christian) hast no more bitter, poisonous, violent enemy than a Jew," but that they were performing a service to God in exterminating them. But, in addition to this, the Jewish people, or at least the better class, represented a distinctly disruptive force. I have said in previous articles that for centuries the only people possessing any genuine scientific knowledge were the Mohammedans, particularly the Spanish section of them. Under these the Jews met with tolerance, good treatment, and occupied prominent positions as scientific teachers—especially in medical science. They were, moreover, the links of communication between the civilised Mohammedan and the uncivilised Christian world. It was principally through them that the scientific knowledge of the Moslem world reached the Christian portion of Europe. Their influence was, consequently, not merely to diminish the profits of the religious by introducing better methods of treating disease than prayers, pilgrimages, and the veneration of relics, but by their general scientific knowledge weakening the whole influence of the Church. In one sense, therefore, the Church, in trying to exterminate the Jews, was struggling against a distinct danger to its own existence, and was thus only one phase of the whole struggle against the spread of scientific knowledge.

Turning to Spain, where there existed large numbers of Jews in pre-Christian times, we find tolerance under Roman and Mohammedan, and persecution under Christian, rule. The persecutions were, however, more or less spasmodic, until the latter portion of the fifteenth century, when the union of the thrones of Castile and Aragon by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella gave rise to one of the most bitter and most thorough of Jewish persecutions. Isabella had been trained by the famous Torquemada, who had extracted from her a promise that, "should she ever come to the throne, she would devote herself to the extirpation of heresy, for the glory of God, and the exaltation of the Catholic faith." The result was that Isabella requested from Pope Sixtus IV. a bull authorising the establishment of the Inquisition in Spain—a request which was granted readily enough. The Inquisition was established against heresy in general; but during Torquemada's lifetime it was directed almost entirely against Jews.

The Inquisition commenced its operations on January 2, 1481, and four days later six heretics were burned "for the greater glory of God." In March seventeen were burned, and by November in the same year no less than 298 had been put to death. "Besides these, the mouldering remains of many who had been tried and convicted after their death were torn up from their graves, with a hyena-like ferocity which has disgraced no other court, Christian or Pagan, and condemned to the common funeral pile."† Considerable numbers of the Jews endeavored to escape persecution by baptism, and for a time succeeded. But gradually doubts began to arise concerning the genuineness of these "New Christians," and finally an edict for the expulsion of the Jews from Spain was signed on March 30, 1492. The number expelled is variously put at from 160,000 to 800,000 persons; but, as Prescott says, the smaller number is probably the more accurate. Special regulations were framed for the conduct of the general public towards the Jews. None were allowed to help; and, consequently, most inflicted injury. The Jews were allowed to sell their belongings, but, as they had to clear out by a given date, none would purchase to-day what would be theirs without purchase to-morrow.

"None," says a Genoese writer, "could behold the sufferings of the Jewish exiles unmoved. A great many

perished of hunger, especially those of tender years. Mothers, with scarcely strength to support themselves, carried their famished infants in their arms and died with them. Many fell victims to the cold, others to intense thirst, while the unaccustomed distresses incident to a sea voyage aggravated their maladies..... Some were murdered to gratify cupidity, others forced to sell their children for the expenses of the passage..... One might have taken them for spectres, so emaciated were they, so cadaverous in their aspect, and with eyes so sunken: they differed in nothing from the dead, except in their power of motion, which, indeed, they scarcely retained."

Spain, however, has paid dearly for this expulsion of the Jews. Their freedom under the Mohammedans had made the Jewish people in Spain much superior to their co-religionists in other countries. "Their families," says Prescott, "were reared in all the elegant refinements of life, and their wealth and education often disposed them to turn their attention to liberal pursuits which ennobled the character.....Even the mass of the common people possessed a dexterity in various handicrafts which afforded them a comfortable livelihood, raising them far above similar classes in other nations." The expulsion of these people at the close of the fifteenth century, and the expulsion of the Mohammedan population a century later, robbed Spain of its chief ornaments in all that constituted the greatness of the Spanish people. It left Spain thoroughly Christian, doubtless; but it left her priding herself upon institutions and ideas that other nations were outgrowing, and excluding all that could contribute to its prosperity and power. One need look little further for the immediate cause of the decline of Spain than its strong Christian and intolerant spirit. The history of Spain stands a living witness to how great a nation may become in the absence of Christian intolerance, and to what depths it may sink under its unrestrained influence.

I have dealt briefly with this aspect of Jewish history in order to pave the way for fuller treatment of the question of holy Russia and the modern Jews.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

## Happiness and Unbelief.

So much is said from time to time, even in journals of liberal policy, as to the necessary, inevitable, and actual unhappiness of unbelievers that one is moved to inquire how the delusion has arisen. It is not that we, being Freethinkers and moving among Freethinkers, ever have the faintest doubt as to the average happiness of those with whom we constantly associate.

Some of the happiest men the present writer has known, in an experience which has not been very limited, have been Freethinkers. And they were but samples of the bulk of Freethinkers to be met with up and down the country, in Europe generally, and in America and elsewhere. There is no question about the fact itself. The only matter that concerns us is, how the very contrary of the fact should be held by so many religious people.

Probably, if we go to the root of the matter, we shall find that the notion, if it has not entirely so originated, has largely sprung from the penalties which the New Testament specifically imposes on unbelief. There can be no controversy as to the judgment which Christ passed upon unbelievers, however latitudinarians may gloss it over by talk about interpolated or misinterpreted texts. He damned—or, if it pleases some Christians who have been improved by modern culture and refinement, and who do not believe in hell because the idea is disturbing, he condemned—them. It is possible to be said, of course, that every man may, in the opinion of those who have some special theory or truth to advance, be in danger of being damned in a sense by its non-acceptance. If it should be a useful and valuable theory or a truth or idea which time will establish, he is necessarily the loser by its rejection. He may suffer in consequence of his wilfulness, waywardness, or obtuseness; but then, at the most, the loss can never be comparable to that which is attached by orthodoxy to

\* *Epidemics of Middle Ages*, pp. 42-6; see also White's *Warfare*, ii., p. 138.

† Prescott, *Ferdinand and Isabella*; see whole of chap. vii., part i., and chap. xvii., part ii., for condition and treatment of Jews in Spain. Also de Castro's *Jews in Spain*.



intellectual doubt, dissent, inability to believe. The punishment in no way fits the crime—if it is a crime not to readily and entirely share the views of your neighbor.

Whatever may be said by religious folks nowadays, the fact is that for centuries, commencing soon after the alleged advent of Christ, it was firmly believed that sceptics, infidels, or disbelievers of whatever class, would be damned. They were to have their everlasting portion with liars, fornicators, and many other objectionable persons. As a preliminary in the present life, they were prosecuted, fined, and even killed. Quite recently a religious weekly, which is by no means orthodox, has reiterated its conviction that unbelief is the "unforgivable sin"—the sin of all sins. If one paid any attention to these threats, which amount to gross intimidation, whether under a spiritual guise or not, where would free inquiry be? Here we see the meaning of the term "Freethinker." It has been derided by Christian evidence lecturers on the ground that anyone may think freely. But *can* he when he is threatened with everlasting punishment or condemnation, or rather when he attaches any importance to that threat? A man condemned to death by a judge and jury is not likely to be the calmest individual, or one best or adequately fitted to investigate problems more or less abstruse. Except there was something specially abnormal about him, he would be more or less distracted, and in no sense one who could be accurately described as having the ability to think freely. But even if this were always the case, what sort of effect must it have upon the judgment and the industry, the extent and intrepidity of inquiry, if there is looming over the inquirer this infinitely worse than "hangman's whip"?

Religious people, who have originated these terrors, have also originated the notion that those for whom they are prepared must necessarily be unhappy, by way of expectancy. But this, as imagined of inquirers who have become Freethinkers, Atheists, Agnostics, and so on, is obviously absurd. They have no belief in the system of faith which threatens them. They laugh at its idle terrorism, which is perfectly impotent as against them. In rejecting Christianity, they have freed themselves from any fear of its threats. Why, then, should they be unhappy as far as Christianity is concerned?

There are many sources of unhappiness, it is true. Man is "fearfully and wonderfully made," but even the best of us is nothing for Omnipotence to be proud of. Pretty much the same kind of remark applies to the sociotarian aspect of mankind. Evils may be, by pleaders for God, ascribed solely to man's wickedness or infirmities; but where, then, is Providence, the moral governor of the universe? We hear about him in remarkable personal escapes, which are said to have been providentially effected, but nothing about him in regard to the great social evils and vile iniquities which exist in the world he has made, and which he seems to have abandoned.

It is no inevitable source of unhappiness that we have got rid of belief in a being like this. In so far as belief may be controlled by will, one would not *wish* to believe in his existence. But, in the absence of any proofs of his existence afforded even by those who live on his name, why should there be any terror, or melancholy, or tendency to unhappiness and grief?

Men thus convinced are left to natural laws, virtues, and learning. They have banished, once for all, a spectre which, if it was not absolutely hideous, was terrorising; and they are free to think, without fear, of those secular and surrounding objects which, as being nearest, should naturally command their first attention.

What always amuses me in the apologetics of the Christian people, who think that unbelievers must necessarily be unhappy, is the cool assumption that is made. Christianity is supposed to be so fine a thing that, if a man is obliged to reject it intellectually, he longs for it emotionally. His head may be averse to it, but his heart hankers for it. He thereby becomes an object of much superfluous sympathy, and has been described over and over again in more or less dismally graphic terms. Many people do not perceive the unreality of it all. If they are piously inclined (though only by repute) they think—sometimes say: "Poor fellow, he has made shipwreck of his faith. He is so very unhappy." Whereas this very same "poor fellow"

might be seen by those who know him engaging with as keen a zest as anybody else in the rational amusements of his place and time. The columns of this journal show that men may live happily and die peacefully quite apart from this boasted Christianity, which, like other systems of faith, is not at all indispensable in the economy of the world.

FRANCIS NEALE.

## Acid Drops.

THE late Queen, a very estimable woman in her way, has been responsible for a great deal of gush, some of which has been absolutely sickening. The parsons, of course, have availed themselves of the opportunity of exhibiting more than their normal imbecility. For instance, the rector of Llanellian, near Colwyn Bay, insisted upon braving the storm the other Sunday "so that he might be able to pay a tribute to the memory of his beloved Queen." He was taken ill, and fell back in the pulpit and died.

This incident is, in a double way, a commentary on "God save the Queen." The Deity had not saved the monarch who was so much prayed for, and seems to have been absolutely indifferent as to the parson. But, it is needless to say, the ways of Providence are "inscrutable"—except when they coincide with the wishes of the pious, and then everything is plain, and there are no end of "thanksgivings."

The funeral of Queen Victoria was splendidly stage-managed, and the "house," so to speak, was truly magnificent. But when one comes to look back over the pageant, one is at a loss to see where the British *people* looked in—except as spectators. There were kings, emperors, princes, and princesses galore. There were plenty of representatives of the Army and Navy. But in all the procession there was not a single representative of science, art, literature, statesmanship, or commerce. It was simply a grand display of the ring of persons who regard the nation as made for them. In the centre was the dead body of the former head and front of their system, and behind it was her living successor. "The Queen is dead! Long live the King!" Yes, and the *system* goes on merrily.

The newspapers continued their riot of loyalty as long as they could. They kept on representing the whole nation as "bowed down with grief" because a lady of eighty-two had paid the debt of nature. In describing the funeral procession through London they fairly eclipsed themselves. It would hardly have been possible to carry on worse if a dead God, instead of a dead Queen, were lying in that coffin. Perhaps the *Weekly Dispatch* took the cake. One of its headlines ran thus: "The Universe Pays Homage to Victoria." The *universe*, mark; not only the world, but even the sun and moon, and, as Genesis says, "the stars also."

For sincere grief we have profound respect, but we make bold to say that this nation, led by its newspapers, has been indulging in a perfect orgie of insincerity.

We have been seduced into looking through a catchpenny booklet by Marie Corelli, entitled *The Greatest Queen in the World*. On the thirty-fourth of her thirty-seven pages of nauseous gush she burst out as follows: "Let us entreat the Ordainer of all events for the Queen: that she may be spared to us even beyond the extreme limits of ordinary human life, seeing that we need her so much more than most kingdoms need their Sovereigns." This was written a few months ago, and the Queen is now dead. Evidently the Ordainer couldn't stand that sort of thing. And what a compliment Marie Corelli's last words were to poor "Albert Edward"!

The contents bill of the *Weekly Dispatch* on Sunday last referred to the late Queen's funeral as the "Greatest Funeral in the World." The journalist had evidently forgotten the interment of the Second Person of the Trinity.

The *Record* has ventured dangerously near disloyalty. Amongst a lot of complimentary stuff about the new King, which most pressmen would recognise as "piffle," it says: "The earlier years of an heir-apparent are beset with many and peculiar temptations. It would be idle to pretend that the Prince of Wales walked untouched through the fiery furnace of those ideals. His nature has been misjudged if he would not reject with contemptuous scorn the insincerity which, because he is now King, would feign an entire ignorance of everything in the past."

The "converted infidel" dodge has been worked in connection with the "Great Simultaneous Mission" of the Free Churches in London. The Rev. Thomas Waugh was advertised to speak at all the meetings in Devonshire-square Church, and was described "as a living witness of the mighty transforming power of the Holy Spirit, by whose influence



he was arrested in a career of sin, and was changed from a sceptic, gambler, and rum-drinker into a soul-winner." When and where this gentleman was ever *known* to be a sceptic is judiciously kept in the background; and the association of scepticism with gambling and drunkenness is characteristic of the most bigoted and malignant creed the world has ever seen. It is also worthy of Mr. Waugh, if we may judge by his photograph.

Rev. J. Moffat Logan, of Bristol, has also been taking part in this "Great Simultaneous Mission." He was advertised to speak at the Balaam-street Congregational Church, West Ham, where it was announced he would "especially like to meet men who may have difficulties about accepting Christianity." "He himself," the notice ran, "had severe mental struggles, having passed from a loyal follower of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh to a loyal servant of Jesus Christ." Mr. Logan, however, does not, any more than Mr. Waugh, state when and where he was a Freethinker. If he was a "loyal" follower of Charles Bradlaugh, he must have belonged to the National Secular Society. Will he kindly give us the date of his membership?

Romford-road Congregational Church, Forest Gate, issues a prettily-got-up card, printed in red, gold, and blue, with a portrait of the pastor wearing his most "fetching" smile—a sort of "Do come to Jesus, my dear sister" expression. We believe he began his pastorate with the new century. The motto on the card is, "Lo, I am with you alway." Evidently the pastor means to stay.

The editor of the *Catholic*—which seems, after all, to be a Protestant paper—is a nice civil-spoken person. In an article on the Bible, he says that Thomas Paine "sank in blasphemy and despair into a drunkard's grave." The rest of the article is written with the same accuracy and good taste.

The effect of Sunday-school teaching is so encouraging that its extension to Board schools on week days is a thing that obviously all should aim at. Here are a few juvenile achievements of Church Sunday-school scholars, according to the Diocesan Inspector of Salop. "False doctrine" was defined as "Doctoring when it does not do you any good"; and another definition was "When you are bad and the doctor's medicine makes you worse." "Negligences" in the Litany was described as "not going to church"; "ignorances" as "not knowing what to do when you get there"; a "canon" as "something which makes a noise"; "bishop" as "over-sure," and "Amen" as "That's the end of it." Which evidently commends itself to the juvenile mind as a happy release.

A Toronto firm advertised that for five shillings they would send, "securely sealed, a beautifully-bound book full of good things which every sporting man should read." The detective department, scenting the possible circulation of improper literature, sent five shillings, for which they received a shilling Bible. And perhaps, after all, there was not so much of false pretence in the advertisement as far as regards the obscenity.

The late Bishop of London, who dearly loved a good story, recently told the following at a Church gathering: He said that he remembered a lych-gate in front of a beautiful church, which had been restored and made very nice. There was painted over the door, "This is the gate of heaven," and underneath was a large notice: "Please go round the other way."

Capsules, it seems, nowadays, are to be used for Communion. A clergyman, writing on the question of whether or not there is a danger of contracting an infectious disease when partaking of Holy Communion as now dispensed, suggests that a small capsule of wine given to each communicant would fill the requirements of both clergy and laity in the administration and receiving of the Sacrament. It is believed that the giving of a capsule of wine would entirely kill any suspicion now existing of the possibility of contracting disease. But isn't there a much safer plan—staying away from Communion altogether?

Sir Andrew Agnew, who was recently returned to Parliament, is the grandson of a baronet of the same name, to whose ultra-Sabbatarianism Tom Moore devoted much of his satirical verse. Thus, in *Extracts from My Diary*, he writes:—

Last night, having naught more holy to do,  
Wrote a letter to dear Sir Andrew Agnew  
About the "Do-Nothing-on-Sunday Club,"  
Which we wish by some shorter name to dub,  
As the use of more vowels and consonants  
Than a Christian on Sunday really wants  
Is a grievance that ought to be done away,  
And the alphabet left to rest that day.

The present baronet is understood to be an upholder of his grandfather's views.

Religion covers a heap of nonsense, and partly consists of

it. But it is rather too much when the *Christian* implores us "to invoke the Divine blessing upon the King as a religious duty." Where does the "religious duty" come in? Without discussing whether our limited monarchy is practically the best form of government, or whether (theoretically) something of another sort, which does happen to exist in America and France, would be better, there is no apparent reason to call on God Almighty to shower blessings on the King.

His Majesty—to address him with full respect—is, and has been, sufficiently well blessed. It seems an insult to God to ask for any more on his behalf when he has done so much for him, and when a great deal more is so sadly needed by poor untitled folks in various parts of London and in many of our great provincial towns.

A very little child inquired the other day, "Mustn't God get bothered?" having in view all the pressing, fulsome, effusive, and conflicting prayers addressed to him. Of course, there is no reply to *any* of them, but one would think that he would be not only bothered, but awfully disgusted, with them. Perhaps this accounts for volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, shipwrecks, and the atrociously bad weather we have had in London of late.

In his recently-published book on the *Babylonians and Assyrians* Professor Sayce tells us that at least some fifty or sixty centuries ago Babylonian culture had elevated woman to a position equal, if not superior, to that of man. In the poetry she always takes precedence—"female and male," not "male and female"; even if married, she had legal powers quite independent of her husband: she could buy and sell, lend and borrow, and could even bequeath her property as she wished. Her dowry was her charter of freedom, and it was tied to her by custom as securely as by any modern marriage settlement; as priestess or prophetess she often exercised an almost despotic influence; as governor of a town she was sometimes responsible for the administration of the public affairs of a considerable community.

Amongst the articles in the *Temple Magazine* for this month we discover one with the title, "Do the Churches Need Converting?" Asked for his opinion on "the greatest need of the century," the Rev. Silas Hocking last month asserted that, "however successful the Church may have been in Christianising the world, the world has been far more successful in secularising the Church.....The Christian Church to-day is suffering from precisely the same evils that affected and paralysed the Jewish Church in the time of Christ." This is a very encouraging reflection to modern Christians, and seems to indicate but little progress during all the Christian era in converting the world.

There is poetry as well as inspiration in the following verses by the Right Rev. Dr. Chadwick, Bishop of Derry. They have an application which he did not perceive when he wrote them, because, of course, as a bishop he wrote them on behalf of his Church, and failed to see how naturally they might be made a battle cry for Freethinkers:—

Draw thou the sword and smite.  
Strong is the foeman, wild the trumpets blow,  
His spears are flashing far to left and right;  
Numberless helmets in the sunbeams glow,  
Yet be thou strong to smite.  
Dare thou the worst and smite.  
Strike home, and perish if thy doom be so;  
Far happier dead, down-trodden of his might,  
Than living shamed, the bondsman of our foe,  
For lack of heart to smite.

The *Examiner* has discovered that the "standard of Christian living and thinking must be greatly raised. Pulpits must be rescued from their intellectual inertness" (there is plenty of room for reform here), "and congregations from their comfortable complacency." The pews may have a reasonable ground of complaint against the pulpits, and both might be better if they looked farther afield.

The late Rev. H. R. Haweis was exceedingly fond of his joke. Once he is said to have affixed to the church door a notice concerning the offertory concluding with the words: "My stock of buttons is complete. I prefer to buy my own cough lozenges." On another occasion, while preaching about Gehenna, "where the worm dieth not," he remarked that all was not bad, even in Gehenna, for the worm, at any rate, seemed to be having a good time. A number of the congregation got up and went out.

The *Sunday Companion* publishes the portrait of the Rev. H. Vyvyan, who went out in a lifeboat to a shipwrecked vessel near the Lizard. He is a good-looking young fellow, and undoubtedly courageous. But are good looks and a little intrepidity so scarce in the Established Church? There were others in the lifeboat who probably did most of the work. Where are *their* portraits?

A crusade against Sunday golf playing and the employment



of boy caddies on that date has been instituted by Mrs. Lewis D. Mason, of Brooklyn. She has organised a club of young women, who are to pray against this terrible form of Sabbath desecration. The boy caddies are strongly of opinion that they had better be left alone. They are not, however, very much afraid of the prayers.

We said the other day, in an editorial note to a letter from Mr. George Anderson, who favored the word Materialism, that Professor Huxley vigorously repudiated that designation. Some surprise has been expressed at this statement of ours, but it is absolutely true, as we shall now proceed to show, once for all, by an appeal to Professor Huxley's writings.

In the ninth volume of Huxley's *Collected Essays* there is a paper on "Science and Morals" in answer to Mr. Lilly, who had said in the *Fortnightly Review* that, with whatever rhetorical ornaments Huxley might gild his teaching, it was "Materialism." Replying to this, Huxley said that if he were a Materialist he would not try to disguise the truth with rhetoric; but, as a matter of fact, he was nothing of the kind. "I have more than once," he said, "taken the pains to say in the most unadorned of plain language that I repudiate, as philosophical error, the doctrine of Materialism as I understand it."

This is plain as far as it goes. Some readers, however, may like to have an explanation of the words, "as I understand it." Fortunately the explanation was furnished in the next paragraph. "I understand," Huxley said, "the main tenet of Materialism to be that there is nothing in the universe but matter and force; and that all the phenomena of nature are explicable by deduction from the properties assignable to these two primitive factors. That great champion of Materialism whom Mr. Lilly appears to consider to be an authority in physical science, Dr. Büchner, embodies this article of faith on his title-page. *Kraft und Stoff*—force and matter—are paraded as the Alpha and Omega of existence. This I apprehend is the fundamental article of the faith materialistic; and whosoever does not hold it is condemned by the more zealous of the persuasion (as I have some reason to know) to the Inferno appointed for fools or hypocrites. But all this I heartily disbelieve."

Surely that is plain enough for anybody. Huxley not only repudiated Materialism generally, but he took care to repudiate it particularly as it was expounded by Büchner. He even accompanied the repudiation with a covert sneer at the famous German scientist; a sneer which was in very bad taste, for Büchner was a professor of science, and had written several practical treatises on biological subjects; and a sneer which was very ungenerous, for Büchner had been bitterly persecuted, and had lost his professorship on account of his outspoken heresy.

Huxley had a singular trait in his character. He was essentially combative himself, and as much a fighter, in his own way, as any man that ever lived. Moreover, when he was not attending to other work, he was nearly always fighting orthodoxy—that is to say, Christianity. But he seldom, if ever, had a generous word for anyone else who was engaged in the same occupation; indeed, he could sneer at them quite viciously if they went any further than he did. He seems to have held "popular Freethought" in great abhorrence.

Let us return to this essay of Huxley's on "Science and Morals." He repudiated Materialism on the ground that, besides force and matter, there is "a third thing in the universe—to wit, consciousness." This he could not see to be matter, or force, or "any conceivable modification of either." At the same time, he admitted that "consciousness is a function of the brain"—also that "consciousness is a function of matter." Which, by the way, is really what Büchner contended for in *Force and Matter*. Büchner, indeed, went to the length of saying that Materialism and Idealism are two aspects of one and the same thing; and this seems to us, in our humble judgment, more philosophical than Huxley's treatment of them as two irreconcilable opponents.

It should be added that Huxley also repudiated Spiritualism, which landed him "in even greater difficulties" than Materialism. He took up what he called the Agnostic position. All he knew of consciousness was its association with a brain; but he was not prepared to say Yes or No to the question of whether it could be "continued, in like association, with some substance which has not the properties of matter and force." No doubt this is sound enough theoretically, but it amounts practically to dismissing the doctrine of a future life. This is what Huxley seemed always loth to admit. He rather played with the word "possible." In one sense, of course, everything is possible that is conceivable. According to this logic, a centaur is possible. So is a planet made of green cheese. But in the practical sense of the word these things are not possible. No sane person expects to see them. Every man with a sense of the ridiculous laughs at them. Huxley appears to have

forgotten that the world at large is governed, not by theoretical, but by practical, logic. The theologians are, to that extent, wiser than he was. Instead of trusting to the abstract arguments of what is called natural religion, they have always fallen back upon what is called revealed religion. They have invented fictions and called them history, and have thus asked for belief on the ground of what they presented (chiefly to children) as "incontrovertible facts." Theologians do not trust to abstract arguments about the possibility of resurrection from the dead. They know that would never lead to anything, one way or another. What they do is to assert that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and they have what they call "histories" to prove it. They bend their powers to the task of imposing those "histories" upon the world; and as long as they can do that they can afford to smile at the carefully-guarded Agnosticism of neither Yes nor No.

Sunday-school teaching seems to be powerless to suppress the spirit of gambling, as it is to achieve anything else of a really utilitarian character. Recently the police at Newcastle-under-Lyme caught half-a-dozen lads gaming with coins. And on a Sunday afternoon, too! Further, will it be believed that these juvenile offenders were actually returning to their homes from Sunday-school, where they had just received prizes for good conduct? A sporting journal, of irreverent disposition, wonders whether the lads were tossing up for the possession of their Sunday-school gifts. If they did, it wouldn't be worse than Church raffles.

A notable work of the Brer Rabbit type, published by Grant Richards, is achieving a considerable circulation in this country. It is said to have sold to the extent of half a million copies in America, where it first appeared. We mention *Ebon Holden* here because of his talk to a lady evangelist who tackled him on the steamboat, and inquired if he were a Christian.

This is what occurred: "'Fore I answer I'll hev to tell you a story," said Uncle Eb. "I recollect a man by the name o' Ranney over in Vermont—he was a pious man. Got into an argument, an' a feller slapped him in the face. Ranney turned t'other side, an' then t'other, an' the feller kep' a-slappin' hot an' heavy. It was jes' like strappin' a razor fer half-a-minnit. Then Ranney sailed in—gin him the wust lickin' he ever hed. 'I declare,' says another man, after 'twas all over, 'I thought you were a Christian.' 'Am up to a certain pint,' says Ranney. 'Can't go tew fur not 'n these parts—men are tew powerful. 'Twon't do 'less ye wan' t' die sudden. When he begun poundin' uv me I see I wa'n't eggzacly prepared.' 'Fraid's a good deal thet way with most of us. We're Christians up to a certain pint. Fer one thing, I think if a man'll stan' still an' see himself knocked into the nex' world, I think he's a leetle tew good fer this.'" The good lady began to preach and to argue. For an hour Uncle Eb sat listening, unable to get in a word. When at last she left him, he came to us, a look of relief upon his face. "I b'lieve," said he, "if Balaam's Ass hed been rode by a woman, he never'd hev spoke." "Why not?" I inquired. "Never'd hev hed a chance," Uncle Eb added.

"Uncle Eb" is of opinion that there is going to be some fun in heaven. "Fer one thing," he said deliberately, "nobody'll die there 'less he'd ought to; don't believe there's goin' to be any need o' swearin' or quarrellin'. To my way o' thinkin' it'll be a good deal like Dave Brower's farm—nice smooth land, and no stun on it; an' hills an' valleys an' white clover a plenty, an' wheat an' corn higher'n a man's head. No bull thistles, no hard winters, no narrer contracted fools; no long faces, an' plenty o' work. Folks sayin' 'How d'ye do?' 'stid o' 'Good-bye' all the while; comin' 'stead o' goin'. There's goin' to be some kind o' fun there."

Old Eb's own epitaph is worth reproduction, though he accepts orthodox teaching as to another life, and believes himself started on a long journey instead of entering upon eternal rest:—

I ain't afraid,  
Shamed o' nothin' I ever done;  
Always kep my tugs tight,  
Never swore 'less 'twas nec'sary,  
Never ketched a fish bigger'n 'twas,  
Er lied 'n a hoss trade,  
Er shed a tear I didn't hev to.  
Never cheated anybody but Eben Holden.  
Goin' off somewheres, Bill—dunno the way nuther;  
Dunno 'f it's east er west er north er south,  
Er road er trail.  
But I ain't afraid.

The *Church Times* was much disturbed that the Queen's funeral had been arranged to take place on a great festival of the Church—the purification of St. Mary the Virgin, commonly called Candlemas Day. The ultra-pious journal seems, however, to have survived the shock. It was willing to stretch a point to the extent of thinking it would be legitimate to have *Dirge* and *Placebo* where they were authorised by the Bishop of the diocese immediately after Mattins and Even-song



of the Purification. This was truly a thoughtful concession. Why doesn't the *Church Times* object to people dying, as well as being buried, on days of Church Festival?

From the Parish Magazine of All Saints', South Lambeth, it appears that there is a prayer-meeting for members of the London School Board to ask God's blessing on the work a quarter of an hour before the Board begins. Canon Allen Edwards, who writes the notice, thinks that these prayers "are needed." Many people think so too, though not with any assurance that the supplications will be attended by success. Board-school education can never be satisfactory until superstitious nonsense is entirely eliminated.

Here is a curious instance of superstition in North India as described by a traveller: "We pass on to another village, and here see a tomb, with a vessel of water placed above it on a wooden tripod. 'What is that?' we ask an intelligent Hindu. 'Oh, that, *sahib*, has been built in memory of a man who died here some years ago.' 'Then he is not buried here?' 'On, no! he was burnt like an orthodox Hindu; that is only in his memory, to appease his spirit.' 'Why do you want to appease his spirit, and why is water made to drip upon the tomb?' 'Oh, *sahib*, his spirit was restless, and used to walk the village for a long time, so we built him a tomb, and let water drip on it to *keep his spirit cool*.'"

An imperative notice appears in the supplement to the *London Gazette*, "Extraordinary," as it is called, ordering alterations in Common Prayers, Litanies, and Collects, by the substitution of "King" for "Queen," and "Edward" for "Victoria." The notice adds that "His Majesty doth strictly charge and command that no Edition of the Common Prayer be from henceforth printed but with this Amendment." Accuracy is very well, but this hurried "charge and command" looks as if there was not only a possibility of people failing to make the substitution themselves, but of the Almighty, in consequence of that failure, being misled, which would indeed be dreadful.

This is the charitable way in which the *Church Times* alludes to the late Rev. Haweis: "So long as a clergyman fiddling in the pulpit and lecturing on Tennyson and every subject under the sun is tolerated, we are at a loss to understand why clergymen should be held up to reprobation because of a little extra ceremonial."

We never heard that Mr. Haweis fiddled in the pulpit. As for his selection of subjects for sermons, it would be advantageous to the Church if the bulk of the clergy followed his example.

Reviewing a new book of Family Prayers for Morning Use, the *Christian World* rightly takes exception to such expressions as "our days are few and evil" and "we are born in sin." It says: "Such sentiments do not carry a wholesome or convincing ring in the ears of young people." Why should there be so much self-abasement in these pious petitions, at once derogatory to self-respect and incitive of hypocrisy?

The *Sunday Companion* says that a leading clergyman, commenting on the absurdity of many hymns, once observed: "Time has hardened us to singing, with some show of reverence, some of the most senseless drivel that man, in his folly, ever conceived." "Senseless drivel" is good!

The Rev. Dr. Horton is highly indignant with Ritualists, if we may judge by the following remark he levels against them: "No State can afford to have its authority flouted by its own servants; and when that is done in the name of the State religion an intolerable situation is created which no right-minded man would wish to perpetuate."

A little girl of my acquaintance, aged six, was (says a correspondent) on a visit to London from the country, and had been taken to various places of amusement. Being naughty one day, she was told she would not go to heaven unless she were good. "Well, mother," she replied, "I've been to the Hippodrome, and Madame Tussaud's, and the Zoo, and I can't expect to go *everywhere*."

A *Rock* correspondent comments in the following terms on what he calls "a horrible suggestion":—"We are told in Scripture to 'judge no one before the time.' Further, Romish writers tell us that, for all we know to the contrary, the pains of purgatory are as acute as those of hell. Would it not, therefore, be both impious and brutal to say of any person that he or she had gone to purgatory? Undoubtedly it would be! Yet this is what Vaughan, of Westminster, says of our late beloved, good, and in real truth 'most religious' Queen!"

"A distinguished, if somewhat erratic, preacher (or shall we say Church lecturer?) has passed away in the sudden death of the Rev. H. R. Haweis, perpetual curate of St. James's, Marylebone." This is the commencement of the obituary notice in an Evangelical contemporary.

Mr. Haweis was much too liberal and broad-minded to please a number of bigoted Churchmen. But what he lost in the shape of their esteem, for which he cared nothing, he gained otherwise in large and appreciative audiences.

The following significant paragraph appears in the *Church Times*: "The Archbishop of Canterbury has inhibited the Rev. W. B. Wallace from performing any of the services of the Church within the diocese of Canterbury. The date of the inhibition is January 17."

Affairs at Swindon parish church are still in a troublous state. True, the former vicar, the Rev. Newton Howe, who for ten years has been a veritable thorn in the flesh of the parishioners, is now serving a term of twelve months' hard labor in Devizes gaol. It was a costly business bringing the conduct of the rev. gentleman before the Consistory Court at Bristol. Then the Court held that the charges were unproven, and Mr. Howe claimed and got his costs. These alone amounted to £276. The parishioners incurred other expenses, which, with the vicar's costs, totalled £1,099. Towards this £325 has been subscribed, and there is a dead-weight of seven hundred pounds odd hanging round the neck of the wardens and parishioners. A large committee has been formed to wipe off this deficiency.

A clergyman turned dustman. The Manchester City Coroner held an inquest last week as to the death of Robert Vincent Reynolds, a man with a most singular career, and end. Reynolds was fifty-nine, and had lived alone for twelve months. He was formerly employed in the Manchester Cleansing Department, but left in order to prepare a pamphlet entitled "The Great Diet Cure," upon the front page of which he was described as a clerk in holy orders, and author of several books. The pamphlet did not sell, and on applying for work again to the Cleansing Department he was appointed lamp cleaner. He had since kept to himself. He had never been medically attended, having an objection to doctors, and when on Sunday the postman could not get admittance the neighbors forced the door, and found him dead in his chair. Evidence was given that Reynolds was a Church of England clergyman at one time, and a verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

The Bishop of Thetford took the chair at the fourth annual meeting of the Lynn, West Norfolk, and Wisbeach Branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. He said it was a shame that such a society was needed, and we quite agree with him. But he did not observe that the shame was all the greater because of the pharisaic pretensions of this most Christian country. What is the use of Christianity if, after all these ages, an organised effort is needed to put down unnatural cruelty in a Christian country? Perhaps the answer to this question was unwittingly supplied by the Bishop himself. He told the meeting that the only way to punish a man who ill-used children was the lash. Those who objected to this punishment were animated by "maudlin sentiment." When they said that the lash only brutalised, he replied that you could not brutalise a man who was already something worse than a brute. But this is surely a peculiar utterance for a Christian priest. Jesus Christ actually taught that evil should never be resisted, much less retaliated. The Bishop of Thetford, however, advocates a lash for a blow; not in a moment of passion, but calmly and deliberately in the chair of a public meeting. So much for his fidelity to the teaching of Jesus Christ. And now let us look at his common sense. The most superficial reading of history would have shown him that crime is always greater where punishments are the most savage. If the lash is a strong deterrent, hanging must be more so; yet crime was most rampant when men and women were hung in batches for offences that are now classified as petty theft, as well as for the supreme crime of murder. Then again, the idea that any man, not actually insane, can be so brutalised that it is impossible for any treatment to brutalise him still further—this idea, we say, may be worthy of a Bishop, as it is certainly worthy of Bedlam.

When speakers like the Bishop of Thetford talk about the efficacy of "the cat" when wielded upon the backs of persons who ill-use children, it is well to ask them why they do not extend its efficacious influence to women. Some of the most cruel brutes towards children belong to "the gentler sex." Why not flog *them*? Oh, it is said, they are women! Of course they are; but what has that got to do with justice and the protection of society? Away with this "maudlin sentiment"—as the Bishop calls it. Lash the women, and save the children. A woman's back is no more sacred than a man's, when the lives and the welfare of poor, helpless, innocent children are at stake. So lay on, and spare not.

Women, however, are no longer flogged, as they used to be. Why? Simply because the brutality of the punishment in their case has become obvious. In the course of time it will be equally obvious in the case of men. Meanwhile, ignorant, stupid, and backward people will go on agreeing with the Bishop of Thetford.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 10, Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow :  
11.30, "The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic";  
2.30, "The Riddle of the Universe"; 6.30, "Shakespeare and the  
Bible: A Comparison and a Contrast."

February 17, Manchester.

### To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—February 10, Athenæum Hall, London. 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.

W. THWAITES.—Your verse is not without merit, but the workmanship is hardly up to our publication level.

T. O. REILLY.—One of the best Histories of the French Revolution in a brief compass is Mignet's. It is published (in English) in Bohn's Library in one volume at 3s. 6d. The Freethought Publishing Company is no longer offering Gibbon for sale; all copies were disposed of months ago.

J. S. (Glasgow).—Acknowledged according to the word within brackets. Glad to have your recognition of what you are good enough to call our "energetic and unselfish devotion to the cause." You say that, being Scotch, you are not effusive. That may be true enough, but outward habit and inner nature are not always identical. According to our experience, Scotsmen are warm-hearted enough. They sometimes remind us of the man in the song—"He's all right when you know him, but you've got to know him first."

W. W. STRICKLAND calls upon us, in the name of common honesty, to change the title of this journal from *The Freethinker* to *The Atheist*. He says that the editor and his staff are Atheists, but not Freethinkers. Well, we beg to differ from him. They are Atheists and Freethinkers. The second designation is the wider of the two. It includes Mr. Strickland himself, just as it includes Mr. Holyoake. In the same way, it included Voltaire and Paine, who were both Theists. A man may be a Freethinker without being an Atheist—or even an Agnostic. Mr. Strickland has hardly taken the trouble to read the recent controversy on Atheism and Agnosticism carefully. The point is, What is Atheism, and What is Agnosticism? Are they really different, or are they really the same thing with different names? For our part, we repeat, we have not the smallest objection to any man calling himself an Agnostic rather than an Atheist, as long as he is not guilty of confusion and misrepresentation.

SHILLING WEEK.—R. W., 2s.; E. D. B., 2s. 4d.; S. Hudson, 10s. Collected by H. E. Higgins.—H. E. Higgins, 5s.; J. Kellet, 5s.; R. Muncey, 5s.; A. A. Watts, 5s.; R. Relf, 1s.; F. Rumsey, 1s.; G. Bullamore, 2s. 6d.; C. Belsten, 1s.; W. Harris, 1s.; J. Farley, 1s.; J. Lawrence, 2s. 6d.; W. Montague, 1s.; G. H. Stevens, 2s.; L. H. Tinson, 1s. W. A. Holroyd, 1s.; Strang, 2s.; Jane Hooper, 5s.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Two Worlds—Newcastle Journal—Freidenker—Torch of Reason (Oregon)—New Century—Anglo-Russian—Secular Thought (Toronto)—Liberator (Melbourne).

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.

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

### Sugar Plums.

THIS morning, Sunday (February 10), at 11.15, Mr. Charles Watts will, by request, open a discussion at the Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E., on "Secularism." Of course our South London friends will muster in good force on this occasion, as no doubt there will be an interesting debate.

This evening, February 10, Mr. Charles Watts lectures at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, taking for his subject, "The New King." In this lecture Mr. Watts will deal with Monarchy and Republicanism from a Secular standpoint, and the prospects of the reign of Edward VII.

Mr. Foote is absent from London as this week's *Freethinker* goes to press. His voice being affected by the obstinate fag-end of the severe cold he was carrying about, it was imperative that he should resort to the most effectual remedy, a dose of sea air. That he is obtaining, with excellent results. Mr. Foote's voice, of course, is of no great importance to the mere readers of this journal; but it is of some importance to the Freethought party, which is not overburdened at present with lecturers who can draw good indoor audiences; and it is naturally of still more importance to himself. In the circumstances, therefore, it is hoped, and even expected, that any shortcomings in this week's *Freethinker* will be forgiven.

The Freethought Demonstration at West Ham on Tuesday evening, January 29, was a great success. In spite of the bitter weather and the unfavorable conditions caused by the Queen's death, there was a capital gathering in the fine Stratford Town Hall. The majority, of course, were men, but there was a very good sprinkling of ladies, and even a few youngsters with their parents. Mr. E. Sims, of the West Ham N. S. S. Branch, officiated ably as chairman. Mr. C. Cohen was the first speaker. He met with a warm greeting on rising to address the meeting, his satirical points were all eagerly caught up, and loud cheers rang through the hall as he resumed his seat. Mr. Watts followed. He was in excellent form, and his oratorical effort was enthusiastically applauded. Then came the religious part of the proceedings—the collection, which was a gratifying one. After this interval Mr. Foote wound up the meeting with a half-hour's speech that kept everybody alive to the finish. The wish was expressed that West Ham should have another Demonstration before long, and there was a roar of applause when Mr. Foote said he had no doubt whatever that the wish would be gratified.

We hope, though we scarcely believe, that the *Humane Review* is winning its way, as it deserves, to a good circulation. It is conducted, we understand, by the leading spirits of the Humanitarian League, and is published quarterly at one shilling. The current number contains some interesting articles, particularly the one on "Why Do I Love Animals?" by W. J. Stillman. The principal article, at least in length and brilliance, is contributed by Mr. G. Bernard Shaw. It is on "Civilisation and the Soldier," and is well worth reading, whether you agree with the writer or not. Mr. Shaw ends with a characteristic piece of humor, tinged this time with unusual savagery. "Since English stupidity," he says, "is steadfast, and Irish cleverness is treacherous, I thought that if the traitor lent his brains to the blockhead, and the blockhead his steadfastness to the traitor, they might between them do something. But it was a dream." Mr. Shaw gives the Englishman up, and regrets having "wasted much good advice on him." We dare say, however, that this Carlylean mood is only a passing one. Mr. Shaw will hardly cease giving the blockhead advice yet.

Mr. Jos. Symes writes in the *Liberator* (Melbourne) as follows: "Just a year ago I was compelled by circumstances and a sense of justice to attack the Romish priests, especially the masquerading Carr. In return one of his party half-murdered me, in open daylight, at my door in Bourke-street. The dastardly papers reported not a word of it, as they would have done if the assassin had been anything but a Papist. The police did nothing, and the assassin has never been caught, though the Papists must know him very well. This is how any non-Papist is liable to be treated in Melbourne, most especially one who dares expose and denounce the standing crimes of the priests. I am permanently deaf as the result of the murderous attack—a fact which will of course give great satisfaction to Carr and his lambs—fellows who hate truth and justice as they do poison." Mr. Symes need not be assured that he has the sympathy of every Freethinker who has heard of his misfortune.

*Secular Thought* (Toronto) reprints Mr. Foote's article in the *Freethinker* on "Dying like a Dog."



The National Secular Society's Executive is in the throes of a discussion on the organisation of the open-air propaganda of Freethought in London during the summer. Next Thursday evening the discussion will be resumed, and probably concluded; after which we shall have something to say on the subject editorially.

Andrew Carnegie has given 425,000 dollars for libraries at Syracuse, N.Y., and Fayette, Iowa. It is a source of much sad thought to ecclesiastics that Mr. Carnegie is an Agnostic instead of a Christian, and gives none of his money to the Church. Nothing less than a cardinal's hat would be the reward of the Catholic priest who should bring the Pittsburg millionaire into the fold and his millions with him.—*Truth-seeker* (New York).

### Atheists and Agnostics.

HERE is a contribution to a discussion which has excited very much interest. It is a letter addressed to the *Truth-seeker* (New York) by W. F. Murray, "1" Sixth Artillery. He says: "I send you a clipping from the editorial columns of the *Weekly Interocean* of December 18, in which an attempt is made to show that Ingersoll and several other well-known Agnostics were not Atheists. An Atheist, according to the etymological significance of that term, is one who is without God. Is it not your opinion that an Agnostic is in the same state of destitution? The Agnostic says he knows nothing about God; that the evidence is not sufficient to convince him of the existence of such a being, and that his judgment is in suspension with regard to that matter. This being the case, how can he be anything but an Atheist?"

The editor appends to this a note, in which he says: "We have read the *Interocean's* endeavor to show that nearly all Atheists are, in fact, believers in a God. We are inclined to think that the difference between Atheism and Agnosticism is very slight. Mr. Holyoake has lately explained it in a controversy with Mr. Watts, but the distinctions pointed out are so refined that we do not readily retain them. On the question of the existence of God the line of division should be tolerably clear: on the one side we should expect to find those who believe there is a God, and on the other side those who do not. The first would be Theists, the last Atheists. Of course, persons who insist on calling themselves Agnostics cannot be compelled to locate on either side of the line, but they really belong to the Atheists' side. They occupy a position with regard to God analogous to that of the woman who did not believe in ghosts, but was afraid of them. Freethinkers are often charged with mere negation—that is, they are accused of conducting a propaganda on the ground only of what they do not believe. If this were wholly true, it might form a valid objection to Freethought as a system; but even then the foundation would appear more stable than that of Agnosticism, which finds its reason for existence in what it does not know. An Atheist denying, for the sake of the argument, that any God exists may consistently proceed to a statement of his reasons for so holding; but the logic of pure Agnosticism dismisses the question. One claiming not to have drawn any conclusion from the evidence before him, and knowing nothing of the facts, would be but poorly accounted to enter upon the debate. Someone has said that the Agnostic is an Atheist in a tall hat. Another has said that Agnosticism is a pillow on which the Atheist lets himself down easily. We noticed at the time of Ingersoll's death that the papers speaking respectfully of him called him an Agnostic. Others used the words 'Atheist' and 'Infidel.' But what's in a name? We have no quarrel with Atheist, Agnostic, or Infidel who does not repudiate the name of Freethinker."

### What I Know.

Is there a God?  
I do not know. If so, it is not revealed to me.  
Is there a future life?  
I do not know. But if there be,  
A secret 'tis to me;  
But this I know—I live;  
My fellows live and struggle by my side.  
I hear their cry for light, for help,  
For strength to struggle with their fate.  
I know their thirst for sympathy,  
For love, and friendship's holy fire.

Heed I this cry—  
Slake I this thirst. Then,  
Whether there is a God, or  
Whether there be a future life,  
Why should I change my course?  
Reward comes to me in this life;  
I fear neither present nor future;  
I am fighting life's battle as best I can

—Josephine K. Henry.

### Body-Snatching as a Fine Art.

#### A FOOTNOTE TO CHURCH HISTORY.

ON Voltaire's death the sacrosanct officials of the Great Lying Catholic Church refused the dead Freethinker burial in consecrated ground. Letters were even sent to the Bishop of Annecy, in whose diocese Ferney was, enjoining him to prohibit the priest from giving Voltaire's remains burial. Voltaire's nephew, the Abbé Mignot, son of his beloved sister, held an abbey at Scellierès, about a hundred miles from Paris. In hot haste the Abbé hurried there, and, showing the Prior a Government order sanctioning the removal of Voltaire's remains to Ferney, procured their burial in the church. This was done on the understanding that this was only their temporary resting-place on the way to Ferney. The Abbé was only just in time. On the same day the Bishop of the diocese wrote to the Prior forbidding the burial without consulting himself. There were even threats of having the heretic's body exhumed. However, it was allowed to rest until 1791, when it was conveyed in a sarcophagus to Paris, and received with immense enthusiasm. With great pomp, and with some members of the Calas family accompanying the procession, Voltaire's remains were taken and deposited in the Pantheon.

One would have thought that the poor, inanimate clay was beyond the reach of the stiletto-stroke of hate of the Great Lying Church. Happy fate! To be borne by loving friends and loyal adherents beyond the reach of malice. To leave behind for ever the godly ghouls that pursued, the holy hyenas that followed, the brazen bigots who defamed. To escape all this, and at the same time to have his name indelibly inscribed on his country's roll of honor.

Thrice happy dust! Thy name secure on history's page, thy poor remains now resting beneath the dome of the Pantheon, bedewed with the tears of thy countrymen. It seemed meet that Voltaire's remains should lie here, amid the scenes he loved and knew, and where he struggled, worked, toiled, achieved, from whence he was banished, and to which he returned in triumph, to receive at last the complete approbation so long withheld by the withered hand of Christian bigotry.

Certainly not in the quiet of a mossy graveyard, nor in a church where shaven priests mumble unmeaning words at fixed times, nor yet alone on the mountain side, for he chafed at solitude; but here in this beautiful Pantheon, with its front glowing with the splendid words:—

Aux grands Hommes la patrie reconnaissante.

But the Great Lying Catholic Church never forgets and never forgives. At the return of the Bourbons to Paris in April, 1814, the Pantheon had been in her possession for some years. Robed and shaven priests chanted the litanies, the great organ pealed, and swinging censers gave off their perfume; and still the great infidel slept undisturbed, and by his side rested the ashes of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Shoulder to shoulder these two great soldiers of the army of human emancipation rested under their magnificent tombs. In the twilight could be dimly read the glowing inscriptions, and from the tomb of Rousseau could be seen the emblematic hand thrust forth, bearing a torch. They should have slept here always:—

With the sound of those they wrought for,  
And the feet of those they fought for,  
Echoing round their bones for evermore.

But the Great Lying Church, hypocritically pretending to love its enemies, now prepared her damnable and long-deferred revenge. The dust of infidel greatness seemed to interfere with her mercenary mummeries. The very ashes of these Freethinkers seemed to challenge the pretended miracle of her altars, the lie of transubstantiation. She determined that a change should be made. One night in May, 1814, a cab stopped near the city gate of La Gare, at an opening in a board fence, surrounding a large vacant piece of ground. The cab had come from the Pantheon, and the coachman had been ordered to take the most deserted streets. Three men alighted from the cab and crawled into the enclosure. Two



carried a sack between them. Other men, some wearing the uniform of the Great Lying Church, awaited them. They proceeded towards a hole dug in the middle of the waste ground. At the bottom of the hole was quicklime. The men said nothing; they had no lanterns. The first hint of daybreak gave a ghastly light to the dreadful scene. The dying moon lent the spectacle its own pallor. The sack was opened. Horror of horrors! It was full of human bones. They were the remains of Rousseau and Voltaire, stolen by these Christian hyenas from the Pantheon. The mouth of the sack was brought close to the hole, and the bones rattled down into the black pit. The two skulls struck one another—the head in which was created *The Philosophical Dictionary*, and the head which was responsible for *The Social Contract*. When Voltaire and Rousseau had been emptied into that cursed hole, a digger seized a spade, threw into the opening the heap of earth, and filled up the grave. The other miscreants stamped on the ground to remove the traces of the interment. They then left the enclosure and hastily escaped. Before the sun had fully risen the Great Lying Church had been avenged. Christ had once more triumphed over his enemies. When the visitor is conducted to the crypt of the Pantheon, he sees the glorious tombs of Rousseau and Voltaire side by side. But the bones of these men are no longer there; the tombs have been desecrated by the most low varlets of the Most High God. It is such actions as these which keep alive the irreconcilable enmity of Freethinkers to the Great Lying Christian Church.

Even the body-snatching is not sufficient for the priests. They still tell "idle tales of dying horrors" concerning Voltaire. But their venom is unavailing. Although every vestige of the remains of this truly great man has been swept away, his work will remain as a precious legacy to his country. So long as the love of liberty animates Freethinkers, his life-work will be honored; so long as literature is appreciated, his books will be read. Above all, he will be remembered as the untiring and eloquent advocate of the rights of man. As Browning well said:—

Ay, sharpest, shrewdest steel that ever stabbed  
To death Imposture through the armor joints.

MIMNERMUS.

### The National Secular Society.

MINUTES of Executive meeting held at the Society's offices on Thursday, January 31. The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, occupied the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, J. Beach, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, B. Munton, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, V. Roger, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, E. E. Sims, T. Shore, T. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, G. J. Warren, and C. Watts.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted.

Correspondence concerning Mr. Stanley Jones was laid before the meeting, and it was unanimously resolved: "That Branches of the N. S. S. be warned against allowing Mr. Stanley Jones to lecture upon their platforms, and that it be made known that he has not for some time been a member of this Society."

A letter from Mr. Haines was ordered to be filed.

Letters complaining of insufficient financial compensation for their outdoor labors were also read from Messrs. A. B. Moss and W. Heaford. After considerable discussion it was resolved that this matter stand over until the outdoor propaganda had been discussed.

The Secretary then read a complete statement of the receipts and expenditure of the London branches, which was supplemented by explanatory speeches from Messrs. Schaller, Leat, Sims, and others, and after a further lengthy discussion the meeting adjourned until Thursday, Feb. 14, at 7.30. Delegates please note.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

Theologians no longer speak with authority. They are content to suggest, and to deprecate hasty contradiction. Those who believed on trust have passed into uncertainty. Those who uphold orthodoxy cannot agree on what ground to defend it. Doctrines once fixed as a rock are now fluid as water. Truth is what men trow. Things are what men think. What is generally doubted is doubtful.—*Froude*.

### The Household of Faith.

(Continued from p. 76.)

A FEW years ago it did not occur to the Christian world that slavery was wrong. It was upheld by the Church. Ministers bought and sold the very people for whom they declared that Christ had died. Clergymen of the English Church owned stock in slave ships, and the man who denounced slavery was regarded as the enemy of morality, and thereupon was duly mobbed by the followers of Jesus Christ. Churches were built with the results of labor stolen from colored Christians. Babes were sold from mothers, and a part of the money given to send missionaries from America to heathen lands with the tidings of great joy. Now, every intelligent man on the earth, every decent man, holds in abhorrence the institution of human slavery.

So with the institution of polygamy. If anything on the earth is immoral, that is. If there is anything calculated to destroy home, to do away with human love, to blot out the idea of family life, to cover the hearthstone with serpents, it is the institution of polygamy. The Jehovah of the Old Testament was a believer in that institution.

Can we now say that the Bible is inspired in its morality? Consider for a moment the manner in which, under the direction of Jehovah, wars were waged. Remember the atrocities that were committed. Think of a war where everything was the food of the sword. Think for a moment of a deity capable of committing the crimes that are described and gloated over in the Old Testament. The civilised man has outgrown the sacred cruelties and absurdities.

There is still another side to this question.

A few centuries ago nothing was more natural than the unnatural. Miracles were as plentiful as actual events. In those blessed days that which actually occurred was not regarded as of sufficient importance to be recorded. A religion without miracles would have excited derision. A creed that did not fill the horizon—that did not account for everything—that could not answer every question, would have been regarded as worthless.

After the birth of Protestantism it could not be admitted by the leaders of the Reformation that the Catholic Church still had the power of working miracles. If the Catholic Church was still in partnership with God, what excuse could have been made for the Reformation? The Protestants took the ground that the age of miracles had passed. This was to justify the new faith. But Protestants could not say that miracles had never been performed, because that would take the foundation, not only from the Catholics, but from themselves; consequently, they were compelled to admit that miracles were performed in the Apostolic days, but to insist that, in their time, man must rely upon the facts in nature. Protestants were compelled to carry on two kinds of war: they had to contend with those who insisted that miracles had never been performed; and in that argument they were forced to insist upon the necessity for miracles, on the probability that they were performed, and upon the truthfulness of the Apostles. A moment afterwards they had to answer those who contended that miracles were performed at that time; then they brought forward against the Catholics the same arguments that their first opponents had brought against them.

This has made every Protestant brain "a house divided against itself." This planted in the Reformation the "irrepressible conflict."

But we have learned more and more about what we call Nature—about what we call facts. Slowly it dawned upon the mind that force is indestructible—that we cannot imagine force as existing apart from matter—that we cannot even think of matter existing apart from force—that we cannot by any possibility conceive of a cause without an effect, of an effect without a cause, of an effect that is not also a cause. We find no room between the links of cause and effect for a miracle. We now perceive that a miracle must be outside of Nature—that it can have no father, no mother—that is to say, that it is an impossibility.

The intellectual world has abandoned the miraculous.



Most ministers are now ashamed to defend a miracle. Some try to explain miracles, and yet, if a miracle is explained, it ceases to exist. Few congregations could keep from smiling were the minister to seriously assert the truth of the Old Testament miracles.

Miracles must be given up. That field must be abandoned by the religious world. The evidence accumulates every day, in every possible direction in which the human mind can investigate, that the miraculous is simply the impossible.

Confidence in the eternal constancy of Nature increases day by day. The scientist has perfect confidence in the attraction of gravitation—in chemical affinities—in the great fact of evolution, and feels absolutely certain that the nature of things will remain forever the same.

We have at last ascertained that miracles can be perfectly understood; that there is nothing mysterious about them; that they are simply transparent falsehoods.

The real miracles are the facts in nature. No one can explain the attraction of gravitation. No one knows why soil and rain and light become the womb of life. No one knows why grass grows, why water runs, or why the magnetic needle points to the north. The facts in nature are the eternal and the only mysteries. There is nothing strange about the miracles of superstition. They are nothing but the mistakes of ignorance and fear, or falsehoods framed by those who wished to live on the labor of others.

In our time the champions of Christianity, for the most part, take the exact ground occupied by the Deists. They dare not defend in the open field the mistakes, the cruelties, the immoralities, and the absurdities of the Bible. They shun the Garden of Eden as though the serpent was still there. They have nothing to say about the Fall of Man. They are silent as to the laws upholding slavery and polygamy. They are ashamed to defend the miraculous. They talk about these things to Sunday-schools and to the elderly members of their congregations; but when doing battle for the faith they misstate the position of their opponents, and then insist that there must be a God, and that the soul is immortal.

We may admit the existence of an infinite being; we may admit the immortality of the soul, and yet deny the inspiration of the Scriptures and the divine origin of the Christian religion. These doctrines, or these dogmas, have nothing in common. The pagan world believed in God and taught the dogma of immortality. These ideas are far older than Christianity, and they have been almost universal.

Christianity asserts more than this. It is based upon the inspiration of the Bible, on the Fall of Man, on the Atonement, on the dogma of the Trinity, on the divinity of Jesus Christ, on his resurrection from the dead, on his ascension into heaven.

Christianity teaches not simply the immortality of the soul—not simply the immortality of joy—but it teaches the immortality of pain, the eternity of sorrow. It insists that evil, that wickedness, that immorality, and that every form of vice, are, and must be, perpetuated for ever. It believes in immortal convicts, in eternal imprisonment, and in a world of unending pain. It has a serpent for every breast and a curse for nearly every soul. This doctrine is called the dearest hope of the human heart, and he who attacks it is denounced as the most infamous of men.

Let us see what the Church, within a few years, has been compelled substantially to abandon—that is to say, what it is now almost ashamed to defend.

*First*, the astronomy of the sacred Scriptures; *second*, the geology; *third*, the account given of the origin of man; *fourth*, the doctrine of original sin, the fall of the human race; *fifth*, the mathematical contradiction known as the Trinity; *sixth*, the atonement—because it was only on the ground that man is accountable for the sin of another that he could be justified by reason of the righteousness of another; *seventh*, that the miraculous is either the misunderstood or the impossible; *eighth*, that the Bible is not inspired in its morality, for the reason that slavery is not moral, that polygamy is not good, that wars of extermination are not merciful, and that nothing can be more immoral than to punish

the innocent on account of the sins of the guilty; and, *ninth*, the divinity of Christ.

All this must be given up by the really intelligent, by those not afraid to think, by those who have the courage of their convictions and the candor to express their thoughts. What, then, is left?

R. G. INGERSOLL.

(To be concluded.)

### The Grand Jury and the Cat.

THE best answer to the recommendation made at the London Central Criminal Court in favor of a freer use of the lash for robbery with violence is this:—Before the so-called Garotting Act was passed in 1863 there was an average of sixty cases per annum of this class of crime at the London Central Criminal Court. Under the late Recorder—who, next to Mr. Justice Day, was our greatest Flogging Judge, being responsible, on an average, for 207½ lashes a year—there was an increase of about seventy cases per annum. The crimes of robbery with violence at Liverpool Assizes under a Flogging Judge increased from fifty-six cases in 1882 to seventy-nine in 1893. They declined elsewhere.

Lord Aberdare, when Home Secretary, stated that robbery with violence had not decreased by means of the lash. This statement has been repeated by Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Asquith, Sir Matthew W. Ridley, and other Home Secretaries. The figures which I have cited are to be found in the Criminal Statistics of the Home Office.

A century ago the criminal laws of this country were based on violence and torture and written in blood, and yet the amount of crime at that time was positively appalling. A return ordered by the House of Commons shows that from 1816 to 1821 over six thousand men and women were publicly flogged, but crime continued to go up by leaps and bounds, and was about ten times greater than it is now without flogging, and with more than double the population.

I submit that it would be impossible to produce more conclusive evidence of the futility of the lash. The result of giving a brutal flogging to a man has been, so far, to make him a greater brute than he was, and to increase the class of crime for which floggings are inflicted. It is not necessary to labor a moral so obvious.

JOSEPH COLLINSON,

Hon. Sec. (Prison Reform Committee).

Humanitarian League, London.

### Other Christs than Ours.

FROM a book entitled *Aryan Sun-Myths the Origin of Religions*, the following facts are derived: "The Persian sun-god Mithras (born December 25) was said to be the Logos, also the Anointed, or the Christ, and was called the Lamb of God. His worshippers addressed him in their litany: 'O Lamb of God! that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Grant us thy peace.' The Egyptian sun-god Osiris, as second person of the trinity, was called the Word. The monogram of Osiris is X and P in combination, and is now used as the monogram of Jesus Christ. Horus, another Egyptian name for the sun, was said to be born of the immaculate virgin Isis (the moon) on December 25.....It was said that he performed many miracles, among them the raising of the dead. He was finally slain, and descended into hell. In three days he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Serapis was another Egyptian sun-god, whose followers were called *Christians* and bishops of *Christ*. The sun-god Dionysius (Bacchus) was born on December 25..... He performed many miracles, among them being the turning of water into wine. The monogram of Bacchus, I. H. S., is now used as the monogram of Jesus Christ, and is wrongfully supposed to stand for *Jesus Hominem Salvator*, or *In Hoc Signo*. The Mexican sun-god, or savior, Quetzalcoatl, was crucified. He descended into hell and rose from the dead. The Scandinavians and Mexicans believed in a trinity. Many of the saviors of ancient nations were considered as suffering saviors, dying for the sins of their people."

The Christians call these discoveries "prophecies" of Christ. What they indicate is that the Galilean Christ was a composite manufactured from the remains of anterior messianic myths.

"What are you grumbling about?" demanded his Satanic majesty. "We have lots of people here, quite as good as you, who are perfectly satisfied." "Oh, I don't mind being here; it's a very interesting place," replied the eminent explorer. "But what jars me is that I can't go back and lecture about it."



### The Drink Question.

THE Editor of this journal replied to a correspondent on the Drink Question, and intimated that he was willing to receive communications on the subject. I think it is time for Freethinkers to make some pronouncement, and, with his permission, I will lay a Freethinker's views before his readers. There is much scope for us in a matter which has been brought almost to a climax by the strenuous efforts of Temperance Societies. Some suggested remedies on behalf of the N. S. S. may go far to bring advanced and rational thinkers in line with us and generate sympathy, which eventually may advance the banner of Freethought.

As Rationalists, we are called upon, in this particular, to carefully watch the manœuvres of those extraordinary compounds, the Gospel Temperance Missions. The party of the virtuous ignoramus must not be permitted to speak for all reformers desiring to see less drunkenness and thriftlessness among the working classes.

I say working classes, because it seems to me that only the lower orders are the inspirers of the teetotaler's special prescriptions, and it is his blindness to the probable opposition his specific may encounter that renders the situation more complex and difficult. Before a policy of suppression is decided upon, if it be one calculated to provoke resistance, the initiators ought beforehand to know in their own minds how far they are going to assist authority of an arrogant and presumptuous kind if the resistance of the people threatens to make their policy impracticable.

No body of responsible persons outside Parliament, save the trade, have expressed any decided opinions against the measure promoted by the United Kingdom Alliance; but there is not the slightest doubt that the public generally are opposed to their policy. Some vague ideas of what is required are voiced here and there, but as yet the popular remedy remains in embryo. Although nearly every Liberal in Parliament is nominally pledged to vote for the Bill known as Local Veto, their support has been secured as the price of peace in their constituencies.

At the recent Parliamentary election Local Veto was practically *non est*—greater issues pushed it aside; but at the previous election its principal exponents lost their seats to the Conservatives, while latterly at Derby, the best case in point, the Liberals fighting on the war policy regained the two seats handsomely.

Nobody will deny that reform is urgent, and everybody imagines that the trade is the chief obstruction. I do not think so. In the face of a rational proposal that will secure public rights and convenience, their resistance is not worth counting upon.

The public want rousing to a sense of their danger, as well as responsibility.

To consider the situation. How far has the restriction of the number of licensed houses so far been beneficial? Except in a few districts, new urban districts principally, where there is total prohibition, it is impossible to say. There it naturally follows that a course of thrift has been encouraged. But what of the character of these districts and of the people? Have they increased facilities for acquiring knowledge, for social intercourse and recreation? Have they adopted more Parliamentary privileges than their neighbours? Have they more baths, recreation grounds, wider streets, libraries and reading rooms? No! But, instead of possessing public necessities of this nature, these areas are a pestilence of silent respectability, the people are chapel-ridden, and all is stagnant that makes for progress. "Virtue is our practice, humbug our possession."

It must be remembered, too, that the Licensing Bench can do as much as this without the aid of Parliament. There can be no question about it. Freedom we must have. Suppression is a dangerous course, and entirely out-of-date.

Drunkenness, to my mind, is more or less prevalent as the unconscious ebb and flow of ideas, working through every class, take the people. For instance, in a town like Liverpool the percentage of drunkards may be considerably higher than in any rural district, and yet the facilities for obtaining drink may not be so great; but there is more slum misery, and people living in Liverpool slums are less hopeful of life.

As for the proposed remedy. My theory is this:—(1) At the end of a given number of years banish the licensing laws. The first thing then secured is immunity from interference on the part of interested people, and without buying it; and that is a great deal. (2) Double the excise department and stop adulteration. (3) Tax heavily liquors containing over a certain percentage of alcohol, as brandy and whisky, the twin destroyers of brain power. Thus the sale of less injurious beverages may be encouraged.

When the citizen is secure in the proper exercise of his liberty, he will have no "house of cull"; and yet will his moral responsibility be diminished? Surely Englishmen have as much sense as Frenchmen. In France every conceivable facility (even to having bars on local trains, etc.) is permitted; and what is to prevent the police from rooting out and closing objectionable places when public convenience cannot be said to suffer? Drinking habits are the result of regulation in a very great measure, and where regulation is despised

as an infringement against personal liberty, as in France, there is a notable absence of drunkenness. Anyone who saw the hundreds of thousands in the hottest weather at Paris last year, drinking at the cafés in the Exposition or on the Boulevards, wherever they turned, could not possibly imagine for a moment they were in London. Here not one in twenty smoked. The drunkard reels along the Strand (where public houses are few and far between) painfully frequent; but in the Rue St. Lazare, or many large boulevards where cafés often stand side by side, and sometimes in rows, one never meets a drunkard.

What the working classes lack in England is something of a rational character to occupy the mind from 12 noon on Saturday until 10 p.m. on Sunday.

Liberty is the Englishman's watchword; if it had been his conviction, he might have no Drink Question to settle.

One more matter to touch upon. Every man may take what view of alcohol he likes. I think it would not be difficult to prove that, either as beer, wine, or spirits, it holds a place similar to love and song in humanising society; and probably love, the source of all happiness, in the insistence of its empire, has been the cause of as much misery as drink.

A. S. VICKERS.

### Praying.

IF a man is good, he thinks all men are more or less worthy; if bad, he makes all mankind co-defendants. That comes of looking into his own heart and fancying that he surveys the world. Naturally, the Rev. Dr. W. S. Hubbell, Chaplain in the Loyal Legion, is a praying man, as befits him. When in trouble he asks God to help him out. So he assumes that all others do the same. At a recent meeting of the Congregational Club to do honor to General Howard on that gentleman's seventieth birthday (may he have a seventy-first) Dr. Hubbell said: "I bear personal testimony that if ever a man prays in his life it is in the midst of battle." My personal testimony is the other way. I have been in a good many battles, and in my youth I used sometimes to pray—when in trouble. But I never prayed in battle; I was always too much preoccupied to think about it. Probably Dr. Hubbell was misled by hearing in battle the sacred name spoken on all sides with great frequency and fervency. And probably he was too busy with his own devotions to observe, or, observing, did not understand, the mystic word that commonly followed, which, as nearly as I can recollect, was "dammit."

—Ambrose Bierce ("Dod Grile").

### Cinderella Science.

CINDERELLA is modestly conscious of her ignorance of these high matters. She lights the fire, sweeps the house, and provides the dinner; and is rewarded by being told that she is a base creature, devoted to low and material interests. But in her garret she has fairy visions out of the ken of the pair of shrews [Theology and Philosophy] who are quarrelling downstairs. She sees the order which pervades the seeming disorder of the world; the great drama of evolution, with its full share of pity and terror, but also with abundant goodness and beauty, unrolls itself before her eyes; and she learns, in her heart of hearts, the lesson, that the foundation of morality is to have done, once and for all, with lying; to give up pretending to believe that for which there is no evidence, and repeating unintelligible propositions about things beyond the possibilities of knowledge. She knows that the safety of morality lies neither in the adoption of this or that philosophical speculation, or this or that theological creed, but in a real and living belief in that fixed order of nature which sends social disorganisation upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses. And of that firm and lively faith it is her high mission to be the priestess.—T. H. Huxley.

The Anti: "But you are mistaken in calling them heathens. Most of them have been long ago converted to Christianity." The Expansionist: "Then, why ain't they got better weapons than bows and arrows? Answer me that."—*Indianapolis Journal*.

St. Peter: "Do you mean to say you brought these beautiful flowers for me?" Female Shade: "Oh, dear, no! Won't you please give them to the poor murderers you have inside?"—*Puck*.

"What! Fishing on the Sabbath?" exclaimed the clergyman, reprovingly. "Don't you know that little boys who fish on the Sabbath go to the bad place?" "I guess dat's right," replied the bad boy, disgustedly. "I couldn't a' struck no worse place dan dis."

At a negro wedding, when the clergyman had read the words "love, honor, and obey," the bridegroom interrupted him and said, "Please, sah, read dat again. Read it once mo', so's de lady kin ketch de full solemnity of de meaning"; adding suggestively, "I's been married befo'."



## 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. Watts, "The New King."  
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.  
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 11.15, Discussion opened by Mr. Charles Watts on "Secularism"; 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Creation and Evolution."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 7, A lecture.  
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

## COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, Mr. N. Morgan, "Secularism Refuted."  
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward—3, "Was Adam the First Man?" 7, "Noah's Ark; or, God's Water Cure."  
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, J. M. Robertson, "The Struggle in South Africa."  
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): G. W. Foote—11.30, "The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic"; 2.30, "The Riddle of the Universe"; 6.30, "Shakespeare and the Bible: A Comparison and a Contrast."  
HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street: 7, Mr. Birks, "Is Spiritualism a Delusion: What are its Fallacies?"  
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Thomas Paine."  
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Dr. Nicholson, "The Life of Thomas Huxley."  
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, H. Simpson, "Cremation."  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Ernest Evans—3, "The Age of the Earth: Recent Work on the Subject"; 7, "Some Animal Histories." Illustrated by lantern. Tea at 5.  
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "Freethought in France"; 8, Lecture arrangements.

## Lecturer's Engagements.

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

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