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Christ's Week-End in Hell.

LOTS of people, if the weather keeps fine, will spend the week-end this Easter at the seaside or in the country. Anywhere will do as long as it affords sweet air, and is remote from the dust and bustle of cities. Some of them, perhaps, out of mere habit, if for no other reason, will attend church on Easter Sunday, and hear the preacher dress up again that old fable of the Resurrection. How few of them, though, will think out the question of how Jesus Christ spent *his* Easter week-end eighteen hundred and sixty-eight years ago. What we call his week-end was the time between his crucifixion and his resurrection. Of course it was a *short* week-end, but the circumstances were rather painful, and the period between Friday afternoon and early on Sunday morning was mercifully counted as three days; perhaps on modern Trade Union principles, reckoning the nights as overtime. In other circumstances the trip would have lasted till Tuesday morning, thus allowing three full days for the return ticket.

Very few Christians, we believe, could tell off-hand where Jesus Christ spent that first Easter week-end. The Gospel truth is that he spent it in hell. At least that is what we are told in the so-called Apostles' Creed, which is supposed to be religiously founded on Scripture. We read therein that he "was crucified, dead, and buried," and then that he "descended into hell." The next article is that "the third day he rose again from the dead." Clearly, therefore, the interval between the crucifixion and the resurrection was spent in hell—minus, of course, whatever time was taken up in going there and in returning.

Now we should like to know how the gentlemen who drew up the Apostles' Creed—a document which is accepted by all the Churches—found out that Jesus Christ descended into hell. This article was not in the Nicene Creed that was formulated in 325, nor in the revised Creed that was formulated fifty years later at the Council of Constantinople. It crept in a long time afterwards. But when it got a start it soon made progress. It was helped along by the Psalmist's saying "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." It was also helped along by the curious words of Peter (1, iii., 18, 19) about Jesus being "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison." But the *origin* of the article seems to have been a sheer accident. Somewhere about A.D. 400 the district Church of Aquileia adopted it, and it was afterwards incorporated into the creeds of the Roman and Eastern Churches. The Church of Aquileia used the words "suffered under Pontius Pilate," and "was crucified," but omitted the words "dead and buried." It went straight on after "crucified" with the words *descendit in inferna*. No doubt this was merely a special way of saying "he was buried," for the word *inferna* did not necessarily mean "hell," any more than the Hebrew *sheol* or the Greek *hades*. All these terms meant at first merely the *grave*, though subsequently they meant the underworld, the ghostland, the general home of the dead; heaven and hell as separate places of reward and punishment being later inventions.

This accident of phraseology on the part of the Church of Aquileia was the foundation on which the universal Christian Church erected the tremendous article of its Creed that Jesus Christ "descended into hell." Such great effects from little causes spring.

No. 1,028.

It is very easy to say "he descended into hell," but very difficult to say what it means. Christian divines are (of course) at loggerheads about it. Some contend that its meaning is that the efficacy of Christ's atoning blood extended even to hell, and did some good even to the denizens of that lurid establishment. Others hold that Christ descended into hell metaphorically, by suffering the torments of the damned in making expiation for the sins of the world. But this is objected to by others on the ground that the worst torments of hell are remorse of conscience and eternal separation from God, neither of which could be suffered by Christ. Another theory is that he went to the Limbo in which the Jewish "fathers" were waiting to emigrate to heaven, and that he served them as a sort of Cook's excursion agent. Still another theory is that he simply went to the place of the dead—down amongst the dead-men—wherever that is. And, after all, what does it matter? It is enough to believe that he "descended into hell" in the sense that he went *somewhere*. So said Bishop Pearson. Archbishop Usher went one better. What we have to do, he said, is to accept the article in a *general* sense; and then we can believe that Jesus Christ went to hell, or heaven, or anywhere else we please.

One of the apocryphal Gospels gives a lively account of how Jesus Christ visited hell and harried the realm of Old Harry, sailing away with a long procession of Old Testament worthies, and leaving the Boss of Hades biting his thumb with vexation in the midst of his depleted and desolate establishment. How nice it must have been for Adam, Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, & Co., when they followed their new-found Savior from the nowhere of hell, through the everywhere of the universe, to the nowhere of heaven! But how sad for all the poor wretches who fell in at the tail of the procession, expecting to get out and cool off with their betters! Alas, the gate was slammed in their faces, and—they are cooking still!

It was asserted by some that Jesus Christ emptied hell entirely. But the Church branded these sanguine persons as heretics. What, an empty hell? Perish the thought! Why, the place might then have been closed for ever; and what could the Church do without a hell for its enemies, and especially for unbelievers?

Supposing that Jesus Christ did descend into hell, what a pity it was that he did not make the best use of such an opportunity. He had to stop there for three days, according to Christian chronology. Why then did he not exert his Omnipotence, guided by his Omniscience, and destroy the place altogether; finding another residence, if necessary, for its displaced inhabitants, as is done by the authorities when they have to pull down for city improvements. He might also have terminated the emigration from earth to hell by converting the Devil. Surely he might have done that. Why, he actually converted a considerable number of Jews before his crucifixion—which is more than the Missionary Societies are able to do now, even with the assistance of colossal sums of money. Had he converted the Devil—as Man Friday suggested to Robinson Crusoe—he would have achieved the salvation of the human race with a single stroke. With no Devil to tempt him, no man would sin; and, with no sin, there would be no damnation. Why then did not Jesus Christ convert the Devil? Because it would have been too bad business for the clergy. The Devil and hell are really the be-all and end-all of their profession.

G. W. FOOTE.

Knox-Little on War.

A COLLECTION of the utterances of prominent preachers and religious newspapers on the ethics of warfare, delivered during the past eighteen months, would make curious reading in the light of their expressed opinions during the time that the Hague Peace Conference was sitting. The reading will be none the less instructive if deferred until the present South African war is ended, and the reaction, which is bound to occur, sets in. On the strength of past experiences, one may safely prophesy that the sermons delivered during the early part of '99 on the un-Christian character of war, and which were conveniently forgotten on the outbreak of hostilities, will be once more resumed, a general laudation of war will be replaced by an indiscriminate denunciation, and our religious leaders will have thus shown their customary ability to pander to whatever passion happens to be uppermost for the time being.

The clergy are born opportunists, and their opportunism becomes more marked and more disgusting as their religious hold on the people becomes weaker. Doctrines have no longer the interest they once had, even to professedly religious people. Long sermons are at a discount, and doctrinal discussions are a drug in the market. The most popular preachers are those who talk the least theology, and whose sermons are composed of a large number of the more harmless sociological platitudes plentifully besprinkled with the name of Jesus. There being no longer the same desire for the *preaching*, the task of the parson is to create a desire for the preacher. Were the pulpits manned by persons of genuine ability, this might be a labor of ease. Even if the clergy were, in the mass, unmistakably sincere, the support that cannot be demanded by intellectual strength might be yielded to genuine conviction. But as this is not the case, the clergy are driven to a progressively parasitic existence—an existence which they strive to perpetuate by shouting with any popular passion that is strong enough to pay for their support.

The attitude of the religious world during the last eighteen months is fully illustrative of what has been said above. That opinions differ concerning the justice of any particular war is natural and inevitable; and, if the clergy had disagreed as to the righteousness of the present conflict, they would only have shown themselves as other men, and could, therefore, be subject to no special censure. But, in their desire to make the most of an outburst of popular feeling, they have, with rare exceptions, done more than this. Not content with justifying the present war, both the pulpit and the religious press have dwelt upon the value of war as war, dilating upon the virtues it encourages, and its immense value as a civilising force, both in the past and in the present, with so much unction that one is driven to the conclusion that, in the opinion of our spiritual guides, the cessation of warfare would involve a decivilising of the race.

Among these bellicose disciples of the Prince of Peace Canon Knox-Little holds a prominent position. In a sermon preached recently at Manchester, the Canon has delivered himself of a species of confession of faith concerning war, and from a brief report in the *Manchester Guardian* I extract the following sentences as being worthy of note. According to the *Guardian's* report,

"He claimed that the teaching of the Scriptures was that *war, as war*, was not wrong. Christ's approval of the military profession admitted of no contradiction.....It was recognised by the Gospel that out of the military profession there came virtues for our contemplation—the virtues, for instance, of obedience and courage.....Discipline and order and comradeship were other virtues to be found in the soldier. To the preacher it had been a marvellous thing to see the generous, loving, manly comradeship of Englishmen in danger, thinking of one another as well as of themselves. When speaking of war as not being forbidden by Christianity, but commended in its proper place, it must be remembered that the history of nations was the history of their wars, and that nations were the creation of God's providence.....If war was unholy, why.....did God so often order and command wars? If wars were costly and cruel, were not speculations in commerce sometimes costly, and might not the counting-house often be as cruel, or more

cruel, than the camp? The crimes of the camp were said to be great, but.....the crimes of large cities in times of peace were greater.....War might only be the means, under God, of reforming corrupt communities, and of cleansing out what was evil and bad. It was God's scourge, God's writing in the temple.....A just war was God's punishment for evil, the last court of appeal in this world; and it was one of the most sad and solemn duties that God laid upon man."

Now I do not wish to discuss here whether Canon Knox-Little is correctly representing the Christian faith or not, nor to traverse the opinion that wars are often stern necessity. No practical, common-sense individual would argue for the immediate disarmament of the world, or deny the justifiability of war under given conditions. Until human nature is civilised beyond the probability of a reversion, the moral exhortation must, to some extent, rest its efficiency upon the physical ability to enforce it. We may regret the fact, but it remains nevertheless. I am only concerned in noting the ethical attitude of a Christian leader towards "war as war," with his justification of the position taken up.

Apart from the theology involved, the Canon, it will be observed, rests his position upon the old pleas that (a) war is a school of virtue, (b) that the evils of peace may be as great as those of war, and (c) that war is God's method of removing evil and building up a righteous nation. It will be necessary to touch but briefly on each point to expose the fallacies involved.

It may be granted that so far as war is necessary the qualities essential to its pursuit may be classed as desirable; but this measure of praise can hardly justify our supporting warfare as a school of character. This last position could only be maintained were war the only condition under which the virtues of courage, comradeship, etc., could be developed. But this is far from being the case. Courage, devotion to duty, comradeship, however much they may be developed by a military life, are far from being its exclusive characteristics. Rhetoric on one side, it may well be argued that the qualities developed in civil life may be every whit as valuable as those brought out under the pressure of warfare, without their involving the same number or quantity of opposite tendencies. The sense of comradeship developed in many of our trade struggles between employers and their employees, the courage that is shown in rescues from fires, wrecks, flooded or burning mines, the steady, unconscious heroism shown in the efforts of many toil-worn, disease-stricken mothers to find food and clothing for their children, a courage the more admirable because unaccompanied by the halo of "glory" surrounding a soldier's life, may fitly compare with anything the battlefield has to offer.

In strict accuracy the virtues developed by the military life are all more or less of a lower order than those developed under peaceful conditions. If war develops obedience, it is of a blind, unquestioning kind, not that which bases itself upon a perception of the rightness of the orders issued. The comradeship encouraged stops short at the limits of the army, often at the regiment; it feeds itself upon the hatred of others, not upon the perception of a common welfare to be achieved by common action. Unconcern as to the sufferings of others, and disregard as to their rights, are the normal and inevitable accompaniments of the military life, and if during modern times warfare has grown more "civilised," this is due, not to the military training, but to the growth of a healthier humanitarian spirit during times of peace. Warfare is essentially savage, whether it be pursued with flint-tipped arrows or modern Lee-Metfords; it may be inevitable just so long as the savage in man finds ready expression; but its real character and influence is plain enough to those who sanely study its nature.

As an example of the fitness of the average cleric to act as a moral guide to the people, the further plea that the crimes of great cities are greater than those of camps deserves to be written in letters of gold. It requires a certain hardihood, after all, to argue that, because there are evils in times of peace, therefore we ought not to complain if we add to their number the evils resulting from war. It is a grim commentary upon the moralising influence of Christianity to find one of its prominent exponents arguing that one course of action is right because another course can be shown to

be wrong. One wonders how the evils of a commercial, can justify those of a military, career, or in what manner the savage feelings encouraged by warfare are rendered admirable because men strangle each other in commercial competition. Judging from the Canon's utterance, I suppose it would be almost useless to point out that the feelings induced by a military life are themselves the strongest encouragement to many of the evils that we complain of in social life. No man can put off his feelings and habits at will, and it is only to be expected that the sentiments encouraged by warfare, in which every success is necessarily purchased by the failures of others, should harden one to the presence of much that might otherwise be deprecated. It is sheer stupidity to expect that, after men have passed through all the horrors of a military campaign, or have even passed through the fever of a war-craze, they can return to civil life with the same niceties of moral discrimination and susceptibility to the presence of suffering as they previously possessed.

Canon Knox-Little's final plea, that war is God's method "of reforming corrupt communities," is almost too stupid to deserve serious treatment. If the statement be accepted, one is bound to believe that the victor is always more righteous than the vanquished, which leads us to the conclusion that might, and nothing but might, is right. If the Canon were to read history a little more thoughtfully than he appears to have done, he would doubtless discover that, in the history of the life and death of nations, military supremacy—which has as often as not decided which nation shall persist—may and does co-exist with a considerable degree of "evil and corruption." The Egyptians did not succumb to the Greeks because their society was more corrupt, nor did the Greeks pass under the dominion of Rome because the latter were the more virtuous of the two, but chiefly because of simple military superiority. Still one can hardly expect a gentleman who sees the history of nations in a history of their wars, and does not even mention any other aspect of national life, to rise to any profound or comprehensive view of human evolution.

But do not let us be too hard upon our worthy Canon. Doubtless, when the war fever subsides, he will be as ready to find a sanction for peace in the Bible as he is at present to find commandments for war. The Bible is a most convenient text-book, and one can safely trust to find within its pages authority for the most contradictory courses of conduct. And as with the Bible, so with the clergy. Their game is to draw paying congregations—to flatter prejudices rather than restrain them, to forge excuses for the passions of the moment rather than to sternly reprove them. The pity is that many should continue to look up to them as trustworthy guides on any of the important concerns of life.

C. COHEN.

Seers at Sea.

"I can tell you strange news that you dreamed not of."

—SHAKESPEARE (*Much Ado About Nothing*, i., 2).

AGREEABLY to the rigid law of supply and demand, prophets have in all times arisen to prophesy events, smooth and otherwise, usually at prices absurdly cheap, considering the value of their services. From the day of the Augurs, who could not look one another in the face without laughing, down to those of the modern fortune-teller, who laughs in her dainty sleeve, until an infidel magistrate usurps her calling, and foretells that she will spend three months at the treadmill, an unbroken line of more or less inspired personages has existed. The entire universe, moreover, has been ransacked for information of coming events. The stars that glitter hundreds of millions of miles afar have been considered as deeply interested in the career of the inhabitants of this tiny globe, and the sediment at the bottom of a paltry tea-cup has been held to be fraught with profound meaning to the same pious paragons of nature. Comets have been obligingly imported into our solar system obviously for the purpose of warning us of approaching disaster, and minute insects are naturally commissioned to prepare us for approaching dissolution by "tapping" in the woodwork of old houses.

The ancient Romans, whose expansive piety required a perfect army of gods and goddesses, cheerfully

invested fever with divine attributes, and would undoubtedly have deified the Main Drainage and worshipped the East London Water Company. They could scarcely have failed to place under mythological guardianship the chances that befall mankind. They depicted fortune as blind, and made its dispenser a lady. That, indeed, was a stroke of genius, and an indirect compliment to a sex, as Mrs. Caudle says, "put upon from the beginning."

The apparently inconsequent nature of the events that befall mankind, of course, engendered the idea of a supernatural control, which equally, according to the prophets, was to be bribed. The rain-doctors and prophets of savages are kept to their contracts. They are expected to bring rain when it is required, and if they do not the consequences are summary, and distinctly unpleasant. They are sometimes disgraced, and occasionally killed. But the rain-doctors in civilised countries retain all the advantages of their savage prototypes, without any of the attendant risks and dangers. The civilised dupes allow the prophet to play his little game on the principle of "Heads I win, tails you lose." If the prophet is unsuccessful, they ignore the mistake; if he should happen to be fortunate, they put it to the credit of the augur, or he puts it to his credit—which is much the same thing.

The phenomenon is not unknown at the present time. Old Moore and Zadkiel, and a host of lesser luminaries, are revered with unimpaired devotion in mansions and cottages.

Prophesying usually implies want of humor, but it must sometimes make even the prophets themselves hold their sides and laugh heartily. The quintessence of nonsense disclosed in such a book as *Forty Coming Wonders*, by Baxter, is quite amazing. For thirty-five years this tremendous publication has been before the public. It is still purchased with unabated credulity, although the error of Baxter's pretensions to be regarded as a seer have been proved again and again, by the irresistible logic of facts, to the satisfaction of all reasonable persons. Few prophets would find it easy to go on year after year delivering a succession of silly prophecies destined to utter failure. But his dupes are the most greedily credulous of their class. Baxter gravely announced the Ascension of 144,000 Christians without dying on March 5, 1896; and the great Persecution from August 14, 1897, to January, 1901. The closing struggle at Armageddon was fixed for the early part of this present year. The Second Advent of Christ, whose first appearance is entirely legendary, is included in his prophetic time-table for April 11, 1901; probably a misprint for the 1st—a much more appropriate date. Some of Baxter's prophecies are said to have come true. It may be so, but I have been unable to trace them. Some must, if enough are made, or there would be nothing in the doctrine of chances.

But, on looking at my watch, I find it is twelve o'clock, "the witching time of night." Though nothing has been written here disrespectful to the mythological world, you cannot really tell. Gods are such peculiar things, though I do not believe in them a bit. Still it is late. What's that? Terror stabs me like a knife. Confound the cat! What on earth do they let her prowl about the house at night for? MIMNERMUS.

Theological Fallacies.

THE fundamental difference between the claims of Christianity and those of Secularism is that the former are based upon theory or speculation, while the latter rest upon practice and demonstration. Whatever advantages a theoretical system may possess, it lacks the value of teachings which are practical. In this age of active thought and persistent conduct something more than mere theory is required to regulate the one and to control the other. Of course, speculation may be, and frequently is, useful; but it must be regarded as speculation, and nothing more. The misfortune is that those, as a rule, who indulge in speculation make their theories do duty for demonstration. They not only invest their ideas with the importance of legitimate deductions from facts, but give to them the value of the facts themselves. When men talk about matters of which no one can

know anything, they may be harmless enough as dreamers; but when they endeavor to bend men of reason to their way of thinking, resorting sometimes even to persecution to promulgate their idle whims, then they are dangerous, and can no longer be regarded with impunity. Society has to suffer for their errors; and it is the duty of every member of that society to lift up his or her voice against either their wilful perversion of truth or their innocent misapprehension of facts. Such is too often the case with orthodox believers in the supernatural, and the popular advocates of speculative views on religion.

The thoughts here recorded have occurred to us while reading an account of a lecture recently delivered by Dr. Edward Caird, the Master of Balliol, and reported in the *Glasgow Herald* of March 19 last. It appears that this was one of a series of the Gifford Lectures which the Doctor has recently been giving in Glasgow. So far as we can understand, the object of the lecture was to compare the practical and the theoretical views of life. Unfortunately, throughout the discourse there is a vagueness of statement and a lack of clearness of expression that render it difficult to grasp the Doctor's meaning. The lecture affords another instance of an able man—which, undoubtedly, Dr. Caird is—allowing his mind to be obscured by the influence of theology. His style was more of a special pleader than that of an impartial and logical reasoner. His mode of treating his subject might have suited his ready-to-believe hearers, but it would fail to satisfy the unprejudiced searcher for truth. He employs terms in their old theological sense, without even attempting to supply their modern signification; he takes for granted that which he should have sought to prove; and, when he utters truths, he abstains from indicating their logical application to the subject under consideration. It is to be regretted that this habit of trying to serve two masters is too prevalent among the leading lights of the Church. The result is that old errors are perpetuated, and the recognition of new truths is delayed.

Referring to "those who exalt the practical above the theoretical life, and who seek to connect religion with the former rather than with the latter," the Doctor says:—

"This was the extreme which was most favored in recent speculations on the nature of religion, for modern philosophy, especially since Kant, had tended to conceive the objective world as a thoroughgoing system of necessity—a system of objects acting and reacting externally upon each other according to fixed laws which are altogether independent of our will and our desires. Of this system we, as natural beings, are parts; but there is nothing in it or in our relations to it which can suggest any thought of an ideal presence, or of a principle of unity which is deeper than that involved in the action of material things upon each other. If we have any right to believe in such a principle, it must, according to this view, be solely in virtue of some impulse or movement of will in ourselves, some need in our souls, which points to an end above nature."

Now, the above may pass current when uttered in a Methodist pulpit; but it is sadly out of place on the platform, where truths are supposed to be fully and philosophically stated. It is not a fact that "recent speculations" favor the practical view of religion. True, a few writers who expound what is termed natural religion have endeavored to impart to it a practical character, but the leading exponents of the Christian religion still rely upon the theories of the New Testament as the groundwork of their faith. Only the other day, according to the *Christian World*, Dr. Horton said that "he would have no attraction in his church unless it were the austere and awful attraction of Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary." What Dr. Caird should have told his hearers is that all consistent Christians are compelled to adhere to the theoretical; but that the intelligent portions of the religious community are rapidly giving up the traditional belief, with its vague conjectures, and, in its place, accepting as their guide in life the practical teachings of Secular philosophy.

Of course, modern philosophy does "conceive the objective world as a thoroughgoing system of necessity," acting "according to fixed laws." Having regard to facts, what other conception can be

formed of it? If the Doctor believed this to be true, why did he not plainly say so; and if he deemed it erroneous, should he not have given some proof that it was so? It would be interesting to know what principle there is "deeper than that involved in the action of material things upon each other." Why this vague use of phrases in a lecture that ought to have been devoted to a logical exposition of admitted facts? The Doctor speaks of "an end above nature." Surely here was an opportunity to differentiate between the known natural and the supposed supernatural. What is there "above" nature, which, as Mill defined it, is everything that exists, or that can possibly come into existence in the hereafter—that is, all the possibilities of existence, whether past, present, or future? If it is asked on what ground we include in this definition that which to-day does not exist, but may come into existence hereafter, we reply: Because that which will be must be, potentially at least, even now. No new entity can come into being; all that can occur is the commencement of some new form of existence, which has ever had a being potentially. No new force can appear; some new form of force may. But, then, that, when it comes, will be as much a part of nature as the rest—is indeed even now a part of nature, since it is latent somewhere in the universe. Nature, in a word, is everything, besides which, to us, there is and can be nothing.

The fact is, we cannot get above, beyond, or outside of nature even in thought. The most extravagant flights of imagination that we find, either in poetry or in the products of religious ecstasy, are always shaped in natural moulds, either as a whole or, what is more general, in their parts. No image formed in the human mind can possibly be other than natural, if not in its entirety, at least in the component parts of which it is made up. If there be a sphere where the alleged supernatural plays a part and exercises any control, it must clearly be in some remote region, of which we have, and can have, no positive knowledge; and the forces in operation must be other than those with which we are conversant upon this earth. Science cannot recognise the so-called supernatural, because she has no instruments which she can bring to bear upon, and no means at her disposal for, its investigation. She leaves to the theologian all useless speculations regarding such a region, contenting herself with reminding him that he is, in all such discussions, travelling outside the domain of facts into a province which should be left to poets and dreamers, and which belongs solely to the imagination. All law is, and must be, natural law, from a scientific standpoint, because we can have access to nature, and to nature only. It is impossible to get beyond her domain, even in imagination.

Dr. Caird states, without giving the slightest proof, that "we can find in our moral consciousness sufficient warrant for the belief in a spiritual or divine Being who is the ultimate principle of all reality." Words should represent ideas, but to use words which have no ideas to correspond to them is to play fast and loose with language. Now, what idea exists of "a spiritual or divine Being"? And even if such an idea did obtain, in what way would it be associated with moral consciousness? The Doctor says, "Belief is legitimately based on the will to believe." But does he not know that the will to believe is conditioned? As belief is the result of environment, so will depend upon the nature of that environment. The notion that a man can "believe at will" is one of the many orthodox errors which no impartial thinker should share. The Doctor further says: "It is faith that goes with the moral consciousness which alone can give insight into final causes." This is pure unadulterated theological nonsense, and it shows how easily the human mind can be perverted by religious teachings. We ask what faith can give an "insight into final causes"? Faith is good in its proper place, though it must be confined within the sphere of knowledge; but what is known of "final causes"? We answer, Nothing at all. As the Duke of Argyle observes in his *Reign of Law*: "We cannot reach final causes any more than final purposes; for every cause which we can detect there is another cause which lies behind, and for every purpose which we can see there are other purposes which lie beyond." In one part of his lecture Dr. Caird seems to share this view,

for he refers to Aristotle as being "entangled in the illusive search for final causes."

The Doctor says: "We cannot take nature any longer as a dead thing moved by external necessity." Just so. Why, then, does he allege that "God is the efficient and final cause of the universe, and that thought is not a natural action, but the inspiration of the Almighty"? Here we have the usual theological lack of consistency; for, if nature is not "moved by external necessity," where does the function of "God Almighty" come in? Is this supposed Being a part of nature? If so, the belief in Christian Theism must give way to that of Pantheism. There are many other fallacies in Dr. Caird's lecture which we should like to deal with, but our space is limited. Enough, however, has been said to show the necessity of well considering what are put forth as verities even by some of the principal Christian exponents. They are too prone to trust to assertion rather than proof, and to assumption rather than demonstration. Thus the intellectual deceptions of Christianity are handed down from generation to generation.

CHARLES WATTS.

A Census of Heaven.

SCENE: A bedroom in the classic regions of Camberwell Gate. EXHAUSTED ENUMERATOR asleep and dreaming. He twists and twitches, and occasionally groans. He is calling at hundreds of houses in as many seconds, and collecting blue schedules by the bushel. Then his dreams take a new turn.

EXHAUSTED ENUMERATOR (with a start): Good God! Can it really be? How in the name of everything did it come about? Got to do a part of the census of heaven! Well, that wins it. No, it's nonsense, of course. Quite a mistake. Besides, I've had enough of census work for a life-time. No more, thank you.

[Turns his head on one side, but continues dreaming.]

Seems to be all right, though. (Reflectively) Must have volunteered for it and forgotten all about it. Couldn't have got this printed authority and special instructions unless I had applied for the work. It is not what I should like, but I suppose I must take it on. Well, anyhow, it can't be much worse than the task I've just been engaged on. Going up and down the golden streets, and in and out of heavenly mansions, ought to be a trifle better than panting from door to door and knocking 'em for their sheets in the Old Kent-road.

[Thinks out the possibilities.]

By Jove! what an inspiration! Suppose, when I get to work in heaven, I insist on stopping there. They can't turn me out, surely? I can send my returns in somehow. Upon my word, this is a veritable Jacob's Ladder; and to think that at first I was about to refuse it. But still I can't quite make it out. Heaven wasn't included in the Act. What an area it is to cover! But I suppose it's all right. All, apparently, that I have to do is to go up there and start work.

[Without surprise, he finds himself lifted by an agreeable afflatus from Camberwell Gate to the Gate of Heaven.]

PETER (gruffly): Who sent you up here?

ENUMERATOR (with dignity): I am a representative of the Local Government Board.

PETER: Don't know it.

ENUMERATOR: Well, then, I am a representative of the Government of his Majesty the King of England.

PETER: Oh, that's the new 'un. I've heard of him. I suppose you must come in, though really I don't know what heaven is coming to.

[Peter sighs; afterwards swears. Enumerator is admitted, and begins to examine his instructions.]

ENUMERATOR (rather puzzled): Now, it's a curious thing I never thought of looking at these before. I don't understand them now I've read them. But anyhow I'm up here to collect schedules. And I'm going for them wherever I can find 'em. Nothing will stop me. They'll have to be forthcoming whether they have been delivered or not, or are filled up or blank. I've got to go through with this job, and go through with it I will. Now, I wonder where I'll start.

[Sits on a cloud, and has a big think.]

Really this is an awfully large shop when you come to look around. Very difficult to deal with, especially when you can't make out where you're expected to begin. Of course, there must be many other enumerators engaged; but if there are millions of them, it would, I should think, take each one billions of years to cover his district. I can see now that I have my work cut out. They'll have to make me almost immortal in order that I may do it. I never quite realised that before. But where shall I begin? I'd better not go straight off to the great central establishment, which I shall be able to recognise from my remembrance of the Book of Revelation. It might be dangerous. Wonder how they'll fill up the form there—I mean the ruling trio, with the virgin mother. "Head of Family" is all right—we know who that is. In regard to his "Condition as to Marriage," well, that can be put down, to begin with, as "Single"; but, then, where does the family come in legitimately? "Married" wouldn't do, because where's the wife? "Sex"; well, that is male. "Age Last Birthday." That's a poser, because there is no birthday to count from. "Profession or Occupation"—that could be filled in; and "On Own Account" goes without saying. But it's when you come to the lines for the other members—"Son," and so on—that I can see how difficulties would arise. The names would have to be written on the top of each other three times over, bracketed, and then divided; and, after all, it wouldn't be right. (Gasping) Oh, dear! the relationship is quite too mixed for any census schedule that ever could be invented. I give it up. I think I'll find out King David for a start.

[Inquires the way to David's palace, which he finds, and enters.]

DAVID: Well, what do you want?

ENUMERATOR: Census paper, please.

DAVID: Census paper! What do you mean? Is this a piece of impertinence? Have you come here to "chip" me over my numbering of the people? Get out this instant, unless you want to go tobogganning to hell.

ENUMERATOR: I must remind you that "any person who refuses to give information is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five pounds."

DAVID (in a towering rage): What ho, there! Guards, throw this varlet out. Coming here with his blooming hank, indeed.

[Enumerator is instantly cast forth, and sits on the golden pavement feeling for bruises and broken limbs.]

ENUMERATOR (ruefully recovering himself): This is a bad beginning. That chap David is a fair takedown and no mistake. I'll fill up a form for him and enter him in column 10 as "Lunatic." I think I'll try Moses now. You never know your luck.

[Finds out Moses, and makes application for the schedule.]

MOSES: Census schedule! Well, really this passes my comprehension. There were several numberings of the children of Israel in the wilderness, but of the numbering you speak of I know nothing. I would fill up the schedule if—

ENUMERATOR (briskly): Oh, if you can't write, I'll do it for you. There is a regulation which states: "The occupier, if unable to write in the particulars himself, may allow another person to do so."

MOSES (indignantly): Can't write! What impudence! Didn't I write the Pentateuch?

ENUMERATOR (bristling up): No; there are crowds of folks on earth who don't believe you wrote a line of it.

MOSES: Dear me, this is too much. Here, Joshua, come and throw this man out. Pitch him into the bottomless pit.

[Enumerator thrown out, and down a pit, where he falls and falls and keeps on falling until he—suddenly awakes in bed, trembling and perspiring.]

ENUMERATOR (rubbing his eyes): Well, well. What a nightmare! (After a pause) Having, as I believe, now collected my senses, the census may collect itself as far as I am concerned if I live to be as old as Methusaleh—ah, Methusaleh, see column 5, "Age last Birthday," and please state correctly.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Acid Drops.

THE other day the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's went through the absurd formality of "electing" a Bishop who had already been elected by the King. Everyone knew that the person elected would be Dr. Winnington-Ingram. Still, the verger called upon the Chapter to proceed in the election, "if they thought fit." As if they had any choice! Still, we learn from the *News* that prayers are sometimes offered for the Divine guidance of the Chapter on these occasions. That looks very much like attempting to fool the Almighty.

Dr. Winnington-Ingram hurries away after Easter for a fortnight's holiday. Though he is practically the Bishop of London, he is still a disappointed man. He has found it impossible to let Fulham Palace and the Bishop's House in St. James's Square. In the innocence of his heart, he thought that that could be managed. Possibly it could if he were to make a *real* effort in that direction. Certainly it is not impossible in regard to the dismal show in St. James's Square. But all that he has made at present is a mere pretence. And why? Because he knows nothing can come of it, and it is well to make the transition from the East End to a stipend of £10,000 a year and two imposing abodes with some kind regard to the "unities."

He finds it absolutely necessary to have a carriage and pair. Poor man! But he says, also with the prescience that no one would ask him, that he would take anyone of his East friends up who asked him for a lift. That is a very cheap offer, which he knows will be regulated by his coachman, who will probably have strict orders to drive on.

Why on earth these silly shams? They suggest that he has been waiting and working for what he has got, and the natural inquiry is, Why doesn't he take it when he has it without hypocritical fuss? One wouldn't say anything about it, because seasoned observers are accustomed to these clerical false pretences. But all these interesting items, with the usual exaggeration, have been cabled to the States. The New York papers have contained accounts of all these pretences of the new Bishop to continue his association with costers and other East-enders. Over there they don't know how false these statements are, and they really imagine that he is not only going to let his two palatial abodes, but give his £10,000 a year to his faithful followers in Victoria Park.

On the supposition that God Almighty is not aware of what is going on in the streets of Dumfries on a Sunday evening, the Rev. W. Bell undertakes a description, which surely must be addressed to the Deity, because the members of the Loreburn United Free Church to whom he spoke know as much about the matter as he does. It is all on account of the desecration of the Lord's Day, the Lord apparently being quite unable to take care of his own day without the assistance of the Loreburn United Free Church. And what is the trouble? Rev. W. Bell said there has been a serious decline in Sabbath observance since he was a boy. Well, no doubt there have been many changes since he was a boy, though old fogies—and we imagine Rev. Bell to be one, by his talk—always think the old times were the best.

But this is the dreadful state of Dumfries on Sunday night—the streets are crowded, not by those who are going to church, but by those who are simply promenading. They "are not going to church"—that is where the iron enters the soul of the Rev. Bell. He says he was told that "up and down High-street young men and women were going for hours together, and never getting past one of the ends. Even in wet weather he had seen groups standing at the Fountain, where there was a gust coming round the corner. He asked if the advance which had been going on all through the past century was to be confined to a material, and not a moral, advance."

No, Mr. Bell; there is no advance at all, except up and down High-street. Dumfries is going to the dogs when young men and women will go courting near the Fountain, notwithstanding the rude gusts that sweep round the corner. No doubt they should be listening to your eloquent periods from the pulpit. But then, perhaps, they are just as well away, because you seem to be a jealous sort of bigot, with probably well-founded doubts as to your own powers of attraction. The gusts round the Fountain are evidently preferred to your windy discourses; so, Rev. Bell, do try to rest in some sort of dignified peace, especially as you can't prevent what you complain about.

After some comments, such as we have already made in regard to the *Encyclopædic Biblica* and Professor George Adam Smith's *Old Testament and Preaching*, and the dreadfully chaotic state in which both sections of the Bible are left by these latest of critics, the *Edinburgh Evening News* says: "Complaint is made that the supply of divinity students is falling off. That is, so far, satisfactory. It is something to

know that religious young men have some hesitation in following the examples of seasoned hypocrites who are making the clerical calling synonymous with intellectual humbug and dishonesty. One thing earnest-minded young men should do. They should seek to enter professions where they can earn their living without making their intellectual life one huge lie. Let young men keep themselves unspotted from the Church."

The Rev. H. Handley, in his work on *The Fatal Opulence of Bishops*, writes favorably of the example in the way of plain living set by the late Bishop of Manchester. The *Church Times* takes occasion to dissent from that estimate. It says: "In our judgment, the author's exaltation of Dr. Fraser is rather overdone. Dr. Fraser got rid of his 'palace,' and lived in a modest private house; he rode in trams and carried his own bag, but our admiration of this simplicity is marred by the fact, which Mr. Handley honestly deplors, that its effect and purpose, in part at least, was the saving and putting by of one-third of the official income of the see."

The *Church Times* adds that it would prefer opulence to this particular kind of parsimony. The endowments of the Church, it observes, were "not designed for the accumulation of private fortunes." So that even this "model" bishop was far from perfection, and his plainness of living enabled him to accumulate quite enough to endanger his eternal salvation.

The Rev. Dr. Povah, a well-known City rector, has died worth £26,758—a fairly respectable sum for a believer in "Blessed are the poor."

Providence has been at work again. A tornado swept through the state of Alabama, causing hundreds of deaths and great destruction of property. In one district a Methodist church was swept away. A large slice of a mountain in Modena has become detached, and is falling. A village, with its church, has already been overwhelmed.

The Abbé Renard, of Brussels, has renounced Roman Catholicism for Freethought. In an interview given to a representative of the *Petit Bleu*, he ascribes his conversion to the direct and indirect teachings of Sir Charles Lyell, Darwin, and Herbert Spencer.

A north-country clergyman advertises for a footman, who must be able to play the organ in church. We shall expect next to read of a demand for a handyman to milk the cows and read the lessons; need not be a Greek scholar, but lawn tennis player preferred.—*The Onlooker*.

Recently the pastor of the Welsh Calvinistic church at Bwlch was mulcted in £100 damages in a breach of promise case. The circumstances detailed at the hearing were anything but creditable to the man of grace. He is said to have induced the lady to make a bogus repudiation of her Roman Catholicism in order to bamboozle his congregation. Afterwards he jilted her when he found she hadn't so much money as he supposed. The members of his church have now, however, passed a vote of confidence in him "as a man and a minister of the Gospel." The Breconshire monthly meeting have passed a similar resolution. It is possible, of course, that he has been a much-maligned saint, but the jury did not think so. Nor do we.

A circuit steward, Mr. Robert Carmichael, suddenly fell to the ground at the end of the Wesleyan quarterly meeting at Blackburn. He died within a few minutes. He might have been an official of a Secular Society, and died from a similar cause—heart failure—at the end of an "infidel" lecture. Then we should have heard of the Almighty making "an awful example." As it is, the incident is dismissed with the pious remark: "In the midst of life we are in death."

The new Mohammedan Mahdi or Prophet of Uganda, on being declared an impostor by the chiefs, became indignant, and declared that he would not remain on earth. He ascended a small eminence outside the King's compound—so says the report—knelt down and called upon the name of Mahomet, and instantly afterwards expired.

Says the *Methodist Times*: "The fact is, there is no escape from the necessity of using our brains in the study of the Bible." Quite true; and the *M. T.* will do well to keep on enforcing that lesson. It offers the above striking remark in the course of a leading article on the Bible, in which the following passage occurs: "There is nothing more painful in the condition of contemporary Protestantism than the persistent refusal of the Bible Society to substitute the Revised Version for the so-called Authorised Version of the English Bible. We have no right to denounce the extent to which Roman Catholics sacrifice truth to tradition and superstition so long as we ourselves are guilty of that offence in relation to the Word of God itself. It is to be feared we shall yet have to pay heavy penalties for the way in which we have persisted in retaining the Old Version both in our pulpits and in our Sunday-schools."

Some correspondence has recently appeared in a contemporary on the subject of Christian Science. One of the correspondents, who describes himself as a "hygienist," offers "a substantial donation to any hospital or Christian Science institution in London if, through the recognised medium of prayer, any duly-constituted champion of this strange belief can cure three out of twelve cases of physical infirmity which shall be specified by an impartial and qualified authority. At the same time, I will guarantee myself personally to afterwards effect cures in all the same twelve cases." That seems to be a fair challenge as between specialists; but what about the poor patients who are thus to be experimented upon? Perhaps the prayers of the Christian Scientists may leave the patients too far gone for the hygienist to operate when his turn arrives.

Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity is overrun by religious cranks. Near the Church of the Ascension is a convent, whose inmates never come out once beyond its sacred portals. Their food is put through a hole in the wall by outside devotees, and when an inmate dies she is buried within the walls by her sisters. All this is done in the name of the meek and lowly Jesus, who "went about doing good." At a given hour in the afternoon an aged lady may be seen wending her way to a spot on the hillside, where she builds a fire, makes a cup of tea, and waits for the Lord's return till the evening shadows gather. She believes the Lord will return soon, will descend at that spot, and she seeks the honor of having ready for him a cup of tea.

"Peter Lombard," in the *Church Times*, quotes a clerical advertisement which has come under his notice: "Lost. By the Rev. —, a sermon preached at — last Sunday, on —. Of no possible use to anyone but the owner."

Many serious admissions now appear from time to time in the Christian press. Take, for example, the following which appears in the front-page article of the *British Weekly*: "We know that in the judgment of many of the acutest minds the glory of Christianity has departed. We know that by many who still call themselves Christians the supernatural elements of the faith are abandoned. They think they can reserve the ethical element, that they can keep the faith in rigid honor and human pity and moral purity while they look upon the mysteries of the Gospel with scornful eyes, while the distaste for miracle and vision increases, while the strong convictions of old time die out."

But, according to the *British Weekly*, there are others "who are more logical, and who see that this cannot be, that it is only in Christ's eternal nature that these things can live and grow, and we shall soon hear far more of the revolt against Christian morality. We shall be told that the Greek life was happier than our life, and from the merely earthly point of view it will be hard to deny it." Yes, the prediction of the *B. W.* seems pretty sure to be fulfilled. There will be far more heard of the revolt against Christian morality. Christ's "eternal nature" and Christ's moral teaching may be expected to be more than ever the subject of successful attack.

The official Year Book of the Church of England is admitted by the *Church Times* to be a "cheerless summary." With respect to ordinations for the ministry in the eighties the figures ranged about 750; in 1898 they fell to 638, and last year they reached only 650. In 1896 the number of confirmations was 228,348, but in 1900 the figures had fallen to 195,569. There is also a decline in the number of Sunday scholars, which is ascribed to the "growing disregard for Sunday."

The *Methodist Times*, commenting on the last-named diminution, says that the incessant attempts to secularise the Lord's Day are already producing "dismal results." Well, the results, even if they include a falling off in Sunday-school attendance, can hardly be so "dismal" as Sunday observance continued on the stupid old lines.

"Who is Mr. Greenhough?" asked the *Record* the other week, in commenting on the Free Church Conference at Cardiff. It seemed to be aware that he occupied the position of President at the Conference; also that there was a great deal of invective in his address. But it said: "We do not recognise the name of the speaker as at all familiar." Such an admission of ignorance has been too much for the *Christian World* and the *British Weekly*, both of whom, in their last issues, have hastened to inform the *Record* who Mr. Greenhough is, and also to comment on the extraordinary ignorance displayed by the Church print. Perhaps a great many people, not happening to move in Nonconformist circles, may have shared this want of acquaintance with the great Free Church light. It seems, whether we have been aware of it or not, that he is quite a person of importance. He is a Baptist minister at Leicester, and some years ago he was elected President of the Baptist Union.

Now that we know for a surety who Mr. Greenhough is, it

may be worth while noticing one or two of his utterances at the Conference referred to. Amongst other general statements of equal truth, he said: "We are witnessing an unmistakable deepening of religious feeling and belief in nearly all classes of the community." Are we, indeed! It would not appear so from the lamentations which are published from time to time in the Christian press. The Anglican Church admits a falling off in the numbers of its ministry and of its communicants. And, in regard to dissent, what about the failure of the great Simultaneous Mission which was to "deepen religious feeling and belief in all classes of the community," and which is admitted not to have had any appreciable effect on outsiders?

"Destructive criticism," Mr. Greenhough says, "has fallen from a commanding place to a more modest background." And this in the face of the alarm created by Dr. George Adam Smith's work on *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* and the much-discussed volume of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, not to mention a number of other recent works published by professing Christians and avowed Free-thinkers. If this very confident speaker would read the journals published in the interests of his own faith, he would find ample recognition of the fact that destructive criticism, so far from falling into the background, is advancing in such a way as to cause grave apprehension in the Christian camp.

Then Mr. Greenhough attempts some very feeble chaff at the expense of Agnostics, whom he speaks of as declaring "Behold we know not anything." Of course, they declare nothing of the kind. They know not God, as the *Record* knows not Mr. Greenhough; but that does not imply in either case universal or very culpable ignorance.

"There is much that is distinctly incongruous in our national observance of Good Friday." Thus commences a leading article in the *Rock*, which may or may not have been inspired by Mr. Foote's article in last week's *Freethinker* published several days before the *Rock*. There is a striking similarity in some of the observations that follow. The *Rock* points out that those who look to the cross of Jesus as their only hope should regard the anniversary of his death as a peculiarly sacred season. Yet, it says, "there are a large number of persons who make it a time for pleasure excursions, and even convivial excess."

Several "unseemly and objectionable practices on the sacred day" are mentioned by the *Rock* which do not seem to be so very objectionable after all. One is that in some rural districts, where the farmers give Good Friday as a holiday, most of their laborers devote it to planting potatoes in their gardens or allotments. Another practice the *Rock* complains of is that Good Friday is selected by the owners and occupiers of chambers and offices in the City of London as a convenient day for cleaning, whitewashing, and painting the interiors of their premises. Upon this subject a memorial has been drawn up by the Archdeacon of London and a number of clergy who say that the caretakers, being for the most part resident parishioners, are prevented from attending their parish church on that day. Naturally the clergy desire to secure congregations of something like respectable dimensions on this day at least. They are not for the most part thus favored on ordinary days in the year. But are they not counting a little too much on the pious devotion of the caretakers? Are not the latter very likely, if released, to betake themselves to the holiday pleasures of the bulk of working people?

The *Rock* says that in some rural districts the laborers are on Good Friday "paid their usual wages on condition of attending the morning service. The result is a large gathering of outsiders and of Nonconformists, who reluctantly consent to be present in church for the sake of the liberty and rest enjoyed afterwards. We even knew of a squire, who was also a churchwarden, who always insisted upon making a collection on the occasion for church expenses. This is, of course, a measure to which independent Englishmen may reasonably object."

Church bells, says the *Pall Mall Gazette*, had their uses before cheap American clocks were purchasable by the poorest household. Nowadays they are something of a nuisance even to the most religiously minded.

Edward Bation, who was formerly archdeacon in Rangoon, and who has been several times convicted for various kinds of frauds, has now been sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment for gross perjury. Members of the Order of St. Paul, taking pity on his destitute condition, had relieved him, and he rewarded them by making a baseless accusation against one of the brothers. He appeared in the dock in clerical attire, with a large cross, a medal, and a blue ribbon.

A former minister of the Zion Congregational Chapel, Dorking—by name Horace Leverage Baker—has been

summoned for the maintenance of his wife, whom he had deserted to live with a girl by whom he has two children.

At South Shields, the other day, a member of a Congregational chapel walked up into the pulpit, spread a Sunday newspaper over the Bible, and proceeded to smoke a cigar. He was forcibly ejected; but the *Umpire* observes that there are many to whom the smell of tobacco is less offensive than the smell of incense. And it thinks there could be no valid objection to a tobacco service being held in any building which is used for an entirely intellectual religion, as contrasted with one where a mystical or sacramental doctrine is preached.

The Darlington magistrates have dealt with a fourth series of cases of Sunday trading under the Act of Charles II. Fourteen defendants were each ordered to pay five shillings and costs. The magistrates, having taken advice of counsel, now believe that they have power to impose costs. It would be a good thing if traders who are affected would combine, and try the question whether this imposition can be legally made. The chances are that the Darlington Dogberries are quite wrong.

Rev. William Wilson, who has been denouncing the rational use of Sunday in the way common to men of his class, has come in for some unmerciful chaffing from a writer in the *Sunday Chronicle*. "What a miserable life," the writer exclaims, "he must lead! He believes that we are on the down-grade, rushing headlong to wickedness and disaster, and he knows that it all comes because we allow ourselves a little relaxation on the Sabbath. He sees people all around him passing his church and going away into the country on bicycles, or trains, wandering in the parks, listening to bands, reading disgraceful Sunday papers, and seeking pleasure which they deem rational, but he knows to be degrading and the beginning of damnation. All this must take the joy out of his life effectually, and yet I am sure he did thoroughly enjoy the construction of those sonorous periods, and I fancy he was filled with pride as he reflected how well he had denounced the thing. It is a pity that he forgot to wed all those majestic words to a small quantity of reason."

In terms of fraternal feeling the Kaiser alluded the other day to his "mighty ally"—"the eternal God in heaven." With God and the Kaiser or the Kaiser and God thus allied, the Fatherland may, as the Emperor said, be "inspired with the certainty that they would always be victors."

How ready are the men of God to turn every possible occasion to their own advantage in the way of roping in the shekels! For instance, it was suggested in several religious journals that the census afforded a good opportunity for many people to express their thankfulness to God for having been preserved for another ten years. And, of course, the way to express thankfulness to God was by handing over a little cash to the ministers of God. The *Rock* pointed out that the numberings of the Israelites were connected with acts of atonement for sin. An offering of half a shekel was required of every man of above twenty years of age as "a ransom for his soul (or life) to the Lord." Then, it asked, may it not have been the neglect of this duty as well as presumptuous pride that rendered David's numbering of the people such a grave offence. This, of course, naturally led up to the suggestion that the people of this Christian nation, while filling up the census schedules, should bethink themselves of making some special "free-will offerings" for the service of Almighty God.

Rev. Dr. Tomkins, Camden, N. J., prescribed kisses for the sick Miss Kate McCullough. She took the medicine. Now she is suing him for four thousand dollars that she loaned him.—*Blue Grass Blade*.

Joseph Keith, sentenced to be hanged at Princetown, Indiana, for the murder of Nora Keifer, is "a pillar in the Methodist Church."

"S. J." writes to us as follows under date of March 26: "Miss Lillian Dine, of New Cross, who was shot by her lover, John Porter, a few days ago, was buried to-day in Deptford Cemetery—the officiating minister reading over her body the prescribed words: 'Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take unto himself the soul of our dear sister here departed,' etc. Can this really mean that Almighty God approved of the deed, because, if he did so, he was accessory to the fact? The same words were doubtless said over the body of her assassin—and this would seem to imply that he also approves of disappointed lovers thus disposing of their sweethearts."

Bollington Parish Magazine contains the following answer to "an unknown correspondent": "Some anonymous friend has been kind enough to send the vicar some copies of a paper, which, we presume, represents his (the sender's) own free-thinking tendencies. The sender possibly is desirous that the vicar should see both sides of the question in the

matter of Christianity. He writes to state that he read the first copy in the hope of seeing this 'other side of the question,' but found the paper so low-toned, vulgar, and blasphemous that he has felt compelled to burn the subsequent numbers *unread*. While thanking the sender for his interest, he hopes he will save himself the trouble of forwarding any further copies of the paper. Should the writer wish to instruct the vicar, he will receive a hearty welcome if he will be good enough to make an appointment. These things should be done in the open, and not anonymously in the dark. It rather looks as though the sender was ashamed of himself."

What humbug is all this? How on earth can the value of a public journal be affected because you don't know the name and address of the person who sent it you? And why should the vicar be willing to receive instruction from the sender, but not from the paper? Does he imagine that the sender is likely to put the Freethought case more effectively than it is put by the writers in the *Freethinker*?—for we have reason to believe that this is the paper he alludes to. Perhaps he rather fancies that he might stand a better chance of answering the local "infidel," though he would probably find that a much tougher job than he anticipated. As to the *Freethinker* being "low-toned, vulgar, and blasphemous," we have to say that we plead guilty to the blasphemy, and that a parson's opinion on the rest of the charge is apt to be a prejudiced one. We are certainly not as vulgar as Jesus was when he railed at his religious rivals in Jerusalem. We do not call our opponents "vipers," "whited sepulchres," and "children of hell." We leave such flowers of speech to the high-toned religionist.

Rev. Charles Sheldon—the Yankee gentleman who knows all about what Jesus would do—has lately been discussing the fateful question, "Is a Christian theatre possible?" He inclines to vote in the affirmative, but hesitates to commit himself. Yet he need not be so scrupulous. There are plenty of Christian theatres already—only they are called churches. At St. Peter's, in Rome, magnificent performances are given. Catholic services are all more or less theatrical entertainments. Our own High Church party is trying to imitate this example. Even the services of the rather drab Mr. Sheldon are somewhat beyond the primitive simplicity. Has he not read chapters of his novels from the pulpit instead of preaching sermons?

Even in the stricter meaning of the word we do not see why there should not be a Christian theatre. There does not seem to be any particular reason why the Passion Play, which is acted periodically at Oberammergau, should not be produced on the boards in London and New York. The scene of the Crucifixion would be sure to catch on; indeed, it would beat the torture scene of Mr. Wilson Barrett's *Sign of the Cross* hollow. For a bit of farce or pantomime, the manager of a Christian theatre could resort to the story of the temptation of Jesus. The dramatisation of this episode in the "Savior's" career ought to be excruciatingly funny. Satan tempts Jesus knowing he cannot succeed, and knowing that Jesus knows he cannot succeed. The top of the pinnacle business, under a well-managed stage moon, ought to be very fetching; and the looking round the globe from the top of a hill should bring down the house—with laughter.

The Old Testament would furnish a large supply of catching pieces for the Christian theatre. Adam and Eve in the garden before the Fall—dressed for the part—would throw the Alhambra ballet into the shade. Old Nick tempting Eve—or the Serpent and Apple comedy—would be a capital thing for school-treats at Christmas time. Elijah going to glory in a fiery chariot would lick a transformation scene, and Elisha raving at the boys who make remarks about his need of Tatcho would be a first-rate substitute for the clown and pantaloons. For tragedy there is the Flood scene and wholesale drowning. The dead would float about in shoals. It would be a splendid triumph of realism. Altogether, we should like to see the Christian theatre running. The sooner the better, Mr. Sheldon, the sooner the better.

The *Dundee Courier* took a census of church attendance in the city on Sunday morning. And this is the result. In about ninety churches there were 33,470 persons, out of a population of 170,000. This is 18.6 per cent. The average collection per church was £1 14s. 3d., and the average contribution per worshipper 2½d. Christianity in Dundee is evidently a twopenny-halfpenny affair.

Still another reverend gentleman is engaged in writing a Life of Christ. This time it is the Rev. W. J. Dawson, of Highbury, and the publisher is to be Mr. Grant Richards. It is reported that Mr. Dawson is at present visiting the Holy Land; perhaps on the principle of seeing "the place where it happened"—like the gentleman who was certain that the Flood story was true because he had seen Mount Ararat with his own eyes.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 7, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.: at 7.30, Debate with the Rev. J. B. Coles on "Evolution and Religion."

April 14, Camberwell; 21, Birmingham; 28, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—April 21, New Brompton; 23, Public Debate with the Rev. Henry Alcock at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, W.; 28, Camberwell. May 5, Glasgow; 12 and 19, Sheffield.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. ELCOAT.—Pleased to hear that you found the parcel of literature so useful for distribution; also that you intend to take up two more Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company. If all the Shareholders would take up fresh Shares in proportion, the success of the Company might be regarded as positively assured.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings. We are very sorry to hear that Mr. Percy Ward just failed to gain a seat on the Board of Guardians. To be so near success, and yet to miss it, is exasperating; unless a man is of a particularly cheerful temper and says, "Well, I guess I'm bound to win next time."

T. W. FREEMAN.—We saw the newspaper report of the Allinson case, but we have not seen the pamphlet for which he was prosecuted. Calling it "obscene" amounts to very little. That is the technical term always used in such prosecutions. The really serious feature of the case is that Dr. Allinson admitted through his counsel that the pamphlet was obscene. He may, of course, reply that he only made this admission technically, in order to satisfy the court and avoid a costly trial with a possible fine or imprisonment. Still, his action was not very heroic. He should write and publish nothing which he is not prepared to defend, and he should defend what he writes and publishes. Besides the unedifying spectacle of a reformer running away, there is the imputation of "obscenity," though we do not believe that Dr. Allinson would pen anything of that character, if judged by the standard of what is permissible when a medical man is addressing the reader on questions of hygiene. The upshot, we suppose, is this—that Dr. Allinson is not built for a martyr.

J. GOULD (Glasgow).—Pleased to hear from you as a recent convert. We agree with you that the Roman Catholic Church is the one real danger. With regard to making the *Freethinker* a penny, getting central newsagents in each town to sell it and show bills, and giving them an extra profit as an inducement—we have to say that we should be very happy to carry out this extensive program if we had the means, but the Freethought millionaire hasn't come along yet.

X.—The editor of the *Catholic* is a nice gentleman. The only evidence he has that the late Colonel Ingersoll spent his life in "managing swindling whisky rings" is the fact that an American minister named Hastings said so while Ingersoll was living, and the pamphlet in which he said it is "now in its second million." We should hardly think it would occur to anyone but a Christian that repeating a lie a million times made it true; but we suppose that frame of mind is natural to those who have been brought up to believe in the Bible, and who boast so much of its being a very old book with a very extensive circulation.

MR. TOOPE complains of the paragraph in our "Acid Drops" of March 24 (p. 184), in which it was stated that he had been summoning the Rev. H. Alcock for the price of some tickets supplied for a public discussion that never took place. Mr. Toope says that the discussion *did* take place. Well, we merely copied the newspaper reports of the action on this point; and Mr. Toope should deal with the daily journals before addressing us. However, we should be sorry to do him (or any man) an injustice; so we give publicity to his correction, and express regret at having apparently been misled. For the rest, our criticism of the case stands; we have not a word to withdraw. Our sympathy for this once is all on the side of the clergyman.

S. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. K. LEWIS.—We note that you much enjoy the literary articles by Mimmermus. So do many other readers.

J. E. STANNARD.—Your newsagent should press for a supply of the pamphlet you mention. We can hardly believe that the firm of John Heywood would deliberately stand between the Freethought Publishing Company and its customers all over that district. Of course you can always obtain pamphlets or books direct (by post) from our office.

S. COLEMAN.—See paragraph.

G. CROOKSON.—The only difficulty is as to a date. Mr. Foote is trying to arrange an early one. He is pleased to learn that the young recruits in and about Barnsley are so anxious to hear him.

A. ADDY.—Mr. Foote is writing you as to a date.

MRS. J. LAMB, newsagent for the *Freethinker* at South Shields, has removed to 126 Eldon-street.

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Sydney Bulletin—Two Worlds—Freidenker—People's Newspaper (Queensland)—Edinburgh Evening News—Public Opinion (New York)—Green Grass Blade—Progressive Thinker (Chicago)—Torch of Reason—Crescent—New Century (California)—Boston Investigator—Carlisle Journal—Dumfries and Galloway Standard—Free Society (Chicago)—Glasgow Herald—The Truthseeker (New York)—Secular Thought—Liberator.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

THERE was a still larger audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Christ's Descent into Hell." Not the least interested auditors were several bright-looking young orientals who occupied front seats, one of whom asked a question after the lecture, prefacing it with the statement that he did not believe in Christianity, nor even in God. We understand that these gentlemen are studying at the London University, and we like to think of them as living links between the reason and humanity of the East and of the West. Some criticism of the lecture was offered by the Rev. J. J. B. Coles, who spoke with the utmost courtesy and good temper. Mr. Coles suggested that he should write a series of letters on New Testament Christianity in the *Freethinker*, and that the editor should reply to them. Mr. Foote answered that he would be very happy to accept this suggestion. He also suggested, on his own part, that the only subject on which he and Mr. Coles seemed likely to get to close quarters with each other on a public platform was the ultimate question of the existence and attributes of God; and that he and Mr. Coles should exchange views on that topic on the following Sunday evening. In that case, the lecture on "The Fable of the Resurrection" could stand over, and, after all, it was a subject that would keep. Mr. Coles assented to this suggestion, apparently much to the satisfaction of the meeting.

"Evolution and Religion" will be the title of the subject of this friendly discussion. Amongst other points of difference, Mr. Coles holds that there is an ineradicable element of corruption in man; also that man is under suggestions of evil that do not arise entirely from his own nature. Mr. Foote dissents from this view, and holds that there is no mystery and no supernaturalism in evil from the point of view of evolution. Other differences, of course, exist between Mr. Foote and Mr. Coles on the main questions of theology, and these will be dealt with as far as the time permits. We hope it is scarcely necessary to say that the reverend gentleman will have equal time with his friendly opponent.

Such a discussion is very rare nowadays. So few ministers of religion have the honesty and courage to cross swords in public with a competent advocate of Naturalism. It is to be hoped, therefore, that Freethinkers will inform their more liberal-minded religious friends that this discussion is going to take place, and advise them not to lose the opportunity.

The Rev. J. J. B. Coles was the principal opponent of Theosophy in the long discussion which took place in the columns of the *Daily Chronicle* some years ago, writing under the pen-name of "No. 5." He afterwards held a public debate on Theosophy with Mrs. Besant at St. George's Hall. Mr. Coles was formerly on the ecclesiastical establishment of the Government of Bengal, and for seven years principal of the Doveton College, Calcutta, and Fellow of the Calcutta University. He holds no ecclesiastical preferment, but is one of the Secretaries of the London City Mission, 3 Bridewell-place, E.C., where of course letters will find him.

Last Sunday Mr. Charles Watts lectured twice in Bolton to good, attentive, and enthusiastic audiences. Friends were present from the surrounding districts, including Blackburn, Wigan, Farworth, and Westhoughton. Mr. Watts was in his best form, and was reminded by several of the audience that he still retained his old energy. His evening lecture,

"Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?" was a great success. Mr. Shufflebotham ably presided at both meetings. There was a brisk sale of literature.

Mr. H. Percy Ward nearly succeeded in gaining a seat on the Birmingham Board of Guardians. Another six votes would have carried him in. It is a pity that he did not win, for the presence of one Freethinker on a public body leaves the whole lump—and sometimes it *is* a lump. We congratulate Mr. Ward, however, on having made a gallant fight.

Mr. Victor Roger, one of the N.S.S. vice-presidents, and president of the Camberwell Branch, was jockeyed off the Lambeth Borough Council by the religious bigots. He has, however, just won a seat on the Board of Guardians. There were two other Progressive candidates besides himself for the three vacancies, but their Christianity was too superfine to allow them to run jointly with an "infidel." Mr. Roger, having to run by himself, naturally asked his friends to plump for him, and apparently they did so. Anyhow he has captured the third seat, and the two Progressives who couldn't run with the "infidel" will now have to sit with him. They have our sympathy.

The East London Branch has taken up quarters at the Stanley Temperance Bar, High-street, Stepney, where it is holding meetings on the first Sunday in each month. The business is made as brief as possible, in order that the gathering may turn itself into a conversazione. The next meeting takes place this afternoon (Easter Sunday) at 3.30, and a good attendance is expected. The East London Branch starts its open-air propaganda this morning at 11.30 at Mile-end Waste. Mr. W. Heaford is the lecturer.

The better the day the better the deed. The Finsbury N.S.S. Branch has organised a social gathering to take place in the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, on Good Friday. The program includes a concert and dancing, and a Shakespearean reading by Mr. G. W. Foote. The proceedings open at 7.30. The tickets are 1s. each.

The National Secular Society's Conference for 1901 will be held at Glasgow on Whit-Sunday. Glasgow Exhibition, which is to be a great affair, will be in full swing by then, and will, of course, be a splendid attraction. No doubt the Glasgow friends will also arrange, as before, for a trip into some part of the grand Clyde and Lake scenery, which lies within such easy reach of their city. We understand that cheap trains will run to Glasgow from all parts of Great Britain. Altogether we entertain a reasonable hope that the Glasgow Conference will be a first-rate success. Delegates and individual members should make a special effort to render it so. It will be the first Conference of the twentieth century, and we ought to start well, at any rate.

Notices of motion for the Conference Agenda should be forwarded to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C., not later than April 26. The financial year closes at the same time, so that Branches and individual members should see that their subscriptions are paid up by then.

Mr. Thomas Shore, we regret to say, has been obliged to resign from the N.S.S. Executive, from the Board of the Secular Society, Limited, and from the Board of the Freethought Publishing Company. Mr. Shore has for some time been in a precarious state of health; and his doctor's warnings, which have been neglected, have now become peremptory. He has to leave London and live in a small country town (Farnham). Mr. Shore himself regrets having to leave off working for the Secular movement, which still has his most cordial good wishes.

The vacancy caused by Mr. Shore's retirement from the Board of the Freethought Publishing Company has been filled by Mr. C. Cohen. Two other members will be added to the Board as soon as possible. Unfortunately the business men who hold shares are so fully occupied with their own concerns.

Dr. E. B. Foote, the veteran American Freethinker and author of *Plain Home Talk*—a valuable work which has had an immense circulation—writes to us from his charming residence at Larchmont, New York, which overlooks a fine stretch of sea with Long Island in the offing. Dr. Foote has received the Report and Balance-Sheet of the Freethought Publishing Company, and informs us that he will be happy to increase his holding by fifty per cent., as suggested by the Directors. If all Shareholders, or even the largest part of them, acted in the same way, the Company would be placed in a more than hopeful position, and a great effort could be made to push the circulation of the *Freethinker*.

Celestial Voices.

THE FATHER:—

"WHEN a very young man I 'created' the earth
Out of nothing, with marvellous ease,
And I said, 'It is good!' with a chuckle of mirth,
'My creatures 'twill certainly please!
I have made light and darkness, and cut them in twain;
I have fashioned a moon and a sun;
Now only one thing to 'create' doth remain,
And then, praise my name, I have done.
I'll make a strange biped, and call it a man,
And apples shall cause him to fall;
I'll make him as daft as I very well can,
And then—I'll do nothing at all!"

THE SON:—

I once came to earth in a casual way,
And worked in the miracle line;
I exorcised spirits of evil each day,
By means of my power divine.
The blind at my word saw the glorious light,
The credulous lost all their sense;
I cursed wretched Reason (a creature of night),
I smiled at each intellect dense;
I died on a cross, and—they say—I arose
(I grant you the story seems 'tall');
But *this* is quite certain, as everyone knows—
Since then I've done nothing at all!"

THE GHOST:—

"I once wrote a book in some sixty-six parts—
A book which I hugely admire;
It's all about Yahveh, the Master of Arts,
His Son, and Old Nick, and hell-fire;
About bloodshed by warriors, bloodshed by priests,
And murder by him who's 'above,'
Who, loathing the taste of the clean amongst beasts,
Sent his Son to the shambles—in love.
Each tale you must swallow which reeketh of gore,
Though these may the worldling appal;
One thing I will promise—I'll write nevermore;
Like my friends, I'll do nothing at all!"

JOHN YOUNG.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting, held at the Society's offices on Thursday, March 28; Mr. G. W. Foote, President, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bator, C. Cohen, J. Cooper, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leal, B. Munton, A. B. Moss, C. Quinton, V. Roger, H. J. Stace, F. Schaller, T. Wilmot.

Apologies were received for the absence of Messrs. Sims, Neate, and Watts.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Monthly cash statement received and adopted.

A letter was read from the Glasgow Branch, asking that the Conference for 1901 should be held in that town. It was formally moved that the invitation be accepted, and the Conference held in Glasgow.

It was reported that the arrangements for the London out-door lectures were now complete, and a monthly list of lecturers was ordered to be printed.

The Secretary was instructed to report upon places suitable for the Annual Excursion, the date of which was fixed for Sunday, July 7.

A notice of motion given by Mr. Quinton at the last meeting was, by agreement, adjourned until the April meeting. The Secretary received instructions re correspondence. Three new members were admitted, and the meeting adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

Branch Secretaries, please note.—All notices of motion for the Conference Agenda must reach the office not later than April 26. All Branch fees, collections, etc., due to the Society should be forwarded without delay; they cannot otherwise be included in this year's accounts.

A Gem from Ingersoll.

Said the ever-lamented Ingersoll: "If not a human being existed, the sun would continue to shine, and tempests now and then would devastate the earth; the rain would fall in pleasant showers, violets would spread their velvet bosoms to the sun, the earthquake would devour, birds would sing and daisies bloom and roses blush; volcanoes would fill the heavens with their lurid glare; the procession of the seasons would not be broken; and the stars would shine as serenely as though the world were filled with loving hearts and happy homes."

On the Present Status of the "God" Question, and on Life and Substance.

A Lecture by DR. ROBERT PARK.

THE acquisition by mankind of the function of articulate language has not been one entirely advantageous. Like the acquisition of great wealth, it has correlative disadvantages. The chief linguistic trouble arises from the ever-increasing burden of signs and symbols whereby expression is given to ideas, and the ever-increasing divergence of meaning attachable to these, by reason of the accretion to them of new ideas, and the shedding off from them of old and effete meanings. Hence one of the first labors of the young of the civilised species is to acquire a knowledge of all the signs (termed letters, words, and figures), with all their meanings, in common use amongst the people to which it belongs; but also, mayhap, all those, or some, pertaining to other people still living; and even some, or many, of those pertaining to races now extinct, and which are so termed "dead" languages.

Now, I may remark here, though parenthetically, that we have in this indubitable fact one of the best of all possible reasons for disbelief in the existence, in each human unit, of a separable immaterial "soul" or "spirit," inasmuch as, if any such thing existed in reality, it would render unnecessary all the laborious acquisition in every succeeding generation of all that had been acquired in the previous. As a matter of fact, in the days when the words "spirit" and "soul" first shaped themselves as symbols of ideas in men's minds, these were supposed to carry with them, in some mysterious manner, *the whole burden of man's ideas and emotions*. It is only of very recent years that it has been demonstrated, and so placed outside the pale of dispute, that every idea and every emotion is inalienably linked to a bodily motion, and is as much an *acquisition* of the individual as any art or craft. Only potentialities are innate or inborn or inherited, and these are inalienably thirled to the material protoplasm and substrata of the nervous system, and are only evocable by and through the agency of stimulus proceeding either from the body itself, directly, or indirectly through it, from the outer environment.

But, apart from the disadvantages accruing thus, there is the much greater one that, having—with great labor and expenditure of energy—acquired a knowledge of word symbols and meanings, the youth finds himself in face of the fact that, in a living language, the symbols are constantly changing their meanings, and different people use the symbols to express various ideas; and some may even use them without having *any proper conception of what they mean at all*. And he may even find, in the course of experience, that such misuse and abuse of words is not so much the result of ignorance, but the outcome of a system, and so deliberately conceived to mislead, to delude, or to deceive. Evidence of this is to be found constantly in the speeches of politicians, diplomatists, statesmen, and ecclesiastics.

To-night I have undertaken to direct your attention to the word or symbol in three letters, and which I pronounce "God." In our language this word represents three main conceptions. The first may be called the orthodox dogmatic conception, and is a Trinity—so-called; the second may be called the unorthodox dogmatic conception; and the third is properly understood as the philosophical conception, or conceptions; for, naturally, philosophy is not bound to any particular conception, but takes cognisance of all except the dogmatic conceptions, which, founding, as they do, upon authority, and demanding a blind belief or credulity, do not, of course, come within the purview of philosophy at all; although most impudent attempts have been made by theologians to erect theology into a science, and so gain for it a philosophical status.

Well now, let us devote attention first to the orthodox dogmatic conception as that whereby all the Churches, from the Romish and Greek to the Reformed Presbyterian and Original Secession, are bound; and by which the Unitarians are also bound, except in so far as the element of Trinity is concerned. I have here, and will read direct from it, *The Confession of Faith*, a publication licensed by no less a personage than her late

gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, and published in 1812 by Francis Orr & Son, publishers in Glasgow. I particularise these details so that there may be no question as to the authority of what is now a very rare book. Chapter ii. concerns, and is entitled, "Of God, and of the Holy Trinity," which phraseology demands attention upon its own account, the conjunction "and" here seeming to imply that two entirely different conceptions are being dealt with instead of one only. The chapter proceeds, thus, viz.:—

"There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

"II. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, not deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; he is the alone fountain of all beings of whom, to whom, and through whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight are all things open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels, and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.

"III. In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

That is all. But it is requisite that I should quote to you paragraphs iii. and iv. from the next chapter, to wit:—

"III. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

"IV. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are *particularly and unchangeably designed*; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished."*

That, then, is the entire orthodox dogmatic conception of God to which every believer must subscribe, and to which every priest or presbyter refers when he uses the word; and every word or paragraph of it has a reference footnote exhibiting the passage in the Bible upon which the characterisation is based. I venture to think that very few lay Christians are at all acquainted with it, that very many of the clergy have no understanding of it, that it is a Chinese puzzle to the eldership and deaconry, and that not one divinity student could reconcile its discordant elements.

Let us look into a few of these assertions merely as a sample of the others; and, in order that I may not be accused of partiality or bias, I will, so far as possible, give you data from the Bible itself, or from members of the ministry whose idea of truth, and love of same, has prompted them, at sundry times and in divers manners, to give expression to their matured belief, even when that entirely runs counter to the Confession of Faith, or the Thirty-nine Articles, to which they ostensibly adhere. But, first of all, let me remind you that not only is the verbal, but the plenary, inspiration of the Bible authority upon which the whole fabric of the conception rests, disputed and rejected. This is put very clearly by the Rev. Dr. Momerie, since dead, a Professor of Theology, in the "Twentieth Century" *Agnostic Annual*. Thus on page 37 of that magazine I read: "Now, in the opinion of Dean Burgon" (representative of believers in verbal inspiration), "in reading of the aims and defects of the early Jewish deities we are reading God's own account of himself. But as soon as we begin to treat the Bible 'like any other book,' when we peruse it discerningly,

* The italics are mine, of course.

discriminately, critically, we discover that on all subjects, especially on the subject of God, it contains a great variety of conflicting ideas. We no longer attempt the impossible task of jumbling these contradictory notions into a single consistent conception. Of the primitive Jehovah we say:—

This our begetter? This was what Man, in his violent youth, begot.

And we feel at liberty to give the lie, without hesitation, to all theological doctrines that are incompatible with the ideal of the Heavenly Father."

(To be continued.)

The American Hall of Fame.

TWENTY-NINE names have been thought worthy of a place in our American Hall of Fame; and no matter how much the divergence in views as to why other names were not selected, no one, that I know of, has argued that those given a place are unworthy. The three strongest and best men in the list, beyond cavil, are Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. These men have done more to give distinction to America than any other three men that can be named. They represent intelligence, patience, forbearance, and a kindliness that causes us mentally to uncover at mention of their names. Men are great only as they possess sympathy. No mere accomplishment in learning or skill can ever make amends for a lack of love. With great intellect must go great sympathy, or no Hall of Fame can serve to hold the name deathless.

And yet the three men I have mentioned were not church members. Emerson was so liberal that even the Unitarian Church repudiated him; Lincoln found no church big enough to hold his faith; and Franklin was a Deist—pure and simple—and was counted an infidel in his day. Dr. Edward Everett Hale, at the grave of Oliver Wendell Holmes, called attention to the fact that the five greatest names in American literature were names of men who were Unitarians—and Unitarianism is a natural religion, or a religion of reason and conduct. But Dr. Hale did not mention Hawthorne, whose name is one of the four literary men in the Hall of Fame; and Hawthorne was a Freethinker, and stood in belief just where Ingersoll stood—that is to say, he didn't know, and said so.

Among Philanthropists, the two names in the Hall of Fame are Peabody and Cooper. Neither was a church member, and, although both gave vast sums for the betterment of mankind, no mention of a church was found in their wills.

Stephen Girard, our third great philanthropist, who came near getting a place in the Hall of Fame, was counted out for the reason that in his will he stipulated that no clergyman should ever have a place among the trustees of Girard College.

Among Preachers we have Beecher, who was practically a Unitarian; Channing, who was a Unitarian; and Jonathan Edwards, who, I believe, wasn't.

With the Statesmen we have Washington, who inherited his religion, as he did his slaves; Lincoln, whose religion was to do good; Clay, whose religion was in his wife's name, and Webster, diplomatically ditto, with Franklin, a Freethinker, as before stated.

The Lawyers and Judges show Marshall, Kent, and Story—the first two Unitarians, and the last a nominal church-goer.

In Educators we have Horace Mann, a Unitarian, and Gilbert Stuart, a Presbyterian.

Soldiers and Sailors reveal the names of Grant, Lee, and Farragut. Grant was not a church member, but he went to the Methodist Church in the interests of polity and domestic peace. Lee was a church member, and Farragut was an Agnostic.

Audubon and Asa Gray, the only two Scientists who were honored, had the same religion that Herbert Spencer has.

And among Inventors we have Fulton, Morse, and Whitney, neither of whom ever expressed himself on the subject of religion, any more than Edison has. Edison's religion is his work, and he once said that the only way he knew when Sunday came was because they had chicken for dinner and the meal was two hours late.

—*The Philistine* (Boston).

Elder Keepalong—"But you know, deacon, nobody is required to believe now that creation was begun and finished in six literal days." Deacon Ironside—"That's what the book says, and I'm not going back on the book. You'll be wanting me to believe next that Peter walked on ice instead of water, and that he began to sink because the ice broke."—*Chicago Tribune*.

St. David.

The Man after God's Own Heart.

By G. W. FOOTE.

(Continued from page 204.)

SAUL hunted David, and he was often in peril. Once the king entered alone to sleep in a cave where the rebel and his followers were secreted. They wished to kill the monarch, but David would not let them touch "the Lord's anointed," though he himself was the *real* "anointed." Cutting off Saul's skirt, and leaving him insufficiently clothed at the rear, David showed it when the king awoke in proof that he did not seek his life. Saul acknowledged himself in the wrong, recognised the rebel as the future king, and made him swear not to cut off his seed; an oath which David, if he took it, grossly violated many years afterwards.

The same story is worked up more artistically in a later chapter. Much of the language is identical in both. It is impossible to believe in the two occurrences, and both may be fiction. Whatever happened, David must have been the relater. He is depicted as generous, but Saul's account is, unfortunately, lacking.

Samuel being dead, David haunted the wilderness of Paran with his banditti. Nabal, a very rich farmer, lived in the vicinity; and at shearing time David sent to him for a big present. The reason given was as strange as the request. David protested he had robbed Nabal of nothing, and regarded this as a legitimate claim on his gratitude. It was like Bill Sikes demanding a handsome Christmas-box on the ground that he had not committed a burglary on the premises.

Nabal tartly refused, and David set out with four hundred men to exact vengeance as well as meat. His intention was to kill Nabal and every male on his estate. The word *male* is not used, but an obscene paraphrase which we dare not repeat.

Abigail, the beautiful wife of Nabal, hastened to meet David with a fine present. She implored his mercy, and called her husband a rogue and a fool. David was mollified, Abigail returned home, and ten days afterwards Nabal died. Scripture says "the Lord smote" him, but his death was singularly opportune. David married the pretty widow, and took possession of the estate. Godliness, especially on David's method, is great gain.

Michal was given in marriage to Phalti, it being, as Renan observes, against the custom of the time for a woman to remain without a husband. David, however, who had no idea of mortifying the flesh, took Abinoam in Michal's place. He had, therefore, two wives and some wealth. David was getting on.

Saul being still on the trail, despite the adventure in the cave, David again repaired to Achish, King of Gath. Ziklag was given him and his six hundred bandits to reside in, and they dwelt there for sixteen months. During this period they made raids into the territory of the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites, who were friends or allies of Achish. Being questioned as to his movements, David replied that he had raided in his native country; and, to cover the lie, he piously slaughtered every man, woman, and child in the villages he attacked, lest any survivors should "bring tidings to Gath." Dead men tell no tales, and David flourished in wealth and reputation. We can picture him, after a successful day's robbery and murder, quaffing his wine, twanging his harp, and singing praises to the Lord.

When the great battle occurred between the Philistines and the Jews, which resulted in the death of Saul, David was ready to fight against his own countrymen. But the Philistine princes wisely objected to his presence in the army, lest he should prove a traitor. Returning home to Ziklag, he found the place sacked by the Amalekites. The town was burnt, and all the women were taken prisoners; but, less bloody than the man after God's own heart, the victors "slew not any, either great or small."

Steeled against the sight of other people's sufferings, David and his gang wept over their own misery. The ephod was consulted, and, the answer being favorable, they pursued and slew the Amalekites. All the spoil and the women were recovered, and much additional booty. David was now so wealthy that he sent presents to the elders of Judah. It was a good investment, for they presently made him their king. They had no crown to give him, but they anointed him regardless of expense.

Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, reigned over the other tribes, but there was strife between the two kings. At length Abner, the famous general, seceded to David; Ish-bosheth was assassinated, and David was anointed king over Israel. He was then thirty-seven. He had reigned seven years and six months over Judah. Elsewhere it is given as seven years only. The Rabbis account for this discrepancy by saying that David suffered six months from leprosy, during which time he may be reckoned as dead.

Saint David got Michal back from Phalti. By this time he had married four fresh wives; having seven in all, and children by six of them. Afterwards he "took him more

concubines and wives out of Jerusalem." He was a rare old polygamist, and the worthy father of Solomon. Eastern traditions assert that David had ninety-nine wives before he married Bathsheba; likewise that he divided his time into three parts, attending one day to the affairs of his kingdom, on the next to the service of God, and on the last to family matters. Probably he did not spend his whole time in the harem in singing. Yet, in order to keep the women in due subjection, he may have had some prayer-meetings as well as love-feasts. Very likely he led the singing, for which he was well adapted. They say he had such a beautiful voice that the birds listened to his strains; while it was of such compass that he could drown the thunder or warble as sweetly as a nightingale.

David next turned his attention to the Jebusites, whom he drove out of Zion after some severe fighting. Occupying the fort, he built a wall to circumscribe a new "city of David," and "the Lord of Hosts was with him." The founding of Jerusalem as a capital was an excellent stroke of policy. Saul created the Jewish army, and David created the metropolis; two essentials to a young nation. Bringing the ark to Jerusalem sanctified the city, and made it at once the religious and political centre of the state.

David's first attempt to fetch the ark failed. It was sent on a new cart, and serenaded along the road; but it tottered at one point, and Uzzah, who tried to steady it, was smitten dead for touching the fetish. Jahveh's action "displeased" David; and, being afraid of such an irascible deity, he decided to leave him there; but three months later, hearing that the ark was blessing the house of Obed-edom, he brought it up to Jerusalem.

Jahveh's triumphal procession to the new capital was a big affair for that age. There was much shouting and trumpeting, and a large quantity of oxen and fatlings were sacrificed. The proceedings ended in a popular bean-feast. The multitude, without distinction of sex, was regaled with bread and meat and wine.

David himself, as master of the ceremonies, was in a fine state of hilarity. Stripping off his clothes, and putting a linen ephod around his middle, he "danced before the Lord with all his might." Leland, and others writers, pretend that David wore a linen robe, which reached to his feet, and was girded round with an ephod. But this is not countenanced by the text. Milman describes him as wearing "a simple linen tunic." Shaftesbury, in commenting on the antics of this royal *saltimbanque*, remarks that, "though this dance was not performed quite naked, the dancers, it seems, were so slightly clothed that, in respect of modesty, they might as well have worn nothing; their nakedness appearing still by means of their high caperings, leaps, and violent attitudes, which were proper to that dance."

Religious dancing is universal among barbarians, and it survives among the lowest sectaries in civilised nations. Professor Hartmann describes a captive gorilla as dancing wildly, often overbalancing himself, reeling to and fro, and whirling round as if intoxicated; and he remarks that the medicine-men, shamans, sorcerers, and rain-doctors of savage races "assume ape-like attitudes in their contortions, leaps, dances, and other gestures inseparable from their trade." Tylor also notices that savages "dance their joy and sorrow, their love and rage, even their magic and religion." According to Robertson, the historian of America, the Indians danced on every important occasion in public and private life. The Peruvians regarded dancing as a religious demonstration. The devil-dancers of Southern India are well known. Among the Veddahs of Ceylon the exorcists dance themselves into a paroxysm, which is taken for inspiration. The Patagonians select those afflicted with the St. Vitus' dance for magicians. Dancing was a prominent feature in the religious festivals of Greece and Rome. Miriam danced and sang at the head of the women of Israel after the destruction of Pharaoh's army, and the Jews danced naked round the golden calf in the desert. Indeed, the Hebrew word *chag*, which is translated *feast*, really signifies a dance. David's capers before the ark were, therefore, in accordance with the spirit and manners of his age. His loin-cloth was a slight advance in decency, for the primitive fashion was absolute nudity. Greater decorum was subsequently introduced, but the sacred dancing was never abandoned. At the close of the Feast of Tabernacles the members of the Sanhedrim, the rulers of the synagogue, and the doctors of the schools, leaped and danced with torches in their hands for a great part of the night, while the people watched their performance. Nor was dancing dispensed with in the early Christian Church. Special provision was made for dancing in the choir. Scaliger says the bishops were called *Prasules* because they led the dance on feast days. The practice fell into discredit with the Agape. But it lingered in the Church for many centuries; and even as late as 1813, at Seville, twelve young men danced before the sacrament on Holy Thursday. Revivalists are always prone to displaying their agility. Whitfield's Welsh followers, the Jumpers, took for their text, "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy." Down at Brighton the Army of the Lord used to worship in its Glory Hole, where women, as well as men, danced until they dropped exhausted, and exhibited an indecent amount of stocking.

(To be continued.)

Knox-Little's Little Knocks.

"Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." "Love your enemies."—CHRIST JESUS.

"War is not wrong."—KNOX-LITTLE.

KNOX-LITTLE, Jesus doesn't like your nasty little knocks,
To the Lake of Fire He'll order your committal;
You're forfeiting a seat inside a Heavenly golden "box,"
Through your nasty little knocks, Knox-Little.

You say it isn't wrong to load a cannon with a ball
And knock a foeman over like a skittle;
Freethinkers harm your Jesus, but you harm Him worse
than all

With your nasty little knocks, Knox-Little.

You make Him out a liar, and His strict commands you
break.

(There's not a piece of glass that's half so "brittle.")

It helps our propaganda—keep it up for goodness sake,
O, we like your little knocks, Knox-Little.

Perhaps you fail to see it—for a Christian is as blind
As the eyes that Jesus smeared with clay and spittle—
But you're helping us who labor in the service of mankind
With your welcome little knocks, Knox-Little.

You misinterpret Scripture, and it prophesies your fate,
If you add or take away a jot or tittle;

You will never dwell in heaven, for the keeper of the gate
Will not heed your little knocks, Knox-Little.

If you do not want to linger in the place without a floor,
And the worm that never dieth help to "victual,"
You will cease to raise the dander of the "Savior" any more
With your nasty little knocks, Knox-Little.

ESS JAY BEE.

Correspondence.

THE CREATION STORY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I apologise to Mr. Watts for having intervened between him and H. J. A.; my action was due to misapprehension on my part.

H. J. A. is forgetful. His original phrase was "that where had been vacancy God called into existence the boundless universe." Well, according to the dictionaries, "vacancy" means "empty space," "universe" means "the collective name of heaven and earth," "heaven" means "the expanse which surrounds the earth," whilst "boundless" means "illimitable"; therefore, as I have already averred, "illimitable space" can only mean the "boundless universe" which H. J. A. says "God called into existence."

Science—and, indeed, common sense—teaches that "illimitable space," otherwise the "boundless universe" of H. J. A., must have existed from all eternity; and that matter, being indestructible, though protean so far as shape is concerned, never had a beginning. Creation out of nothing has long ago been consigned, on all hands, to the limbo of absurdities. Dr. J. H. Gladstone, an advocate of the Christian Evidence Society, in his book, *Faith and Free-thought* (p. 156), says: "I failed to discover any theological reason for supposing this word [Bara] means necessarily to make out of nothing; and I examined all the places—about fifty in number—in which it occurs in the Old Testament."

J. W. DE CAUX.

The Government of Children.

Self-government with tenderness—here you have the condition of all authority over children. The child must discover in us no passion, no weakness of which he can make use; he must feel himself powerless to deceive or to trouble us; then he will recognise in us his natural superiors, and he will attach a special value to our kindness, because he will respect it. The child who can rouse in us anger, or impatience, or excitement, feels himself stronger than we, and a child respects strength only. The child sees what we are, not what we wish to be. He is a magnifying mirror. That is why the first principle of education is, Train yourself; and the first rule to follow, if you wish to possess yourself of a child's will is, Master your own.—*Henri Frederic Amiel.*

About this time there came a small-pox scare in the land of Uz, and the physicians were sent around to vaccinate the people. In due course they came to the house of Job. Now Job was the most patient man in the settlement, and, instead of pleading that he had troubles of his own, as indeed he had at that time, he gave orders that they be admitted. "Job," they said, stepping up to his bedside, "we have come to vaccinate you." "Go ahead, gentlemen," he groaned, "if you can find a place."—*Chicago Tribune.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, Discussion between Mr. G. W. Foote and the Rev. J. J. B. Coles, "Evolution and Religion."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, John M. Robertson, "Rationalism and Social Efficiency."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (The Victory, Newnham-street, Queen-street, Edgware-road): April 11, at 9, Special members' meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11 and 7.30, R. P. Edwards.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward—11 (in the Bull Ring), "Has Man an Immortal Soul?"; 3 (near Ship Hotel, Camp Hill), "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secularist Platform"; 7 (in Assembly Rooms), "A Christian Ghost Story." April 10, at 8, Bull Ring; April 12, at 8, Nechell's Green.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Amateur Dramatic Class Entertainment—a drama in three acts, "Agnes De Vere." Also on Wednesday evening at 8.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): Closed for Easter.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, J. Birks, "A Reflection."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Closed for Easter.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Closed for Easter.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday evening; musical and other recitals.

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