

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Black Cap.

JUDGE: The sentence of the law is that you be taken hence to the place from whence you came, and that you be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and that your body be buried within the precincts of the gaol in which you shall have been last confined after this conviction, and may the Lord have mercy on your soul.

THE CHAPLAIN: Amen.

SUCH is the prescribed form of sentence of death when, in a murder case, the judge, as the reporters say, "assumes the black cap." Uttered in solemn tones, and in the painful silence of a crowded court, the pronouncement is rarely devoid of its intended impressiveness. People, perhaps, do not follow the actual words. Many of them are probably engaged at that moment in scanning, ghoul-like, the features of the unhappy person in the dock. They know, however, what it all means, or, for the time, they think they do. Not until it is over, and they are leaving the Court, do they begin, as a rule, to think of a possible reprieve. By that time the actual form of the sentence has passed from their minds. Perhaps they are reminded of its terms when they see them reproduced in the newspapers which usually make a point of setting out this dramatic tit-bit for gentle readers who like to feel their flesh creep. But, after all, as with many texts of "Holy Writ," the death-sentence is generally too familiar to excite any inquiry into its precise and complete meaning.

Its effect is, of course, that the culprit will be hanged unless the Home Secretary intervenes. That, no doubt, for all practical purposes, is about enough to know. Still, the inquiring mind may fix itself upon the concluding words of the formula, and begin to ponder on the question, What do *they* mean? There is an unctuously pious sound about them that usually carries them clear of criticism. Most folks, whether real or merely nominal believers in the current theology, assume that so devout a hope is appropriate to the occasion. They even seem to have a dim notion that it is a sort of "tempering of justice with mercy."

What the culprit thinks about it is quite another matter. Possibly he regards the dread pronouncement as a little unevenly balanced. If consulted at the time, he would, no doubt, eagerly take the risk of what the Lord may eventually do with his soul, if only his fellow creatures would not, after three clear Sundays, take his body and hang it by the neck. His reply to the judge might conceivably be, in regard to the pious hope: "Thank you, my lord, for nothing."

What, however, is most interesting to consider is the attitude of the law. In effect, the law says in this death-sentence, and in the customary observations with which the judge precedes it: "You, John Jones, have been found guilty of murder. We are going to hang you. You have a soul. We can't touch that, even if we wanted to. It's beyond our reach, so it doesn't really matter whether we desire to deprive you of it or not. As a matter of fact, we don't. We have even provided a salaried soul-saver for you. But we are going to dispose of your wretched body, first with a rope and then with quicklime. The Lord will do what he likes with your soul. That's his business. We hope, for your sake, he will be merciful to it. If he chooses to take it into heaven, it's *his* look-out. Anyhow, you aren't good enough for earth. You've got no place here. We couldn't endure you even in a gaol. So we are going to say 'Good-bye' to you, and will even wish you a pleasant journey. Likely enough the Lord will be more merciful to your immortal essence

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than we intend to be to your carcass. Make your peace with him. As far as we are concerned, we hold out no hope to you. God may be more forgiving than we intend to be. You are made in his image, and that image we are going to spoil. The Lord is welcome to what is left of you when we have done with you."

And the chaplain says "Amen!"

Now, isn't this a pretty specimen of the Christian administration of what is supposed to be Christian law? One does not raise here the question of whether capital punishment should be abolished. There is much to be said upon that problem both *pro* and *con*. The present writer has a personal prejudice on the subject. Not from fear, but from having some years ago unwillingly witnessed the private execution of four men on different occasions in a small vaulted chamber of a Midland gaol. It is a cold-blooded business—this hanging—from any point of view. But the question here is not as to the continuance of capital punishment, but simply—How can Christians reconcile it with the Gospel of Christ? Surely there never was such an example of violent antagonism—of glaring, monstrous inconsistency. Would he who is said to have abrogated the old law of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," have countenanced our English law of a life for a life? True, the law is subject to modifications, as by verdicts of manslaughter, proof of insanity, or by interpositions of a Secretary of State. The black cap does not always mean death to the convicted. Fortunately, it does not in many cases of infanticide, where a betrayed girl murders her offspring in a paroxysm of despair. Often, in such instances, the black cap is donned, and the judge has to perpetrate the needless cruelty of pronouncing a sentence that he knows will not be carried out. One is glad to find that a movement is on foot to enable the judge, if he so pleases, to dispense in such cases with the horrible formality.

Nevertheless there are numerous occasions when the sentence is anything but a mere form, as the culprits only too clearly discover when the rope is round their necks. And what the present writer wants to know is, how Christians reconcile these judicial hangings with the teachings of Christ. What do they say to the lengthy and undoubtedly most weighty arguments of Count Tolstoi on this subject in his work called *My Religion*? Tolstoi holds that such words as "Judge not that ye be not judged" were not applied to mere gossip or evil speaking, but were directed against the institution of all human tribunals of whatever sort. Tolstoi supports this view by other sayings attributed to Jesus, and by the teachings of the Apostles and the early Fathers of the Church. His conclusion is that, "according to the doctrine of Jesus, no Christian judge could pass sentence of condemnation." That, of course, only shows how impracticable these teachings of Jesus are. Society, in the present era at any rate, could not possibly exist without its legal tribunals. Christians recognise that fact, and quietly make a sacrifice of their religion at the shrine of reason.

They have, of course, their little explanations which are really prevarications, and their arguments which are more ingenious than ingenuous. No doubt the ponderous and pious Lord Chief Justice, who pronounced the latest sentence of death, somehow or other, reconciled the task to his conscience and religious belief. We can be sure the chaplain—who weighed in with his "Amen"—has done so. *He* is now attending the condemned man, reading to him the Holy Scriptures, and assuring him of that forgiveness of God which human law is both unable and disinclined to imitate.

There is one thing of which a murderer may be pretty sure—if he believes what the chaplain tells him. He has seen the judge put on a black cap. He has now only to wait the time when he himself will put on a golden crown. Pending his departure to eternal bliss, he may address letters to his relatives and friends, advising them to be good, and promising to look out for them when they come to heaven.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Gospel of Freethought.

CHRISTIANS are perpetually crying that we destroy and never build up. Nothing could be more false, for all negation has a positive side, and we cannot deny error without affirming truth. But even if it were true, it would not lessen the value of our work. You must clear the ground before you can build, and plough before you sow. Splendor gives no strength to an edifice whose foundations are treacherous, nor can a harvest be reaped from fields unprepared for the seed.

Freethought is, in this respect, like a skilful physician, whose function it is to expel disease and leave the patient sound and well. No sick man claims that the doctor shall supply him with something in place of his malady. It is enough that the enemy of his health is driven out. He is then in a position to act for himself. He has legs to walk with, a brain to devise, and hands to execute his will. What more does he need? What more can he ask without declaring himself a weakling or a fool? So it is with superstition, the deadliest disease of the mind. Freethought casts it out, with its blindness and its terrors, and leaves the mind clear and free. All nature is then before us to study and enjoy. Truth shines on us with celestial light, Goodness smiles on our best endeavors, and Beauty thrills our senses and kindles our imagination with the subtle magic of her charms.

What a boon it is to think freely, to let the intellect dart out in quest of truth at every point of the compass, to feel the delight of the chase and the gladness of capture! What a noble privilege to pour treasures of knowledge into the alembic of the brain, and separate the gold from the dross!

The Freethinker takes nothing on trust, if he can help it; he dissects, analyses, and proves everything. Does this make him a barren sceptic? Not so. What he discards he knows to be worthless, and he also knows the value of what he prizes. If one sweet vision turns out a mirage, how does it lessen our enjoyment at the true oasis, or shake our certitude of water and shade under the palm-trees by the well?

The masses of men do not think freely. They scarcely think at all out of their round of business. They are trained not to think. From the cradle to the grave orthodoxy has them in its clutches. Their religion is settled by priests, and their political and social institutions by custom. They look askance at the man who dares to question what is established, not reflecting that all orthodoxies were once heterodox, that without innovation there could never have been any progress, and that if inquisitive fellows had not gone prying about in forbidden quarters ages ago, the world would still be peopled by savages dressed in nakedness, war-paint, and feathers. The mental stultification which begins in youth reaches ossification as men grow older. Lack of thought ends in incapacity to think.

Real Freethought is impossible without education. The mind cannot operate without means or construct without materials. Theology opposes education; Freethought supports it. The poor as well as the rich should share in its blessings. Education is a social capital which should be supplied to all. It enriches and expands. It not only furnishes the mind, but strengthens its faculties. Knowledge is power. A race of giants could not level the Alps; but ordinary men, equipped with science, bore through them, and make easy channels for the intercourse of divided nations.

Growth comes with use, and power with exercise. Education makes both possible. It puts the means of salvation at the service of all, and prevents the faculties from moving about *in vacuo*, and finally standing still

from sheer hopelessness. The educated man has a whole magazine of appliances at his command, and his intellect is trained in using them, while the uneducated man has nothing but his strength, and his training is limited to its use.

Freethought demands education for all. It claims a mental inheritance for every child born into the world. Superstition demands ignorance, stupidity, and degradation. Wherever the schoolmaster is busy, Freethought prospers; where he is not found, superstition reigns supreme and levels the people in the dust.

Free speech and Freethought go together. If one is hampered, the other languishes. What is the use of thinking if I may not express my thought? We claim equal liberty for all. The priest shall say what he believes, and so shall the sceptic. No law shall protect the one and disfranchise the other. If any man disproves what I say, he need not hear me a second time. What more does he require? Let him listen to what he likes, and leave others to do the same. Let us have justice and fair play all round.

Freethought is not only useful, but laudable. It involves labor and trouble. Ours is not a gospel for those who love the soft pillow of faith. The Freethinker does not let his ship rot away in harbor; he spreads his canvas and sails the seas of thought. What though tempests beat and billows roar? He is undaunted, and leaves the avoidance of danger to the sluggard and the slave. He will not pay their price for ease and safety. Away he sails with Vigilance at the prow and Wisdom at the helm. He not only traverses the ocean highways, but skirts unmapped coasts and ventures on uncharted seas. He gathers spoils in every zone, and returns with a rich freight that compensates for all hazards. Some day or other, you say, he will be shipwrecked and lost. Perhaps. All things end somehow. But if he goes down he will die like a man and not like a coward, and have for his requiem the psalm of the tempest and the anthem of the waves.

Doubt is the beginning of wisdom. It means caution, independence, honesty, and veracity. Faith means negligence, serfdom, insincerity, and deception. The man who never doubts never thinks. He is like a straw in the wind or a waif on the sea. He is one of the helpless, docile, unquestioning millions, who keep the world in a state of stagnation, and serve as a fulcrum for the lever of despotism. The stupidity of the people, says Whitman, is always inviting the insolence of power.

Buckle has well said that scepticism is "the necessary antecedent of all progress." Without it we should still be groping in the night of the Dark Ages. The very foundations of modern science and philosophy were laid on ground which was wrested from the Church, and every stone was cemented with the blood of martyrs. As the edifice arose the sharpshooters of faith attacked the builders at every point, and they still continue their old practice, although their missiles can hardly reach the towering heights where their enemies are now at work.

Astronomy was opposed by the Church because it unsettled old notions of the earth being the centre of the universe, and the sun, moon, and stars mere lights stuck in the solid firmament, and worked to and fro like sliding panels. Did not the Bible say that General Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and how could this have happened unless it moved round the earth? And was not the earth certainly flat, as millions of flats believed it to be? The Catholic Inquisition forced Galileo to recant, and Protestant Luther called Copernicus "an old fool."

Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of God. It was put in the same class with sorcery and witchcraft, and punished in the same way. The early chemists were regarded as agents of the Devil, and their successors are still regarded as "uncanny" in the more ignorant parts of Christendom. Roger Bacon was persecuted by his brother monks; his testing fire was thought to have come from the pit, and the explosion of his gunpowder was the Devil vanishing in smoke and smell. Even at the end of the eighteenth century the clergy-led mob of Birmingham who wrecked Priestley's house and destroyed his apparatus, no doubt felt that there was a close connection between chemistry and infidelity.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

The Bible Story of Creation.

A LETTER from the Rev. H. J. Alcock, M.A., appeared in the *Freethinker* of February 24, in which he criticises certain statements which I made in my recent article on "The New Theory of the Bible." Mr. Alcock is a courteous and, no doubt, an honest opponent, and therefore his criticism deserves notice. His letter, however, is a fair sample of the usual theological method of dealing with expressions of opinions opposed to popular religious notions. For instance, instead of grappling with the main points of my article, he indulges in unwarranted assertions, indefinite statements, and in fanciful views of the Bible story of creation.

The rev. gentleman commences by asserting that I often write in a manner which, to him, "appears easy to be disproved." Possibly this is so, for the claim to infallibility is not one of my mistakes. But if my arguments can be disproved, surely it should be the duty of a Christian teacher to endeavor to perform the task. It is not in evidence that Mr. Alcock was ever refused the opportunity of attempting this in the *Freethinker*. Here is an instance where the Secularist is more useful than the professed Christian. The former, wherever he sees an error, does his best to expose and refute it; while the latter looks on, deploring the wrong, but leaves its removal to his imaginary God. My "interpretation" of Genesis is objected to, without any proof being advanced that I put a false meaning upon what is therein stated. In my article the ordinary signification of the language of the Bible is accepted, and in no case is any "interpretation" put upon it different from that which is held by the vast majority of professed Christians. Perhaps Mr. Alcock has discovered the error of Bible phraseology, and prefers his own arbitrary explanation of what the language should mean. This is what theologians generally do when dealing with "God's Word"; but it does not accord with the canon of honest criticism, and neither is it, in my opinion, the proper mode of arriving at truth.

The rev. gentleman accuses me of applying "uncomplimentary language" to theologians in the article he criticises. He does not, however, give any proof of his assertion. What I said of theologians was, that their clinging to traditional notions of the Bible was in keeping with the general history of their order. They had always opposed new discoveries and impeded the advancement of progressive measures. If this statement were erroneous, why did not my critic prove it to be so? The answer is that he could not without falsifying the facts of history. Who was it that opposed modern science and sought to crush every discovery that tended to enhance the secular welfare of the human race? It was the theologians. As Professor Huxley put it: "Who shall number the patient and earnest seekers after truth, from the days of Galileo until now, whose lives have been embittered and their good name blasted by the mistaken zeal of Bibliolaters?" Who caused the murder of Bruno, Vanini, and the noble-minded Hypatia? Theologians. Who opposed Copernicus, condemned Kepler, and imprisoned Bacon? Theologians. But for their interference, the victories of science would to-day be even greater than they are. As Dr. White observes in his *Warfare of Science*: "Thousands of precious lives shall be lost, tens of thousands shall suffer discomfort, privation, sickness, poverty, ignorance, for lack of discoveries and methods which, but for this mistaken religious fight against Bacon and his compeers, would now be blessing the earth." Who was it that opposed national education, fettered the press, and strove to suppress free speech? Theologians. Time would fail me to complete the indictment against the Church, which Draper tells us "became a stumbling-block in the intellectual advancement of Europe for more than a thousand years." Such are the facts of history as to the conduct of theologians. Any language that faithfully describes their conduct cannot be very complimentary.

Mr. Alcock informs us that, according to the first chapter of Genesis, "God called into existence the boundless universe"; but we are not told the process

by which this calling was accomplished. Does my critic believe, as the *Westminster Catechism* states, that "the work of creation is, God's making all things out of nothing"? If so, my reply is, in the words of Huxley: "Omnipotence itself can surely no more make something 'out of' nothing than it can make a triangular circle." If, on the other hand, the new "existence" was "called" from something which already existed, it was no creation, but only a re-arrangement of pre-existing materials. The rev. gentleman continues: "No note of time is given, but science teaches this creation took place at some date inconceivably remote. Between verses 1 and 2 an immense lapse of ages is silently overpassed, the object of Scripture being to disclose our relation to God, not to teach us geology or any secular branch of knowledge." Here we have the usual theological assertion without a shadow of proof. Where does science teach that "creation took place"? Will the rev. gentleman answer that question? As far as I know, science does not reveal anything about creation, as that term is used by theologians. If it does, let us know where. If the Bible teaches nothing as to secular knowledge, the book is a poor guide for us in daily life. What becomes of the teaching of our "national religion," that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation"? The theory that a long period elapsed between the time referred to in the first and second verses of Genesis i., and that the creation spoken of in the first two chapters of that book was only a re-adaptation of the chaos of a previous world, is purely arbitrary, for, if this were so, how is it that no allusion is made to animals or plants as being in existence before the time referred to in Genesis? Is it not there said that light was created on the first of the six days, and the sun on the fourth? Admit this to be true, then previous to that time there was no light nor heat—a condition of existence which science pronounces an impossibility. Besides, have not geological investigations discovered that the remains of animals and plants found in the strata correspond with species now existing on the earth, indicating thereby that no new creation took place about 6,000 years ago? Clearly there was and could be no such break in the continuity of the chain of geological events as this theory assumes. The remains of animals and plants found in the tertiary are identical with those living to-day, and there was, therefore, no new creation of fauna and flora at the time at which the writer of Genesis declares the origin of the whole to have taken place. If such had occurred, it is only reasonable to suppose that evidences of it would be found in those old records written in stone, which cannot err as documents may do that have been produced by human fingers. Besides, does it not look very much like a childish work of supererogation to create by a special supernatural act a new set of plants and animals exactly like those already existing, who would, as a matter of course, have propagated their species in the ordinary natural way, as they had been doing for generations before? Nor is there the slightest intimation in the book that any sort of an interval of long duration occurred between the creation described in the first verse and that enumerated in the subsequent account. It is evidently one continuous record, the whole extending over just six days.

My critic asks me how increasing knowledge interferes with his interpretation. The answer should be obvious. Mr. Alcock contends that a long period elapsed between the events spoken of in the first two verses of Genesis, but there is no knowledge upon which such an assertion can be based. He affirms that the universe was created, but we have no knowledge of such an event, as science knows nothing of this alleged creation. He argues that the words "in the beginning" refer to a period long anterior to the six days spoken of in Genesis; but a knowledge of the Bible shows that the "beginning" was a part of the six days (see Exodus xx. 9 and 11; xxxi. 17). He avers that the Bible account of creation is a record of fact, whereas "increasing knowledge" goes to corroborate Professor Huxley's belief "that the Pentateuchal story of the creation is simply a myth"; and "thus, far from confirming the account in Genesis, the results of modern science, so far as they go, are in principle, as in detail, hopelessly discordant with it."

CHARLES WATTS.

Christianity and Civilisation.—XV.

OPPOSITION TO SCIENCE.

THE story of Christian opposition to the advance of science is an old and well-worn tale, yet it is one that always bears re-telling, because of the light it casts on the nature of religious influences on the world's development. It might be argued that, in opposing science, Christianity was only manifesting a trait that was tolerably common to all religions; and with this I entirely agree. But, nevertheless, the greater dominance of the secular powers by the various Christian Churches, their more complete ascendancy over the average lay mind, together with the long period of their power, enabled tendencies to develop thoroughly that were elsewhere but partly expressed. This, it is true, makes no difference to the *quality* of the offence; the religion that persecutes while it can—and all have done this—can hardly claim any praise because the period of its power was of limited duration.

The opposition of Christianity to science is not only an opposition of actual teaching; it is an opposition of spirit—of method. Between a dogmatic revelation, and a careful collection of facts with a subsequent framing of theories that will cover the facts, there is necessarily antagonism. In the one case we start with a theory, and hunt for facts to fit it; in the other we start with the facts, and frame theories afterwards. To the scientist theories are of no value apart from the facts, and may therefore be dismissed or modified as occasion may demand. To the believer in revelation the theory is all; facts are either unnecessary or dangerous—unnecessary because, if they agree with the theory, they add nothing to it, and dangerous because, if opposed to it, they may weaken a belief which *must* be held in spite of the disagreement. Moreover, while to the scientist examination and verification are the two cardinal rules of guidance, to the theologian examination is always more or less of an impertinence, and verification an implied doubting of God's Word. The most casual reading of religious literature, past and present, will show that the most admired type of mind is that which accepts doctrines with the most unquestioning credulity, and retains them, in the face of all disproof, with the most dogged tenacity.

Opposition to scientific teaching and the scientific spirit was one of the earliest characteristics of Christianity. In previous articles of this series I have laid stress upon the fact that in no direction does the Jesus of the Gospels raise himself above the most ignorant of superstitions, nor in a single instance betray the slightest acquaintance with the scientific culture of Greece, Rome, or Egypt. And when the chief actor in the drama betrays such a complete absence of scientific knowledge it would be unwise to expect an improvement in any of the subordinate characters. The Old Testament plainly gave the early Christians nothing in the shape of an impetus to scientific development. From Genesis to Malachi I cannot recall a single text that is a clear indication of any consciousness of the operation of natural law. Natural processes may be either interrupted or annihilated; miracle becomes a normal occurrence. In every case where the Bible trenches on scientific subjects it is demonstrably in error. In brief, to quote Dean Farrar, "the mere natural science of the Bible is the natural science of its writers; and they were men of a country the most scientifically ignorant in a scientifically ignorant age"—a circumstance which may be either a cause or a result of their being God's chosen people.

From such writings and from such people little was to be expected; and in this respect the earliest generation of Christians evinced no improvement upon their exemplars. The majority of the Christian leaders regarded the study of Pagan authors as contrary to the dictates of their religion, and some of the earliest Church councils prohibited their being read by the clergy.* Mosheim admits that the greater part of the Christian leaders were "entirely destitute of all learning

and education," and few who have adequate knowledge of the subject will fall foul of the assertion. Physical science was specially held in avowed contempt. "It is not through ignorance of the things admired by them," says Eusebius, speaking of scientists in general, "but through contempt of their useless labor, that we think little of these matters, turning our attention to better matters." Bishop Basil declared it "a matter of no interest to us whether the earth is a sphere or a cylinder or a disk or concave in the middle like a fan." Lactantius also said of astronomy that it was "bad and senseless.**

With these opinions as guides, combined with the fervent belief in the approaching end of the world—which necessarily reduced scientific studies to the position of a gratuitous luxury—and the ignorance to which Christianity appealed and from which it derived its chief support, there is little wonder that scientific studies underwent a rapid and fatal decline. Libraries were burned and schools closed; the ideas of the ancient world—in the main, accurate—concerning the shape of the earth, the distribution of climates, the position of the earth in the planetary system, on the precession of the equinoxes, on physics, on the structure of the human body, and on the treatment of disease, with many other valuable speculations and suggestions, were all crushed out, to be rediscovered many centuries later in the teeth of bitter opposition from all sections of the Christian Church.

How crippling the presence of the Church was is best noted in the simple fact that for over a thousand years there was not a single scientific worker throughout the whole of Christendom. There was much ingenious speculation concerning the exact location of Paradise, the nature of angels, how many of them could rest on the point of a needle, etc.; but of useful work scarce a trace. The first investigator of pure physics appeared as late as the middle of the fifteenth century in the person of Leonardo Da Vinci; but, in general, not merely were there no improvements on ancient science during the intervening period, but the stock of positive knowledge actually decreased.

Now it would be sheer folly to assume that, given fair conditions, the people to whom Hipparchus, Pythagoras, Aristotle, and others of a similar type had belonged, *could* not have produced men who might have shown themselves their worthy successors. It would, as Hallam remarks, "be a strange hypothesis that no man endowed with superior gifts of nature lived in so many ages." Nature may have her periods of unusual fertility, but there is no reason for assuming the necessary existence of such a lengthy period of barrenness. When every allowance has been made for every other possible factor, the repressive influence of Christianity is still unmistakable. Not of one Christian church, but of all. In Geneva, for example, during the whole two hundred years that Calvinism ruled, from early sixteenth to early eighteenth century, there did not appear therein a single cultivator of the physical sciences. The burning of Servetus, against whom one of the counts was that he had described the Holy Land as it is, instead of as a "land flowing with milk and honey," was an indication of what any would-be scientist might expect. It was not until the power of Calvinism was broken that Geneva began to produce its quota of scientific workers. And Geneva was only a type of what was going on, or had gone on, elsewhere. Everywhere "the darkness of the Dark Ages was deepest when the power of the Church was least disputed; that darkness began to break when, in the eleventh century, the doctrines began to be called in question; the dawn was coeval with an insurrection."†

The opposition of the Christian Churches to science was, indeed, in the nature of a struggle for existence. The Roman Church had committed itself to a certain definite theory of the universe, and, in this respect at least, her Protestant offspring followed faithfully in her steps. According to the accepted Christian teaching as laid down authoritatively by Cosmas Indicopleustes and others, the world was the centre of the planetary system; in shape it was a flat parallelogram, four hundred days' journey long, and two hundred broad. It was surrounded by four seas, which were enclosed by massive

* See Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, i., 4-8, and *Middle Ages*, ii., 337-8; Owen's *Sceptics of Italian Renaissance*, p. 61; and Berington's *Literary History of the Middle Ages*, p. 48.

* Quoted by White, *Warfare of Science*, i., pp. 91-2.
† Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, ii., p. 5.

walls, on which the sky rested. Above were angels, below were men. On the north and south side of the earth were great mountains, placed there as a kind of balancers, behind which the sun going caused night. The main business of the angels seems to have been to push the stars to and fro. With various modifications this scheme was adopted by Catholic and Protestant alike. Where Protestants altered they often made it more absurd; as when, in the eighteenth century, the Rev. Dr. Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge, fixed the creation of man as taking place on October 23, 4004 B. C., at nine o'clock in the morning, or when Luther declared dogmatically that Eve ate that memorable apple at two o'clock in the afternoon. It was such unmistakable medleys of nonsense as these that for centuries constituted Christian cosmography, and for casting discredit on which men spent years of lingering torture in Christian dungeons, or perished, more mercifully, at the stake.

The first great blow at the teaching of the Church in these matters came with the pronouncement of the Copernican system of astronomy. Nearly six centuries B. C., Pythagoras had laid down a true theory of our planetary system, but not until 1543 was it revived in Christian Europe. How it was then received is a matter of common knowledge, and will obviate the necessity of dealing with it at any length here. Copernicus withheld his book so long that he only received a copy of it on his death-bed. A few hours later he was beyond the reach of the Church, but the book remained, and around this there raged a battle that only finds its equal in the more modern contest over the doctrine of evolution. For seventy years the Church contented itself with a mild condemnation of the Copernican theory.* It was the work of Galileo, whose discoveries demonstrated its truth, that roused the Church to a more drastic activity. The authority of the Church, nay, the authority of the Bible itself, was at stake. From numberless texts it was shown that the Bible taught the immovability of the earth. It was a plain question of the Bible and the Church *versus* Copernicus and Galileo, and for a time the former triumphed. Galileo, an old man of seventy, was seized and imprisoned, his books burned, his instruments destroyed, and he forced on bended knees to recant the truth of his teachings. Henceforth no child of the Church might believe in the motion of the earth without running the risk of immortal damnation. Not until 1822 did the Roman Church decree that works dealing with the motion of the earth and the stability of the sun might be circulated in Rome.†

Not only the Roman Catholic Church was it that denounced the new teaching. The Protestants were even more stupidly bigoted and vituperative. Said Luther: "People give ear to an upstart astrologer who strives to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon..... This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth." Melancthon, his greatest follower, in his treatise on physics, declared that "It is a want of honesty and decency to assert such notions publicly." Calvin, in his *Commentary on Genesis*, quotes the first verse of the Ninety-third Psalm, and asks: "Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?" In England some of the most prominent of the Puritan divines denounced the theory as "a delusive and arbitrary hypothesis, contrary to Scripture." Even Wesley was of opinion that the system led to infidelity. It is only part of the eternal game of theological dishonesty and misrepresentation that, with these and hundreds of similar instances at hand, present-day Protestants should denounce the Roman Church as the enemy of science. As though there were any real difference between them!

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

* One of the charges against Bruno was that he supported the Copernican theory, but the storm seems to have only properly broken around Galileo.

† See *Galileo Galilei*, by Karl von Gebler, pp. 314-15.

An Aid to Religion.

(At a meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, recently, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave vent to the opinion that science is an aid to religion.)

O WHAT an aid to Religion is Science,
According to Temple, Archbishop of Cant,
Who sets all the teachings of Christ at defiance,
A glaring impostor, the biggest extant.

How She impresses on brains not affected
Belief in the making of man, and the "fall";
"God's Word" but for Her would be surely rejected;
O how She helps us to swallow it all!

O how She aids our belief that the "Father"
Fathered a Son in the way that He did;
Yes, Science confirms it, or we should be rather
Inclined to reject it as blasphemous "kid."

Science proves clearly that if three or four nails
Are run through a man by a murderous mob,
He's able, when dead as the dearest of door nails,
To raise himself up, none the worse for the job.

O how She aids our belief in damnation,
That souls will be burnt, but will never consume;
Belief that the "saved" will defy gravitation,
And soar like a dove to their Heavenly "doom."

O what an aid to Religion is Science!
On Sundays a parson can travel by train,
Setting the laws of the Lord at defiance,
All for his own and the Company's gain.

O what an aid Science is to Religion!
For each single parson that travels to preach
There are hundreds of folks who take train for some region
Far from the sound of his hideous screech!

ESS JAY BEE.

Acid Drops.

THE *Vegetarian* has a beautifully silly article on "Humanity and the Bible." It tries to prove that kindness to animals is the regular teaching of that miscellaneous volume, but all the evidence it adduces is a few texts from Deuteronomy. Being unable to find anything to serve the turn in the New Testament, and discreetly overlooking Paul's callous question, "Doth God care for oxen?" our contemporary remarks that it leaves the letter for the spirit—in other words, it leaves the text for suppositions. The reader is then treated to a "beautiful legend" about Jesus, representing him as having pity on a mongrel cur; though, alas, it is not to be found in the Bible. Finally, the writer winds up with a verse from Coleridge, which he horribly mangles. There really ought to be a law against this sort of thing. To murder a man is a hanging offence. To murder his verses, the children of his brain, is no offence at all. We don't suggest hanging, though, for villainous quotation; but there might be a fine proportioned to the enormity of the misdemeanor.

So Jesus, in the beautiful legend, had pity on a mongrel cur, did he? Well, the great soul of Shakespeare went one better than Jesus—or ever so many better. You may find it in *King Lear*:—

My enemy's dog, though he had bit me,
Should have stood, that night, against my fire.

An idea like that only occurs to the loftiest genius. It came naturally to the mind of Shakespeare. And he put it, characteristically, into the mouth of a woman—the divine Cordelia.

Daylight (Norwich) remarks that "flogging bishops" are getting common, and that Bishop Jayne is "well known in this line." This prelate, by the way, is the one who had the lying impudence to declare that working-class Secularists were the worst ill-users of children. Mr. Waugh, who backed him up, has had the grace to retract and apologise; but the bishop is like God Almighty, and says with a lordly air, "I have spoken." Returning to Bishop Jayne's belief in flogging, however, we extract the following from our sparkling Norwich contemporary:—

Then pretty Jayne, my dearest Jayne,
Your birch you need not spare;
But do not meet me in the lane,
When the fruit is on the pear.

St. Patrick's Day, March 17, falls this year on a Sunday. A Protestant Society calling itself the Irish Church Missions

Better bitter truth than blessed error, for truth always heals the wounds that error inflicts.—Goethe.

has "spotted" the fact, and its clerical secretary writes to a number of papers urging the "appropriateness" of special sermons and offertories on that day in aid of Protestant mission work in Ireland!

The Lord is no respecter of persons—nor, apparently, has he much respect for his own consecrated edifices. He knew, before anybody else, that there was a nice little fire springing up in the parish church of Sturton-le-Steeple. But it didn't disturb him; he let it go on, notwithstanding all the episcopal eloquence and the prayers addressed to him when it was formally dedicated to his worship. When the outbreak was discovered in a common or garden way, just as if the building had been a music-hall or a gin-palace, it was too late to do anything but save the tower. By the time the fire-engines arrived, the whole of the interior of the church was a mass of flames, and part of the roof had fallen in. The organ, stained-glass windows, screens, and memorials were all destroyed.

The pious may, therefore, begin their work again, but how can they restore the memorials?

The editor of the *Sunday Companion* has been instructing, in his oracular way, a correspondent who is disturbed by the declaration of Jesus given in Mark xvi. In the passage referred to Christ is represented to have appeared to the eleven apostles after his resurrection. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

The oracle of the *Sunday Companion* does not avail himself of the plea sometimes made that this is an unwarranted addendum to the Gospel. He accepts its genuineness and authority without question. But he says that "such immunity from evil was only granted at special times, and did not shield the Apostles (for example) from the effects of persecution. Nor was it meant to last beyond the first ages of the Church. Certainly the most sincere believers cannot claim like security now."

The last sentence of this reply is not in accordance with fact, because the Peculiar People, who are sincere believers, do claim that, by the laying on of hands, the sick will recover.

Then it is not to the point to say that the Apostles were not shielded. No doubt they weren't, but Jesus thought they would be. The main question, however, is, By what right does this expositor declare that the "immunity was only granted at special times," and was not "meant to last beyond the first ages of the Church"? There is no such limitation in the text. If any had been intended, it would, or ought to, have been made clear. The immunity was to be the sign of belief. Either there is no belief in the present day, or Jesus was wrong in his anticipations as to the security belief would afford. Obviously, the pretended explanation is mere subterfuge.

Under its new management, the *Daily News* has dropped its Monday reports of sermons. We cannot think that this is any loss to the readers. It leaves room for matter which might easily be more interesting. Sermons naturally belong to Sunday—the dullest day out of the seven. Fashion and some sickly notions of piety tolerate them then as contributing to the apparently essential features of the day. But on Monday morning the ordinary churchgoer wakes up with a thankfulness that that kind of thing is over for another week. He doesn't want to be confronted with columns of stuff that he went to sleep over when he heard it. Some complaint has been made in religious journals as to the change. But the fact is, the persons who are really offended by the *Daily News* omission are the preachers.

At Cobourg, Ontario, a Methodist minister, to give emphasis to a discourse on the evil habits of the age, covered his pulpit with bottles of beer and whisky and boxes of cigars and cigarettes. Not content with this, he denounced the local shooting gallery as an improper resort for young men, and referred to some of the leading lady citizens as being also frequenters at the place. Next evening the reverend gentleman was publicly horsewhipped by the husband of one of the ladies referred to. There is now a lull in these pointed pulpit references.

Divinity degrees, as we know, are very cheap. But is it not rather too bad of a correspondent of the *British Weekly* to point out that Dr. Parker and Dr. Clifford are "wearing the degrees of certain not too well-known colleges of the Stat^{es}?"

In the recently-published *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, D.D.*, two or three good stories are told. He had his version of the "Jonah" narrative. When someone was wondering at the possibility of Jonah being swallowed by the whale, he said: "There was no difficulty. Jonah was one of the *minor* prophets!" "Why is it," said a friend to him, "that some men who call themselves Atheists seem to lead such moral lives?" "They have to; they have no God to forgive them if they don't."

Since 1804 the Bible Society has circulated 165,000,000 copies of Scripture at a cost of over £13,000,000. Last year it issued over 5,047,000 copies. Its income for the year was £211,468, and its expenditure £235,210. These are large totals truly. But there is one important point to be considered in connection with them. It is easy enough to scatter the Scriptures broadcast. But what we should like to know is—how many of these millions of copies are read. There are no means, of course, whereby we could arrive at a general estimate. But we know very well what happens to the "sacred volume" in the majority of households. Even Christian preachers seem at times to be hardly aware of all it contains.

Undoubtedly the theological sensation of the hour is the new volume of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*. Two reviews—one by the *Academy*, and the other by the *Speaker*—are especially noteworthy. The latter is evidently written in a state of much alarm at the boldness of Dr. Schmiedel's treatment of a portion of the New Testament. It says that Dr. Schmiedel's articles are "amazingly clever and even brilliant," but the Doctor "shows himself a hard-and-dry, yet almost a fierce and truculent, Rationalist."

The *Academy* refers to Dr. E. A. Abbott's article on the "Gospels," which is by far the longest in the volume and (it says) may be taken as typical of the rest. Dr. Abbott thinks that Matthew's account of the Resurrection has been modified by later writers "so as to soften some of its improbabilities," and that "in course of time sceptics and enemies detected and exposed 'stumbling blocks,' and subsequent Evangelists adopted traditions that sprang up to remove or diminish them." He further claims that the omission by the other Evangelists of the healing of Malchus's ear recorded by Luke is "almost fatal to its authenticity," and he explains it by a corruption of the text which transforms the replacing of the sword into a replacing of the ear. In like manner he thinks that many of the numerous miracles connected with the raising of the dead are to be explained as "very early exaggerations arising from misunderstood metaphor," "death" being sometimes used by patristic writers in the sense of mortal sin or death to God. The raising of the widow's son at Nain, however, he finds himself obliged to reject as "non-historical," and he asserts that the narrative of the raising of Lazarus was "mainly allegorical"; while he points out that the silence of the Synoptists on the point has "never been explained."

But, if Dr. Abbott plays havoc with the New Testament in his section of the *Encyclopaedia*, he is harmless as a lamb by the side of Dr. Schmiedel—in the estimation of the *Academy*. Professor Schmiedel, while disclaiming that he starts with the postulate or axiom that miracles are impossible, thinks that "some doubts as to the accuracy of the narratives cannot fail to arise in the mind of even the stoutest believer in miracles," when he sees "how contradictory they are." Of these contradictions he gives a long list, and then claims that these facts "show only too clearly with what lack of concern for historical precision the Evangelists wrote." He thinks "the most credible statement in the Synoptics" as to the Resurrection is that "the first appearances were in Galilee," and that the statements that the risen Jesus was touched or that he ate are "seen to be incredible"; and he points out that St. Paul saw no difference between any of the post-resurrection appearances to others and that to himself on the road to Damascus, the inference being that all alike were "visions."

By this and similar roads Professor Schmiedel is led to consider whether there are any "credible elements to be found in the Gospels at all," and he comes to the conclusion that there are five passages which are authentic. These five are the "Why callest thou Me good? none is good save God only," of Mark; the statement that blasphemy against the Son of Man can be forgiven, in Matthew; those in Mark that the relations of Jesus held him to be beside himself, and that "of that day and that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of God, neither the Son, but the Father"; and, finally, the cry from the cross of "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

This selection of "credible elements" is very peculiar. The *British Weekly* was not far wrong in suggesting that Dr. Schmiedel, of Zurich, "plunges the steel into the very heart of Christianity."

One of the things one would rather not have said escaped

from Mr. Compton Rickett, M.P., at the recent Congregational Conference at the Holborn Restaurant. Wishing to pay a compliment to Independents, he said they had "the spirit of the wild ass." Then he tried to mend it by adding "or, at least, the 'breath of the desert.'" We prefer the first description.

Really, some Christians have a curious notion as to the sort of appeals they may address to their God. For instance, take the list of "prayers requested" in the latest issue of Reader Harris's paper called *Tongues of Fire*. Amongst other odd subjects for supplication set forth, prayers are invited "that a member may be enabled quickly to learn shorthand and typewriting." Why not go a little further, and pray for God's advice as to which is the best system of shorthand and the best kind of typewriting-machine? Why not ask for Divine guidance as to the respective merits of the Pitman and the Sloan-Duployan systems, or of the Remington and the Yost? God has nothing much to do. His time is his own, for he made it.

Other invited prayers are equally funny. Two aged heretics seem to be causing no end of anxiety to their relatives. Prayer is asked "for an aged dying father who is an unbeliever," also for "an old lady in North Wales that the Lord will take away her unbelief." But perhaps these two old parties are too far gone even for the Lord to do any good with them. Anyhow, those who offer up prayers for them will have to pray, not only "early and often," but very hard.

The following little dialogue is reported in the *Globe* in connection with the Duke of Cornwall's tour: "School-master—'What is the meaning of Antipodes?' (Class silent.) Master—'Come, come. You ought to know that. Some of you may go there some day.' Head Boy—'Please, sir, I think I know now, but I'd rather not say!'"

Pity the poor Bishops! A recent issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette* contained the following trenchant letter: "In your issue of January 14 last there were some remarks upon the poverty of the late Bishop of London, in which that prelate is reported to have spoken of his financial troubles, and the difficulty he found in keeping out of debt, saying: 'A bishop is the merest distributing agent of the salary he receives. Wasn't it Archbishop Tait who said that he never was a poor man until he became Archbishop of Canterbury?' and so forth. Now I observe that the will of 'poor' Dr. Creighton has just been proved at £29,500. Archbishop Tait left £35,000 behind him. I make no special comment; the world will judge for itself; but, speaking generally, it strikes a mere layman like myself as being very remarkable that men who have all their lives preached poverty as one of the highest virtues, admonishing us to sell all that we have and give it to the poor, and pointing out the impossibility of those who die rich ever entering the kingdom of Heaven, should have hoarded the substantial fortunes set forth in the following interesting list:—

Tait.....	£ 35,000	Tufnell	£ 63,805
Benson	35,000	Thomson (York)	55,000
Phillpot	60,000	Goodwin	19,361
Creighton	29,500	Perry (Melbourne).....	33,518
Durnford	37,633	Browne (Winchester) ..	36,352
Tozer	10,449	Harvey (Bath)	12,680
Trollope	50,790	Pelham (Norwich).....	12,605
Wordsworth	21,500	Walsham How	72,240

People must be induced to attend "divine worship" somehow or another, else how are the sky-pilots to make a living? The pastor of a church in Brooklyn, U.S., has hit upon a novel idea. He provides a free lunch after morning service for those who attend his church. No doubt the free meal is appreciated, perhaps even more than the sermon. Certainly, the provision of food seems to suggest that the pastor himself has not much faith in the drawing power of his own eloquence, or the pure and simple desire of people to worship God.

The ungodly are suggesting that he is borrowing an idea from the American saloon bar. Of course, it is open for him to point out that Jesus provided food for the multitude on one occasion, just as he provided drink for a party of wedding guests. It will be noticed that the Brooklyn church repast is given *after* the service. That plan has the advantage of securing the attendance of those who are "an hungred." But may not the anticipation of the feed interfere with a concentrated devotional feeling?

The Manchester *Empire* has the following lines on the novel provision:—

"Pastor," indeed!—you feed the erring sheep;
A varied larder in your church you keep;
Whoever's left by scoffers in the lurch,

You're sure of an attendance in your church!
You treat "the keys of Peter" as a household bunch,
And freely offer sinners "gratis lunch."

Certain modest clerics in Rome recently took exception to some statuettes of nymphs put up to decorate a fountain. As an outcome of their protest, boarding was erected around the offending females. The public have since torn this protection down, and supposed that the matter was ended. But they have still to reckon with clerical modesty. The city authorities have been appealed to, and it has been decided to appoint a commission of artists to decide how the offending dames may be "modified" (clericalise for clothed). The *Pall Mall Gazette* asks: Is Rome really becoming moral? and exclaims, Poor Venus of the Capitol!

After praying all his life, in the set formula of his church, to be preserved from sudden death, Canon John Balmer Jones, for thirty-two years vicar of St. Ives, Cornwall, fell dead on the road at Marazion, near Penzance, last week.

The Japanese papers condemn severely the conduct of many of the soldiers of the Christian Powers in China. They admit that the English, Americans, and Germans have behaved well, but declare that the Russian and French troops have behaved diabolically. The *Maishushinsi*, of Tokyo, says: "In the matter of politics and national morality there is no distinction between Christians and Pagans. The Russians are generally supposed to be Christians, and the Japanese heathens; yet in China at the present moment the Russians are committing outrages which the Japanese are even ashamed to witness. Is this the vaunted superiority of the West? O Christianity! O Christianity! what a byword thou now art!"

This is how Reader Harris, of the Pentecostal League, writes about the Evangelical Mission: "A great effort has been made, large sums of money have been spent, 200 ministers, and perhaps a dozen Evangelists, have conducted services and delivered addresses—intended for the non-churchgoer, who has been painfully conspicuous by his absence." The Rev. F. C. Spurr, who conducted a mission for the Clapham district, says: "We have scarcely touched the outsiders. Very few genuine non-churchgoers have visited us."

The Free Churches' Simultaneous Mission claims to have made converts, apparently in the Leeds district alone, not by the hundred, but by the thousand. We daresay the Devil can read this boast without overwhelming terror. He must be pretty well used to Christian statistics by this time.

The Midland rector who writes to the Spiritualistic journal, *Light*, appears to have a good opinion of his own abilities. He declares that a voice from the "far beyond" has come to him with a message to say he is to seek wider fields of usefulness. This message was the ghostly utterance of a well-known London divine who died not long ago, and it ended with the words: "If you could only take my place!" So much merit ought not to be overlooked on earth when it is so readily recognised in spirit-land. We should, however, like to hear the opinion of gruff old Dr. Temple on this truly modest revelation.

It is well to know things. Thus, it is interesting to learn from a religious contemporary that the money for the building of St. Paul's Cathedral was raised by a small tax levied on every ton of coal brought into London. They seemed to have done many curious things just about then; but we don't think that the London householder, with coal at its present price, would stand anything of the sort in these ungodly days, even for the sake of erecting so fine a temple.

According to *The Chautauquan*, it took £57,400,000 to pay the current expenses of all the churches in the United States in 1900. How much in the way of real secular improvement might have been achieved with half that sum of money!

Commenting on what it considers to be the inadequate stipends of some of the Anglican clergy, the *Church Times* says: "We have just learnt with alarm how seriously the number of candidates for ordination has fallen off—more seriously, indeed, than ever before; but we can scarcely be surprised that men are discouraged from the ministry of the Church by the hopeless prospect before them."

But surely these narrow incomes afford to some extent an opportunity for real Christians to live on Christ-like lines. Our blessed Lord and his apostles were content with the barest means of subsistence. Did not Christ preach "Blessed are the poor"? The *Church Times* rather anticipates this point by observing that the teaching was intended for the laity as well as the clergy. Quite so; we think that bot

laity and clergy are open to a charge of glaring inconsistency. We should positively tremble for both if we accepted Christ as a Divine Teacher and Example.

After all, is there really so much ground for these frequent lamentations on the penury of a certain number of curates and a still smaller number of beneficed clergy? How many hard-working city clerks have to maintain a family and keep up appearances on very much less per week? These unfortunates may be counted by thousands, and the worst of it is they have but little prospect of doing any better. On the whole, we should say that, considering the nature of the work the clergy engage in, and the very moderate amount of ability required, the "men of God" are about the best paid class of men in the country.

Rev. Charles James Hinkson, of Newtown Bromshold, Northamptonshire, has been fined £1 and costs for being drunk and disorderly at Rushden. He pleaded that the bishop of his diocese had driven him to drink by refusing to allow him to continue his clerical duties. It is stated that this "clerk in holy orders" has applied at the Wellingborough workhouse for admission. There he might, if they admit him, practically realise how blessed it is to be poor.

Dowie's disciples, says the *Christian World*, have been destroying drug stores in Chicago after the manner of Mrs. Nation with regard to the liquor-shops. Armed with pitchforks, umbrellas, and canes, and shouting, "Drugs are the devil's agents!" six women smashed a number of plate-glass windows belonging to chemists. At one shop they called the proprietor to the door. "Don't you know that all illnesses can be cured by prayer?" asked the spokeswoman. "I am not aware of the fact, if such is the case," replied the apothecary. He received a buffet on the ear from one of the umbrella-wielders. His shelves and counters were then wrecked by the Amazons of Zion amid shouts of "Hurrah for Dowie!" but the chemist and his assistants finally cleared the shop by dispensing *aqua pura* to the invaders by means of a hose. Another chemist subsequently drove them out of his shop with a revolver. No arrests were made, and the Hooliganesque Zionites dispersed after chanting "Zion Forever"—a favorite hymn of the sect.

The Dowieites, like the Peculiar People, have evidently grasped the meaning of New Testament teaching. And their method of enforcing it is quite on Christ-like lines. They are only following in Chicago the example of their Master in Judea, with pitchforks and umbrellas instead of a "cat-o-nine-tails," and with chemists instead of money-changers for victims.

Jesuit missionaries in Galicia are selling for the "furtherance of Christian souls in piety" small pictures of the Virgin Mary, printed on thin paper, and about the size of an ordinary postage stamp. These pictures the faithful are requested to eat, in order to strengthen their faith and ensure numerous graces. They are not to be swallowed in the churches, but at home. A picture of the Mother of God of Campo Cavallo costs one kreuzer.

Certain Protestant journals affect to be amazed and shocked at this gross piece of Popish superstition. We don't see that it is any worse than the ceremony of swallowing a wafer at "Holy Communion" in the churches of our own enlightened land. True, a piece of paper may be less digestible than the sacramental wafer, but they both go the same way, and are productive (spiritually) of equally beneficial results.

Reviewing the recent Evangelical mission to the towns, the *Christian World* says: "It is not concealed that, with a few notable exceptions, the mission practically failed to bring in non-church goers." Well, is not that an acknowledgment that the mission failed in its primary object? When the mission was projected, it was specially announced as a means of reaching outsiders. "Up to the present," said Rev. P. T. Thomson, one of the Leeds missionaries after five days' work, "it must be frankly confessed we have not touched even the fringe of the un-churched people—not, at any rate, so far as their attendance at the services is concerned." We expected as much, and said so when this "Great National Simultaneous Mission of the Evangelical Free Churches" was announced with such a flourish of trumpets and beating of the big drum.

"It is a disgrace to Birmingham journalism that it practically ignored the mission," writes the *Christian World* correspondent in that city. "Not one of the four dailies gave it more than paragraphs, but they found room for long letters criticising and sneering at the mission and its methods." Dreadful! Those Birmingham journalists will have something to answer for when they go to kingdom come. Perhaps they thought they could occupy their space with something

better than the refined and inspiring eloquence of Gipsy Smith. Perhaps they diagnosed the whole business as a bad form of religious *delirium tremens*.

How curious the idea, says "Viator" in the *Sydney Bulletin*, of a small hyper-cultured set of Americans that the publication of births is indecent! It sends back to mediæval notions that woman is an unclean animal, an idea based in its turn on the Mosaic regulations which put the "churching" of women into the Anglican ritual of to-day.

Announcing in the *Irish Times* the birth of a daughter, Mr. S. G. N., of Drogheda, adds to his advertisement the exclamation, "Praise the Lord!" We like this; it is at once so modest and so pious. There *was* a man "down in Judæa," of the name of Joseph, who is said to have had a son born to him in Bethlehem, and who might, indeed, have "praised the Lord," but he didn't; at any rate, at first, because, apparently, he felt a little bit "knocked."

A Victorian clergyman, says the *Sydney Bulletin*, created a scene in his church the other Sunday by outbursting most excitedly after finding a button in the plate. "Fancy," he cried, "anyone committing such a gross insult as offering a button to Almighty God!" And yet a button is probably of just as much consequence to Almighty God as a half-crown. How cheerfully blasphemous is the average man of grace:—

You tread upon a parson's toes,
And God's convulsed with mortal throes.

The Liversedge School Board arranged a social gathering for the pupil teachers and others attending certain classes, and it took place on a Friday. Some superstitious people regard that day as unlucky, but a different objection was raised by the Vicar of Roberttown. This gentleman wrote to remind the Board that "All Fridays, except when Christmas Day happens to be on a Friday, are days of fasting and abstinence." No doubt the reverend gentleman honestly entertains that view, and no one can have any objection to his fasting on Friday, or practising as many other forms of "abstinence" as he pleases. But when he seeks to make other people do as he does, he should give some better reason than his own opinion, or even that of his Church. According to this clergyman, there is one Good Friday in the year, and there are fifty-one Bad Fridays. Now, we venture to suggest that this is a very unhappy proportion. If we have a father in heaven, he can hardly be so lacking in parental love as to wish us to be miserable on fifty-one days in every three hundred and sixty-five.

Our serious contemporary, the *Two Worlds*, sometimes condescends to be, perhaps unconsciously, facetious. Being an organ of the Spiritualist party in this country—and a very good organ too from their standpoint—it is naturally on the look out for evidences of the "psychic" side of nature. But that is no reason why it should flatter a very vulgar superstition. After referring to the "disturbance of the elements" at the deaths of Cromwell and Napoleon, and the stormy weather that followed the deaths of Gladstone and Queen Victoria, the *Two Worlds* drags in the ridiculous New Testament story of the rending of the veil of the temple, and the earthquake, at the crucifixion of Jesus; and then it asks this question: "May not a psychological explanation be yet forthcoming for this violent disturbance of the material elements?"

Now we wonder if the *Two Worlds* editor has read Shakespeare. If he has, he may recollect the reply of Harry Hotspur to Glendower. The latter boasts that a variety of wonders occurred at his birth, and marked him out of the run of common men; and the latter tells him that the same things would have happened if his mother's cat had kitted. Glendower was not the only person born just then, and the "signs" were good for all alike. In the same way, lots of people died at the same time as Cromwell, Napoleon, Gladstone, and Queen Victoria; and the "signs" were good for all in that case too. There were no convulsions, by the way, when Shakespeare died—at least they are not recorded; and he was the greatest of the sons of men. But perhaps the "natural disturbance" apparatus was out of order on that occasion.

We don't know anything about Victor Ruthven, the Protestant lecturer, who has been mobbed by Catholics at Shanklin for lecturing on the Confessional, and has had to defend himself with a revolver. It appears that he only fired when his life was in danger. "I am only one man before you all," he said; "give me a chance." But the fanatical mob pursued him down the stairs with cries of "Lynch him," and it was after he received the first blow that he shot one of his assailants. We can quite understand why Catholics, and particularly Catholic priests, are opposed to lectures on the Confessional; but, after all, this is supposed to be a free country, and they must put up with criticism and controversy. If they won't, they should be made to.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

March 17, Athenæum Hall.

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.

READER OF THE "FREETHINKER."—We note your suggestion that the chairmen of open-air lecture-stations in London should do as much justice as possible to the collection, which, at the very best, only defrays a portion of the cost of the meetings. If a thing is worth doing, as you say, it is worth doing well; and, after all, it is only fair that the people who hear, and presumably profit by, a lecture should contribute towards its cost.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings.

X.—What the editor of the *Catholic* (edited by a Protestant) says about the late Colonel Ingersoll is unworthy of notice. Whoever states that Ingersoll spent his life in "managing swindling whiskey rings" deserves a horsewhip rather than a reply.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always valued.

ATHEIST.—We have seen Mr. Holyoake's fresh article on Agnosticism. It is extremely well written, but it calls for no reply. Time is only wasted in controversy waged around a persistent misrepresentation. Mr. Holyoake goes on repeating that an Atheist denies the existence of God. What he should do is to furnish the names of known Atheists who have accepted that definition. Until he does so, it is best to say with Hamlet "the rest is silence."

ALEXANDER HUNTER.—Mr. Forder has had no connection whatever with the *Freethinker* or the Freethought Publishing Company since last April. We have repeatedly announced the fact, and cannot accept any sort of responsibility for orders sent to him.

F. H. WATTS.—Thanks for cuttings.

ONLOOKER.—We don't quite understand. Why not be more explicit?

W. K. LEWIS.—We shall always be pleased to hear from you.

J. S. D.—Received and having attention. You do not waste our time. We are always glad to hear from converts to Freethought. Your letter has given us real pleasure. Write again whenever you feel disposed. You will see by the advertisement that Mr. Cohen's little book on Missions is preparing for publication.

W. B. JONES.—You will find pretty well all that you require in Mr. Foote's *Bible Heroes* and *Bible Romances*, which are written in a critical and satirical vein, but contain, by the way, a great deal of information.

M. CLYDESDALE.—Pleased to hear that the *Bible Handbook* has set your shopmates thinking. A great many persons have found it an eye-opener. The anti-infidel tract you enclose is not worth a serious reply. Only a reckless liar could say that Secularism teaches "sensuality" and "free love" and leads to "universal prostitution." You must excuse us from answering such malignant absurdities. Our legitimate work is already too heavy. We have no time for chasing blackguards through the gutters.

JOSEPH LAID.—You will find Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, translated by George Eliot, a masterly piece of work. Read also, if you can, his *Old Faith and the New*. Likewise Dr. Giles's *Christian and Hebrew Records*. The late Samuel Laing's works, all at cheap prices, would prove useful. Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* would give you a fine view of human history. Clodd's little books on *Evolution* and the *Childhood of Religions* would further help you.

J. FISH.—We are looking into the matter, and will let you know the result.

T. BEAL.—As soon as the General Meeting of the Freethought Publishing Company is over Mr. Foote hopes to be able to make arrangements for relieving himself of a good deal of the more mechanical part of his work, and liberating some of his time for the more important functions of his office. The mechanical work—the drudgery, as it might be called—must be done, and while Mr. Foote has to do it himself he is bound to neglect the special work which no one can do very well (at present) but himself. Of course the arrangement is very much a question of means.

OLD FREETHINKER.—No, we do not recollect Charles Southwell. He was before our time. Nor did we ever hear Joseph Barker. The great Charles Bradlaugh was the first apostle of Freethought under whom we sat, as the Christians say. We heard Mr. Holyoake subsequently. We listened to the debate between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Holyoake in 1870, we think; and, in our judgment, they were both right and both wrong, as we tried to show in a pamphlet entitled *Secularism Restated*, which we have long lost sight of. We daresay it was very crude, and perhaps a little presumptuous. But we were young then. Sometimes we wish we were young now. Youth is the true paradise. They are obliged to promise eternal youth even in heaven.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Leicester Reasoner—Leeds Daily News—Daily Express—Huddersfield Examiner—Freidenker—Free Society—Torch of Reason—Boston Investigator—Liberator—El Libre Pensamiento—Two Worlds—Sunday Chronicle—Irish Times—Sydney Bulletin—People's Newspaper—Truthseeker (New York)—Blue Grass Blade—Zoophilist—Truthseeker (Bradford).

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.

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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.

THE article by Mr. Foote on "The Gospel of Freethought" in this week's *Freethinker* was written a great many years ago. He has been asked to reprint it, and it will be new to the great majority of our readers.

Mr. C. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (March 10). His subject will be "Atheism and its Critics." We hope he will have a good audience.

The Annual General Meeting of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, will be held at Anderton's Hotel, Fleetstreet, London, on Monday evening, March 18, at 8 o'clock. Legal notices, etc., are being sent out to shareholders. Some of these have changed their addresses, we fear, without notifying the secretary; in fact, we know that a few of them have. Such shareholders should forward their new addresses at once, in order that they may at least receive the Report and Balance-sheet.

On Sunday, March 3, the Leicester Secular Society celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the opening of its hall in Humberstone Gate. Speeches were delivered by Messrs. G. J. Holyoake, J. H. Levy, Sydney A. Gimson, and F. J. Gould; and Mrs. Theodore Wright gave some of her spirited recitations. In the course of the evening meeting, which was well attended and enthusiastic, Mr. Gimson stated that the Society had cleared £140 by its bazaar last September.

Mr. Malcolm Quin lectures this morning and evening (March 10) in the Secular Hall, Leicester; his subjects being "The Positive Religion" and "The Worship of Humanity." Mr. Quin is the minister of the Church of Humanity at Newcastle-on-Tyne. He is a disciple of Comte, so that the religion he promotes is quite devoid of supernaturalism. Mr. Quin should have good audiences at Leicester. What he has to say is sure to be interesting and stimulating. He is guided by profound convictions, for which he has sacrificed what the world calls "good prospects"—though he is not likely to say anything on that matter himself.

We have received the first (March) number of the *Leicester Reasoner*, which is to be conducted in the interest of the Leicester Secular Society by Mr. F. J. Gould. It is, therefore, in very competent hands, and may be expected to do good service to the Society and to Secularism generally. The price of one penny places it within the reach of all. Mr. G. J. Holyoake leads off with an article on "The Public Service of Reason." Mr. Gould contributes some notes on the local School Board, of which he is a member. We are pleased to see that Mr. Gould voted for placing the Rev. Father Hawkins on the Industrial School Committee. This act of rational toleration was, however, resented by other members, who frustrated Mr. Gould's vote by turning the whole Board into a committee for the management of the school. Other items of interest in this publication are (1) a chatty, instructive article on "Five Skeletons" for children, (2) some Local Comments, (3) some Secular Society Notes, and (4) a short paper on the Leicester Secular Society's Twentieth Century Fund, by Mr. S. A. Gimson. We wish the *Leicester Reasoner* a prosperous career.

The Civil List and Royal Grants is the title of a reprint (by A. & H. Bonner) from the Appendix to the late Charles Bradlaugh's *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*. This threepenny pamphlet is very reasonable just at present, and we hope it will be widely read.

Mr. H. Percy Ward contributes to the March number of the *Truthseeker* (Bradford) an interesting account of his progress "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secularist Platform." Mr.

Ward writes with logic, lucidity, and force. He should wield his pen more frequently.

Mr. Treharne-Jones, ex-Church of England curate, who lately left his pulpit to preach the Gospel of Freethought, is holding two meetings to-day (March 10) in the Temperance Hall, Aberdare, at 2.30 and 6 o'clock, his subjects being "Christianity an Obstruction to Progress" and "An Examination of Christian Morality." Admission is free, with a collection to defray expenses; and discussion is earnestly invited.

We are always glad to receive the *Blue Grass Blade*, edited by Charles C. Moore, at Lexington, Kentucky. It is never very informing, but it is always lively. Editor Moore is an elderly man, but there is a lot of the *gamin* about him still, and his articles and letters are all written in slapdash style, with a plentiful spice of the slang of the street. Personally, we should prefer to see him a little more sober. He is a strict teetotaler in regard to whisky and cognate liquors, but he makes up for it in his journal, in which he provides weekly evidence that every man must go on the spree somewhere. For all that, he is a brave man, and a forceful journalist, in his way; and we gather that he has an extending circle of readers. We hope he will find a tangible reward before the end for the sacrifices he has made for the Freethought cause. It is not true, as Editor Moore says, that we ignore the existence of all other American Freethought journals than the New York *Truthseeker*. We often refer to other journals. Some time ago we congratulated Editor Moore on his escape from the hands of the bigots who tried to put him in prison again. That paragraph seems to have escaped his attention. We beg to assure him that we have the highest respect for his courage; what we have a doubt about is his discretion.

Freethinkers all over the country should prepare themselves for a special effort to push the circulation of the Twentieth Century Edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, which is shortly to be issued by the Secular Society, Limited, and sold by the Freethought Publishing Company. The marvellously low price of sixpence will place this famous work within the reach of all. It has already converted thousands of men and women from superstition, and it should convert many thousands more. Freethinkers who can afford it should order a number of copies for circulation amongst their friends and acquaintances. Six copies will be supplied for 2s. 3d., and twelve for 4s. 6d. Here is a bit of propaganda open to every Freethinker who can spare a few shillings for the good old cause of mental emancipation.

The *Freethinker* has held its own wonderfully well considering the great drawbacks consequent on the war and other public excitements, from which other advanced journals have suffered far more severely. There can be no doubt that our journal would rapidly increase in circulation if it were not for the "cussedness," and even the boycott, of newsagents. Unfortunately, owing in the main to this cause, the *Freethinker* is perhaps the most difficult paper to obtain in the kingdom. Sometimes the wholesale agent invents excuses for his injustice towards us, and the retail agents are palmed off with lying nonsense about the trouble of obtaining the *Freethinker*, and the impossibility of changing returns; whereas the fact is that we publish regularly in the best of time for the trade, and have always exchanged unsold copies within a reasonable limit of time and quantity. We should be glad if friends who experience any bother with their newsagents would communicate with us direct, giving the name and address of the party who fails to supply the paper punctually, and the reason he assigns for the irregularity. We will then see what can be done to remedy the mischief.

Mr. Foote has been strongly invited to pay Edinburgh another visit, and he will arrange to do so as soon as possible. What of Newcastle-on-Tyne, by the way? Are the friends there able to obtain a good hall for a Sunday course of lectures? And is there a prospect of arranging for week-night lectures in the district?

Mr. Foote will also be glad to visit the West of England again. Will the Plymouth friends kindly inquire about halls, and let him know the result? What of Exeter and Bristol? And will it be possible to do anything down in Cornwall?

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.

The Passing of a Great Poet.

"Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange."

—SHAKESPEARE (*Ariel's Song*).

"Though my words avail not, I greet thy silent ashes."

—CATULLUS.

THE story of Shelley's last days is ever fresh and pathetic. And, more than mere lovers of literature, Freethinkers have reason to be interested in the passing of the radiant poet whose sun set for ever in the stormy waters of Lerici. Shelley from the first seemed destined by the sea for its own. From his boyhood he loved to watch the drifting of paper boats down a stream, and thought that drowning would be the most beautiful of deaths. Thrice he had narrow escapes from shipwreck—once flying with Mary Godwin across the Channel, once with Byron on the Lake of Geneva, and again with Williams in Italy. But the sea and the ships absorbed him with a fatal fascination, though he was luckless with all his boats. His unfortunate first wife, Harriet, sought the same mode of death which at last fell upon the poet. Shelley prophesied his own end, though few have noticed it. In *Julian and Maddalo* he makes Byron ("Count Maddalo") address to him a jesting warning:—

You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs.

And the warning concludes.—

Beware, if you can't swim.

A prophecy the more sinister for its very levity, its total unconsciousness of hastening destiny. The frequent recurrence of this thought in Shelley's poetry is very singular. The last lines of *Adonais* might be read as an anticipation of his own death by drowning. In *Alastor* we read:—

A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone death on the drear ocean's waste.

The glorious *Ode to Liberty* closes on the same pathetic note:—

As waves, which lately paved his watery way,
His round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

The *Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples*, echo the same thought with a slight variation:—

And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

In a dirge written in 1817 he gives vent to the idea:—

That time is dead for ever, child—
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever.

Shelley made the acquaintance at Pisa of Captain Williams, the man who was to help him to his fate. Enough of a sailor to stimulate Shelley's own doomed desire for the waves, too little seaman to save him from their power. On May 1, 1822, the fatal beauty of Casa Magni drew them from Pisa, and there came to them from Genoa the schooner they had designed for their death. Byron had given it the name of the *Don Juan*; but they cut the name out of the mainsail, and renamed it the *Ariel*. The shadow of the fate sitting in its shrouds fell upon Mary Shelley. She was oppressed with melancholy; the woods overshadowing the house gave forth to her a nameless horror; the dwelling itself she hated. It was a comrade of the fatal sea, which washed into its very porch, and showered its spray upon the walls, until it seemed the cave of black despair. For five weeks Shelley lived upon the sea, putting forth in fine weather in a flimsy boat, and during stormy weather in the *Ariel*, despite the warnings of the fishermen. When he was not at sea he read or wrote poems to Captain Williams's wife, the famous Jane. Once he lured the unlucky woman, with her children, into his cockleshell of a boat, and frightened her terribly. The poet was infatuated with the sea. With the coming of Leigh Hunt to Pisa all was over. Shelley crossed to meet him, and then returned to Leghorn, where Williams and he boarded the *Ariel*, for the sail back to Casa Magni. In vain they were warned that a hurricane was imminent. For weeks they had despised all warnings; and they despised also this—the last. They put off in company with two feluccas. Trelawny, from the deck of

Byron's yacht, watched the doomed *Ariel*. "They are mad," said a Genoese sailor. Mad, indeed! Williams was sailing the vessel to his death.

The glory of the day had changed. An intense sultry furnace-glow had replaced the flood of sunlight. The thunder brooded among the jagged clouds which gathered above the horizon. Mischievous was brewing. A sea-fog came up. The waves became discolored and weed-clogged, and moaned with a premonition of storm. At last the tempest came, brief, but fiercely violent. Trelawny looked, but where the *Ariel* had been there was speckled sea. Soon the clouds gathered again, and the hurricane blew all night; but Shelley and his companions had already gone down to night eternal. To the weary watchers the troubled plumes of midnight were the plumes upon a hearse.

It seems meet that Shelley should have ended his life at sea. In the midst of storm, with no requiem but the sobbing of the wind and the moaning of the waves, as they surged over the doomed vessel, the unplumbed, infinite sea, beloved and sung by so many generations of poets, took his tired form to her arms.

Of the sad waiting and despair of the two lonely women, in whose hearts terror was lying still, at Casa Magni, until the body of Shelley was washed ashore at Viareggio, and that of Williams on the Tuscan coast, the pitiful tale has been told by Trelawny. He, too, has told of that last sad scene of all, on the beach before the pine wood, when the body of Shelley in the blazing furnace was reduced to ashes, all but the heart. Snatched by Trelawny from the flames, it was given by Leigh Hunt to Shelley's widow—the dead heart to the broken heart:—

O heart whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty makes clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

MIMNERMUS.

"The Divine Failure."

DIVESTED of its romantic coloring, the life of Jesus is prosaic. Could we recross the centuries, forget all that name has been and is to mankind, ignore the glory it has won, blot from the map the empire it has conquered, and find Jesus as he was, we should find a disillusion and a disappointment. In the business world he had no standing; in the industrial world he was not a factor; in the social world he had no recognition; in the religious world he was looked upon as an infidel and an iconoclast. He was one of those who came and went. In the present day he would be subject to arrest for vagrancy. He taught what seemed to be Socialism, and inveighed against riches on the streets. He antagonized every class; the rich disliked him because he seemed to cast reflection upon the possession of wealth; the political world feared him because of the rumor that he was stirring up dissension; the ecclesiastics hated him because he made his nonconformity conspicuous, and in a dramatic way set aside the teachings and the ceremonies that they held sacred. When he was arrested and tried he had no defenders—friendless and alone he was condemned to death; even the few chosen ones that had been his companions forsook him and fled. As for the rest, it is said that in that tragic hour "sitting down they watched him there"—watched him suffer, watched him die. It was cold indifference. Not a throb of pity, not a tear, not a friend to protect; abandoned, forsaken, he died alone. Measure that life by any standard accepted among men, and it must be called a failure to those who witnessed it. Without family or loved ones or home; despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; reviled, humiliated, spat upon, and crowned with thorns; put to death by torture; numbered with malefactors, and, when he was dead, even his poor dust homeless but for the grave offered by charity. Imagine such a life; picture it then, picture it now; place it in any age, and there is none so poor, so abject, to say it was a success.

What was the Prophet's own interpretation of his

career we may only conjecture. Two explanations were possible to him. He may have chosen the life of an ascetic, and schooled himself to be indifferent to friends, to the pleasures, the joys, and the ambitions that men hold dear. Such characters are not unknown in history—men who make a virtue of compelling themselves to be unmoved by the things that move most men. Some of his teachings seem to indicate that that was the view he accepted; he seemed to teach that poverty, if not a virtue, was at least one of the favorable conditions—one of the means towards virtue—and that if riches were not an evil they were assuredly a snare. Some of his words seem to indicate a profound disregard for the common emotions and impulses of the human world. "Except a man forsake father and mother, and wife and children, and houses and lands, and follow me, he is not worthy of me." "Come on," he said, "and let the dead bury their dead." These and other statements credited to him indicate an intense ascetic spirit. If that was his construction of his life, then, from his own view-point, it was a successful one; for, from the personal point of view, any life is successful that fulfils the ideal set before it.

The other hypothesis seems more in accord with what we know of him, and that is this—that he believed he would be vindicated at last. He certainly possessed some strange power, yet unexplained; he believed in the ministry of angels and spirits; he seemed to have been infatuated with the belief in the immanence of the kingdom of God; but while he did not rely in any least degree upon the common adjuncts of power, while he disclaimed the use and support of the sword, while he did not rely upon numbers that he might command, he does seem to have had some strange belief that there would be a supernatural delivery. I believe that he went up Calvary believing that he would be rescued from the Cross; I think that when that dying cry was forced from those lips, "My God, thou hast forsaken me," that it was the cry of a broken and disappointed heart; in that gathering gloom of death the darkness about him was light compared with the darkness of his own disappointment. Whatever construction his contemporaries put upon it, we look at it from an entirely different view-point. It makes no difference to the Jesus that suffered; his career is ended, his work is done, his compensations were never found in this world, and, from this far-distant point of view, it all looks different.

Much of the value of this world is brought to it by the lives that fail. It is not, as a rule, the successful life, measured by the common standards, that endows or enriches the world. It is necessary that the human world have now and then some man infatuated with an ideal, some man strong enough and unselfish enough to disregard all things else but his ideal, and follow it through good and evil report; follow it into the Gethsemane darkness, if need be; follow it to the Cross and die for it, in order that the world may know that there are some values that are not measured by the balance at the bank. It is necessary for this human world to have the rebellious men, the men who stand as living protests against things as they are—religion, society, politics, and government. It was such an attitude that Jesus occupied; sometimes aggressive, sometimes positively antagonistic, but at no time a conformer; always with the language of protest, always with the attitude of non-acceptance, too many of such men would make revolutions, too many would unsettle and disturb. A few Christs living at the same time would bring calamity and disaster to all existing institutions, but now and then one to become a sort of bond between the actual and the ideal; now and then one to bring men to the bars of their own judgments to reason about things; now and then one to feed the fire of discontent; now and then one, a prophetic soul, in whose few utterances there may come the gleam and flash of things that are to be; and such a life must always fail, always be numbered with the despised. And these failures, by the common standard, after all, are the successful men in the large and impersonal way. Every man of us, every woman, cherishes ideals known to be impossible and impracticable. Everyone of us who thinks at all has conceptions about society, religion, government, that we firmly believe in, but do not dare to attempt to put in practice—do not even dare to proclaim. Everyone of

us has unspoken dreams of the future of man, of the future of the human world; most of us have plans or theories by which we think that future will be realised; but none of us dare say those things. All of us conform with a spirit more or less of silent protest, sometimes of cowardice. These men who fail are the men whom we cry out against, the men whom we imprison, or crucify, or burn; and yet we know that in the final solution of the great problem they will be the men who will appear as the great factors that made actual the ideal of which we dreamed. It is easy enough to take out of the past some great failure, and garland and applaud it; but if Jesus Christ were alive to-day, and lived exactly as he lived when on the earth, and did the same things, and taught the same doctrines, he would be an outcast now exactly as he was then; he would be at first ignored, then, as his influences seemed to widen, he would be feared, and then he would be despised and hated, exactly as in the earlier times. The only difference would be that it would be the nineteenth century instead of the first that cast him out. Yet he was necessary—necessary because the world must have its ideal men—that is to say, its impossible and impracticable men. (DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Torch of Reason.*

(To be concluded.)

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of Monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices on Thursday, February 28. There were present (Mr. G. W. Foote, President, in the chair): Messrs. E. Bater, W. Beech, C. Cohen, J. Cooper, T. Gorniot, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, B. Munton, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, C. Quinton, V. Roger, F. Schaller, H. Stace, E. E. Sims, T. Shore, T. Thurlow, C. Watts, T. Wilmot, and the Secretary.

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

The President informed the meeting that he had found it necessary to consult a solicitor *re* the trust money in the hands of the executors of the late Mr. Hartmann.

The Secretary reported upon the meeting of the sub-committee elected to make arrangements for the out-door lectures during the coming season, and it was resolved: "That the Branch secretaries remit the collections to the General Secretary monthly—that is to say, on the first Monday in each month, and the remittance be accompanied by a statement of the amount received at each lecture." A further resolution was passed to the effect that all literature sold at lectures should be sold by the Branch officials.

The circular *re* the arrangements for the Society's Annual Conference on Whit-Sunday was ordered to be sent out.

Other minor matters of business having been discussed, the meeting adjourned. EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

The Parsons and the Barmaids.

An embarrassing moment occurred at one of the annual meetings of the Committee of the Church of England Temperance Society, over which the late Bishop of London presided. The report of the Ladies' Committee was read, which, among other information, contained the statement that "during the last year much attention has been paid to barmaids."

A very audible titter ran round the meeting, which was changed to undisguised laughter as the following words were read: "This has, in many cases, led to their being visited in their homes."

So loud was the merriment of the clergy that the chairman, fearful of more alarming ambiguities, rose and smilingly observed:—

"Perhaps, gentlemen, we may take the report as read."

—*Daily Chronicle.*

Ingersoll and Talmage.

The late Col. Ingersoll was riding in a street car one day when the Rev. T. De Witt Talmage got in, and presently they fell into an argument. Finally Ingersoll said: "Then you would like to live in a place, Brother Talmage, where everyone has to be good by law?" "Certainly," said Talmage. "You would like to live where everyone has to go to church regularly every Sunday?" "Yes, that would suit me." "Where no man can get a drink, and swearing is not permitted?" "Yes; that's the place for me." "And where every man would have to keep regular hours?" "That would be heaven on earth," said Talmage, smiling, and striking his knee with his open palm. "Well," said Bob, looking over his glasses, "you'd better go up to Sing Sing [Prison]. That's the way they do there."

Correspondence.

THE CREATION STORY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, "H. J. A." (I use his initials simply for the sake of brevity), undertakes to square the circle. Why not afford him the opportunity of doing so—if he can? Failure to accomplish his self-imposed task may be of service to him, if to no one else; it may cause the scales to fall from his eyes.

"H. J. A." says that "Genesis i. 1 informs us that where before had been vacancy God called into existence the boundless universe." Does not the word "vacancy" mean "space"? And is not illimitable space the "boundless universe" which, he says, "God called into existence"?

"H. J. A." says that "science teaches this creation took place at some date inconceivably remote." Is not that which is inconceivable beyond discussion? But does science so teach? It does nothing of the kind. On the contrary, it teaches in the most unmistakeable manner that the "boundless universe" never had a "beginning," and that it existed from all eternity.

"H. J. A." says that "no note of time is given," and that "between verses 1 and 2 an immense lapse of ages is silently overpassed." Indeed! Let us read the second verse, and then ask what science teaches on the subject. The second verse reads thus: "And the earth was without form and void [was waste and void—R. V.]; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." What is the grammatical meaning of these words? What picture do they present to the mind? The picture they present is a description of the *state in which the earth was at the time of its so-called "creation,"* and before, according to the Bible, the *work of the six days had commenced.* What time was that? The answer is given in the verse. The word "deep"—especially when it is used, as it is here used, in connection with the word "waters"—can have only one meaning. It means such seas and oceans as are familiar to us all. And as it is impossible for water to be in existence at a temperature above 212 degrees of heat, it follows as a matter of course that the "time" referred to was the geologic period which followed the formation of water—a period when the virgin earth was *not* "wrapped in gloomy vapor," but was in a fit state for the habitation of living creatures, and was so inhabited.

"H. J. A." says "the remainder of the chapter relates how, in six days of twenty-four hours each, a part of Western Asia was fitted for man's habitation." He is quite right in saying that in the Bible the word "day," except where it is used idiomatically, has no other meaning than a space of time, the duration of which is twenty-four solar hours; for it is only since natural science has swept away the Biblical landmarks that efforts have been made by theologians to reconcile the Bible statements with scientific facts. But, in doing so, he is hopelessly at variance not only with scientists, but with all modern Christians except those of the Dean Burgon type. The Rev. G. Henslow, an advocate of the Christian Evidence Society, voicing the new interpretation of the Bible, in his book entitled *Popular Objections to Revealed Truth*, tells us with charming candor (p. 129) that "when geology had advanced sufficiently to be able to show incontestably that, whatever the 'days' of Genesis might mean, they could not possibly signify that the world was created within the space of six literal days, theologians, finding they must yield to scientific discoveries, immediately adopted the interpretation of infinite time."

I need not follow "H. J. A." any further. That the Bible account of the creation of the earth and scientific facts are utterly opposed to each other is proved by the strenuous efforts which theologians have made to reconcile them, though reconciliation is impossible. And well may they make such efforts. For, as science demonstrates that the Biblical story of the creation is simply a story and nothing more, it follows logically that all other statements connected with it, or appertaining thereto—as, for instance, the fall of man—are simply stories, and nothing more. Be it so! "Truth is great, and will prevail."

J. W. DE CAUX.

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A statement made in your issue of January 20, 1901, p. 43, has been brought under my notice. It is made by Mr. C. Cohen, in a series of articles on "Christianity and Civilisation," and is to the following effect: "Alexander Campbell, founder of the 'Christian' sect, proclaimed the divine right of slavery." There are two fallacies in this statement.

(1) Alexander Campbell was not the founder of the "Christian" sect, inasmuch as we have the authority of the historian Luke for saying that the disciples [of Christ] were first called "Christians" at Antioch; so that the "Christian" sect existed—had its origin—in the first century of this era.

(2) It is false to say that Alexander Campbell "proclaimed

the divine right of slavery," if by that it is meant that he taught the divine right of a man to hold other men as his property. No one could have better known the views of Alexander Campbell upon slavery than Alexander Campbell himself, and he delivered a lecture on his attitude towards this question in Edinburgh, in the year 1847. I here append a few extracts from that lecture, as reported by himself in a letter written to his daughter: "I then proceeded to my own position to American slavery, declaring that I neither approved of nor defended any system of slavery, ancient or modern, Anglican or American; that in the statute-books of all slave States there were sundry laws and enactments that no Christian man could sanction or practise; alleging, also, that no Christian man in America was either obliged to approve them or to put them into practice in his own case. I had myself emancipated several slaves that came into my possession, and had emancipated them; and for several years had not had any property in any human beings except in my wife and children." Surely the above is a clear expression of A. Campbell's "own position," as he calls it, in regard to slavery. He goes on to say that, when Christianity was introduced into the world by its founder, it found slavery in existence as a political institution, and continues: "Christianity regulated, but did not annihilate, the relation of master and bond-servant; and that, although I was constitutionally, politically, economically, and morally opposed to all forms of slavery, ecclesiastic and political, English and American, I could not legislate [that is, in the Christian Church] beyond the passages of Scripture which I read" [here follow a number of quotations from the New Testament]. In a word, the position of A. Campbell was simply this—that, while he was opposed to all forms of slavery, he could not, consistently with his standard, the New Testament, excommunicate a slaveholder, unless in cases where the slave was inhumanly treated.

J. M. CHRISTIE.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Kindly permit me to notice the pointed reference to myself made by your correspondent. His letter, as I understand it, implies an acknowledgment and makes a statement. The "acknowledgment" is that Genesis i. may reasonably be interpreted in a manner which does not conflict with any scientific advance. Such a concession appears to me of the very greatest importance.

The "statement" I take to be that, if I give reasons for believing in the existence of God, he will "be glad to try to reply." As you admitted this "statement," I hope you will be good enough to append an editorial note saying you will permit me to give some reasons for holding a mighty God is existing, our present Ruler and future Judge. I think yourself and your subscribers will agree with me that all discussions, in comparison with this, are quite insignificant.

While there are many reasons for believing in God's existence, allow me to offer one from Paine's *Age of Reason*, the book you are so anxious to circulate. I quote from Bonner's edition: "Everything we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself that he did not make himself, neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself; and it is the conviction arising from this evidence that carries us on, as it were, by necessity to the belief of a first cause, eternally existing, of a nature totally different from any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause man calls God" (p. 21).

HENRY J. ALCOCK.

[Certainly we shall be pleased to insert such a letter as Mr. Alcock suggests. The question contemplated is, as he justly says, of transcendent importance; and men of all schools of thought have an equal interest in ascertaining the truth. Mr. Alcock's letter will doubtless be answered, when it appears, by the correspondent who made the pointed appeal to him.—EDITOR.]

THE REMAINS OF VOLTAIRE AND ROUSSEAU.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Allow me to express my appreciation of the reply of Mimmermus to my communication *re* the remains of Rousseau and Voltaire. Mimmermus, in his own clever manner, has thrown considerable doubt upon the result of the investigation reported in the *Daily Telegraph* cutting sent you. However, as he remarks, "much depends on the evidence for the Government opening the tomb in 1864, mentioned by Espinasse." Did it not occur to Mimmermus, when he wrote these words, that had the evidence of same been satisfactory there would have been no need for a more recent investigation? The *Telegraph* account states that it was due to doubts expressed that the recent investigation was resolved upon. Therefore, we may presumably suppose that the evidence of the 1864 investigation is not conclusive.

Also, I would like to draw the attention of Mimmermus to that portion of the *Telegraph* report which says "Voltaire's outer coffin was just as it has been described in the official documents of 1821," etc.

Unfortunately, owing to my being otherwise occupied, I am unable to spare the time for research on this subject; but it offers an excellent opportunity, and I am sure that there are a number of Freethinkers, besides myself, who would be grateful to anyone who would get at the facts and enable us to form a more satisfactory opinion than is possible at present. Perhaps Mimmermus will continue it, or perhaps our French *confreres* could shed some light on it.

GEO. FACER.

A PROTEST FROM CAMBERWELL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The Committee of the Camberwell Branch wishes to express its regret that the editor of the *Freethinker* should have thought it necessary to publish a paragraph reflecting upon the disinterestedness of the Branch.

It further desires to point out that the relation of the Branch to the Hall proprietors is merely that of tenant to landlord, and the "special advantages" it enjoys are due only to its superior internal strength, and not in any way to exterior assistance.

The Committee's objection to the Centralisation Scheme rests upon the proposal to deprive branches of the power to employ their own lecturers. It regards this as a serious obstacle to its independence. In other respects the Committee recognise that the scheme offers many advantages.

T. WILMOT (Sec.).

[(1) We are not able to follow the Camberwell Branch in its contention, that it derives no advantage from its comparatively cheap use of a building erected by the money of Freethinkers in various localities. We fancy that more than one N. S. S. Branch, even in London, wishes it were similarly privileged. This may be said without disparaging in any way the excellent and fruitful work which the Camberwell Branch has carried on for so many years. (2) It is scarcely accurate to say that the centralisation of the open-air lecturing in London deprives Branches of the power to employ their own lecturers, or interferes in the slightest degree with their independence—except to the extent that all co-operation involves some loss of individuality. Instead of each Branch secretary making up his own list of lectures for the season, all the Branch secretaries meet together and make up a common list. If this is a blow at their independence, so is their having a common annual excursion; and so, indeed, is their sending representatives to a central Executive. We venture to suggest that the Camberwell Branch should think this matter over again, and see if it cannot fall into a line with the other London Branches. A merely parish view of organisation is hardly adequate to the needs of the Freethought Movement in London.—EDITOR.]

The Bible can be Read Any Way.

A colored Mrs. Partington lives in Georgia. She is about seventy years old, and makes a great show of reading the Bible, although it is well known that she cannot read a line. The other day she was seated on her front porch with a large family Bible on her lap. Some one in passing thus saluted:

"Good-morning, Aunt Caroline."

"Mawnin', suh, mawnin'! It's right previous weather, suh."

"Yes, rather previous."

"The clouds hang so low, hit looks like dey 'bout ter have a collegiance wid de airth."

"Yes, it does look so."

"Well, de Lawd 'll take keer on us. De Bible say he dis-temper de wind to de born lambs."

"Is that the Bible you are reading?"

"O yes, suh."

"Why, it's upside down."

"Look heah, Mistuh!" said the old woman, indignantly, "don't you s'pose I knowed it? What disfunce do it make? De Bible is so plain, you kin jes read it any way!"

Obituary.

It is my painful duty to announce the death of Mrs. Birch, wife of Mr. E. J. Birch, and one of the oldest members of the North West London Branch N. S. S. The undersigned had the pleasure of her acquaintance for upwards of sixteen years, and can testify to the fact that she was an earnest Secularist and an excellent wife and mother, and her bereaved family may find consolation in the memory of her virtues. The deceased lady, who died suddenly, was buried at Highgate Cemetery on Thursday, February 28. At the request of the family, Mr. W. J. Ramsey read the Secular Burial Service.—EDITH M. VANCE.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Atheism and its Critics."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Joseph McCabe, "The Origin of Life."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 11.15, Discussion on "Theosophy"; 7, J. M. Robertson, "War: What it Means to Man and Beast."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11, Prof. Earl Barnes, "The Negro in America."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Debate—Messrs. E. White v. Rev. J. B. Coles; 7, E. White.

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, A lecture. BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward—11 (if fine, in the Bull Ring), "The Jokes of Jehovah"; 3, "Vaccination: A Delusion and a Crime"; 7, "The Wickedness of God."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, R. P. Edwards, "The Character and Teaching of Jesus." Special collection for the local Cement Workers now on strike.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Open Discussion on "The Housing Problem"; 6.30, Social Meeting in Commemoration of Mazzini.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): Mr. Malcolm Quin—11, "The Positive Religion"; 6.30, "The Worship of Humanity."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Lawrence Bergmann, B.Sc., "Karl Pearson's *National Life from the Scientific Point of View*."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. A. Rogerson, "Embryology." Lantern illustration: slides by Mr. A. Flatters.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Mr. Robert Low, F.G.S.—3, "The History of Rocks Formed by Fire"; 7, "Life History of Plants." Tea at 5.

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

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 241 High-road, Leyton.—March 10, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 17, Glasgow; 24, Manchester; 31, Camberwell.

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

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