

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Jesus the Raider.

A GREAT many Englishmen, and Christian Englishmen too, have been mightily amused by the reports from America of the "goings on" of Mrs. Carrie Nation. This lady has set the world talking, and is enjoying her little hour of splendid fame. She is not lovely, and she is not a genius. She is hard-featured and very determined. The man who married her, if her lower jaw was always like we see it in her portraits now, must have been the bravest fellow in the United States. She has immense resolution, and with that she has made herself a name. The State of Kansas, which she honors by residing in it, is a Prohibition State. No alcoholic liquors are supposed to be sold within its borders. Wicked men who want a toothful have to go to the chemist's and imbibe "cholera mixture"—or whatever else the bottle is labelled. Those who want a good long drink just walk into a saloon and get it. Of course the saloons are not supposed to exist. Still, they do exist; and are often handsome places in important thoroughfares. Thirst is so strong, and so widespread, that the police wink at its quenching. Mrs. Carrie Nation, however, will *not* wink. She glares. Like a true fanatic, she fancies she has a commission from heaven to put down drinking-saloons in Kansas. When she has finished there, she is going to follow the divine finger to New York. Finally, she proposes (we understand) to cross the Atlantic, and execute the Lord's orders in the Strand and Piccadilly. Meanwhile, she is languishing in prison, as so many of the Lord's servants have done before her. Her method of stopping the drink traffic is to raid saloons. She visits them with a *posse* of square-jawed, resolute female friends, and a contingent of other supporters who pass muster as men, though most of them are merely Methodists. Axes are plied upon the costly furniture and fittings, and in a few minutes a lot of valuable property is reduced to broken glass and firewood. Naturally this kind of recreation cannot be continued *ad infinitum*. The police did not know how to act at first, as the saloons were clearly illegal; but the saloon-keepers, as soon as they recovered from their initial fit of astonishment, took to defending their property; and the result, which anyone not a lunatic could have foreseen, has been wounds and bloodshed, and even casualties leading to funerals.

This pious American lady, who wields the Prohibition battle-axe so lustily, has apparently never had the time or inclination to consider if she is really following Jesus Christ. Teetotalism was neither the preaching nor the practice of her Master. Certainly he did not drink whiskey, or lower cocktails; but it is equally certain that he drank what was going in his own age and nation. He was even accused of consorting with wine-bibbers. The flowing bowl went round at the very last meal he took with his disciples before his unfortunate decease. On an earlier occasion—it was some three years previous—he kept a marriage feast going, after the liquor laid in for it had given out, by turning a vast quantity of water into wine. It appears from the narrative that some of the guests were already "heady," and several may have dropped under the table before the finish, for Jesus had provided about seventy-five gallons—some say a great deal more. Altogether, therefore, it seems a bit strange to carry on a teetotal agitation in the name of Jesus Christ. Mrs. Carrie Nation may think she is following her Master, but, if

he were living now, she would probably overtake him—in a saloon. And in that case we should like to hear the dialogue.

The Kansas lady prohibitionist and saloon-furniture smasher has amused a crowd of Christians in Great Britain. They regard her as a crazy fanatic. But it is very questionable, after all, whether, apart from her teetotalism, she is not following the very method of Jesus Christ. In the twenty-first chapter of Matthew—or whoever wrote the first Gospel—we read how that personage raided the temple merchants, and played the devil with their stock in trade.

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves.

"And he said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."

According to Mark (xi. 15), Jesus "cast out" the buyers and sellers in the temple. According to John (ii. 15) he "drove them all out of the temple" with "a scourge of small cords." This, indeed, is how he is generally depicted by the painters of the incident.

Now this raid of Jesus upon the money changers and dove sellers was really worse than that of Mrs. Carrie Nation upon the Kansas liquor saloons. Such a statement will doubtless seem strange to ordinary Christians, but we can easily prove it.

Let us first take the case of the money changers. On the face of it, theirs was no dishonorable occupation. They exchanged one coinage for another, and thus supplied a public necessity. There is no suggestion that they were guilty of cheating. Even if they were, they almost deserved to win by it, for all their customers were Jews. What these particular money changers did was this. They did not sit in the temple itself, but in the precincts; and they changed money for pious Jews, who were visiting the temple, and were intending to present an offering to the priests. By that time the old Jewish money had passed out of the currency. The money in common use was Greek and Roman. But the priesthood, with professional conservatism, refused to receive this "profane" coinage into the sacred treasury. They would only accept the "holy" Jewish coinage. This, however, the pilgrims did not possess. They were, therefore, obliged to obtain it in exchange for the coinage they did possess; and the money changers sat there to oblige them with the needful—no doubt on the basis of a settled commission, involved in what is nowadays called the rate of exchange.

Now let us take the case of the dove sellers. According to the Mosaic law, women were obliged after childbirth to go through a rite of purification; a certain survival of which remains in our "churching of women." One feature of this rite was the offering of doves or pigeons to the Lord; that is to say, to the priests. Now it was manifestly impossible, or at least inconvenient, to bring up these birds from distant parts of Palestine in those days of slow and cumbrous locomotion. Here again the merchants interposed their good offices. They sold the requisite birds in the temple precincts to the ladies who then presented them to the priests. The business of these merchants was a perfectly honest one. And in their case, also, there is no suggestion that it was carried on dishonestly.

Much other traffic took place in the temple precincts, but it appears to have been these money changers and dove sellers against whom Jesus directed his anger and

wielded his flail. His pretence was that the temple, being God's house, was a house of prayer. But the temple was a great deal more than that, under the Mosaic law, which he said that he had come, not to abolish, but to fulfil. It was a place of solemn and gorgeous rites, of perpetual sacrifice and "collections." Moreover, as we have already pointed out, the harmless and necessary traffic of which Jesus complained was not carried on in the sanctuary itself, but in the unsanctified precincts, which could no more be profaned than the shops in St. Paul's Churchyard. Between the outer courts and the sacred portion of the temple a sharp line was drawn, and carefully guarded by a double row of Roman soldiers and Jewish priests.

It may, of course, be objected that Jesus declared that his Father's house, which should be a house of prayer, had been turned into a "den of thieves." The first answer to this charge has already been stated. The merchants were *not* in the house of prayer. The second answer is equally simple. We have only the word of Jesus for it that the merchants were thieves, and it is not customary to find men guilty without a trial and sufficient evidence. It is not suggested that they had stolen anything from him, and he might have let other people speak for themselves.

Altogether, it must be said that Jesus acted on this occasion like a mad Anarchist. Curiously enough—although, perhaps, it is not so curious when you think it over—this narrative of his assault upon the temple merchants is immediately followed by the story of his cursing the barren fig-tree. To curse a tree is madness on the part of a man. What it is on the part of a god we leave everyone to decide for himself.

Mrs. Carrie Nation is not following Jesus in picking out the liquor sellers as the objects of her attack, but she is following him in the method she pursues. He took the law into his own hands, and so does she. He wielded a flail, and she wields a hatchet. He boasted a divine commission, and she claims the same authority. He got arrested, and so has she. But let us hope that the parallel will be extended no further.

We should like to say, in conclusion, and with the utmost seriousness, that the violent solution of social questions, after the fashion of Mrs. Carrie Nation and her supporters, would, if persisted in, and attempted on a large scale, lead first to anarchy and last to despotism. Order is the indispensable basis of progress. Violence begets violence, and brutality provokes brutality. Evil must not be done in the hope that good will come of it. Society must not wink at feminine and religious methods of impatience in politics and sociology. Furniture may be smashed and heads split open with a hatchet, but nothing is proved thereby but the folly and fanaticism of the wielder. The drink question is one that undoubtedly calls for careful study and rational treatment. But one form of drunkenness will never be cured by another. The intemperate friends of temperance are its worst enemies. Let them return, if they can, to the older and saner method of persuasion. Every appeal they make to science and humanity will produce a good effect. Every appeal they make to passion and obstinacy will intensify the evil. It is easier to lead men than to drive them. And the results of leading are vital and durable, while the results of driving are dead and ephemeral.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religious Novels.

THERE seems, in these latter days, to be quite a plethora of religious novels. Surely, even with all our manifold sins, we scarcely deserve to be afflicted thus. We know we are but earth-worms in the infinitude of existence; but why so many of our fellow-worms should come crawling over us, one after another, with their slimy exudations, entirely surpasses an ordinary comprehension. One would fain hope that this kind of literary output will not become a feature of the new century. If it does, it will add another misery to existence, which is already oftentimes, for some of us, scarcely tolerable. Freethinkers, in self-defence, will have to turn novelists, and, in the guise of fiction, lash the religious follies of the age. Nothing would be

easier if one paid as little attention to patent facts, inherent probabilities, and gave as loose a rein to the imagination as seems to be the way with certain religious novelists of the day. Indeed, from our point of view, there is a far wider scope for novels with an anti-theological purpose, seeing how easily they might be invested with an air of convincing realism.

There is no reason why Christian novelists should have the field all to themselves. Some of them appear to have worked the vein with considerable profit. That is not saying much for the taste or intelligence of the reading public. Most of these productions are devoid of any merit or attractiveness, except such as they may be supposed to derive from the religious element by which they are plentifully permeated. Pious folks, who would not willingly be seen reading ordinary novels, especially on a Sunday, count it rather as a religious exercise to wander through the pages of these books, in which they see constant references to Biblical personages or to familiar Christian precepts as they may be supposed to work out under given circumstances in daily life. The perusal must, of course, be more of a duty than a pleasure, for in no other way can we account for the sale—in some cases enormous sales—of these intrinsically tiresome and absurd compositions.

People who feel themselves under no obligation to read a novel because it purports to be religious or semi-religious may, of course, leave this class of literature severely alone. Still, when they see some much-talked-of specimen lying about in bookshops and libraries, and find reviews and advertisements of it in nearly every paper they pick up, a temptation to satisfy their curiosity as to what it really is may seize them against their better judgment, and likely enough they add their unit to the circulation, which becomes bigger by the fact that preliminary "puffs" enable it to start big. Should they be so weak as to give way, a speedy retribution overtakes them when once they sit down to read the much-belauded volume.

The success—not literary, but financial—of one religious novel suggests another. Hall Caine makes a pile by the *Christian*; Marie Corelli follows with the *Master Christian*; and now we have the *Master Sinner*. This last-named novel is dedicated "to those inspired persons who quarrel amongst themselves whilst instructing the world by religious novels." Looking at the title and dedication, the *Master Sinner* might be thought to be a satire, and to some extent it is; but it sins as badly as the production it satirises. We must agree with the *Sunday Sun* reviewer that, whilst we were led to expect a brilliant, cynical, enjoyable satire on the styles of Marie Corelli and Hall Caine, we are launched on two hundred pages of "senseless drivel." It may be that the author intends to be satirical in his description of the following episode in the careers of two impecunious Bohemian philosophers who are living in a garret in the neighborhood of Drury Lane:—

"Said Thomas Trelawney to Anthony Grigg, in contemptuous jest, on the 14th day of April, 1890: 'When I die, if the event happens before you shake off mortality for dust, I will send you a series of letters from hell.' Then they both chuckled derisively, and continued their researches into the origin and evolution of the horse. The next morning Thomas Trelawney lay dead upon his sheetless mattress."

Is this intended to be a burlesque on the Sunday-school stories of impious persons who have brought immediate judgment on themselves by "defying the Almighty," or by some similarly theatrical and quite unnecessary performance? There is nothing to show. The sequel throws no light on the subject. On the anniversary of his friend's death Grigg finds the first of Trelawney's letters from hell on his writing-table. What follows may be a cynical travesty of Marie Corelli's hysterical style, or it may be a specimen of the author's "fine writing." Unrolling the MS., the surviving philosopher falls on the floor, and then follows a long screed about his "livid, hideous, terror-stricken eyeballs," convulsive writhing and wriggling "like a shot dog in the agonies of death," foaming at the mouth, and so on. It is difficult to see the purpose of a book like this.

One turns with some pleasure to a religious novel, *The Believing Bishop*, to which allusion has already

been made in these columns. The author, like Count Tolstoi, has set up for himself a standard of life and conduct which he imagines to be on Christ-like lines. He takes the "believing bishop" through various trying vicissitudes, in which it must be confessed the prelate seems to have abandoned, not only worldly ambition, but ordinary common sense. The bishop speaks to his son "gently, confidently, of the glorious charm of absolute surrender to the life and teaching of Jesus, and expatiates very tenderly, but enthusiastically, on the glorious privilege offered, especially to a young man, to consecrate himself truly to the only divine life possible." The answer of the young man is one with which we can hardly fail to sympathise: "No Jesus for me, sir. You have followed him to the disgust of everybody who has heard of it. I am going to let him alone." The author adds very sorrowfully: "It is not given to all men to do so obvious and simple a thing as to follow Christ." And perhaps it is well that it is not, seeing where the author lands his hero in the end.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Fallacies of Professor Bonney.

IN my article last week, commenting upon Professor Bonney's recent lecture on "Christ and Evolution," it was stated that it was one of the weakest attempts to reconcile science with Christian teaching that has ever been made. This allegation may be considered by some as rather too sweeping. It is, however, borne out by facts. The Professor is very prolific in assertions, but exceedingly reticent in furnishing proof thereof. Like other teachers of science whose minds are swayed by theological doctrines, he takes for granted the very things he should endeavor to prove; and what he finds impossible to explain he attributes to a source which is beyond the human mind to understand. This is not the scientific method of dealing with the problems of existence. To meet one difficulty by presenting another, possibly a greater one, is a theological habit that should not be resorted to by the impartial searcher for truth.

The Professor frankly admits that "evolution is the law of this world, and probably the whole system of which it is a part"; but he says that the process of evolution "may be affirmed as a scientific induction from observed fact indifferently by a Theist or by an Atheist." If it is here meant that the views of Atheists and Theists as to the theory of evolution can reasonably be the same, Professor Bonney is decidedly in the wrong. The Atheist regards evolution as meaning an unfolding, opening out, or unwinding; a disclosure of something which was not previously known, but which existed before in a more condensed or hidden form. There is no new existence called into being, but something is made clear to us which was previously concealed. It is the theory that the matter of which the universe is composed has progressed from a vague and, perhaps, all but homogeneous nebula of tremendous extent, to complete systems of suns, worlds, comets, sea and land, and to countless varieties of living things, each composed of many very different parts, and of complex organisations. In other words, "Evolution teaches that the universe and man did not always exist in their present form; neither are they the product of a sudden creative act; but rather the result of innumerable changes from the lower to the higher, each step in advance being an evolution from a pre-existing condition." Now, the Theist looks upon evolution as the very opposite of this. His notion is that the evolutionary process only commenced after an act of special creation. He asserts that in a definite period God suddenly created the universe and man, and that the various phenomena are not the result simply of natural law, but the outcome of alleged supernatural design. No two theories could be more unlike each other than those of evolution and special creation. If, therefore, Professor Bonney is right (which, of course, he is) in saying that "evolution is a fact," he must, to be consistent, consider the Bible theory of creation to be a fiction. His allegation that "evolution may be recognised in the spiritual as well as in the material universe" is merely an assertion. He should define what he means by "spiritual,"

and whether or not he considers this "spiritual" something to be governed by the same laws that belong to the "material." If the law in both cases is the same, where does the differentiation between the supposed "spiritual" and the known "material" universe occur?

To prove the possibility of creation the Professor refers to the alleged miraculous birth of Christ, which, he says, was "a contravention of the law of evolution, a totally new beginning analogous to a creation." What can be thought of the mental acumen of "a Fellow of the Royal Society" who, in this scientific age, avows his belief in this orthodox fable? Supposing the New Testament account of the birth of Jesus to be true, it cannot claim to be a part of the evolutionary process, inasmuch as the plan alleged then to have been adopted was never repeated. There was no development in the Holy Ghost theory. Besides, if this "miraculous" birth were a "contravention of evolution" and "analogous to a creation," the two—evolution and creation—must be in opposition to each other; and, therefore, the Professor's contention that they are in harmony falls to the ground. He says the beginning of existence "is incomprehensible to us, and must be called a creation." This is the very essence of theological assumption. Why *must* it be called a creation? As Mansel says: "Creation is to human thought inconceivable." Spencer also says: "Whatever may be true of it absolutely, we have learnt that, relatively to our consciousness, matter never either comes into existence or ceases to exist.....The annihilation of matter is unthinkable for the same reason that the creation of matter is unthinkable." In my article last week I indicated the drawbacks of the creation theory, and now it remains to be added that before theologians talk of the universe being created they have to show that there was a time when the universe was not. Unless they can do this, all their wild assertions about what *must* have been are idle talk.

Professor Bonney further says: "The beginning of life still ranks among the things not to be discovered, and so must be called a creation." Could theological presumption and absurdity further go? The Rev. Professor admits that the origin of life is unknown, and yet he dogmatically attributes its beginning to an act of which he knows nothing, and of which he can form no idea. He should remember that every argument by which he seeks to force the evolutionist to admit the creation of at least one living protoplasmic cell as a starting point for evolution involves a fallacy—the fallacy that the unknown origin of life tells *against* evolution and *for* creation, whereas it does neither the one nor the other. It is neutral. Every such argument contains also the tacit and fatal admission that creationism, which is thus able to support itself without facts, makes the absence of evidence its building material, and has for its foundation principle the assumption that obscurity is a sign of the supernatural! Some dogmas require only to be stated to be exploded, and the dogma of creation is perhaps the most conspicuous example.

Those theologians who assume so much would do well to carefully study Lester F. Ward's *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. i., chapter iv. In referring to protoplasm, he says:—

"The complex stage of aggregation of matter exhibiting life is no longer a hypothetical one. The molar aggregate resulting from such a re-compounding of the albuminoids has been discovered. It exists under diverse conditions, and manifests properties fully in keeping with its exalted molecular character. This substance, discovered by Oken in 1809 and denominated *Urschleim*, recognised by Dujardin in 1835 and called *sarcodé*, and thoroughly studied by Mohl in 1846, who named it *protoplasm*, has now passed unchallenged into the nomenclature of modern organic chemistry under the last-mentioned title.....Protoplasm is a real substance, found in considerable abundance in Nature, not only within the tissues of organised beings, but, as we might almost say, in a mineral state, wholly disconnected from such beings. There is no more doubt that it is elaborated out of the inorganic elements than there is that ammonia or common salt is thus elaborated. It is a true chemical compound, in which the proportions of each element are known. It contains approximately fifty-four parts of carbon, twenty-one parts of oxygen, sixteen parts of nitrogen, seven parts of hydrogen, and about one part of sulphur and phosphorus.....The great truth that now comes squarely home to us is that *life is a property of matter*. It is simply the result of the movements going

on among the molecules composing a mass of protoplasm. It is a phenomenon presented by this most highly complex form of matter, and which is never absent from it. To kill protoplasm is to destroy its composition, to degrade it into a lower order of substance. The activities, powers, functions, and susceptibilities possessed by this substance, whose combined effect we denominate life, are but the relations which the substance sustains by virtue of its constitution to the forms of matter around it. They are its properties, just as astringency, transparency, etc., are the properties of alum.....In reaching the substance, protoplasm, we have not only reached the fact of life itself, but in its properties we behold all there is essential to life."

This ought to be sufficient to explode the fallacy of the special creation of life. The fact is, until it can be shown that protoplasm was produced by some supernatural power, only two reasonable suppositions can be maintained. These are, that it has existed longer than we have any power to conceive, or that it evolved out of material existence. Either supposition excludes the notion of creation.

There are other fallacies in Professor Bonney's lecture, but enough has been said to show how frequently in the theological world the "blind lead the blind."

CHARLES WATTS.

Christianity and Civilisation.—XIV.

"THOU SHALT NOT SUFFER A WITCH TO LIVE."

(Continued from p. 117.)

ONE could fill pages with citations showing how real and vivid was Luther's belief in demoniacal agency, and how much he did to impress this belief on others. And in this matter Luther was only a type of the Reformers and the Reformation generally. This movement served to bring the belief in witches and evil spirits into bolder relief than it had ever been before. The very existence of the Roman Church was a proof of Satanic power, and all its agents were emissaries of the devil. It is, indeed, worth noting, by all who persist in regarding the Lutheran revolt as a conscious step towards greater intellectual liberty and enlightenment, that this most degrading of all superstitions was preached by prominent Protestant divines, with an energy far surpassing that displayed by the preachers belonging to the Church of Rome.

Wherever Protestantism established itself there was an immediate and marked increase in the belief in witchcraft and in the number of executions. In England, if we except a law passed in the tenth century upon which some doubt has been cast, there does not appear to have been any regular law against witchcraft until 1541. From then until the last judicial executions in 1712 at least 50,000 are believed to have been put to death. Twenty-one years later the sermon preached by Bishop Jewell before Elizabeth (lamenting "that witches and sorcerers within these few years are marvellously increased within your Grace's realm. Your Grace's subjects pine away even unto the death; their color fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft") led to the passing of more severe measures and to more numerous executions.

James I., the "wisest fool in Christendom," as he was well called by Henry IV. of France, wrote an elaborate treatise on the subject of witchcraft, and boasted that the devil regarded him as one of his greatest enemies. He ascribed the storm that he encountered in his journey from Denmark as due to the agency of witches, and afterwards presided over the torture of Dr. Fian, who was accused of having roused the wind. Ordinary tortures not producing the desired confession, the king suggested that his finger-nails should be pulled off and needles run into his fingers up to the heads. However, "so deeply had the devil entered his heart" that he refused to acknowledge his guilt, and was burnt unconfessed.* Under James the laws against sorcery became still more severe; witches being put to death on a first conviction, even though they had not inflicted harm on their neighbors. Twelve bishops sat on the commission to which this measure was referred before it became law.

But James's efforts to suppress witchcraft were far outdone by the Puritan Commonwealth. Under Puritan rule there was a revival of superstition of all kinds, a lowering of the higher intellectual life, and a morbid, unhealthy emphasis laid upon the far-reaching power of Satan and his angels. A commission was appointed by Parliament with instructions to traverse the country and exterminate witchcraft; which had the immediate, and not unnatural, effect of stimulating the disease it was intended to eradicate. There is reason to believe that Cromwell was superior to his followers in this matter, but he does not seem to have taken any active steps to check their action. It was to the Commonwealth that Hopkins owed his appointment—a stroke that was hit off by Butler in the following lines:—

Has not this present Parliament
A ledger to the devil sent,
Fully empower'd to treat about
Finding revolted witches out?
And has not he, within a year,
Hang'd threescore of 'em in one shire?
Some only for not being drown'd,
And some for sitting above ground
Whole days and nights upon their breeches,
And, feeling pain, were hanged for witches;
And some for putting knavish tricks
Upon green geese and turkey chicks,
Or pigs, that suddenly deceast,
Of griefs unnatural as he guest.*

The influence of Puritanism in America was of the same character as elsewhere. Increase Mather and his more celebrated son, Cotton Mather, both wrote on the subject and stirred up public opinion to appoint a commission, as had already been done in England. A judge was appointed who seems to have convicted whenever the clergy thought it desirable; and, by the usual process of torture, many confessions of guilt were obtained. "Multitudes," says Lecky, "were thrown into prison, others fled from the country abandoning their property, and twenty-seven persons were executed. An old man of eighty was pressed to death—a horrible sentence, which was never afterwards executed in America. The ministers of Boston and Charleston drew up an address warmly thanking the commissioners for their zeal, and expressing their hope that it would never be relaxed."

The incentive given to witch-hunting by Protestantism is seen more clearly than elsewhere in the history of Scotland. Nowhere did the clergy wield more absolute power than here, and nowhere were the people encouraged in holding darker or more degrading beliefs. And,

"Of all the means of intimidation employed by the Scotch clergy, none was more efficacious than the doctrines they propounded respecting evil spirits and future punishments. On these subjects they constantly uttered the most appalling threats. The language which they used was calculated to madden men with fear, and to drive them to the depths of despair.....It was generally believed that the world was overrun by evil spirits, who not only went up and down the earth, but also lived in the air, and whose business it was to tempt mankind. Their number was infinite, and they were to be found in all places and in all seasons. At their head was Satan himself.....he assumed various forms. One day he would visit the earth as a black dog; on another day as a raven; on another he would be heard in the distance, roaring like a bull.....In the opinion of divines, his cunning increased with his age; and, having been studying for more than five thousand years, he had now attained to unexampled dexterity."†

Such teachings as these were not only delivered from hundreds of pulpits, but were accepted as unquestionable articles of faith by those who heard them. And, having scattered the seeds, the clergy set to work to reap the harvest. People were appointed to make inquiry of every person concerning his or her knowledge of witches. In the churches boxes were placed to receive accusations. Witches were denounced by name from the pulpit, and people exhorted to bring evidence against them. Persons were tortured for forty-eight hours at a stretch. No official of the Inquisition ever hunted down his quarry with keener zest than did the seventeenth-century Scottish divine; nor was there ever greater ingenuity displayed than in the tortures that were devised by these men of God to wring confessions

* Lecky, *Rise of Rationalism*, i., p. 114.

* *Hudibras*, pt. ii., ch. iii.

† Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, Lib. Ed., i., pp. 366-8.

from the lips of young girls or demented old women.* To any who raised a protest against the execution of witches there was not only the authority of "holy writ," but also the expressed opinions of men of undoubted intellectual eminence as well as of religious leaders. Henry More, the celebrated Platonist, asserted that they who denied the agency of witches were "puffed up with nothing but ignorance, vanity, and stupid infidelity." Sir Matthew Hale, in sentencing two women for witchcraft, asserted its reality was unquestionable, since "the Scriptures had affirmed so much; and, secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons." The otherwise amiable Sir Thomas Browne also affirmed: "For my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches. They that doubt of these do not only deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely, and upon consequence, a sort not of infidels, but atheists."† Ralph Cudworth, one of the greatest scholars of the seventeenth century, also thought it necessary to point out that they who denied the possibility of intercourse between Satan "can hardly escape the suspicion of having some hankering towards Atheism."‡ Nearly a century later the same views were held by Wesley, the founder of Methodism, in his famous utterance, "that the giving up of witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible."

The logic of this sentence can hardly be questioned. If the Bible is not to be followed in its clearest counsel and most unmistakeable utterances, in what is it to be followed? When all that apologists may say has been said, the stubborn fact remains that the power of the belief in witchcraft in modern times can be traced directly to the influence of a book, and that book the Bible. With other subjects—slavery, for example—it may be plausibly argued that economic or other interests were using religious beliefs as a cloak; but in this matter that argument is of no avail. As I have shown, the belief in witchcraft increased as religion became more and more a personal matter, and was actually greatest where the influence of Protestantism was strongest. Scotch witchcraft, Lecky declared, was the offspring of Scotch Puritanism, and faithfully reflected the character of its parent; and the same may be said of any other country in which the belief existed.

The clergy, too, held to the belief as long as they possibly could. As late as 1773 the divines of the "Associated Presbytery" passed a resolution declaring their belief in witchcraft, and deploring the fact that it was dropping into disrepute. For the movement against the belief one has to turn almost entirely to non-believers in Christianity. It was Montaigne who asserted with strong common sense, at almost the opening of the witch-hunting period: "How much more natural and more likely do I find it that two men should lie than one in twelve hours pass with the winds from east to west? How much more natural that our understanding may, by the volubility of our loose, capering mind, be transported from his place, than that one of us should, by a strange spirit, in flesh and bone, be carried upon a broom through the tunnel of a chimney?"§ And, in his time, Cudworth admits that the growing disbelief in witches was almost entirely due to the influence of Hobbes.

But greater than even the direct attack on witchcraft was the indirect influence of the slowly-awakening sense of natural law. Both Buckle and Lecky have noted that the decline of the witch mania was coincident with the establishment of the Royal Society and the growth of a taste for the physical sciences. After all, the belief in witches was only one form of the belief in the supernatural, and both gradually weakened before the advance of positive knowledge and the conception

of natural law. Against this form of attack the supernatural can make no lasting defence. A man or a book may be destroyed, but against that impalpable, imperceptible modification of the intellectual environment which is brought about by the circulation of positive knowledge concerning man and nature, religion is powerless. The organism becomes unsuited to its surroundings; and right through nature the penalty of maladaptation is death.

C. COHEN.

Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Body-Snatchers.

"Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?".....

"No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir; but I bite my thumb, sir."

—SHAKESPEARE (*R. and J.*).

I WAS much interested in reading Mr. Facer's letter and the *Daily Telegraph* article on the exhumation of the bodies of Voltaire and Rousseau, which I had not previously seen. At first blush it would seem as if the *Daily Telegraph* article entirely disposes of my accusation of clerical body-snatching made in my article of February 10. But let us examine the facts. First of all, there can be little doubt that at the recent opening of the tombs two skeletons were found, unless the whole account were due to the inventive impudence of interested imposture, the possibility of which is suggested by the *Telegraph's* remark, "but, as the police kept back most of the newspaper representatives, there is a good deal of confliction in the reports published to-day." It is natural to ask, Why were the representatives of the press kept back? Letting that pass, however, we come to the evidence for the body-snatching as described.

In Espinasse's *Life of Voltaire*, published in 1892 (Great Writers' Series, Walter Scott, p. 197), occurs this passage:—

"But at the return of the Bourbons to Paris in April, 1814, a party of French royalists and Roman Catholic zealots, there is reason to believe, regarding the Panthéon, which had become a church, as desecrated by being the resting-place of Voltaire and Rousseau, at dead of night extracted their remains from their leaden coffins, and buried them at two in the morning in a piece of waste ground opposite Bercy. In 1864, during the Third Empire, Voltaire's sarcophagus was opened by order of the Government, and found to be empty."

So far the chronology of Voltaire's case seems to be as follows:—

- 1778. Voltaire buried at Romilli. Opposition of clergy and some talk of exhumation.
- 1791. Voltaire re-interred in Panthéon.
- 1814. Voltaire's remains alleged to be stolen. The priests have possession of the crypt for some years (1814-1821).
- 1864. Government orders tomb to be opened, and finds it empty.
- 1899. (*circa*) Government orders tomb to be opened a second time, and finds skeleton alleged to resemble Voltaire.

Of course much depends on the evidence for the Government opening the tomb in 1864, mentioned by Espinasse. Whatever the evidence may be, it was, evidently, of sufficient weight to convince Professor George Saintsbury, who, in the latest edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1898 (article "Voltaire"), writes as follows:—

"On July 10, 1791, the body was transferred to the Panthéon, but it was not to rest there, and during the Hundred Days it was once more, it is said, disinterred and stowed away in a piece of waste ground. His heart, taken from the body when it was embalmed, and given to M^{me}. Denis, and by her to M^{me}. de Vilette, was preserved in a silver case, and when it was proposed (in 1864) to restore it to the other remains, the sarcophagus at Sainte Geneviève (the Panthéon) was opened and found to be empty."

Edgar Quinet also, in the *Paris Guide, par les Principaux Ecrivains et Artistes de la France*, 1867 (second edition, vol. i., p. 666)—that is, three years after the event referred to by Espinasse and Professor Saintsbury—refers to the desecration of the tombs of Rousseau and Voltaire, and speaks of the Church choosing "the night for this work of darkness."

As to the details of this gruesome affair, these are supplied by Victor Hugo, to whose account I was

* Readers may be interested in the perusal of the following bill of costs for burning Janet Wischert and Isabel Cocker in Aberdeen:—

Item,	£	s.	d.
for twenty loads of Peatts to burn them	2	0	0
" for one boll of collis	1	4	0
" for four tar barrellis	1	6	8
" for fir and win barrellis	0	16	8
" for a stailk, and the dressing of it	0	16	0
" for four fadomes of towis	4	0	0
" to Jon Justice for their execution	0	13	4

† *Religio Medici*, pt. i., sec. 30.
 ‡ *True Intellectual System*, ii., 650.
 § *Essays*, bk. iii., ch. xi.

indebted for the description of the body-snatching, as given in my previous article.

Now, if the tomb of Voltaire was actually empty when opened in 1864, it is certain that the remains found recently are not those of Voltaire. Whether the remains found were the skeletons of some long-forgotten priests, whose bones had been transferred to the tombs of the two illustrious Freethinkers, or what they were, will, perhaps, remain a mystery. However, it will be noticed that in the *Daily Telegraph's* report it says that no trace of a bullet was found in the skull in Rousseau's coffin—a significant fact, in the light of the allegation that Rousseau shot himself through the brain; and most remarkable of all is the *Daily Telegraph's* assertion that M. Berthelot found "even a little hair still adhering to the frontal part of the skull, and forming a sort of crown, or tonsure, like that of monks."

"A tonsure like that of monks"! did you say, Monsieur Berthelot?

MIMNERMUS.

Canada Becoming a Catholic Country.

It is an old story, that men should not be measured by their words, but by their deeds. The actions of the "Liberal" Governments of Ontario and Canada during recent years prove that, in spite of loud protestations of independence and honesty, they are subject to the same influences that, but a few years ago, led an English politician to compromise with convicted felons in order to gain votes. It is but a decade ago that, at the dictation of a Catholic Archbishop, "Marmion" was cut out of the list of books used in Ontario schools; and now we find an Ottawa Government cancelling its orders for a State memorial service in Christ Church Cathedral, the leading Anglican church in Ottawa. The ground upon which this action is taken is said to be that Canada has no State Church. We are very glad to have a declaration of this kind from the Government, for it has been manifest for a long time that, though strictly correct, the principle has been largely ignored, and not only has the English Church in Canada been endowed with large blocks of land, but all the churches receive a substantial endowment in the shape of exemption from taxation, which acts as a heavy burden upon the rest of the community. In Toronto nearly one-fifth of the property in the city is exempt from taxation, and the taxes of the rest of the community are thus increased by about twenty-five per cent. The advocates of the abolition of tax exemptions should not lose sight of this declaration of the Government. We do not imagine that it is any more honest than other similar declarations, and we should like the Government to explain why they did not think of it when they gave the order to hold the memorial service. The true explanation seems to be indicated by the action of the Government when Premier Sir J. Thompson was buried. That gentleman was a Catholic, and the Government paid nearly a thousand dollars for the privilege of having mass said over his body in a Catholic church. Now, however, that a Protestant church is to get a pull, the Government suddenly finds out that it is not entitled to squander the public funds in religious mummeries. We hope its members will not forget their lesson. The antics of the Churchmen would be laughable were it not for the fact that they exercise a powerful influence over the more ignorant sections of the people. The Anglicans of Toronto proposed to hold a united Christian service in St. James's Cathedral, and at first it seemed probable that all sects would unite in a grand religious jamboree; but Christian jealousy prevailed over Christian love, and now each sect will have its own memorial service. We suppose, if the service had taken place at St. James's, the Anglicans would have roped in a big collection. The affair at Ottawa would seem to show the working of another and more sinister influence, and one the insidious effect of which is largely to sap the foundations of political morality. Politicians in our country, like those in the United States, in pandering to the pretensions of a cunning and truculent priesthood, are sowing the seeds of future disasters to the cause of freedom.

—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

La Risposta.

(Adapted from the Italian.)

THE starving mother moaned and pulled the bell
One winter's night before the priory, late;
Then prayed the stony Virgin o'er the gate
"O save my child, though e'en I go to hell."

Wild beasts received their bodies, God their—well,
That winter's morn the lazy monks, elate,
Collect the grisly relics from the gate.
Providence had sent them bones to sell!

GEORGE WOODWARD.

Acid Drops.

"My Dear Hellbound Sinners" is the way in which Mrs. Carrie Nation addressed the saloon-keepers of Topeka when advising them to repent or be smashed. Jesus Christ laid his axe at the root of the tree. Mrs. Nation laid her axe on the saloon furniture.

Mrs. Carrie Nation's raid upon the Kansas liquor saloons has been imitated by Dowicite women in Chicago, who have wrecked several drug stores as branch establishments of the Devil.

A great fuss is made by the *Christian Budget* over the fact that young Rockefeller, who is the heir to £100,000,000, conducts a Bible-class for young men in a Baptist church in New York. An illustration is given depicting this young man sitting at a desk reverently thumbing a Bible, whilst in a semi-circle his class sits in front of him. Young Rockefeller looks a marvel of adolescent piety. He seems not to have paid much attention to Christ's denunciation of riches. He may intend to renounce his wealth when it comes to him. Perhaps so—perhaps not.

The *Christian Budget* says, apparently with pleased astonishment, that he can boast a Bible-class of 125 members. We think it rather odd that he—the heir to £100,000,000—hasn't very many more. A little deferential attention to his exposition of the Word, and a little zeal in "cramming" the points of Gospel stories—with the exception of that one relating to the young ruler—must surely have prospective advantages to good professing Christians.

De Witt Talmage has been preaching on "mending nets." He ought to know something about them. He has spread his net pretty wide, and roped in a goodly number of shekels. He seems to be specially anxious that his hearers should "tear out of their nets the tangled meshes of unbelief." He says that the "man who believes in only half a Bible or the Bible in spots, the man who halts, doubting about this and doubting about that, will be a failure in Christian work. Show me the man who rather thinks that the Garden of Eden may have been an allegory, and is not quite certain but that there may be another chance after death, and does not know whether or not the Bible is inspired, and I tell you that man for soul-saving is a poor stick."

Probably he *would* be a "poor stick" at soul-saving. In that kind of work, "cocksureness" and an absolute disregard for opposing facts are vitally essential. But he may be anything but a "poor stick" in other and more useful directions.

The foreign mission question, says the Bishop of Durham, is a national, and not an ecclesiastical, one. So it is, in the sense of involving us in no end of needless trouble. But if the Bishop means, as his other observations seem to indicate, that the nation, as represented by the Government, should undertake the spread of his particular faith, there is but one plain and decided reply—Certainly not. We are not taking on anything of that kind now. And this is especially a bad time to urge it, after the late events in China. Why doesn't the Bishop of Durham look a little nearer home if he is seized with an apostolic spirit of conversion? There is plenty of scope for him in his own diocese of Durham and in Northumberland.

One is very much amused at these frantic desires to convert foreign nations—who do not want us—when such facts are disclosed as appear in a recent Sunday census taken in Dewsbury. It was found that on the 10th ult. 1,539 men went to churches, chapels, and mission rooms, whilst 9,717 men went to hotels, public-houses, etc. The proportion of women was slightly different: 1,995 went to churches, chapels, etc., and 359 to public-houses. Boys and girls brought up the respective totals to 4,654 who sought spiritual excitement, and 4,421 who favored stimulation of an alcoholic kind. Hadn't the men of God better look after those by whom they are surrounded, instead of worrying about Chinese, Japanese, and Hindoos, who have their own native religious instructors?

A missionary from the Far East writes to the *Church Times* anent the recent Buddhist address from Japan. He admits that it is often questionable whether the best interests of the missionary in China are advanced by "obtrusively running counter to popular feeling, for this spirit of assertion appears of late to have been a fruitful source of trouble."

"That it has led to difficulty," he continues, "is proved by the fact that about a year and a half ago the heads of certain missions met together to protest against the abuses arising from this spirit, which had become subject of bitter complaint amongst the Chinese and a scandal to foreigners. All missions may do well to ask themselves how far they are one and all to blame in the matter."

This very candid missionary correspondent explains that

the Roman Catholic priests have received a certain social status. As mandarins, they have a right to speedy attention in the Law Courts, not easily obtainable by the ordinary native. "This privilege they have managed to secure to their converts, and, as might be expected in China, where the people are notoriously litigious, many will register themselves as Christians to ensure more powerful protection for their suits."

The missionary observes, in conclusion: "It is not easy to see how far it would be possible, or even desirable, to withdraw English missions from the Far East; but there are places where all might tread more gently on one another's heels and less hardly on native prejudices of over a thousand years, and with less of the spirit of competition amongst one another." This seems to be a very fair and dispassionate statement of the case, especially as proceeding from one who is engaged in missionary work himself in the land of which he speaks.

The new volume of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, to which some reference was made in these notes last week, seems to have occasioned much dismay in the orthodox camp. The *Examiner* devotes a leading article to it, observing that "we cannot but count it a misfortune that a dictionary of the Bible, which is presumably intended to be a book of reference, should have been so entirely handed over to men who are among the most extreme of modern critics."

This observation is aimed at Canon Cheyne (the editor) and Professor Schmiedel, whose iconoclastic work in this latest volume has done much to bring the Bible down to its proper level. The *Examiner* objects to their "too manifest desire to make one's flesh creep." Still, with a toleration which will be the better appreciated in view of the fact that no other attitude is possible, the *Examiner* says: "It is a good thing that serious and reverent students of the Bible should know all that these men have to say. Ministers especially ought to be acquainted with the problems they raise, for, unless we are very much mistaken, the question of New Testament criticism is about to take a very serious form, and one which will require no little faith and wisdom on the part of all preachers of the Gospel. We have no doubt whatever that the ultimate result, in the case of the New Testament, as of the Old, will be the truer understanding and appreciation of the Word of God and the confirmation of belief. But meanwhile, in order that the things which cannot be shaken may remain, there must be a good deal of modification of traditional views; and on the attitude of religious men, and especially of the leaders of religious thought, while the process is going on, very much will depend. The only policy which can be fatal is the ostrich policy of deliberate and wilful ignorance."

In a consoling sort of way the *Examiner* says "there is no need whatever for panic." It reminds its readers that the knowledge of Jesus "does not depend on the accuracy of traditional views as to the date and authorship of the books of the New Testament." We should have thought, as Christians themselves thought until recent times, that a great deal indeed depended upon when, and by whom, these wonderful narratives were written. The teachings attributed to Christ may, of course, be judged on their merits. But what about the varying stories of his life, from the so-called "immaculate conception" to his alleged resurrection, with all the intervening miracles? Some reliable testimony on these points is surely necessary to belief.

What a wonderful change is taking place in the attitude of Christians towards their "Holy Bible"! For example, read the *Christian World's* review of Dr. George Adam Smith's *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*. It is all in the way of unloading. Christ himself, we are told, was one of the freest critics of the Old Testament. The modern preacher must "deal frankly with the new situation created by criticism." "Refusal to face the facts is driving thoughtful men into scepticism and despair." We don't quite see where the despair comes in. Why should anyone despair because he cannot believe a number of incredibilities in some old Hebrew records? Reference is made to letters received from every part of the globe by the late Professor Drummond, in which "one and all tell how the literal acceptance of the Bible—the faith which finds in it nothing erroneous, nothing defective—has driven them from religion." As to the stories of the patriarchs, Dr. Smith goes so far as to think that we may find in them "an historical nucleus."

Sairey Gamp, as we know, was "partial" to "cucumber" and a drop of gin. Perhaps the writer of a certain London "Literary Letter" had this in his mind when he informs us, in his elegant style, that Queen Victoria was "very partial to Marie Corelli's books." Miss Corelli has acknowledged this partiality by giving to the world a little book on *The Passing of the Great Queen*. We haven't read the book, and don't want to. Some extracts, which have appeared in reviews, are quite enough. It seems to be a triumph in the way of gush and disregard of grammar.

A correspondent of the *Rock* points out that "we are so much under the dominion of heathenism that our very 'days' (Gal. iv. 10) are adapted from old heathen anniversaries. Of such is the 'Day' called Christmas, which really has as much to do with the Lord Jesus Christ's birth as have the words 'Easter,' 'Lent,' 'Good Friday,' 'Ash Wednesday,' with His death. The very names of our weekdays are heathen, and have reference to the worship of sun, moon, and pantheistic divinities. It was not for want of information, indeed, that Christmas was fixed to a heathen anniversary, the 25th of December, on the 'Birthday of the unconquerable Sun,' but simply to 'wisely counteract' Pagan ceremonies, as the Popish writer Picart declares. It was considered in Constantine's day, and in succeeding ages of increasing religious darkness, that, by giving names borrowed from Christianity to old heathen festivals, demi-gods, rites, and 'Days,' the bounds of 'The Church' would be enlarged by the entrance of heathen 'converts.'"

The Evangelical Alliance has just received a report from what it says is a "thoroughly trustworthy source," that in Sucre, in Bolivia, a Bible colporteur, for circulating the Scriptures, is being now proceeded against by the Roman Catholic Archbishop, who has asked the judges of the Supreme Court to pass sentence of death! We can hardly believe it. If it is so, the Evangelical Alliance should bestir itself. We have no particular desire to see the Bible circulated, but we should certainly protest against any veto being placed upon it by law.

It was very good of Cardinal Vaughan to try to modify the teaching of his Church when the question of the salvation of Queen Victoria was raised. We can be sure that there would have been no such attempt if she had been a washerwoman instead of a Queen and Empress. The teaching of Rome, however, in regard to those who die outside the pale of its "Church," is not to be explained away. In Archbishop Manning's book, *England and Christendom*, the following appears: "It is clearly and openly manifest that no one can belong to the true Church of Christ, unless he firmly adhere by free *subjection of mind and heart*, and open confession of the lips, to the Chair of Peter and the Roman Pontiff."—*Pius IX., in a letter to the Roman Catholic Bishops in England, dated May 31, 1866.* "Every several soul, under pain of *losing eternal life*, is bound to enter the only Church of Christ, out of which is neither absolution nor *entrance* into the Kingdom of Heaven."—*Answer of the Holy Office to 198 clergy of the Church of England, November 8, 1865.* "We are as much bound, under pain of *eternal death*, to bear witness that without the Church [Rome] is *no salvation*, as that without the Name of Jesus there is no entrance into eternal life."

The Duke of Norfolk was not to be sympathised with personally when he had to listen to King Edward's formal repudiation of the errors of Rome. The Ministry of the Royal Household of Italy have forwarded to this country the following expression of feeling in regard to the late "indiscretion" of the Duke: "It is regrettable that the only tactless remark made during the Papal jubilee year has fallen from the lips of a citizen of the country to which Italy is bound by so many ties of sympathy and friendship."

The Scotch regard for the "Sawbath" is amusingly illustrated in the following story by Mr. Tully, M.P. "A friend of his was playing billiards one wet Thursday at an inn in Kircudbrightshire. Suddenly the landlord entered, very drunk, and insisted on their stopping. His wife afterwards explained that it was his habit to get drunk on Sundays, but, mistaking the day, he had got drunk on Thursday instead; and, from force of habit, believing it was Sunday, he had been shocked at billiards being played."

A big effort is being made to convert the banished King Prempeh of Ashanti, who is now in exile on one of the Mauritius Islands. Archdeacon Buswell, of the Church Missionary Society, has been buzzing about him. Progress seems to be slow. All that can be said of him so far is, that he is "trying to take in what he hears." That is what is being done by a number of civilised persons in our own country who are brought under clerical influence. As in the case of King Prempeh, the success achieved is not likely to cause any violent demonstrations of delight in heaven.

"She kissed the book over her veil. I don't like that!" exclaimed the mayor of Richmond (Sir J. W. Szlumper) in the Borough Police-court as a veiled lady took the oath. Of course, the gallant knight didn't like that, but she wasn't kissing him, but a probably dirty and greasy book, which makes all the difference.

Providence, who watches the sparrows that fall, seems, in his minute scrutiny, to have overlooked poor, insignificant India, with its teeming populations. We learn that one of the greatest living authorities on India calculates that from 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 of the people of that land scarcely ever lose the sensation of hunger.

Two more clergymen have been charged with drunkenness. The Rev. Charles James Hinkson, vicar of Newton Bromswold, near Rushden, has been charged with drunk and disorderly conduct. The police evidence was to the effect that every effort was made to induce him to return home, but he continued ringing bells and knocking at doors, besides committing other nuisances. Andrew Parsons, a clergyman, was found incapably drunk in Archway-road, Highgate.

Probably the Athanasian Creed never gave more honest enjoyment to any company than it afforded my audience and myself on the first Sunday night in the new century. It is a pity it does not produce as much amusement and genuine mirth when recited in the churches. It may at some time. All theology will by-and-bye be laughed at. We set the example very long ago; and the world will follow it. Men will soon come to see that theology, religion, is the most laughable thing in the world; yes, they will laugh at the horrors it once gave them. That time is worth working and suffering for, even if I never see it except in anticipation. God, Christ, Satan, Ghost, Mary, are bound to become sources of amusement in future, just as Pixies, Fairies, Genii, etc. are at present. What is religion but solemnly horrible amusement, created by sharpers in order to swindle fools?—*Joseph Symes, in the "Liberator" (Melbourne)*.

Rev. Dr. Parker, writing in the *Homiletic Review*, New York, says that the Christian Churches are in danger of losing their distinctiveness. They are becoming clubs, recreation grounds, and mutual entertainment societies. What they really want is not more machinery, but fresh dynamic force. Very likely! But how and where is it to be obtained?

The Milan correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* writes:—"A serious dispute has arisen here which may have far-reaching effects. For years it has been the custom in the Italian lower schools for the pupils before beginning their lessons to recite the Paternoster—a prayer which was accepted by all shades of opinion at the Chicago Congress of Religions. Last week, however, the superintendent of the schools ordered that the recitation of the prayer should be discontinued. It should be mentioned that the Milan Municipal Council, which has authority over the schools, is at present dominated by the Democratic party, assisted by the Socialists. The superintendent's order has aroused the religious and moral feelings of the people, and the crisis threatens to assume an acute character. A protest is being published by the children's parents and the clergy. It has already been signed by many prominent citizens, political and literary men, artists, and men of science. Altogether the signatures number over 100,000, or more than a fifth of the population. On Sunday, in order to counteract the popular indignation, a public meeting was held by the Socialists. The prevailing note of the many violent speeches was the denial of the existence of God. The meeting ended by approving the order forbidding public prayer in the schools. This question accentuates the discord between the Catholics and the Socialists. It may now, however, have serious consequences, as all believers will undoubtedly withdraw from the Socialist party. Open rebellion against the Church is already spreading to other towns in Italy."

"Whoever," the Revised Statutes of the State of Ohio says, "being over fourteen years of age, profanely curses or swears by the name of God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Ghost, shall, on complaint made within ten days thereafter, be fined not more than one dollar for each offence." If these fines were honestly collected, there would be little necessity for any other taxes in Ohio. In that case, the more economically-minded users of strong language would very likely do all their swearing early, before the fine became leviable.

There is always something very refreshing about Hibernicisms. Mr. Murphy, of the Missouri Legislature, has recently taken the cake in those parts for adding to the public gaiety. "Present-day Democrats," he declared, "have little reason to be proud of Andy Jackson. And if Andy Jackson was alive to-day, he would be glad he was dead."

Lorenzo Priori, who was electrocuted at Sing Sing prison, New York, the other day, wrote his last message to the world on a piece of paper. "Good-bye," he said, "I am going to heaven in the arms of Jesus Christ; going where all innocents will go sooner or later." He does not seem to have troubled himself much about Vincenzo Garagusi whom he murdered. Perhaps he felt that the poor devil was installed below, and that it couldn't be helped.

Reverence for sacred things is not universal in America. The *Star*, of Marshall, Texas, says: "The ministers of Austin volunteered to do the praying for the House of Representatives free, and that body refused the offer. They wanted to pay some fellow five dollars for five minutes' perfunctory supplication to the throne of grace, which everyone should do on his own account."

"Leave me in the hands of God, and I will be all right,"

said William H. Scott, an American Christian Scientist and Healer, to his wife. She left him to God, and pneumonia settled the rest.

The father of "Kid" McCoy, the pugilist, is Francis Selby, of Indianapolis, who has just got divorced from his wife. She joined a new sect, and one of its missionaries came to live in the Selby household. Hence these tears. The "lodger" again!

Salmon fishing opened the other day at Norham-on-Tweed, and the Rev. M. Green, the vicar of Norham, appeared on the scene and offered up a prayer for the success of the season's take. This may have been all right for the fishermen, but it was rather rough on the salmon. What the Rev. M. Green should do is to show that he can fish himself like a true apostle. When Peter went fishing he caught a salmon, a trout, or something, that had money in its mouth, wherewith to pay the tax collector's bill for both Peter and Jesus. If the Rev. M. Green can fish like that, let him do so; otherwise, let him leave the game to be played by the fishermen and the salmon, without taking sides in the name of the Lord.

A correspondent of the *New York Truthseeker* asks whom Ingersoll meant when he observed that "The greatest of human beings has said, 'Conscience is born of love.'" Our contemporary replies, "Shakespeare, probably." But why "probably"? Shakespeare was always "the greatest of men" to Ingersoll, and "Conscience is born of love" occurs in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Rev. F. B. Meyer, who has lately been addressing the students of the Yorkshire College, took the opportunity of extending the business in which he is lucratively engaged. He affirmed that everything which developed their natural faculties of mind and body was a religious act. This definition brings swimming, rowing, cycling, cricket, football, and lawn tennis within the range of the clergy's attention. A hundred years ago such a conception would have been regarded as blasphemous. A hundred years hence it will probably be smiled at as one of those little dodges by which the clergy tried to keep a hold on retreating customers.

According to the February number of the *Temple Magazine*, a most extraordinary success has been achieved by a certain infidel-slayer, whom we have always declined to advertise. The funniest part of the eulogy lies in the statement that, owing to the efforts of this brainless wastrel, the Freethinkers are "at their wits' ends to find fresh weapons such as they are to attack the truth of the Bible." As a matter of fact, the Freethinkers are not in want of fresh weapons. Those they have are sound and effective. In any case, they are not likely to trouble themselves overmuch about one of Walton Powell's "pals."

The following conversation is vouched for by a correspondent as recent and historical:—"Good evening, Jack." "Good evening." "Whose photo is that?" "Mr. Foote's, the editor of the *Freethinker*." "Is it? I'd like to throw him in our duck pond."

It is just possible that this pious gentleman would find the ducking of the editor of the *Freethinker* a little difficult. A man who measures forty-one inches round the chest, whose muscles are kept fairly hard by regular dumb-bell exercise, who is just about the standard weight for his height, and has not varied seven pounds in seventeen years, is not exactly everybody's mark in a tussle. Even if the editor of the *Freethinker* were got into the water, he would not necessarily be settled. He often swam a couple of miles in his younger days, and can still float better than most Christians.

Trying to Keep Out.

A sick man who was really near to death could not resist the temptation to have a little fun with his spiritual adviser. He had a lingering malady, but his days were certainly numbered by a few weeks at the most. He had not been known as a man of strong religious convictions.

Someone suggested to the Rev. Paul Weyland, then stationed at Morningside, that he make a call upon the patient.

Going to the house, the Rev. Mr. Weyland began to make subtle inquiries about his spiritual welfare. The invalid's answers were all non-committal and evasive, and finally, in despair, the pastor said:—

"Do you really want to go to heaven, Mr. Blank?"
"Do I want to go to heaven?" repeated the dying man, in a hoarse whisper. "Why, that's the place I've been fighting so hard to keep out of for the last two years!"

—*Pittsburg News.*

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 3, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W., at 7.30, "Airs from Heaven and Blasts from Hell."

To Correspondents.

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

G. F. H. MCCLUSKEY.—Kindly convey our sympathy to Mrs. Hooper in her bereavement.

W. FROUDE.—The finest thing ever said of a woman was said by "Dicky" Steele: "To love her was a liberal education." Sir Richard was too often at the tavern; to tell the plain truth, he was too often drunk; he was too much acquainted with sheriffs and bailiffs; there was a soft, weak side to his character, that kept him in perpetual trouble; but when all is said and done, he was still a gallant fellow, kind and brave and generous, and no man's enemy but his own; and that consummate praise of a woman, which came from his head and heart in perfect alliance, will outlive any sentence of the more widely gifted, but colder, Addison. You will find, on further investigation, that Addison drank perhaps as much as Steele, only he managed to *spread* it better. When he was at death's door, he sent for his stepson, young Lord Warwick, to see how a Christian could die; and it has been suggested that he sent for half a pint of brandy (his favorite tippie) at the same time, to enable him to go through the performance with *éclat*.

JOSEPH LAID.—When you say "not too expensive" you are still using relative language. Can you afford books priced at from five to ten shillings? Let us know, and we will answer your question. Meanwhile, we strongly advise you to buy and use the *Bible Handbook* advertised on our last page. For the other matter, see "Acid Drops."

R. CHAPMAN.—Sorry. Better luck next time.

ESS JAY BEE.—Thanks. Shall appear.

ATHEIST (Newark).—Must keep it over till next week.

TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—W. Davey, 5s.; H. Boll, 3s. From India:—J. Matthews, 2 rupees; C. Burgeon, 2 rupees; S. A. Buttery, 1 rupee; A. O. Rainford, 2 rupees; J. D'Costa, 5 rupees; E. H. Steppings, 2 rupees—in all 19s.

W. COX.—We hope the Liverpool Branch has better times to come. You must recollect that all intellectual and advanced movements have suffered heavily during the past year or so. Don't be discouraged. The tide is sure to turn.

H. ORGAN.—Your pious friend talks stuff and nonsense. Thomas Paine, in his *Age of Reason*, is not an echo of Rousseau. To say that he was not a factor in establishing American Independence is to fly in the face of history. Paine was thanked and rewarded by Congress for his labors; and it was his pamphlets, *Common Sense* and the *Crisis*, that inspired the "rebels" to throw off the yoke of George III. It was Paine who originated the expression, "The United States of America."

F. H. FACEY.—Your suggestion that Freethinkers should wear a certain badge has several times been advanced, but we do not think they would consent to be publicly ticketed with the same readiness as Christians.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged to you for your regular and valuable batches of cuttings.

J. ROBERTSON.—Mr. Foote is writing you with respect to visiting Edinburgh.

T. HUNT.—Thanks for the cutting. With regard to your query—Some prominent Freethinkers are Socialists, and some are not. The National Secular Society, which is organised on a purely Freethought basis, has nothing to do with that matter, one way or another. You refer to Mr. Percy Ward as "being often engaged in attacking the tenets of the Socialist faith." But you should remember that he does so on his own responsibility. The N. S. S. does not want to set him talking, or to close his mouth, on that subject. After all, the best way to deal with Mr. Ward is to answer him.

S. W. DE CAUX, the Great Yarmouth stalwart, writes: "I was very glad to see in the *Freethinker* of last week that a fund is about to be raised to enable you to take a well-deserved holiday. Such a fund should be raised annually, for Freethinkers are under the deepest obligation to you. I enclose my contribution (£1) to the fund." We are very much obliged to our friend for his kind consideration. No such fund was being raised, but an old Freethinker sent £2 towards the expenses of Mr. Foote's dash to the seaside quite recently. That dash lasted six days, and was capital—as far as it went. It was the first bit of leisure from work he had enjoyed since last September; and he works, generally speaking, seven days a week, with only a rare evening off for recreation. As he gets older, however, he cannot keep up the great pace; he will have to take a leaf out of the late Mr. Spurgeon's book, and get rest and change more frequently; which can only be done by going right away from London.

MINNIE W. HUTTY.—We have handed your flattering letter to Mr. Neale. He is as large-hearted as he is clever, and will be delighted to know that his writing affords pleasure to young Freethinkers. We are very sorry to hear that you have lost your father.

T. P. STEWART.—The South Shields engagement, as you will see, has been cancelled. We hope a suitable hall will soon be available there.

D. FRANKEL.—See paragraph.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Secular Thought—Liberator—Lucifer—Sydney Bulletin—Public Opinion (New York)—Two Worlds—People's Newspaper—Essex Weekly News—Crescent—Blue Grass Blade—Torch of Reason—Western Daily Press.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. FOOTE had a capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when he lectured on "The Fable of Jesus Christ." Mr. Foote occupies the same platform this evening (March 3), taking for his subject, "Airs from Heaven and Blasts from Hell."

Bills are not issued to advertise these Athenæum Hall lectures. It is to be hoped, therefore, that readers of the *Freethinker* who are in the habit of attending, frequently or occasionally, will do their utmost to give publicity to the lectures amongst their friends and acquaintances. A good deal of effective advertising can be done in this way.

It has been found necessary to cancel Mr. Foote's engagement to lecture at South Shields next Sunday (March 10). Inquiry concerning halls was delayed rather too long, and when it came to "the sticking place" it was found that the one that was available was rented too highly. Unfortunately, as it appears, South Shields, which used to be so favorably situated in the matter of halls, is now as unfavorably situated as almost any town in the kingdom.

A big program, something like a section of Bradshaw's Railway Guide, has been made up for the London Branches who stood by the Executive's resolution to organise, and therefore centralise, the outdoor propaganda during the approaching summer. Thirteen lectures every Sunday have been arranged for in various parts of the metropolis, and every well-known lecturer, with a single exception, has been engaged for the work. A start is to be made on the first Sunday in May, and the work will be continued until the end of September.

Special outdoor efforts will be organised as before. Freethought Demonstrations will be held as extensively as possible, and Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen will be the principal speakers. Altogether, it must be admitted that the National Secular Society has a first-rate summer program for London.

The Twentieth Century Edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, which is being issued by the Secular Society, Limited, through the Freethought Publishing Company, at the wonderfully low price of sixpence, will be a larger book than the cheapest of the American editions published at a quarter of a dollar (1s.). The American editions include Parts I. and II. only. This Twentieth Century edition will include what for nearly a century has been called Part III., and was apparently intended by Paine himself to be associated with the former Parts. This edition is being printed with brand new type on good paper. Trouble is being taken to correct, silently, the many mistakes that have crept into the later English editions. Mr. Foote is contributing a preliminary Life of Paine, and editorial notes by way of Appendix. The first issue is to comprise 10,000 copies, and a second issue should be required in the course of a few months after publication.

Every effort will be made to get this first-rate, though marvellously cheap, edition of Paine's masterpiece into the

hands of "the people" of this country. No doubt a good many Freethinkers who can afford it will be glad to purchase copies for distribution amongst their friends and acquaintances—which is always one of the best and most efficacious forms of propaganda. It has been decided that private persons buying not less than half-a-dozen copies for this purpose shall be supplied at trade price—that is to say, at the rate of 9d. in the shilling. Six copies will cost 2s. 3d., and twelve copies 4s. 6d. Thus, for a small amount of money, and at the cost of a little trouble, hundreds of Freethinkers may become active missionaries of their cause; and it is really worth a much greater effort to place the *Age of Reason* in the hands of the priest-ridden, priest-deluded, and priest-exploited masses of Great Britain. We should add that orders, at the above rate, for copies of this Twentieth Century edition should be forwarded direct to the Freethought Publishing Company, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C. Publication may be expected in a fortnight or so, and orders will be executed in turn as they are received and entered on the list.

Mr. J. M. Robertson delivers three lectures for the Liverpool N. S. S. Branch to-day in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. We hope there will be good meetings. The local "saints" should try to make up for the late disadvantages by attending themselves and trying to secure the attendance of their liberal-minded friends.

Mr. Joseph Symes, our gallant old friend and colleague at Melbourne, has shifted the plant of his paper into the Freethought Hall, Victoria-parade, where it now occupies the rooms originally built for it about twelve years ago. It will be remembered that Mr. Symes was jockeyed out of the Freethought Hall by pretended friends of the movement. The place has since fallen into the hands of a well-wisher, and it is once more the centre of Mr. Symes's activities. For some months he has been lecturing there to good meetings, and now his paper is edited and printed there.

Mr. Symes has had a terrible struggle, and the *Liberator* has more than once been in the sorest straits. This has naturally intensified his affection for the paper, and we are not surprised that he is anxious about its future. We take the following from the last number to hand:—"Is it not time the Australasian Freethinkers took the trouble to consider what is to be done with the *Liberator* when my hand and brain can work no longer? A man of sixty, however good his constitution and however great his capacity for continuous work, cannot be regarded as young. And the question to be decided is, Who is to conduct the paper when my work is done? If it should be continued, as I hope it may, I think my successor, whoever he may be, ought not to be subjected to the worry and the poverty I have endured for so many years. Indeed, I can hardly imagine any other man enduring it. He will require some uncommon elements in his composition—elements good, bad, and indifferent—to carry him through; and even then it would be very unfair to subject him to such conditions. A soldier doesn't mind fighting—he glories in it; but he ought not to find those he fights for his worst foes. However, I hope to live long enough to know my successor, and to feel confident that his life will be easier than mine in some respects, though I do not wish him to have less fighting to do. I should not like to be succeeded by a milksop, nor by one who had nothing to do but to enjoy himself."

We used to receive the *Sydney Bulletin* pretty regularly. Of late, however, it has reached us very spasmodically. The latest number to hand, the first for several months, is dated January 19. It opens with a cartoon which reminds us, though there is no suspicion of plagiarism, of some sketches that appeared in the *Freethinker* a good many years ago. "More Shuffling on the Steps" is the title. St. Peter, wearing a halo, is descending the front steps of heaven to receive the prayers of the Archbishop of Sydney and Cardinal Moran for the new Australian Commonwealth. Each man of God says that *his* prayer is the one that St. Peter has to hand in at headquarters. "Really, gentlemen," the peppery old saint says, "it's as much as my place is worth to have any disturbance here! You had better both go to—well, down below!"

The East London Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday. Mr. J. F. Haines was re-elected president, Mr. L. Coleman (9 Nicholas-street, St. Peter's-road, Mile End) secretary; and Mr. D. Frankel (25 Osborn-street, White-chapel) assistant secretary. An adjournment was made till 3.30 to-day (March 3) for transacting the remainder of the business.

The West London Branch will hold a special meeting on Thursday, March 7th, at nine o'clock, at "The Victory," Newham-street, Edgware-road. The new secretary, Mr. Samuels, 74 Carter-street, Walworth, would be pleased to receive members' cards for his endorsement.

Mrs. Marilla M. Ricker offers to provide any library in

her State, New Hampshire, [with the complete edition of Ingersoll's writings. It is suggested by the New York *Truthseeker* that Mr. Andrew Carnegie, the multi-millionaire, who was a friend and an admirer of Ingersoll, and who has spent so much money on libraries, should make a similar offer to Mrs. Ricker's, with a wider application.

Mrs. Ricker, says the *Boston Sunday Post*, is vice-president of the National Legislative League, the object of which is to obtain for women equality, municipal and industrial rights through action by the National Congress and the State Legislatures. Mrs. Ricker is one of the best-known women lawyers in the land. She is the first woman who ever attempted to vote in the country—that was in 1870, when she fortified herself by preparing a constitutional argument for the selectmen of her town (Dover, N.H.), which closed with these words: "So long as women are hanged under the laws, they should have a voice in making them." Mrs. Ricker was brought up on a New Hampshire farm, was trained to teach the young "idea how to shoot," graduating from Colby Academy, and beginning this work at sixteen. In 1862 she married, and became a widow in 1868, acquiring a large property from her husband. Her only brother was killed in the Civil War. Left a widow at twenty-eight, and with means, she concluded to travel, and did, going to Germany and France, where she remained two years, and acquired the languages. She, too, has travelled over her own country, and is about to start for California to spend some months. In 1890 she applied for admission to the New Hampshire bar, and was admitted—the first and almost the only woman to enter. Her fight against the directors of the Dover National Bank, and her success in that suit, is a matter of history. It proved her to be a woman of great acumen and persistency. She had a personal interest, too, being a stock holder; but her chief aim was to show up the real culprits.

The Sphinx.

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

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

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

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

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

—*Boston Investigator.*

ARTHUR EGERTON.

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.

Counter-Attractions.

In the *Daily News* the other day there was an interesting account of what is called a Church and Public-house Census, carried out in Dewsbury on the evening of Sunday, February 3, from six to eight o'clock. "Snow and sleet," we are told, "made the task anything but pleasant; but no less than two hundred men were at their appointed posts, and from six to eight o'clock counted every man, woman, and child who went into the Churches, Chapels, Mission-rooms, Public-houses, and Clubs." These enumerators, who would appear to have been volunteers, were organised under superintendents by the *Dewsbury Reporter*. When the returns and totals were checked, the result was as follows:—

"Churches, Chapels, and Mission-Rooms.—Men, 1,539; women, 1,995; boys, 570; girls, 550; total, 4,654.

"Hotels, Public-Houses, and Clubs where Excisable Liquors are Sold.—Men, 3,717; women, 359; boys, 175; girls, 170; total, 4,421."

Firstly, one would like to say that, though there is a tendency to laugh at this kind of procedure, the work is really valuable. When religious people pry into the private affairs and opinions of their neighbors, and make house-to-house inquiries, the thing is an impertinence; only the State can have the right or the necessity to ask such information. But such an inquiry as that made at Dewsbury—provided it be efficiently directed towards the elucidation of valuable facts and is competently carried out—must provide the only data on which one can found general sociological inferences.

The results of this inquiry, as summed up by the *Dewsbury Reporter*, are given thus:—

"1.—That 4,421 persons entered the public-houses of Dewsbury in two hours last Sunday evening.

"2.—That 2,178 more men were in the public-houses than were in the various places of worship.

"3.—That no less than 359 women visited the public-houses.

"4.—That 175 boys and 170 girls were seen to go into the places at present licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquors on a Sunday."

One does not know the grounds on which the *Reporter* bases its apparent assumption that none of the figures are duplicates, that no chapel-goers paid a visit to a public-house that night in Dewsbury, or that no worshipper at the shrine of Bacchus paid his respects to another deity on the same evening. It is at least possible to imagine that some of the 4,654 supporters of churches and mission-halls paid a visit beforehand to, say, a hotel or club in order to fortify themselves for the ordeal before them, or else paid a visit afterwards in order to revive their spirits after the solemn proceeding in which they had shared. To make the census perfect, the transfers would require to have been traced.

If, however, we accept the newspaper's conclusions, which are probably in the main correct, we find that, whilst 3,717 men entered public-houses, only 1,539, or less than half that number, went to church or chapel; the difference, however, being more than counter-balanced by women, boys, and girls. So that the net result is that church and public-house almost tie in the contest for the people's homage, there being only a difference of a couple of hundred between the two totals in a census covering 9,000 cases. Whatever the circumstances in which this enumeration was made—and the newspaper which organised it makes specific declarations as to its *bona-fides* and accuracy—the result is certainly symbolical. No one who values the welfare of the community can possibly wish to see the empire of the public-house expanded; but, apart from that aspect of the matter, and taking the church and chapel figures alone, we find that the Church is coming more and more to rest on the support of women and children—women whose reasoning and critical faculties are not yet sufficiently cultivated, and children whose reasoning and critical faculties are not yet mature. It is, indeed, a dramatic retribution for the systematic disfranchisement and disparagement of women that they should thus come in to swamp the progress which may otherwise have been achieved; and, by neglecting the woman question, each generation has largely to go over the same work and reclaim the ground lost through apathy

to the needs of the female half of the race. In France, for instance, the Church flourishes to the extent it does, simply because the women, generation after generation, provide it with fresh material.

There is only one other reflection which these figures suggest, and it is a forcible one. The Christian Churches are all crying out for money to spread their creed in other non-Christian lands, which at present are getting on well enough in their own way. And, in the case of China, this zeal has helped to create friction, as a result of which blood has flowed like water, and dreadful sufferings and cruelties have been inflicted on Christian and Chinese alike; whole districts have been laid waste, women have been killed and tortured, and heart-rending ruin and devastation wrought over a vast area, in the ostensible effort to press Christianity on the Chinese. And, whilst all this is actually occurring, a census taken in a typical English town shows that quite half the population at least (and the Dewsbury figures take no note of those who went neither to church nor public-house) care nothing, really, about the creed which is pressed on other and alien nations at the imminent risk of hideous war. How any ordinarily sincere Christian can survey the hypocrisy of it all without a shudder passes comprehension.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Ethical Culture versus Ethical Cult.

(Concluded from page 124.)

THERE were Roman sceptics who, having listened to Paul's theistic doctrine—"He will have mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth"—asked the apostle, "Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth His will?" Paul could only reply: "Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' Or hath not the potter a right over the clay?"

No further report of the discussion is given by Paul; but there is reason to believe that one of the sceptics answered: "Nay, but who art thou, O Paul, but clay, like ourselves, affirming that we are all shaped by an invisible potter, and venturing to expound the potter's purpose? If one pot may affirm, may not another pot reply?"

"But I am an inspired pot," said Paul.

"I too," said a second sceptic, "feel inspired enough to declare that I am not a pot; but even if I were a pot, and so badly fashioned that I couldn't stand straight, I would have a right, if I could talk, to ask the potter why he made me so. Therefore, I do not believe, Paul, in your notion of a divine Potter."

"I do believe," said the fourth Roman, a centurion. "And I am much indebted to you, great apostle, for your lucid exposition. There is a neighbor of mine who has a farm with a gold mine in it, also a pretty wife; I have long wanted both, but have had some hesitations. But now that I know that I cannot possibly do anything but what the divine Potter fashioned me for, I go to have that farmer slain and to appropriate his farm and his wife. Good day, dear Brother Paul!"

"See," said the second sceptic, when the centurion had gone, "see, Paul, what your pot-theism amounts to: it is a mere version of that old pan-theism which some ancient Greek theologians devised, but which Roman common sense discarded because it rendered moral responsibility impossible."

"Well," cried Paul, "all I can say is that you have either to accept my God or none at all. If God is omniscient, he must foreknow everything that will occur, and if he is omnipotent nothing can occur unless He supplies the power. Are you vile Atheists?"

"Even if we were, we would be, according to your doctrine, pots fashioned for Atheism, as you for Theism, by the same Potter. I for one refuse your pot-Theism. If there were such a deity—creative, omniscient, omnipotent—I could not respect him, much less love him, for he would be the ordainer or the permitter of all the evils, agonies, villainies of the world—a supremely immoral God."

"You will burn in hell-fire forever," cried Paul, "for

daring to measure the morality of God by the morality of man."

"Ah, Paul, that is enough. I had rather go to Hell forever than worship a God who would send there even a worm. But whence came this moral sentiment of mine?"

Paul did not reply.

Centuries have overlaid the bald fatalism of Paul's theism with metaphysical moss and rhetorical flowers, but no euphemism can escape its inexorable logic. For God's "will" may be substituted "divine laws," and the future Hell may be turned to a metaphor, but the actual hell—the innumerable hells on earth—remain, and no modern Theism, however refined (as by Newman, Parker, Martineau), can theoretically relieve a creature and sovereign deity from responsibility for all evil, all crime.

It will be said that theory and practice are very different, and, to a certain extent, this is true; evolutionary laws render it necessary that in social life individuals must be held responsible for their conduct. But there are large general interests where evolutionary laws work in a reverse direction. In political life dishonesty is often the best policy, and the moral sense is brought to its aid by the convenient doctrine that the hand of God shapes the destinies of States. If Jehovah commissioned "a lying spirit" to get "in the mouth of all his prophets," in order to deceive a king to his destruction, as related in the Ethical Manual of Christendom (1 Kings xxii.), what conscience need be troubled about a manipulation of ballots in order to fulfil the destiny of the white race to rule over the black? "For," says Paul, "if the truth of God has more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"

I recently attended a lecture on the Washington family by Mr. Ellsworth, in New York, and was much struck by his interpretation of General Washington's motto, *Exitus acta probat*. Mr. Ellsworth translated it, "The end justifies the means." The sense really is, "The action is tested by its result." Even as a prudential maxim the motto is not always true, but to translate it into a flagrantly immoral maxim, without any protest, though it may seem a mere straw, appeared to me a straw showing the direction of the popular breath. To do evil that good may come is humanly immoral in the view of ethical science, but in religion it is the fundamental morality of God. All the evils and villainies of the world are apologised for on the ground that the moral method of God is to do evil that good may come.

If God can so act righteously, why not man also? The reply of Theism is, that for Omniscience the beneficial result is certain, but ignorant man cannot be assured of the result of his action. Apart from the consideration that Omnipotence could not have been under any necessity of adopting evil means, ethical science cannot admit that any certainty of good results could justify a deed morally wrong, such as Abraham's intended murder of Isaac. Social necessity prevents the imitation of sacred examples of atrocity by individuals, but when it comes to the will of the popular majority in democratic countries, such majority is not more amenable to moral principles than Jupiter or Jehovah. No pope in history was ever accorded a divine authority more supreme above moral considerations than that now accorded by democracy to the popular majority.

In an article on "The Future of the Anglo-Saxon Race," in the *North American Review* for December, 1900, Lord Charles Beresford says: "'The voice of the people is the voice of God,' says an old Latin proverb, and in the main that is true." The proverb is altogether English, though it has been Latinised. Hearing the proverb, John Wesley said: "No, it cannot be the voice of God, for it was *vox populi* that cried out 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'" But an American democrat answered that the crucifixion, being necessary for human salvation, the cry of the people, "Crucify him," was in exact accord with the will and purpose of God. And this is precisely the ethical corollary of *vox populi vox dei*. If the people vote that fifty cents shall be a dollar, or that a foreign nation shall be crushed, the sanction of God goes with the vote, and considerations of morality and justice are swallowed up in the divine decree. As a matter of fact, however, there is

no such thing as the *vox populi*; what we really get is the voice of some Croker, or Hanna, or Chamberlain. The Boss is spokesman of the Collectivist God, and the deluded people are politically valueless as ciphers, except as they are added by order to one partisan figure or the other.

Although, as already said, divine authority is not admitted to the same extent in the internal affairs of a community, yet there are several vitally important social interests in which progress is obstructed by an ethical cult. For example, the Episcopal Church finds it necessary to regulate marriage and divorce by words ascribed to a religious teacher in ancient Judea. It seems vain to argue with the textual moralists that, if the divorced are not permitted to re-marry, they will form illicit relations, that both virtue and happiness will be sacrificed: what is mere human morality in the presence of God? And when we pass from the Episcopalian to the less educated churches, we find that each has an ethical cult in which moral fictions—such as Sabbath-keeping, abstinence from balls and theatres, prayer—are the supreme things. The rigid irrational sects enhance the charms of immorality.

There is in America a notable effort to recover the lost authority of theology under the mask of morality. It is shown in the demand that "immorality" shall be punished legally as crime. But what is immorality? It is the other man's morality, that doesn't accord with mine. If my morality has in my eyes a divine sanction, if it is a cult, it is but natural that I should try to crush the other man's morality by force. In that way personal liberty is sacrificed to the Sabbath, and if those agitators for "God in the Constitution" should succeed, Atheism will be punished as immorality.

Every now and then there occurs in New York a "crusade against vice," and it always becomes a question whether the vices or the methods taken against them are the more immoral. The houses lyingly called "disorderly" are generally so orderly that they can only be detected by men sneaking about, and pretending to be patrons of such places: espionage, treachery, falsehood, intimidation, are freely employed, and then the citizens are shocked when it turns out that a police trained in such methods can equally deceive their "virtuous" employers when that is more advantageous. Emerson met at Concord Station a friend who asked him where he was going; and he replied, "I am going to Boston to get an angel to do housework." New York will need a police force of angels to carry out the statutes against vices which do no calculable damage to any non-consenting party, nor disturb public order, and can only be proved by mere verbal police testimony. Wherever there are law-made crimes there must be blackmail. This is the gangrene of New York, and it will continue so long as the citizens suppose that their moral system is divine, infallible, and continue to substitute violence and its immoral methods for moral culture and removal of the physical conditions out of which the tares grow.

So far as I can learn, there is not a school in New York in which children are taught good manners. Of the deference due to age, of the respect due from boys to girls, from men to women, of the thoughtfulness for others and the self-respect that make the gentleman and the lady, the millions of children are taught nothing. Yet this is the foundation of all morality, and it is only as manners that morals can be taught children at all.

The movement for Ethical Culture has for its foremost task the removal of the Ethical Cult. Morality must be founded solely in human conditions and needs. Milton say:—

God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts.

No traditional system of morality, however sanctified, must be allowed to impede the development of new ethical ideas. Science admits no sacramental obligations. Ethical science is the most backward of all inquiries because of the intimidation of thinkers by the semi-theological ethics of monastic ages. The old theological polemics are ended. The dogmas have been weighed and found wanting by thinkers; their defence is professional; they continue automatically among those who dare not, or cannot, weigh them. There seems nothing left for the twentieth century but a great ethical reformation. The worship of an immoral deity, the

circulation of an immoral Bible, the sacrifice of human freedom and happiness to ancient notions—these must all be severely challenged. Possibly this entire humanisation of ethics may be attended by some outbreaks of moral anarchy; but even that is better than moral slavery. When philosophic and scientific minds are perfectly free there is little doubt that a purely human ethic will be developed able to bear great fruits. For the whole aim of ethics is human happiness. Those now described as immoral are really seeking happiness in the only way left open to them by personal and social conditions. Diffuse happiness, and you diffuse virtue.

Meanwhile, let not the ethical philosopher despise the immoral, nor confuse them with the criminal. The Crusaders would like to make every city into a prayer-meeting, relieved only by salvationist amusements. Because they are "virtuous" there are to be no more cakes and ale. But the so-called "immoral" are there, finding and conferring happiness in their own way, just as genuine products of the world as the pious; and hitherto it is they, rather than the handful of ethical cultivators, who have saved the world from a deluge of superstition and moral despotism. That English Bishop who said he would rather have a free England than a sober England hit the nail on the head. The definition of Liberty in the French Declaration of Rights is impregnable: "Liberty consists in the power to do whatever is not contrary to the rights of others; thus, the natural rights of each man have no limits other than those which secure to other members of society enjoyment of the same rights." If anyone injures another, he is not immoral, but criminal; and the statute that encroaches on the personal liberty of anyone who wrongs no other is a criminal statute. It is a supreme task of ethical culture to maintain and defend moral freedom. To overthrow this principle because of even the worst vices is like burning down one's house to get rid of rats. Ethical Cult, like the theological Cult which preceded it, may propose such sacrifices of the large to the little; but Ethical Culture realises that social evils can be got rid of only as farms are rid of skunks and foxes. Agriculture, unrestrained by any superstition, clears away weeds and wild creatures; and Ethical Culture, when equally unrestrained, will replace with innocent pleasures the vices that nestle in untilled swamps.

MONCURE D. CONWAY.

—Open Court (Chicago).

Death of Alderman J. R. Lawson, of South Shields.

MR. JOHN ROBERT LAWSON, SENR., an alderman and magistrate of the borough of South Shields, died on Sunday, February 17. His death was not unexpected, his illness having been of a prolonged nature. In October last year he had a serious illness, and although he overcame it, and was able to resume his ordinary public duties, he never regained his normal condition of health. Mr. Lawson was born in Newcastle in 1822, and was thus in his seventy-ninth year. He came of a good old North-country family. He was essentially a self-taught man, having read studiously and acquired a practical knowledge, which, in after years, he turned to useful purposes in his public life in South Shields, his adopted town.

An interesting and instructive conversationalist, he was a close student of mathematics and astronomy, and also followed a course of practical training in engineering. As a result of persistent effort and study, he invented an improved marine boiler for steam-tugs, and was closely connected with riverside and harbor work generally throughout his life. As a public man he accomplished much valuable educational and progressive work in South Shields. He took a prominent part in the promotion and formation of the Old Working Men's Institute, afterwards merged into the Mechanics' Institute, now the Public Free Library. He entered the Municipal Council in 1880, was made an alderman in 1897, and filled several other public appointments on the River Tyne Commission and North East Coast Fisheries Board. Among other public improvements, he was a warm supporter of the park—on the bowling-greens of which he was a familiar figure—electric lighting, free library, etc. The deceased was a vigorous and keen debater, and in his public as well as in his private business alike showed a marked candor, shrewdness, and foresight which made his advice welcome and esteemed. In 1894 he was placed on the Commission of the Peace. In politics he was a staunch Liberal, and took an active part in the political life of the borough. His theological opinions were of an advanced character, and he was

a regular attendant at the lectures of the late Mr. Bradlaugh and other Secular lecturers so far as his public duties permitted. He leaves a widow and grown-up family of six sons and two daughters, the present Mayor of South Shields (Mr. J. R. Lawson, junr.) being his third son. In a touching reference from the magisterial bench by one of his colleagues, he was said to have adorned every position in which his fellows had placed him.

On Thursday week the body was conveyed to its last resting-place in Harton Cemetery, attended by considerable evidences of public respect and sympathy. The various local bodies among the representatives of the School Board—Mr. S. M. Peacock, vice-chairman, magistrates, Corporation officials, and personal friends and relatives—were accompanied by the Police Band playing "The Dead March in Saul" as the *cortège* made its way through the large crowds of the inhabitants which gathered in spite of the inclement weather. There were about forty carriages in the procession. A short service was held in the chapel conducted by the Rev. Metcalfe Gray, the Congregationalist minister, who delivered a brief address conceived in a most liberal and tolerant spirit. It was noticeable that the substance of the address was a eulogy of character; any theological references were left over to the end of the discourse, and were not directly connected with the deceased gentleman. E. C.

Correspondence.

OUT-OF-DATE QUESTIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It appears to me that your amiable subscriber, Mr. Alcock, in trying to induce some of your readers to discuss the Bible with him, somewhat misunderstands the intellectual position held by, I think, a majority of them. If, as I believe, there never did, or could, exist any such being as Mr. Alcock's God, of what use is it to discuss with Mr. Alcock the alleged words of a non-existent "being"? "Man, in the beginning, made God in His own image; in the image of Man created He him, male and female created He them." That is my position, and the position of most Freethinkers I know. When Mr. Alcock can bring forward any evidence to show that his God was not created by man, or that the supernatural in every form is anything more than a figment of man's imagination, we shall, many of us, be glad to write matters over with him. So far as I know, there is not a god—male, or female, or epicene—which can be shown to be anything other than the creation of man's mind working under the influence of fear generally—perhaps in a few cases under the influence of some less ignoble passion; in one or two cases—*e.g.*, Spinoza's—under the influence of a passionate love of truth.

And now at last authentic word I bring,
Witnessed by every dead and living thing:
There is no God; no fiend Divine
Made us and tortures us! If we pine,
It is to satiate no being's gall.
It was the blind delusion of a dream,
That living person, conscious and supreme.

This, and much more, Mr. Alcock may read in James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*. If Mr. Alcock cares to address himself to the confutation of this position, I shall be glad to try to reply. S.

Obituary.

A STAUNCH and highly-esteemed Freethinker and member has been lost to the Plymouth Branch of the N. S. S. by the death of James Hooper, of Devonport, aged sixty-three years. For some months past he has known of his approaching end, and looked forward to it with courage and resignation. Over his bed when he died hung a large framed portrait of Colonel Ingersoll, inscribed "Freethinker, Orator, and Wit." He directed in his will that no religious ceremony should take place at his burial; at his own request, and also that of his sorrowing wife, the undersigned read the Secular Burial Service at his funeral, which took place in the Plymouth Cemetery on the 23rd ult. There was a large attendance of relatives and friends, who listened with marked attention to the simple and impressive words of the address at the grave-side. There was a good sprinkling of Freethinkers also present.—G. F. HUGH McCLUSKY.

WE much regret to hear of the death of Mr. H. Sesemann, of London, whose face was familiar to the regular attendants of the Athenæum Hall Sunday evening lectures. Mr. Sesemann was a very sterling Freethinker and a constant supporter of the Freethought movement. Intelligence and benevolence were written plainly upon his features by the hand of nature. His death took place on Friday, February 15. We are sorry that the information did not reach us in time for an earlier notice, and we should have felt privileged to be able to show him the respect of attending his funeral.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Airs from Heaven and Blasts from Hell."

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

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Herbert Burrows, "Twentieth Century Religion."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 7.15, W. J. Ramsey.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, Mrs. Evans, "Theosophy."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward—11 (if fine, in the Bull Ring) and 3—for subjects see *Birmingham Daily Mail*, March 2; 7, Concert, by Social Volunteer Choir and friends.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, F. A. Davis, "Creed and Conduct."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Open Discussion on "The Land Question"; 6.30, "Sansculotte," "Religion and the Class War."

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, G. E. C. Naewiger, "The Teachings of Anarchism" (a criticism).

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Twentieth Anniversary of the Opening of the Hall.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): J. M. Robertson—11, "Rationalism and Social Efficiency"; 3, "Imperialism in Action" (with special reference to South Africa); 7, "The Darwinian Principle in Morals."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Social evening, vocal and instrumental music, etc.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Geo. Berrisford, "New Testament Contradictions."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "Tolstoy and Ingersoll"; 8, Business meeting.

Lecturer's Engagements.

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

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