

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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The Jerusalem Ghost.

This is the season for Christians to talk, for parsons to preach, and for hireling (and mostly anonymous) religious journalists to write, on the resurrection of their "Lord." In other words, this is the time of the year when the old Jerusalem Ghost story is dished up again, to the satisfaction of believers, and the laughter of sceptics.

The worst service you can do a story of this kind is to reason about it, to advance the "evidence" on which it is supported, and to ask unbelievers to discuss it.

This is the way to make *more* unbelievers. A great many Christians have become Freethinkers through listening to such discussions, but who ever heard of a Freethinker becoming a Christian from the same cause?

We smiled, therefore, on beginning to read a controversial article in the *Baptist Times and Freeman* on "The Historic Truth of the Resurrection of Our Lord." Perhaps, after reading our reply, the writer will wish he had let the subject alone; although, of course, it is just possible that he does not mind our criticism as long as it does not come under the eyes of his own readers.

This writer begins by referring to the "unique character" of the resurrection of Jesus. But what was there unique about it? We wish he had told us. Persons rose from the dead in the Old Testament. We read of others in the New Testament; a girl, a lad, and Lazarus, besides a crowd of buried "saints" who rose from their graves when Jesus was crucified, and afterwards went into Jerusalem. So far from being unique, the resurrection of Jesus was a commonplace occurrence. We mean that it was commonplace then, and to the people who believed it. There was nothing in it to stagger *their* credulity. Hugo Grotius, indeed, who may be called the father of modern Christian Evidences, actually appealed to Pagan authorities in favor of the *possibility* of the resurrection. He cited certain cases from Plato, Herodotus, and Plutarch; and argued that, whether they were true or false, the record of them showed "the opinion of learned men concerning the possibility of the thing."

The next point urged by this writer is that the apostles, who went about preaching the resurrection, had everything to lose and nothing to gain by doing so. What they did get was "hatred, persecution, exile, and death." Yes, that is what the Christians say. But where is the proof? We ask for a scrap of historical evidence that a single apostle suffered martyrdom. We know there are Christian traditions, and what these are worth may soon be decided by any sane man or woman who will take the trouble to read them. But even if every apostle suffered martyrdom, the fact would only prove their sincerity; it could not possibly prove their accuracy as observers, or their logicality as reasoners. This view is amply confirmed by an appeal to religious history. Fanatics have laid down their lives in all ages for the most contemptible superstitions.

We are next reminded by this writer that the apostles, who were cowards before the crucifixion, were as bold as lions after the resurrection; that they converted and baptised three thousand persons in "an hour or two"; and that multitudes were soon gathered into the Christian fold. "This is history!" he exclaims; and he says that "it has to be accounted for upon historical principles." Bless his simple soul! What he calls "history" is a *Christian* document—that is, a *partisan* document—written of course by somebody; but who

that somebody was, where he wrote it, and when he wrote it, God only knows; which is another way of saying that nobody knows, and that nobody is ever likely to know. To call this document "history" is to beg the whole question. If the Acts of the Apostles is history, then the Gospels are history too, and the discussion is ended by a single word. It might occur, however, even to this Baptist writer, that disputes are not settled quite so easily. A plain-spoken sceptic might even suggest that this writer has no better idea of "history" than a Central African, or any other savage who takes the dreams and oracles of his mystery-man for Gospel truth.

This advocate of the Jerusalem Ghost story proceeds to remark on the number of people who saw Jesus after the resurrection. Here again he treats us to fine "history." The number of witnesses amounted to "nearly six hundred," and is it possible that "this large number of persons were all deceived and all visionaries"?

We reply, in the first place, that there is no safety in numbers. A conjurer prefers a large audience to a small one. In some cases it is easier to deceive a crowd than a few individuals. We have ourselves seen scores of people watching a ghost slip by the window of a haunted empty house, when it was obvious to a cool observer that what they saw was only the flickering light of a gas-lamp blown by the wind. Nothing is commoner than for ghost stories to be believed by the mob and disbelieved by the sensible minority. The famous Cock-lane ghost, for instance, had an immense vogue with the multitude, and was finally disposed of by a few persons in the full possession of their wits.

But let us look at that "six hundred." We shall find that they are not as substantial as the six hundred of the Light Brigade. Five hundred of them are introduced at one fell swoop by Paul. It was a splendid stroke on his part, and we have always admired his audacity. When you are in for a lie it is as well to make it a good one. The man who forges a cheque for £5 when he can make it £500 is both a rogue and a fool. Paul was of a different complexion. He found a big number just as easy to write as a little one. No lumbering tricycle for him; he forged ahead on a motor car, and was out of sight in no time. Other writers mention a woman, two women, two men, and then eleven men, as witnesses of the risen Jesus. Paul smiled, took his pen, and slapped in five hundred. He was too wise to say who they were, or where they saw Jesus. He simply said that some of them were dead when he wrote, though most of them were still living. But he was too wise to give the name and address of one of them. He confined himself to a statement that could not possibly be disproved. It might not satisfy the critical reader, but it might catch on with the rest. And it did. Yes, and it catches on still. For the mob is the same in all times and places, with a large and active bump of wonder, and small and feeble organs of perception and ratiocination.

What this Baptist writer totally ignores is one of the most important features of the story. All the persons to whom Jesus is alleged to have appeared after his resurrection—whether the number be eleven or six hundred—were what the man in the street would call "in the swim." No outsider, no independent witness, ever caught a glimpse of him. His crucifixion, as the story goes, was public enough. Why did he not demonstrate his resurrection in the same public manner? Why did he skulk about like a guilty thing? Was he afraid that the police would run him in again, and that

Pontius Pilate would nail him up again on the cross? The more one considers this *partisan* character of the whole of the testimony, the more one sees that it is not "history" at all, but the legend of a little sect, which subsequently, owing to a variety of causes, and none of them supernatural, entered upon a prosperous career as the state religion of the Roman Empire.

We have a word in conclusion to this Baptist writer, whoever he may be. He refers to "ignorant and loud-voiced unbelievers." Well, we do not know the strength of his voice, but we perceive the depth of his ignorance. He appears to be quite unaware that the majority of present-day Freethinkers feel themselves under no sort of obligation to propound "rationalist" theories of the resurrection. Whether the crucified Jesus died on the cross or only swooned, what became of his body if he did not rise from the dead, whether the disciples were all victims of hallucination, or whether they were deceived by a fervent woman who had seen an apparition; all such questions as these belong to an earlier and less scientific stage of the controversy. We now challenge the whole story of Jesus Christ—from the immaculate conception, through the miracles, up to the resurrection and ascension—as a fable gradually constructed out of Hebrew prophecy and Gentile legend and mythology. All the parts stand or fall together. It is only the Christians who regard the resurrection as the capital feature of the narrative. To the Freethinker it is all of a piece, and in every feature it follows the laws of such pious constructions. The pattern existed east, west, north, and south, hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of years before the Christian era; and all the Christian builders did was to show a little originality in adapting their work to the requirements of the more cosmopolitan sentiment that followed the break-up of the old national religions. The way to this achievement was opened by Paul, and it was he and not Jesus who was the real Founder of Christianity.

G. W. FOOTE.

Freethought and Christianity.

THE period immediately antecedent to the first appearance of Christianity within the bounds of the Roman Empire was one of great intellectual activity. The all-conquering race, which had numbered Greece among its other possessions, had been in turn conquered by the philosophy, the art, and the science of Greece. And with the Athenian learning had gone that spirit of toleration for which the citizens of Athens had been so honorably distinguished. That intolerant dogmatism which has since marked the Christian Church was unknown to either the votaries of Greek philosophy, or to the followers of the different sects of Oriental science. The Epicureans and the Neo-Academics—the Atheists of their time—were not persecuted by the Platonists, Stoics, or Aristotelians. Yet the latter believed in a "Supreme Being," whilst the Neo-Academics and the disciples of Epicurus maintained that it was doubtful whether there were any gods, or whether the soul was immortal, together with many other theses which placed them in the front rank of the heretics of that time. The foundation of the Eclectic School at Alexandria tended still further to bind the civilised world together, and to promote universal toleration. One of the tenets of the Alexandrian philosophy was that man's real interest lay in the pursuit and discovery of truth. Hence it was man's duty to study all the systems of philosophy, not with a view of becoming a blind zealot for the doctrines of any one system, but with a desire to select the true and the good which were to be found in every system in a greater or lesser degree. Lewes, in his *History of Philosophy*, aptly remarks:—

"In Alexandria.....several schools were formed, and some new elements introduced into the doctrines then existent. Great thinkers—Plotinus, Proclus, Porphyry—made it illustrious.....In no species of grandeur was the Alexandrian school deficient, as M. Saisset justly observes; genius, power, and duration have consecrated it. Reanimating, during an epoch of decline, the fecundity of an aged civilisation, it created a whole family of illustrious names. Plotinus, its real founder, resuscitated Plato; Proclus gave the world another Aristotle, and, in the person of Julian the Apostate, it became master of the world."

Under such bright auspices, is it surprising that the "divine school of Alexandria," as it has been termed, grew gradually to occupy the position of a great cosmopolitan Freethought University, where as many as fourteen thousand students attended from all parts of the then known world?

As most of our readers are aware, the ethical system of the Museum was founded upon that of Zeno, who probably was born about 360 years B.C. The following excellent synopsis of his system is given by Draper in his *Conflict between Religion and Science*:—

"The aim of Zeno was to furnish a guide for the daily practice of life, to make men virtuous. He insisted that education is the true foundation of virtue, for, if we know what is good, we shall incline to do it. We must trust to sense to furnish the data of knowledge, and reason will suitably combine them.....Every appetite, lust, desire, springs from imperfect knowledge. Our nature is imposed upon us by Fate, but we must learn to control our passions, and live free, intelligent, virtuous in all things, in accordance with reason. Our existence should be intellectual, we should survey with equanimity all pleasures and all pains. We should never forget that we are free men, not the slaves of society.....It is, therefore, for us to submit to Destiny, cultivating, as the things necessary to virtue, knowledge, temperance, fortitude, justice. We must remember that everything around us is in mutation; decay follows reproduction, and reproduction decay, and that it is useless to repine at death in a world where everything is dying. As a cataract shows from year to year an invariable shape, though the water composing it is perpetually changing, so the aspect of Nature is nothing more than a flow of matter presenting an impermanent form. The universe, considered as a whole, is unchangeable. Nothing is eternal but space, atoms, force. The forms of nature that we see are essentially transitory—they must all pass away."

It is not necessary to inquire here whether this early Freethought School resulted from the decay of the old religions and mythologies, or whether—as is far more probable—the Museum of Alexandria was the chief agent in destroying ancient superstitions. It is enough to know that science had begun to demolish alike the figments of imagination and the creations of poetical and sacerdotal inventions. Here we recognise the dawn of modern Freethought, and no doubt it would be interesting to speculate how different would have been the condition of our own lives, how much more developed our civilisation to-day, had the pursuit of knowledge been unchecked. But unfortunately the introduction and gradual propagation of theological dogmas and priestly rule were from the first inimical to the development of knowledge.

From the very inception of Freethought, under Christian rule, until our own time human reason and a so-called revelation have been waging an incessant warfare—reason ever prompting man to throw away his mental shackles, and to put all assertions and systems to the test; revelation ever threatening with eternal torment, and often hounding to death, the men and women who looked upon Christianity with as much doubt as do our philosophers and scientists to-day. In the early history of this great conflict we find the Christian superstition obtaining an apparent victory over Freethought. We say advisedly "an apparent victory," because the triumph of the Christian system was neither complete nor lasting. Having grafted the rites and ceremonies of Paganism upon the bald and unattractive congeries of dogmas preached by Paul, the Christian Church had greatly increased its hold upon the populace of the Roman Empire. In Egypt and its immediate neighborhood the worship of a God who was nurtured at a virgin's bosom was easily accepted by those who had from infancy been wont to adore Isis and Horus. By thus making use of Pagan observances, ritual, and festivals, the Christian leaders and their royal patrons were not long in securing the general acceptance of Christianity. And no sooner had this new form of belief become dominant than it endeavored to destroy every germ of philosophy and Freethought. Besides effecting a thorough change in the whole system of teaching, the Christians determined to root out freedom of thought by violent means. They had destroyed the old independence of mind for which the public schools had been so famous; they regarded the books of Moses as of greater importance than the study of Aristotle, Zeno, Epicurus, and Democritus; they had discontinued every branch of physics for the study of heaven; they

had, in short, rejected science, and thereby invited barbarism, superstition, and the other accompaniments of ignorance. Amongst these latter was persecution, the weapon with which the Church has ever since sought to silence free inquiry, prohibit the untrammelled use of reason, and keep the human mind in a worse than Egyptian bondage. To deny the truth of revelation was to provoke the open malice of the clergy; to be learned in that philosophy, which was, as the clergy well knew, so greatly opposed to their assumptions and follies, was to incur the peril of banishment, and, in too many instances, of death. In the most cultivated, learned, and polite city of the Empire, Alexandria itself, the dregs of the city, the rabble, were "converted Christians." Just as Christian missionaries now succeed in winning over to their "faith" a few of the worst outcasts of "heathen" countries, so in its youth the Christian Church attracted towards itself the idle, the dissolute, the ignorant, and the vicious.

Such was the condition of affairs when Freethought first grappled with the early Christian Church, and had to contend with dogmatism and persecution of every kind. Its most stubborn foe, however, has always been an unbending theology, against which Freethought has had to wage a persistent war. In every land may be found traces of the contest, and almost every age has witnessed the terrible conflict. Thought has been again and again thrown back for centuries by the violent opposition that it has had to encounter; in some cases it would seem to have been completely extinguished for a time.

"But truth crushed to the earth will rise again," and it is now rapidly making its way against error, although in the history of the world it has for a period appeared otherwise.

CHARLES WATTS.

A Free Church Fiasco.

ALL things considered, the Simultaneous Mission of the Free Churches does not appear to have been a very comprehensive success. It was inaugurated with a loud flourish of trumpets, and carried through with a considerable degree of energy; but its results, so far as a realisation of its objects is concerned, were absolutely *nil*. It has realised none of its promoters' hopes, and, judging from the published comments, it must have shattered a great many of their ideals. One of its participants, the Rev. Mr. C. F. Aked, does not hesitate to say, in a recent article in the *Christian World*, that "from one point of view we have wholly failed, and that the point of view which most of us occupied when we gave ourselves to the idea of a national mission a little over a year ago."

The failure is all the more conspicuous when judged by what was hoped for. This, according to the same gentleman, was "to kindle in this country such a flame of enthusiasm for the religion of Jesus Christ as should set on fire every moral movement with a fire which could not be quenched. We wanted to fill town and country with a great desire to transform our present human society into the kingdom of God." This is *all* that was aimed at. What has been achieved is the scattering over the country of hundreds of preachers, the delivery of innumerable sermons, the expenditure of enormous sums of money; but of genuine conversions scarce a trace. There is, indeed, a general consensus of opinion among the preachers that the world outside the churches has not been touched. There *have* been conversions, but they have been from other churches; a few Christians have been induced to change their labels, but those who were apart from the churches remain apart still.

If a history of religious revivals were written, this would be their most prominent and most striking characteristic. What is achieved is, so to speak, a new shuffling of the cards. People who belong to one camp shift over to another; but, when all is finished, the relation of Christianity to unbelief in point of numbers remains as before. It may be well questioned whether any of the revivals from the time of Wesley until to-day have ever succeeded in inducing a single intelligent unbeliever to alter his views. It is simply

incredible that any man, whose rejection of Christianity was based upon anything like intellectual grounds, should be influenced by the preachings of the average evangelist. The pleadings of men like Messrs. Horton, Clifford, Parker, and MacNeil are doubtless convincing—to those who already believe; but their chief interest to the outsider would lie in their furnishing a study in mental aberrations.

Moreover, even among religious people, these revivals quickly exhaust themselves. From the Reformation onwards each new revival has run through pretty much the same phases, and has come to an end in pretty much the same manner. A certain number have responded to the new appeal, and, looking at the rest of the people through their religious prejudices, have concluded that the world was profoundly moved by the outburst of religious extravagance. But those who did respond were earmarked by nature for such a course of behavior, and beyond their number the movement did not, and could not, spread. The consequence has been that within a few years the emotion has worn itself out, leaving the net result as at most the formation of a new sect, which, once formed, was hardly distinguishable from its religious competitors. The truth of this is seen in the practical inability of Protestantism to spread beyond certain limits. It is also seen in the history of Methodism, and in the necessity imposed upon the Salvation Army of spreading to fresh fields, in order to make good the losses in those already worked. Religious movements cannot—nowadays, at least—gain recruits from the non-religious population, as other movements do; hence the comparative sterility of their efforts.

There are only three classes to whom such enterprises as the Free Church Mission can appeal. The first, the already religious class, can yield it no real strength; the second, the definitely and consciously non-religious class, are, as I have said, untouched by it, and regard it with either pity or amusement; and the third, the indifferent class, are, with rare exceptions, also unaffected by it. Those who constitute this last, and by far the greater, division may not have any conscious or strongly reasoned objection to Christianity; but they are guarded from its influence by that almost unconquerable force, the "Time Spirit." Out of the number of people who have ceased to feel any interest in religious matters, perhaps not one in twenty could assign any very cogent reason for their indifference. They are not even always aware of their own indifference, and an attack on religious beliefs will often drive them into making some sort of effort in their defence. Their indifference is simply a register of the unconscious, but all-pervading, influence of those modern intellectual conditions which have made Christianity the round peg in the square hole. Mr. Aked admits that the reason why "some of the best-brained men and women of our time" are unaffected by mission preaching is because they possess "a certain mental and moral equipment which is not only untouched by the old shibboleths and methods, but which is actually repelled by them." Exactly; but this is only saying that Christianity is no longer in touch with modern life and modern thought, and that, however much certain highly emotional men and women may be influenced by sensational preaching and the hypnotic conditions of the revival tent, the more thoughtful see in it only the modernised form of an old-world superstition.

It is this unconscious working of the environment that constitutes the greatest danger to Christianity, and holds out the greatest promise to Rationalism. The belief in the atoning blood of Jesus, in the virgin birth, and the resurrection falls with diminishing force upon the ears of a generation that is rapidly becoming familiarised with the fact that all these ideas are being affiliated to religious conceptions that are world-wide in their distribution, and which have their roots in the fancies and fears of our savage ancestors. The belief in miracles can appeal with but little strength to people who are living amid an intellectual environment that is simply saturated with the conception of undeviating and unconscious natural law. Even "Providence" begins to assume the form of an ingenious, but outworn, speculation to people who are learning to trace disease, crime, and poverty to defective sanitation and bad social conditions rather than to the anger of God

and the sinfulness of men's hearts. Our whole intellectual environment has undergone a profound modification; and this modification has made orthodox Christian beliefs as much out of place as would be the system of Ptolemy in a modern handbook of astronomy.

There is, however, one aspect of the Simultaneous Mission that, even to Freethinkers, must be full of significance. Christianity has to-day ceased, or almost ceased, to be a matter of individual conviction; it has become, instead, a matter of organisation. Mr. Aked admits mournfully that "the old phrases have lost their power—that is the simple fact, not with everybody, but with many, and those the best-brained men and women of our time." Still, the old phrases and the old beliefs exist; not, as I have said, in the shape of living, earnest, individual conviction, but in the form of wealthy trading corporations—for that is what the churches and chapels really are—who will spare no effort and shrink from no method that will perpetuate those institutions into which Christianity has crystallised. It is this phenomenon which is full of either promise or of peril to the cause of Freethought; and whether it be one or the other depends entirely upon the conduct of individual Freethinkers.

As a system of belief Christianity is no longer to be seriously feared. The day has gone, perhaps for ever, when it can even pretend to be in workable harmony with the best forms of contemporary life and thought. But organisations that can raise the sums of money that have been raised of late, that can purchase the silence of some and the speech of others, and can scatter its agents broadcast throughout the country, *are* to be feared, and they are living in a fool's paradise who think otherwise. Intellectual conviction hardly plays the important part in life that many of us are in the habit of believing; the majority of people are moved far more by skilful appeals to their prejudices and crafty flatterings of their passions. Incessant repetition is the great method of carrying conviction, and outward visible success the surest way to demand allegiance, so far as concerns the general public. It is useless our expecting, therefore, that merely because our case is the more logical, the more in harmony with facts, and more consonant with a rational reading of history, that we are therefore secure. Organisation must be met with organisation, and a repetition of fable on the one side checked by an insistent repetition of fact on the other.

Deeply injured as Christianity has been by modern scientific and sociological developments, its influence for evil is far from being a thing of the past. Apart from the evil with which all supernaturalism is instinct, there are not wanting signs that its representatives are making preparations for a strenuous effort to regain some of its lost ground. There have been several distinct victories secured by the Sabbatarian party during the last two or three years, and in one of the principal provincial cities the religious party on the School Board has recently given most unpleasant evidences of its strength. It is, of course, unlikely that we should ever get back Christianity in its old form; but what is to be feared is that we may see the game of the Protestant Reformation repeated, and a new and more accommodating form of Christianity established, which will serve as a set-back to twentieth-century Rationalism, as the Lutheran movement threw back the Rationalism of the sixteenth century. And, after all, whether progress is obstructed by a Christianity that smacks of the Dark Ages or by a Christianity that uses more modern language is a matter of small concern to the Secular reformer.

The remedy is in our own hands. We cannot hope to capture the average evangelical Christian, any more than the Christian can reasonably hope to capture the Freethinker. But we can safely hope, by pursuing proper methods, to influence, and ultimately to win, that large army of men and women who are out of touch with all the churches, and out of sympathy with all the creeds. But, to do this, organisation is absolutely necessary; and organisation must depend, finally, upon how much each individual is prepared to do for the cause that seems to him to be right. I am far from underrating the intrinsic strength of the churches, but I am painfully aware that *some* of their strength is due to Freethinkers' lack of cohesion and lack of

organisation. Let each Freethinker bear constantly in mind that his refusal to bear his share of the burden and to do his share of the fighting is not only casting a heavier load upon others; it is also increasing the strength of the common enemy. Numerically we are the weaker, but intellectually we believe that the strength lies with us, and this should tell, and, given fair conditions, must tell in the conflict between the forces of progress and reaction.

C. COHEN.

The Clergy and Christ.

ARCHDEACON DIGGLE has recently been discoursing in the North on clerical incomes, and the sympathetic *Carlisle Journal* heads a long extract from his sermon with the line, "A Plea for Poor Clergymen." But why plead for *poor* clergymen? Surely they ought to be poor if they are Christian believers, and still more if they are preachers of the Gospel of Christ. Their poverty—if it can be shown to exist—should be a proof of their piety, a triumphant evidence of consistent faith and life, a striking testimony to their sincerity, a distinctive feature which belongs to them of right, and of which no man should seek or be allowed to deprive them. Devout Christians, we are led to believe, are constantly subject to the temptations of the Devil—or, if we have really ceased to believe in the Devil, to those evil influences and seductions of the world of which he is the mythological representative. Why should Mr. Diggle, under the guise of fraternal solicitude, go out of his way to do the Devil's work? Why should he make these "poor" clergymen dissatisfied with their lot, disinclined to act up to what it is their mission to preach, disposed to cast sidelong glances at Mammon, and to endanger their eternal salvation by hankering after the "flesh-pots," the "loaves and fishes," and the "meat which perisheth"?

Mr. Diggle says he "does not speak in respect of his own personal want." No; *he* is all right. Somehow or other, he has reconciled it all to his conscience and creed. But how? He is well-to-do and comfortably circumstanced; and, in so far as he is so, it devolves upon him to explain how that is consistent with the precept and the example of his Divine Master, of the Apostles, and the early founders of the Church. Has he had some later revelation, which abrogates what has already been written, or is he a law unto himself? The same questions may be asked of higher dignitaries of his Church, to whom, having regard to the extent of their emoluments, they have a stronger application.

Let it be clearly understood what is the real complaint against the clergy—and, for the matter of that, against most ministers of religion. Is it suggested that men of more or less education, and special training, should devote themselves to public teaching day and night, and from year to year, and all the time live on thin air? Certainly not. Professors of science, scholars, literary men, lecturers—all naturally expect remuneration for their labors when they devote their lives and best energies to special spheres of exertion. If it were not so, the world of thought and research, of exposition and tuition, would be given over, in the main, to mere amateurism. Men of means are too few, and the leisured classes too much inclined to consult their own ease, for any real work and advancement to be achieved.

Archdeacon Diggle places the clergy on this platform of professional teachers, and urges their claims from that point of view. He says:—

"The condition of our clergy is rapidly growing serious; very serious in several ways. The number of University graduates offering themselves for Holy Orders is diminishing. In 1899, of the entire number ordained, sixty-six per cent. were graduates from Oxford or Cambridge; in 1900 the proportion had fallen to sixty per cent. Concurrently with this diminution of University clergymen, the general standard of the education of the people is constantly rising. In former times the clergy were recognised leaders of thought; if they fall from that position, the Church at large will suffer great loss."

Then he goes on to ask whether it is any wonder that the best University graduates, "even when very earnestly religious," hesitate to become clergymen. Look, he

says, at their prospects. And he fixes the average stipend at £190 a year, and enlarges upon the difficulties of maintaining a family upon that sum. Accepting his average for the sake of argument, one does not see that it is absolutely impossible to live upon that income. It would mean a great deal of self-renunciation, no doubt—including, it might be, enforced celibacy. Probably it would mean a very hard struggle. But are not these precisely the conditions most to be desired by those of the followers of Christ who are "very earnestly religious"? What is the use of pretending to be "very earnestly religious," and then sitting down and balancing the prospects afforded in the doing of the Lord's work against the prospects offered by any one of the ordinary secular professions? Here—it might seem to the truly pious view—God has ordered things, if they are as Mr. Diggle describes them, with a special intent to provide a test of the real earnestness of those who acknowledge his name and profess a desire to devote themselves to his service. "Leave all and follow me" is a command as applicable now as in the days when it is said to have been first uttered. Mr. Diggle, if he looks again at his own words, must see that he has passed the gravest possible reflection on "the best University graduates" he speaks of. At any rate, by implication, he impugns the strength and honesty of their Christian belief. He suggests a calculating spirit entirely at variance with the self-sacrifice and abnegation of worldly interests which, most of all, Christ appears to have demanded.

There is no parallel between the clergy and the professional teachers before referred to. The clergy engage to preach a Gospel, and by that Gospel they must be judged. Those who accept it must abandon all mere worldly desires, must give up all temporal possessions, must regard poverty as a blessing and riches as dangerous snares. The laborer, of course, is worthy of his hire; but what that hire should be is plainly shown by the example of Christ and his Apostles, who seem to have been content with the bare means of existence, living from hand to mouth, and moving about in a vagrant sort of way, caring nothing for the morrow, but relying on their Father in heaven to keep them alive. They did not stop to consider their worldly "prospects," as do these careful University graduates of whom Mr. Diggle speaks, apparently without condemnation.

It is not to the purpose to say that society and the conditions of modern life do not permit of an imitation of Christ's example. Why is this Gospel preached, this example belauded, if it is impracticable, or likely to be attended with undesirable results? It is a part of the stock-in-trade of the clergy, and they have no right to disavow it when they find it applied to themselves. If, as Mr. Diggle says, the clergy are poor, then we say that, on Christian principles, blessed are the clergy. But Mr. Diggle does not wish them to remain poor. He would like to see them as comfortably well-to-do as himself. That desire may indicate a good-natured feeling, but it is contrary to the spirit of Christian teaching.

Professor F. W. Newman, in his *Phases of Faith*, observes: "That to inculcate religious beggary as the only form and mode of spiritual perfection is fanatical and mischievous, even Rome will admit. Protestants universally reject it as a deplorable absurdity; not merely wealthy bishops, squires, and merchants, but the poorest curate. A man could not preach such a doctrine in a Protestant pulpit without incurring deep reprobation and contempt; but preached by Jesus it is extolled as divine wisdom—and disobeyed!" It is not even a counsel of perfection; it is preposterous nonsense, as are other teachings of Christ.

If Archdeacon Diggle is so concerned about the poor clergy—some of whom he describes as "half-starved"—why does he not suggest the apportionment to their wants of some of the quite too excessive incomes of the bishops? It is perfectly clear—whatever Christ preached—that our dear old friend, Dr. Temple, for instance, could do with considerably less than £15,000 a year. It isn't good for him to draw so much. Why doesn't he give half of it to the Clergy Sustentation Fund, for which Archdeacon Diggle pleaded? Why doesn't Mr. Diggle ask him to do so? If we saw something of this kind done, we should have a better opinion of the

higher clergy. But evidently the higher clergy do not think the rank and file are so badly off as Mr. Diggle represents; and perhaps, after all, that worthy gentleman has been painting too sad a picture.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Cost of Religion in America.

THE following summary of a *New York Herald* two-page article on the financial side of Christianity is taken from the *Truthseeker* of that city:—

"There are 187,800 churches, with a value of 724,900,000 dollars. Parsonages and other ecclesiastical property raise the total to 1,024,971,372 dollars. Last year the running expenses of the churches of the United States were 287,000,000 dollars. It required nearly 9,000,000 dollars for New York City alone. For the four cities of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston over 18,000,000 dollars was required, and this does not include new buildings, mission contributions, or general charities. Missionary Societies collect 25,000,000 dollars a year. It costs 14,600,000 dollars a year to maintain the Episcopal churches of this country, while the Presbyterian cost 20,375,000 dollars; Baptist, 12,348,000; Methodist, 26,267,000 dollars; and Roman Catholic, 31,185,000 dollars. The Sunday-school lesson papers, libraries, etc., cost 7,250,000 dollars.

"Trinity Church of New York is regarded as the richest church in America, it having large holdings of real estate; but St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, New York, has an income of about 200,000 dollars a year, while Trinity, also Episcopal, receives about 168,000 dollars a year. There are several Episcopal churches in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston having incomes of from 50,000 dollars to 130,000 dollars a year. The largest income of any Presbyterian church is that of the Brick, New York, which is 116,000 dollars a year; the next largest is the Second of Indianapolis, with 85,000 dollars. Madison-avenue, New York, has the largest income of any Methodist church—30,000 dollars a year. The wealthiest Baptist church is Fifth-avenue, New York; its income last year amounting to 145,000 dollars. The Rockefeller attend this church, and its income last year does not represent a fixed annual amount. While the Baptist churches have more than six times as many members as the Episcopalian, the cost of maintaining the latter is more than 2,000,000 dollars greater. The Episcopal church, in proportion to numerical strength, costs from three to five times as much for maintenance as either the Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Catholic.

"About 2,000,000 dollars a year is spent for Bibles by the American people, while 500,000 dollars a year goes for hymn-books and 60,000 dollars a year for prayer-books. The cost of religious periodicals and other literature amounts to 11,750,000 dollars a year. Last year the amount of money spent by all countries in the interest of Christianity amounted, as the figures show, to 1,009,369,494 dollars."

A Mighty Delusion.

EVEN so fanatical a preacher as De Witt Talmage stumbles on the truth occasionally. A late issue of the *New York World* quotes a recent discourse of the doctor, from which we extract the following: "There has been much destructive superstition abroad in the world concerning possession by evil spirits. Under the form of belief in witchcraft this delusion swept the continents.....So mighty was the delusion it included among its victims some of the greatest intellects of all time, such as Chief Justice Matthew Hale and Sir Edward Coke, and such renowned ministers of religion as Cotton Mather and Richard Baxter and Archbishop Cranmer and Martin Luther, and among philosophers Lord Bacon. That belief which has become the laughing-stock of all sensible people counted its disciples among the wisest and best people of Sweden, Germany, England, France, Spain, and New England." Now why did learned jurists, renowned ministers, acute philosophers, and the wisest and best people of widely-separated countries believe in witchcraft, and exhaust their best energies to suppress it, resorting to capital punishment to accomplish their end? It was because they believed in the teachings of that book labelled Holy Bible. They believed the Lord had declared, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and they acted in obedience to that command, and usually carried it out by burning them. The statute-books of most Christian countries, extending even far into the eighteenth century, were filled with enactments against sorcery and witchcraft. Protestants were equally guilty with Catholics in executing this law of God, and millions perished in obedience to the damnable decree.—*Progressive Thinker.*

Acid Drops.

THE *Glasgow Herald* is wild because "atheists and anti-clericals" assembled at a Good Friday banquet in Paris to eat "pork and ham sausages" while Catholics were observing Lent. Our contemporary regards this function as a "most offensive display of intolerant aggressiveness." But is not this very great nonsense? Intolerance consists in wanting to compel other people to do what you want to do yourself, and the Paris Freethinkers are not guilty of this misdemeanor. Does the *Glasgow Herald* really think that "atheists and anti-clericals" should fast during Lent out of respect to the Catholics? Why should not the Catholics eat pork and ham sausages out of respect to the Freethinkers?

Another piece of anti-clerical intolerance, in the *Glasgow Herald's* opinion, is the objection to the sign of the Cross on the gates of public cemeteries. But it seems to us rather a piece of Catholic intolerance to put the sign of the Cross there. Public cemeteries are for *all* citizens, irrespective of sect or denomination. Why then should the symbol of *one* sect be set up in defiance of all others? As the orator said, we pause for a reply.

"Bishop and Atheist" is the heading of a paragraph that is going the round of the newspapers. It relates the affable condescension of the new Bishop of London, who left a swell acquaintance to run and shake hands with a horny-handed Atheist who sometimes opposed him in Victoria Park. The Bishop's swell acquaintance was astonished to learn the horny-handed's religious status. "Not an Atheist, surely?" he queried. "Yes," said the Bishop, "or, at all events, he fancies he is; but he's such a pleasant fellow, and there's a lot of good in him." And then, after a pause—"And goodness can only have one source." Well, it may only have one source, but it seems to have many issues. One man's goodness leads him to hard work and thirty bob a week, and another man's goodness leads him to a bishopric and ten thousand a year. The Bishop can afford to smile.

Week-end tickets are playing the deuce with church attendance in Scotland. The fact was deplored at a recent meeting of the Dumfries Free Presbytery. Naturally we condole with the poor men of God who see their business cut out of their hands by the wicked railway companies.

Edinburgh Sabbatarianism is up in arms. The Museum of Science and Art is now open on Sunday afternoon, and a goodly number of people take advantage of the opportunity, much to the disgust of "the Lord's Day" gentry, who stand outside and try to persuade them to turn from their evil courses and go to the house of God. Rev. Dr. A. B. Cameron has been thundering against this desecration from the pulpit. But nobody minds him—except his own congregation, and some of them will probably slip off some Sunday afternoon to the Devil's house in Chambers-street.

Mr. P. Shaughnessy ventilates what appears to be a legitimate grievance in the *Glasgow Evening Times*. The police have stopped his Freethought lectures in Sauchiehall-street, but they allow pious young men to hold forth in the same street with the assistance of a harmonium. This is a bigoted distinction. But a letter to a newspaper is not a sufficient protest. Mr. Shaughnessy should persist in holding his own meeting while other meetings are permitted. That would bring the matter to a crisis—probably in the police court.

Old Dowie, who caused a bit of a sensation amongst the medical students in London, having returned home to Chicago, is now arranging to spend fifty thousand dollars in furnishing a swell residence for himself, which he proposes to inhabit until the Lord calls him to occupy his mansion in the New Jerusalem. Good old Dowie! Evidently he finds the game pay. There's nothing like religious humbug to fill your pockets, if you only catch on with the faithful.

Mr. J. T. Hall, of Darlington, has gone off to Buenos Ayres, where Jabez Balfour went for a holiday. He has been chairman of the School Board and justice of the peace, and was the only layman in the town who held the Bishop of Durham's licence to preach. His defalcations are said to amount to £50,000 for certain, and the investigations are still proceeding. A warrant is out for his arrest.

There is something specially significant about the following paragraph which appears in *Central Africa*, the monthly record of the Universities' Mission, for April: "Church newspapers should not be sent to the African clergy. The Bishop of Likoma makes this a very urgent request, as he considers it very unsettling to read so much controversial matter."

No doubt it is "unsettling," and it would be still more unsettling if Dissenting papers were forwarded as well. If the missionaries are likely to be so much disturbed, what about

the heathen converts? Are we not hiding away a vast amount of vital information from these poor, untutored people whom we try to convert?

In the ordinary way, and presenting a bold and brazen front, it is difficult to convert them to our jumble of Western religious incongruities. But suppose the missionaries allowed the natives to know how little they (the missionaries) really accept of the Bible they offer, and how violent are the dissensions of Christian people upon points of all-important doctrine, what chances are there of inducing the heathen to relinquish the faith of their ancestors—rough and crude as it may be—for these Christian dogmas which, if we take a consensus of the sects, and all their contradictions of each other, no one seems in the end to wholly believe in?

The Abbé Renard, professor at Ghent University, member of the Belgian Academy of Sciences, and honorary Doctor of the Universities of Edinburgh and Dublin, has left the Jesuits and the Catholic Church for Freethought. As we stated last week, he has taken this step mainly from the enlightening influence of the works of Darwin, Lyell, and Herbert Spencer.

The Abbé, in a letter to a friend published in the *Etoile Belge*, says: "A breath of fresh life is passing over the human intelligence. Ideas which for centuries have dominated the conscience are giving place to a larger and truer conception of reality. Science moves on, and each one of its conquests is a decisive blow at the supernatural. I claim, late it is true, but with all the force of my conscience as an honest man, my right to liberty. If my resolution does but command your admiration, I am, at any rate, sure that between the unbelieving priest and the man who wishes to be sincere your esteem will not hesitate." The *Christian World* understands that the ex-professor has just married, in London, a Brussels lady.

A priest preached a mission sermon on eternity and death in Nantes Cathedral. At the close he told the congregation that in twenty years' experience he had always observed that the mission was followed by a sudden death in the parish. Shortly after leaving the pulpit the priest fell dead in the aisle.

A national memorial to Queen Victoria is proposed to be erected near Buckingham Palace. Already a large sum has been subscribed—quite sufficient, one would think, for the purpose. But, of course, the clerical toadies—the pious, sycophantic crawlers before the throne—must try to make themselves even more despicable than we had supposed them to be. They are now asking the little children in the Sunday-schools to subscribe their pennies to the memorial. A great effort in this direction is about to be made. The idea—though it is already rather more than that—is so sickening and shameful that it is impossible to write of it in any terms except of indignation and contempt. Let us hope that the children will spend their money in toffee—also the pence given them for the missionary box. Why don't the contemptible belly-crawlers who have got up the memorial pay for it themselves, and not descend to cadging little children's ha'pence?

Says the Rev. Dr. Horton in *Great Thoughts*: "The pulpit will rapidly obtain control over the new century when the people are assured that preachers are not seeking livings, but souls, and preach for love, not for money." Ah, yes, when the people are so assured, but how *can* they be when they see so much self-seeking and mendacious hypocrisy, such an evil, grasping spirit both in the Church and in Dissent? Dr. Horton points out the drawback, but is quite too sanguine as to results, even if the obstacle were at once removed. The people of the new century are only concerned with ministerial greed in so far as it is a glaring inconsistency between teaching and practice; but beyond that—and of far greater importance—is the inculcation of false and monstrously absurd ideas, and it is upon that rock that Christianity will split. It is foundering already.

In regard to the falling off in ordinations for the Anglican Church, a pious person writes to the *Church Times* pointing out what he thinks is a likely explanation. It seems we do not use in the daily offices of the Church the Collect embodying our Lord's own words: "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."

Now really "who'd ha' thought it!" Here we have been going on, and expecting University graduates to offer themselves, and this special petition—so applicable to the urgent need—finds no place at all in our Prayer Book, and is not even embodied in an Ember Collect.

"Surely," says this writer in the *Church Times*, "we 'have not' because we 'ask not'; and our faithless neglect in this respect must be displeasing, as it is also dishonoring, to the Lord of the harvest." As they say at football matches, "Play up Villa" or "Play up Albion," so we are emboldened by

the *C. T.* to say "Play up Lord," and all those who offer supplications to him.

The *Examiner* contains a letter on the Birmingham School Board and the religious question in which there is a great deal of common sense. But unfortunately it comes after the event. The writer says, truly enough, that "a large proportion of the ratepayers' schools have become practically Anglican schools. The clergy infest them, and bring with them their methods and doctrines, and surround their ministrations with Church atmosphere." At the close of his letter "Non-Con." says: "There was really no strenuous action taken at the late election, and thus both ministers and laymen allowed the education of 60,000 children, a large pupil teacher centre, a day training college, &c., to pass into the hands of Catholics and Churchmen, and they have themselves to thank for it. Oh, for an hour of Dale and Dawson!"

It seems that even religious journals have been badly hit during the past year, if we may judge by the following statement which appears in an editorial address in the *Examiner*, which has now arrived at its first birthday: "Probably since the newspaper stamp duty was removed there has been no year so dangerous and difficult in the history of British journalism as the last twelve months."

Lord Balfour, in a letter to the Earl of Moray, who was one of the signatories to a petition asking his lordship to reconsider his decision to open the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art on Sunday afternoons, says: "In point of principle I am unable to agree that a visit to a museum is a contravention of any Divine law. If a citizen of Edinburgh may not go to a museum, by what right does any one of us enjoy a walk in our own, or somebody's else's, garden? In deciding the practical question, I think we must keep in view the extent of the innocent gratification as well as improvement offered to those whose opportunities for both are otherwise limited. I believe that in these respects the advantages will be very great as compared with the amount of labor involved. Having regard to this, and bearing in mind the resolution of the House of Commons, I had but little difficulty in coming to the conclusion that it was my duty to decide the question of Sunday opening in the case of the Edinburgh Museum in the way I have done."

Over the great question of the King's Declaration against Romanism, the *Rock* threatens Lord Salisbury in these terms: "We demand that an appeal be made to the electorate before the slightest alteration be made in the Statutory Declaration required of the Sovereign of this country. Let this be ignored, and Lord Salisbury will find that Protestant patience has its limits." To which rhodomontade rational people will be inclined to exclaim, "Fiddlesticks!" We can't have a general election on such a question. The notion is absurd. It is only a squabble between two Churches. There is not much to choose between them. The Romish Church is intolerant and aggressive, but so has been the Anglican Church whenever it has had a chance, especially with unbelievers. It may be well to preserve the Protestant succession, not as if it were a blessing, but as possibly better than Roman accession. Still, there are offensive phrases in the Declaration which may well be removed without any interference with the general principle. These phrases should be expunged in the interests of sectarian peace. Meanwhile, and with these reservations, we exclaim: "A plague o' both your houses!"

Canon Knox-Little has, according to the *Rock*, been delivering impassioned addresses in St. Paul's Cathedral. His passion—in discoursing on the Lord's "passion"—seems to have carried him away. He implored people to have "a manly religion untainted by the wretched unbelief and scepticism of the day." This "manly religion," according to his discourses and the teachings of his Church, consists mainly in relying for salvation on the execution of a poor, wretched carpenter some two thousand years ago in an obscure corner of our planet. The "wretched unbelief" he talks of means self-reliance and self-redemption, and scorns the shifting of one's sins on to an innocent person who lived ages ago, and probably was not without sin himself. At any rate, he had a violent temper at times, as Knox-Little appears to have; but Knox-Little has even less originality about him than Christ had, and his voice is but the mechanical working of a feeble phonograph.

An interesting correspondence appears in the Evangelical Church paper, *The News*, on "The Fatal Opulence of Bishops." The letter of "A Diocesan Bishop" to the *Guardian* is torn to pieces. That Right Rev. Father-in-God is accused, with other Fathers-in-God, of knowing nothing about, and apparently caring nothing about, the lower clergy, "or even of the few wicked parish clergy who here and there most wrongly are suffered to exist, known to all but the Bishops, blots and stains in the Church."

"Presbyter" writes: "'A Diocesan Bishop' did not make quite clear what he meant to prove by publishing the account

of his expenditure. If he aimed at showing how reasonable it is that so large a proportion of the Church's resources should be assigned for his maintenance in comparison with that which falls to the lot of the mere presbyter, I fear he will have discovered that his letter has proved unconvincing. He has only shown the opulence of the ideas a Bishop is able to indulge, in contrast, not with the peers of the realm with whom he is now classed, but with those who were but lately his peers in the Church's service, and over whom he now presides."

Then, in the course of a merciless analysis, "Presbyter" points out that the "Diocesan Bishop" puts down "a sum as necessary for the education of his children larger, I suppose, than the whole average income of the beneficed clergy of his diocese, and for his holiday a sum equal to half the average income of the unbeneficed, some of whom are probably his equals in learning and length of service. His own estimate of the *minimum* income on which he could exist is apparently somewhat over £3,000, and this only if he may largely reduce his charities, which he seems to suggest are so large because other people expect them to be so, and he lacks the courage to reduce them to the figure at which he thinks they ought to stand. No one, I think, charges the Bishops with not making an excellent use of their money, or supposes that any of them hoard; but the necessity of a household whose cost reaches £2,500 is becoming less and less apparent to many."

"Is the Church of England, as by law established, an organised hypocrisy?" is the inquiry of a correspondent of the *Church Times*. Off-hand we should reply "Yes." But the anxious inquirer says that this is not *his* question, but "it is one that is being asked in perplexity and wonder by the outside world, and Churchmen reply only by an abashed silence." No wonder.

Encyclopædia Biblica, vol. ii., seems to have occasioned this somewhat fierce interrogation. "Thirty years ago," writes the *C. T.* correspondent, "nay, even twenty years ago, the publication of that volume, with its articles on the Gospels by Dr. E. A. Abbott and Professor Schmiedel, would have caused an outcry that would have reverberated throughout the length and breadth of the land. Now we fold our hands in slumberous contentment. Yet Professor Schmiedel maintains that passages which he quotes 'prove not only that in the person of Jesus we have to do with a completely human being, and that the divine is to be sought in him only in the form in which it is capable of being found in a man; they also prove that he really did exist, and that the Gospels contain at least some absolutely trustworthy facts concerning him.' I hope that your readers will appreciate to the full the patronising tone of the last sentence; Mr. Pecksniff himself could not be more impartial than its writer."

Now, really, where does any similarity to Mr. Pecksniff come in? If we must have any of Dickens's characters introduced, we might say with more point that this correspondent presents himself as a combination of Stiggins and Chadband. His letter, in its long and sanctimonious whine, smacks of each. In religious circles we come across these composites frequently. It is, perhaps, an accident that the *C. T.* correspondent—who may be a very estimable gentleman—so presents himself. We can only judge of him by what he writes.

He deprecates Canon Cheyne's connection with the *Encyclopædia*, and strives to do him an injury by directing attention in the *Church Times* to the fact that he is not only Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford, but also Canon of Rochester. He adds, quoting the *Academy*, that "at least one other Church dignity of high position has contributed to its columns."

"Speaking," he says, "for myself, I must confess that I find the policy of silence pursued by the Church's leaders perplexing and bewildering in the extreme. Are High Churchmen so paralysed by complicity with *Lux Mundi*—in which some of us feared they saw a willingness to give ground before every new assailant, even if he should attempt to subvert the foundations of our faith, or even an uneasy, half-concealed feeling that more than half of Christianity was unsound—that they dare not denounce the condonation of heresy for fear that heretics may be found in their own ranks?"

"Are Low Churchmen," he continues, "so busied about the illegality of incense, or so fluttered and flattered by a recent appointment, that they, too, keep silence when the Incarnation and Resurrection and the Divinity of our Lord are attacked 'under the auspices' (as the *Academy* truly says) of the Church's 'own dignitaries'? If they continue so, the plague will go on until the younger sons of the Church will assume that the old doctrines of the Christian faith are untrue, and are merely retained for the amusement or the useful deception of the ignorant, and those who, like myself, do not believe that the Apostles were fools or impostors will have

eventually to seek a home elsewhere than in 'Establishment.'"

The Rev. P. Carnegie Simpson, M.A., of Renfield Church, Glasgow, has issued a second edition of his work, *The Fact of Christ*. He writes a new preface, in which he says: "The articles recently published by Dr. Schmiedel, of Zurich, and the late Professor Bruce, of Glasgow, in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* cannot but suggest to many that the very starting-point of the argument in these lectures is made impossible by modern criticism. Dr. Schmiedel leaves us with an historical fact of Christ that is no more than a 'thing of shreds and patches'; Dr. Bruce gives us little or no ground for regarding Jesus as being historically more than a lofty teacher and notable healer—the child, in many things, of his times, but with spiritual intuitions truly and happily conceived."

Reviewing the notable work by Dr. George Adam Smith on *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, the *Examiner* says: "Dr. Smith insists on the injury done to faith by unintelligent defence of the Old Testament, 'its discrepancies, its rigorous laws, its pitiless tempers, its open treatment of sexual questions, the atrocities which are narrated by its histories and sanctioned by its laws.' Modern criticism came not a moment too soon if we were to be saved from the dilemma either of believing all this to be the declared will of Deity or believing nothing."

Here is an admission by the *Congregational Examiner*: "That into records so ancient, around personalities so distant, legend has woven itself, we are prepared to believe; but the modern mind, not less than the mediæval or the patristic, demands assurance that the amazing story of God's dealings with Israel is substantially and broadly historic. We are prepared to concede much more than was common fifty years back, to the human element in what we call revelation; but we are no less firm in insisting that the sublime truths which broke over the spirits of the Old Testament seers were a result of the co-operation of the Divine Wisdom. Dr. Smith is able to show how, in the life story of David, we have a sanction of 'the Spirit of Christ' such as the Law did not contain, and how, here and there, are glimmerings of the immortal hope."

The review from which these extracts are made is written by the Rev. Silvester Horne. The "saving clauses" we give, but for the present pass by. It is sufficient to know that Christians are "climbing down." The so-called "Word of God" is no longer, even with preachers of the Gospel, "God's Word," truly and entirely. There is "legend interwoven in it." Many portions are doubtful, and all the faithful have to rely upon is the assurance that *broadly*, in regard to the Old Testament, there is some historic basis.

It seems that the Anglican Church, after all, contains at least one parson who is sane on the question of Sunday observance. This sensible cleric is the Rev. Conrad Noel, curate of St. Mary's, Paddington Green. He has published a book called *The Day of the Sun* (David Nutt, Long Acre), to which the *Sunday Chronicle* devotes a column review. Mr. Noel goes "bald-headed" for the survival of Puritanism with which we are afflicted in this "Merrie England" of ours. "The sin of Sabbath-breaking," he says, "is entirely an invention of the Puritan mind." He shows that Christ was not a Sabbatarian, and that even the dourest of the reformers, Calvin, would take part in a game of bowls on Sundays after preaching.

The Rev. Conrad Noel thinks that the earnest multitude might be "pressing into the conscious fellowship of religion but for the narrow and blighting action of the religious bullies, the loud-tongued minority of the pious who bind on men's shoulders burdens too grievous to be borne." Whether there would be any such "pressing" even if the religious bullies were prevented from having their way is a question quite open to argument; but it is certain that rational, liberal-minded people will hold aloof from religious communions as long as the latter are associated with narrow and blighting Sabbatarian ideas.

This outspoken cleric looks forward to a "free Sunday, a holy day of spontaneous worship, not forced knee-drill; of instruction in the art of life; in political, economic, domestic science; in poetry, music, and other arts; of games and sports; of social entertainment and merry-making." Fancy sports and games and merry-making on the blessed Sabbath!

The *Sunday Chronicle* asks very pertinently: "Why is it that the clergy wield so slight an influence on the mass of the people, and that, though still in the shackles of Puritanism, the nation is, for the main part, indifferent to church or chapel? Because there is not vitality enough about their methods to inspire the people; because the religion of the pulpit is so often a mere rattling of dry bones and mumbling of barren words." And it adds: "The English Sunday numbs the faculties of the masses, it does not quicken them; and it is very refreshing to see a clergyman with courage

enough to advocate the emancipation of the Sunday from these fetters, so that every man, while preserving the right of labor to the day of rest, should secure the equally obvious right to apply his Sunday, without shame, to the cultivation of himself in the pursuit of beauty, art, or mirth."

The Manchester *Umpire* publishes, under the heading "Truth at Last," a special article on "How Home Missions are Worked," by someone who signs himself "A Revivalist," and who undoubtedly knows all about these attempts at spiritualisation, especially from behind the scenes. He recognises that they have no appreciable effect on "outsiders," but simply draw those who are already "saved" from their ordinary places of worship. The missionaries "entertained the sensation-loving section of the Christian community to a form of religious variety business which they could procure nowhere else at the time, while the lapsed masses, that we had been so very enthusiast'c in inviting, just went on their way as though we were not."

The article throughout is a damning indictment and exposure of revival methods. Take, for example, the following passage: "One of the first postulates of my creed was to deny all goodness not molded on the approved ecclesiastical plan, so that, if I saw a publican sending a good hot dinner to a poor sick man, I must still regard him as a candidate for perdition, so long as he retailed pints of fourpenny to those able to pay for and strong enough to drink them. When I chanced across a chorus-girl as chaste as Diana and as pure as an angel, I must still hold her as a child of the Devil, so long as she consorted with people who did not wear the orthodox length and number of skirts. Moral convulsion, and moral convulsion alone, was the sign-manual of salvation. But here comes the funny part of it all. Exceptions had to be made, because it would never do to attack a respectable civic magistrate, who might be necessary to fill 'chairs' at our assemblies, in the same fashion as we should attack the working-class sinner. In such case we just simply waived the absoluteness of our special 'milling' process as *sine quâ non*, and went on thumping at the humbler fry as creatures of deplorable degenerateness."

A sanitary Testament for use in the administration of oaths has been put on the market. It is bound with white celluloid, instead of leather, and it can, therefore, be washed and disinfected from time to time.

In a remote country district a certain Bishop was travelling in a third-class compartment, and at the next stopping place a navy got in. The Bishop adjusted his apron after the usual manner, and surveyed the surrounding country from the window. After a time the navy addressed his lordship: "Curate, sir?" The Bishop hesitated a second, and then blandly replied, "I was once." "Ah!" sympathetically retorted the navy; "drink, I suppose."

After a long agitation, the Castle grounds at Nottingham have been thrown open to the public on Sundays.

As showing the manner in which Christianity and civilisation are being spread by Europeans in China, the following account from the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* is interesting. Describing a railway journey to Peking, he says that on the way the German guard showed him into a compartment in which two Boxers were being taken thither to be sentenced. He then continues:—"Good heavens, what miserable creatures! A man of about sixty years of age, nothing but skin and bone, crouches by the side of a lad of about fourteen, whose round, child-like eyes look harmlessly out into the world. They are tied together by their pig-tails. In front of these two dangerous beings stand two gigantic riflemen with fixed bayonets. The old man is the boy's father. He had fired from the ruins of his village at the railway sentinel, who was walking down the line, and who then took him prisoner. The little boy was in possession of an old German cuirassier pistol as used in the war of 1870-1871, and for this he was also arrested. A highly wise State weeded out these weapons, and sold them at threepence apiece to a firm which agreed to sell them only abroad. 'But,' said I to the German non-commissioned officer who was acting as guard, 'with that thing the boy can do no harm.' 'That is true,' said he, 'but he was armed, and no quarter is given them. They have not got long to live.' Did the old man suspect of what we were speaking? He began to speak most excitedly to all present, and a young man who spoke Chinese told us he was saying he would take all the blame upon himself, and would willingly die. The lad's hand stole into his father's, and he gazed affectionately up at the old man. This was too much for me. I hastily left the compartment, and relieved my feelings outside by the most awful swearing. The curses were directed against the devil in man, and against the so-called justice which finds it quite right that the property of whole populations should be destroyed, and then gives no quarter to the desperate and impoverished subjects when they act rashly. Sentence of death even for children who are not able to use a weapon!"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 14, North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road; at 7.30, "The Fable of Jesus Christ."

April 21, Birmingham; 22, Coventry; 28, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—April 14, Athenæum Hall; 21, New Brompton; 23, Public Debate with the Rev. Henry Alcock at the Athenæum Hall; 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.

H. LEWIS.—Why do you refer to Dr. Pinnock for the last words of Jesus? That learned gentleman was not present at the crucifixion. Read the Gospels for yourself, and you will find that there are several last words ascribed to the dying Nazarene. We are well aware that "It is finished" is one of them. According to another account, he cried out with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. But *what* he cried is left a mystery.

G. HOLLOWAY asks whether it is true, as he has been told by a Christian friend, that Mr. G. J. Holyoake stated to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes that if the Christian Church of fifty years ago had acted like the West London Mission he (Mr. Holyoake) would never have founded the Secular Society. We cannot answer this question from personal knowledge. Still, we are pretty confident that Mr. Holyoake never uttered such nonsense; though we should find no difficulty in believing that it had been put into his mouth by the author of "The Atheist Shoemaker."

J. SEDDON.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for your valued cuttings.

R. BELL.—The debate between Mr. Foote and the Rev. Mr. Coles will not be published as you suggest. The rest of your letter is being attended to. One Share in the Freethought Publishing Company is enough for "a poor miner." We wish every member of the party would support it in proportion.

J. E. STANNARD.—Address, Leighton Hall, Kentish Town, London, N.W. Pleased to receive your interesting letter. Pamphlet sent.

L. COLEMAN.—We cannot give opinions as to the National Democratic League, or other political bodies, in these columns.

J. F. COOKSON.—Your question shall be answered in our next.

B. W. S.—Glad to hear from you in a happier frame of mind. Miss Vance will attend to the matter of the receipt.

T. ROBERTSON, secretary of the Glasgow Branch, has removed to 1 Battlefield-crescent, Langside, Glasgow. Branch secretaries, lecturers, etc., will please note.

T. WILMOT, secretary, Camberwell Branch, asks us to draw the attention of South Londoners to the fact that the open-air propaganda commences to-day (April 14) at Station-road, Peckham Rye, and Brockwell Park. We hope all three platforms will be well supported by the "saints."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Glasgow Herald—Dumfries Standard—Hong Kong Daily Press—Torch of Reason—Edinburgh Evening News—Truthseeker (New York)—Freidenker—People's Newspaper—Boston Investigator—Two Worlds—Public Opinion—Open Court—Humane Review—El Libre Pensamiento—Literary Guide—Glasgow Evening Times—Leicester Reasoner—Lucifer—La Raison—Sunderland Weekly Echo—Publishers' Circular—Bradford Observer—Hackney Gazette—Secular Thought—Liberator.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

THE Athenæum Hall was almost unpleasantly crowded on Sunday evening. Every bit of standing room was occupied, and the doors had to be shut against many persons who desired to gain entrance. Mr. H. Snell occupied the chair to everybody's satisfaction. Mr. Foote opened a discussion on "Evolution and Religion," speaking for half an hour, and was followed by the Rev. J. B. Coles in a speech of the same length. Mr. Coles presented his case with the utmost courtesy and good feeling, and if he did not convince the audience he secured their attention and gained their respect. Each disputant spoke twice subsequently, and the discussion ended within the two hours. Owing to the holidays, there were Freethinkers present from Land's End to John-o'-Groat's. No doubt the country friends were specially glad of the opportunity to hear a debate.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening (April 14) in the Secular Hall, New Church-street, Camberwell, taking for his subject "The Fable of Jesus Christ," with special reference to the Resurrection. It is some time since Mr. Foote last lectured in South London, and the local "saints" should try to advertise this lecture amongst their more orthodox friends and acquaintances.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures this evening, Sunday, April 14, at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, taking for his subject, "What Does the World Owe to Christianity?" This is an important question, and no doubt it will elicit an interesting debate.

The Glasgow friends are preparing for the National Secular Society's Annual Conference, which will be held in their city on Whit-Sunday. They hope to greet a large number of delegates and visitors from England. An announcement of the provision made for their entertainment will appear in an early number of the *Freethinker*.

Number thirteen of *La Raison*, the new organ of International Freethought, contains a long and excellent account of the National Secular Society and its work, from the pen of Mr. E. R. Woodward, of the Camberwell Branch. Mr. Woodward writes nearly as well in French as he does in English. Had we retained a capacity for blushing at our age, and with our experience, we should have turned as red as a lobster at the paragraphs relating to the N. S. S. President. The rest of Mr. Woodward's article is quite unexceptionable. He speaks modestly enough of the good work of his own Branch in South London, and gives the readers of *La Raison* a lively description of the London open-air meetings and demonstrations. We beg to thank him for representing the party so well in the columns of that journal.

Mr. Cohen delivers three lectures to-day (April 14) in the Court Room, Canon-street, Aberdare. We hope he will have good meetings, and we shall be glad to have his personal report of Secular prospects in South Wales. We understand that he will meet Mr. Treharne-Jones, the Church of England clergyman who seceded to Secularism, and is now carrying on an active Freethought propaganda in the district.

The *Christian World*, in a leading article, suggests that Mr. Herbert Gladstone, in a recent speech, "might well have reminded us how his great father once quoted with approving emphasis certain lines of a Secularist prophet":—

People throughout the land
Join in one sacred band,
And save yourselves!
If you would happy be,
Free from all slavery,
Banish all knavery,
And save yourselves!

These lines are from the "questionable book" to which Mr. Gladstone alluded in one of his great speeches. It was a manual of Secular songs and ceremonies, edited by the late Mr. Austin Holyoake. Mr. Austin Holyoake will always be remembered with affection and esteem by those who knew him as an unassuming, hard-working Freethinker and, personally, a gentleman in the best sense of the term.

The Finsbury Branch held a successful social party at the Athenæum Hall on Good Friday evening. There was plenty of music, vocal and instrumental, and a couple of readings from Browning and Shakespeare by Mr. Foote. The company included a goodly number of ladies, and a capital sprinkling of young persons of both sexes.

The second (April) number has reached us of the *Leicester Reasoner*. It well sustains the promise of the first number. We wish it a long and useful career. Mr. Gould continues his interesting School Board Notes. We regret to note, however, that he believes discipline cannot be maintained in school without corporal punishment, unless the ratepayers agree to maintain a much more expensive staff of teachers.

No doubt his belief is founded on experience, but we think he is mistaken. We regard the beating of children as always an evil. For a parent to beat his own children is bad enough, but to let them be beaten by strangers is still worse. The discipline that can only be maintained by the rod might as well be abandoned.

"Mr. Foote's journal, the *Freethinker*, so often referred to and quoted in these pages," says Mr. Joseph Symes in the *Liberator* (Melbourne), "is nearly twenty years old. We wish it another twenty years' life. This paper has been a decidedly useful one, and has been conducted with great ability."

We hope our appeal will be borne in mind on behalf of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, whose advertisement appears in another part of this week's *Freethinker*. Fresh Shares are being taken up, though not as rapidly as we thought we had a right to expect. This Company deals with a side of our movement which is certainly not the least important. It should therefore be supported by all the friends of the movement. A large number of Freethinkers could very well afford to take Shares, and some present Shareholders could increase their holding without inconvenience. We beg them all to give the matter their prompt and serious attention.

Grains of Salt.

DEAR MR. FOOTE,—The columns of the *Freethinker* are read by many thoughtful men, and so I account it a privilege to be admitted to your list of contributors. Your "Acid Drops" are sharp, incisive, and to the point, and must often send a shaft home to the mark. Even those who do not agree with your views must acknowledge that wit, irony, sarcasm, and ridicule have their legitimate functions, and that solemnity and dulness often call for these antidotes.

On the other hand, your "Sugar Plums" show that your system of ethics includes the cultivation of courteous and kindly feelings towards your opponents, even though the milk and honey of human kindness are not always to be found in proper proportion in their replies to you. May they learn the wisdom of the old adage, "*Fas est et ab hoste doceri*," notwithstanding that they do not approve of all your methods.

Now, I see you quite recognise the value of salt in the animal economy, as well as of sweets and acids. May I, therefore, be allowed to head my remarks, questions, criticisms, and proffered suggestions with the words, "Grains of Salt"?

Salt is good, and exceedingly useful, provided it has not lost its savor.

In all our controversies our words should be "with grace, seasoned with salt."

There is, unfortunately, a dark side to our nature, whether we are Christians, Theosophists, or Freethinkers. The "Old Adam," "the Lower Self," or "the remains of the brute," is in us all, however lofty our ideals, or however ambitious our schemes of philosophy, science, and religion.

A wise and gracious controversialist will endeavor to avoid any appeal to this "lower self" and its weaknesses, for altruism does not seek for the self-complacency following a selfish victory over an opponent who has been provoked and mortified by his own loss of self-restraint during the conflict.

As a Christian, I endeavor to act up to this obvious, though sometimes forgotten, standard.

Questions.

I have many questions to ask, for I have yet much to learn; and sometimes questions are suggestive and helpful, both to the learned and the unlearned, to the uninitiated and to the adept. I undertake to do my best to answer your questions, taking the Bible as my standard and test of truth; for, as a Christian, I account the Scriptures to be a revelation from God.

Questions.

1. Do Freethinkers generally consider that Evolution necessarily excludes the idea of a Personal God? Is it necessary to take it for granted that Evolution and Special Creation cannot possibly both be true? Are they mutually exclusive? Are there not indications that both methods have been used?

2. Do Freethinkers consider that moral evil can be sufficiently explained and accounted for by saying that this evil is the result of "the remains of the brute within us"?—I am, dear Mr. Foote, yours faithfully,

J. J. B. COLES.
16 Victoria Mansions, West Kensington, W.,
April 9, 1901.

A Baltimorean who has been collecting queer epitaphs from the old graveyards of the State found this one in a cemetery on the banks of the Little Choptank in Dorchester:—

"Little Willie was a darling;
Little thought we he would pass
Through the holy gates of heaven
When he ate that apple sass."

Hugo's "Swan Song."

"God-like pity fired with god-like scorn
Thy swift, live pen." —SWINBURNE.

THE last colossal production of Victor Hugo's old age was *The Legend of the Ages*. Its author tells us that it is not so much a fragment as a leaf. It is to his entire conception what the first page is to the book, the foundation-stone to the edifice, the overture to the symphony, the tree to the forest. His object, as announced by himself, is to represent Humanity as one moral being, with Progress for the real, though almost impalpable, link which unites the various portions of its history. Humanity has two aspects—the historical and the legendary. It is the latter which *The Legend of the Ages* is intended to exhibit—with a careful presentation, however, of historical coloring. This poetical framework is filled up by poems, chiefly historical, distributed into sixteen cycles, extending from a fictitious Creation to an equally imaginary Day of Judgment.

The first set of poems is grouped together as "From Eve to Jesus," linking two mythical characters together for poetical purposes. The pieces, with two exceptions, are upon scriptural subjects. Victor Hugo is obviously not quite at home upon "sacred" ground. The "heavenly muse" of Dante, Calderon, or our own Milton, has never visited him. Hugo knows the Hebrew Scriptures only as he knows Herodotus or Ossian, Homer or Sismondi. To write greatly upon Christian themes a man must feel as a Christian. This Victor Hugo was unable to do, even for the space of half an hour. Restraint was not Hugo's strong point; but, in dealing with Christianity, he is as frigid as Gibbon. His religious opinions never exceeded an emotional Deism, colored, in his youth, by the Voltairean influence of his mother, and, in his later years, influenced by a suspicion of Saint-Simonian Pantheism.

The second section, entitled "The Decadence of Rome," contains the noble poem of "Androcles and the Lion." Its position in the volume is in itself a stroke of art. Thus might Tacitus have written had he been a poet. The essence of a phase of Roman history is here distilled into a vial. Lesbia, with the elegant Catullus at her feet, pricking with her golden pin the breast of the slave who arranges her tresses; Delia walking with Tibullus, hundreds of gory shapes gibbeted upon either side of the road. Here, also, is the infamous Messalina. These, and such as these, are the bloody and lustful figures that are emblazoned, as it were, upon the darkening sky of Rome in the sunset of her decline.

We pass hurriedly over the third section, "Islam," with its wild and barbarous traditions, and come to the fourth, "The Heroic Christian Cycle." The "Parricide" opens the series, a composition of high and terrible power. Canute has murdered his father, an old man, ripe for the harvest of Death. The usurper, like many others, adorns by his genius the crown which he has gained by so black a crime. He is, of course, an earnest and sincere Christian. Death at last overtakes him. A bishop chants his solemn obsequies. The robed and shaven priests are certain that his beatified spirit is in heaven. When the tapers are extinguished, and the cathedral is wrapped in gloom, a naked, guilty, shivering shade, spotted with human blood, creeps forth to seek expiation, mocking the mummery of the priests.

The four following poems are in lighter mood. The fifth division is "The Knight-Errants." The general description of chivalry attains the point where the highest philosophical generalisation meets with the highest power of poetical expression. Hugo brings out, with wonderful skill, the salient points of chivalry. It is, as Bacon says, "a wild kind of justice." It is, as Victor Hugo calls it, with inimitable fineness, "a magistracy of the sword," an arm thrust forth out of the darkness, with this cry to the evil-doer, "Thou shalt die!"

"Eviradnus," the longest composition in the work, is admirable. The old donjon of Corbus is a perfect castle-piece. Hugo's genius appears to be peculiarly at home in mediæval buildings. He seems to have the architecture by heart, and to have watched and listened in such places. Every grim figure carved in stone,

every cranny and gargoyle, every clump of ivy, the very lichen on the walls, like rust on a sword, has told him its story. "The Thrones of the East" occupy the sixth book. The pantheistic raptures of "Le Satyre," representing the Renaissance, are eloquent of Hugo's command of language. They are beyond criticism, because they are beyond comprehension. "Ratbert," in the eighth cycle, headed Italy, is, we believe, considered in France a perfect gem. The horror is, perhaps, too atrocious for an English taste. The poem certainly verges upon melodrama too much.

But *La Rose de l'Infante* is altogether admirable. The character of Philip of Spain is drawn in a few powerful lines; his slow and cautious nature, veiling its hatred so long, and at last sending forth the great Armada, is embodied rather than described. The conception which links and yet contrasts the father and child; the strokes which bring out the Infanta's beauty and haughtiness; above all, the poetic art, which unites the child's rose with the father's fleet, and the moral which links the leaves scattered on the pond with the ships driven by the storm, are nothing short of marvellous.

This Legend of History closes with a glimpse into the future. The "Twentieth Century" is its fourteenth section. Then comes an extravaganza, "The Trump of Doom," a signal instance of the predominance of a rich pictorial fancy.

This work, as a whole, shows Hugo's power. It is full of exquisite passages and wonderful lines. The descriptions are marvellously varied and singularly fine. Hugo's hatred of kingcraft and priestcraft is awful. Shelley's outbursts against tyranny are weak and vacillating compared with Hugo's inexorable hatred. In spite of Hugo's learning, sinewy rhetoric, sounding declamation, pictorial richness, he falls short of the highest flights. It is easy to cite passages like Shelley, in their fluidity and indignation; like Macaulay, in their balanced antithesis; like Tennyson, in their compressed pictures and pregnant sentiment; like Dryden, in their sonorous strength. Hugo just fell short of being a very great poet. A man must be partaker of Shakespeare's all-embracing toleration before he can ascend to Shakespeare's altitude, "out-topping knowledge." True tolerance, wisdom, and judgment are the requisites for every great poet.

Although Hugo was not a second Shakespeare, we can still admire him. In the "Realms of Gold," as Keats called the pleasant Land of Poesy, we can offer our flowers at many shrines—we may wander where we will, stop where we like, and admire whom we love. Nothing is asked of us save this, that in our quest we keep two objects steadily in view—Truth and Beauty.

MIMNERMUS.

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

A Lecture by DR. ROBERT PARK.

II.

Now, I trust that any Christians who still find it possible honestly to retain their beliefs, and who honor us with their presence here to-night, will not feel offended at what I may say from this platform, because I conceive that, in lecturing to the Secular Society of Glasgow, I am at liberty to give more pointed expression to my convictions than if I had been addressing, for instance, a Young Men's Christian Association. But I point out that, in calling a spade a spade, I shall have the sanction of an eminent doctor of divinity who still believes in a "Heavenly Father," although he repudiates the verbal inspiration of the Bible. I direct the attention of all concerned also to the fact, expressly stated by Dr. Momerie, that the liberty claimed by him has been expressly recognised by the Law Courts. According to him, Dr. Lushington has ruled that "the Articles allow us to reject Scriptural narratives if they are inherently incredible, and to disregard Scriptural precepts if they are evidently wrong." Lord Westbury has ruled similarly; and that good man, but bad politician, William Ewart Gladstone, in his work Jesuitically entitled *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, affirms

"imperfect comprehension on the part of the inspired writers of what was communicated, imperfect expression of what they had comprehended, lapse of memory in oral transmission, errors of copyists in written transmission," and so on. What do you think of that, now? Is much more wanted to show that, even amongst those who earnestly wish to cleave by the orthodox notion of God, the authority on which that notion rests is discredited in every possible way? But suppose we assume, for the sake of argument, that that authority is still in force, and binding on us *in some sense or another*—say a Pickwickian. Let us just test this conception by its own content. How does "without body, parts, or passions" comport with his talking with Adam and others, and being a jealous and revengeful God, and "a man of war" (Exodus xv. 3)? One of his numerous *aliases* is "Lord of Hosts." In Judges xiv. 19 you can read: "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, and he went down to Askelon and slew thirty men." Truly a most dangerous "spirit"! Again, in his wars no quarter was given; all living things were put to the sword. In 1 Samuel xv. we read: "Thus saith the Lord, Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass"! There are two accounts of David's census. In 2 Samuel xxiv. it is written: "The *anger* of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David to number the people." And, after the numbering, "the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, and there died of the people seventy thousand men"! Just think of it! Seventy thousand men!—about a third of all the men this country recently sent out to Africa, and about six times as many as were killed or died throughout that dreadful campaign. Here you have God represented as himself instigating a procedure upon the part of David, in order that he may have an excuse to execute vengeance upon his so-called "chosen people." To-day we would regard such conduct as that of a fiend. Indeed, the second version of the same event—by an equally inspired writer, of course—actually does ascribe the instigation to a fiend called Satan, but who also rejoiced in various *aliases*. In 1 Chronicles xxi. it is recorded that "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number the people." Thus the impulse which one writer attributed to an angry God, a later writer declared to have emanated from the Devil, both writers being equally inspired by the God! But, although the later writer was ashamed, apparently, to ascribe the villainy of the instigation to God, he could see nothing ungodlike in the deliberate murder of seventy thousand men for what someone else had done! So much, then, for the conception of God without "passions," and, incidentally, for the morality of this idea as a whole.

"Almighty, most wise." Touching these elements of the conception, we may turn up Judges i. 19, and read: "The Lord was with Judah, and drove out the inhabitants of the mountains; *but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valleys, because they had chariots of iron.*" No wonder he couldn't help old Kruger! Chariots of iron! Great Scott! If he couldn't make a show before chariots of iron, how could he be expected to oppose an enemy who had marine guns and lyddite shells, and the determination of the very Devil at the back of them! Kruger should have known better than pray to a Mumbo Jumbo of that sort, *whose decrees are immutable, and whose designs are unchangeable*, more especially as the others were praying to him likewise, but had the sense not to lippen to prayer, but to provide themselves with chariots of iron and guns and shells, and a few prayerful and pushful generals!

"Abundant in goodness and truth." With reference to this element of character, I will again quote the Rev. Dr. Momerie, as you will find him expressing himself on p. 35 of the *Agnostic Annual*:—

"In regard to character.....he was destitute of the most elementary principles of morality. Take truthfulness: he had not a vestige of it. Exodus iii.: 'God said unto Moses, Thou shalt come unto the king of Egypt, and say unto him, Let us go three days' journey into the wilderness'—three days' journey! when they knew they were going for good! 'And ye shall not go empty; but every woman shall borrow of her neighbor jewels of silver and of gold'—borrow, knowing all the time that they would never be returned! 1 Samuel xvi.: 'The Lord said unto Samuel, I have rejected Saul from

reigning over Israel. I will send thee unto Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king among his sons. And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hears of it he will kill me. And the Lord said, Say I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord.' Think of it. The very sacraments of religion converted into diplomatic tricks! 2 Chronicles xviii.: 'I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and the host of heaven standing on the right hand and on the left. And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And there came a spirit, and said, I will entice him; I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. And the Lord said, Go and do even so.' If he could not conquer his enemies by fair means, he would conquer them by foul."

Finally, consider the Trinity element—"three persons of one substance, power, and eternity" in one unity. Here we have, of course, a flat contradiction in terms—that is to say, a plainly meaningless agglomeration of words. But let that pass. And let it be even assumed that a son might be co-eternal with a father, and also be an identical person. In Deuteronomy vii. we read: "The Lord keepeth covenant with them that love him, and repayeth them that hate him to their face to destroy them." The same God, as the Son, in Luke vi. 32, is reported to have said: "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do the same. Love ye your enemies. Then ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind to the unthankful and the evil." Here, then, it appears to me clear that there is an irreconcilable divergence of moral conception and practice revealed by an identical person concerning himself as Father in the one case and Son in the other. And these discrepancies might be multiplied. I think you will agree with me in saying that the imagination of man committed a dirty trick upon humanity when it foisted this purely imaginary word "idol" upon the minds of the unthinking and wholly ignorant people.

But I have surely recounted enough to make us all here feel proud that we own allegiance to no such product of morbid human imagination as this orthodox dogmatic conception; that we entirely repudiate the idea of such Godship, not maintaining even an Agnostic attitude towards it, but having no manner of doubt that an Atheistic attitude of mind is clearly the only one consistent with honest, manly sanity.

(To be continued.)

Was Abraham Lincoln a Christian?

BY THE LATE ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

MY DEAR MR. SEIP,—I have carefully read your article on the religious belief of Abraham Lincoln, and, in accordance with your request, I will not only give you my opinion of the evidence upon which you rely, as set out in your article, but my belief as to the religious opinions of Mr. Lincoln, and the facts on which my belief rests.

You speak of a controversy between myself and General Collis upon this subject. A few years ago I delivered a lecture on Mr. Lincoln in this city, and in that lecture said that Lincoln, so far as his religious opinions were concerned, substantially agreed with Franklin, Jefferson, Paine, and Voltaire. Thereupon General Collis wrote me a note contradicting what I had said, and asserting that "Lincoln invoked the power of Almighty God, not the Deist God, but the God whom he worshipped under the forms of the Christian Church, of which he was a member." To this I replied, saying that Voltaire and Paine both believed in God, and that Lincoln was never a member of any Christian church.

General Collis wrote another letter, to which, I think, I made no reply, for the reason that the General had demonstrated that he knew nothing whatever on the subject. It was evident that he had never read the life of Lincoln, because, if he had, he would not have said that he was a member of a church. It was also evident that he knew nothing about the religious opinions of Franklin, Voltaire, or Paine, or he would have known that they were believers in the existence of a Supreme

Being. It did not seem to me that his letter was worthy of a reply.

Now, as to your article, I find in what you have written very little that is new. I do not remember ever to have seen anything about the statement of the daughter of the Rev. Mr. Gurley in regard to Lincoln's letters. The daughter, however, does not pretend to know the contents of the letters, and says that they were destroyed by fire; consequently these letters, so far as this question is concerned, are of no possible importance. The only thing in your article tending to show Lincoln was a Christian is the following: "I think I can say with sincerity that I hope I am a Christian. I had lived, until my Willie died, without fully realising these things. That blow overwhelmed me. It showed me my weakness as I had never felt it before, and I think I can safely say that I know something of a change of heart; and I will further add that it has been my intention for some time, at a suitable opportunity, to make a public religious profession."

Now, if you had given the name of the person to whom this was said, and if that person had told you that Lincoln did utter these words, then the evidence would have been good; but you are forced to say that this was said to an eminent Christian lady. You do not give this lady's name. I take it for granted that her name is unknown, and that the name of the person to whom she told the story is also unknown, and that the name of the man who gave the story to the world is unknown. This falsehood, according to your own showing, is an orphan—a lonely lie without father or mother. Such testimony cannot be accepted. It is not even good hearsay.

In the next point you make you also bring forward the remarks claimed to have been made by Mr. Lincoln when some colored people of Baltimore presented him with a Bible. You say that he said the Bible was God's best gift to man, and but for the Bible we could not know right from wrong. It is impossible that Lincoln should have uttered these words. He certainly would not have said to some colored people that the book that instituted human slavery was God's best gift to man; neither could he have said that but for this book we could not know right from wrong. If he said these things, he was temporarily insane. Mr. Lincoln was familiar with the lives of Socrates, Epictetus, Epicurus, Zeno, Confucius, Zoroaster, and Buddha, not one of whom ever heard of the Bible. Certainly these men knew right from wrong. In my judgment they would compare favorably with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the Jews that crucified Christ. These pretended remarks must be thrown away; they could have been uttered only by an ignorant and thoughtless zealot, not by a sensible, thoughtful man. Neither can we rely on any new evidence given by the Rev. Mr. Gurley. If Mr. Gurley at any time claimed that Lincoln was a Christian, such claim was born of an afterthought. Mr. Gurley preached a funeral sermon over the body of Lincoln at the White House, and in that sermon he did not claim that Mr. Lincoln was in any sense a Christian. He said nothing about Christ. So the testimony of the Rev. Mr. Sunderland amounts to nothing. Lincoln did not tell him that he was a Christian, or that he believed in Christ. Not one of the ministers who claim that Lincoln was a Christian, not one, testifies that Lincoln so said in his hearing. So the lives that have been written of Lincoln by Holland and Arnold are of no possible authority. Holland knew nothing about Lincoln; he relied on gossip, and was exceedingly anxious to make Lincoln a Christian, so that his life would sell. As a matter of fact, Mr. Arnold knew little of Lincoln, and knew no more of his religious opinions than he seems to have known about the opinions of Washington.

I find also in your article a claim that Lincoln said to somebody that under certain conditions—that is to say, if a Church had the Golden Rule for its creed—he would join that Church; but you do not give the name of the friend to whom Lincoln made this declaration. Still, if he made it, it does not tend to show that he was a Christian. A Church founded on the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you," would not in any sense be a Christian Church. It would be an ethical society. The testimony of Mr. Bateman has been changed by himself, he having

admitted that it was colored—that he was not properly reported; so the night-walking scene given by James E. Murdoch does not even tend to show that Lincoln was a Christian. According to Mr. Murdoch, he was praying to the God of Solomon, and he never mentioned the name of Christ. I think, however, Mr. Murdoch's story is too theatrical, and my own opinion is that it was a waking dream. I think Lincoln was a man of too much sense, too much tact, to have said anything to God about Solomon. Lincoln knew that what God did for Solomon ended in failure, and if he wanted God to do something for him (Lincoln) he would not have called attention to the other case. So Bishop Simpson, in his oration or funeral sermon, said nothing about Lincoln's having been a Christian.

Now, what is the testimony that you present that Lincoln was a Christian?

First. Several of your witnesses say that he believed in God.

Second. Some say that he believed in the efficacy of prayer.

Third. Some say that he was a believer in Providence.

Fourth. An unknown person says that he said to another unknown person that he was a Christian.

Fifth. You also claim that he said the Bible was the best gift of God to man, and that without it we could not have known right from wrong.

The anonymous testimony has to be thrown away, so nothing is left except the remarks claimed to have been made when the Bible was presented by the colored people, and these remarks destroyed themselves. It is absolutely impossible that Lincoln could have uttered the words attributed to him on that occasion. I know of no one who heard the words; I know of no witness who says he heard them, or that he knows anybody who did. These remarks were not even heard by an "eminent Christian lady"; and we are driven to say that if Lincoln was a Christian he took great pains to keep it a secret.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(*To be concluded.*)

St. David.

The Man after God's Own Heart.

By G. W. FOOTE.

(*Continued from page 221.*)

QUEEN MICHAL, looking through a window, saw her royal husband "leaping and dancing before the Lord," and she "despised him in her heart." When they met she upbraided him. "How glorious," she exclaimed, "was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself."

Like a patriarchal polygamist, David would not stand reproach from one of his bedfellows. He told Michal that his family was better than hers; that he would be viler and baser still; and that the maidservants would honor him all the more. This prophecy was, perhaps, only too well grounded. David appears to have known the character of the "maids" about a court.

Not satisfied with this elegant retort, David divorced Michal from his bed; and therefore she "had no child unto the day of her death." This was a terrible punishment, for to be childless was the greatest curse that could befall a woman. Bayle remarks, with equal justness and point, that "many ladies would merit sterility, if all that was necessary to deserve it were to share the taste of Michal."

Scripture is brutal, but not consistent. According to a later chapter Michal had five sons. The Authorised Version tries to cover the contradiction by saying she "brought up" these children "for Adriel," but the Revised Version honestly allows that she "bare" them. Josephus differs from both accounts. He alleges that Michal had those five children by Phalti, who married her again after David put her away.

David had set up a palace at Jerusalem. Scripture calls it a house, and it was probably a small affair. But the chosen people were so backward in all the arts of civilisation that the carpenters and masons were imported from Tyre. Having provided for himself, David's next thought was to do something handsome for Jahveh. The God of Israel was still dwelling in a tent, but this seemed beneath his dignity, and the king offered to build him a house. Nathan the prophet conveyed the message to Jahveh, who declined the offer; telling David to mind his own business, and declaring his intention to continue living in a tent, as he was opposed to new-fangled ideas.

Like the shipwrecked sailors who, being unable to sing a hymn or pray, decided to make a collection, David was resolved to do something religious. He therefore went to war with the Philistines. Moab was next attacked. Its inhabitants were divided into two halves; one was spared, and the other massacred. David likewise "smote" Hadadezer, king of Zobah; capturing a thousand horses, and savagely houghing all but a hundred. David was fortunately able to "dedicate" much "silver and gold" unto the Lord, and piety covers a multitude of sins.

Scripture informs us that he "executed judgment and justice unto all his people." This is belied, however, by succeeding events. His throne was supported by force of arms, despite the discontent of his subjects. How otherwise can we account for the rapid success of Absalom's rebellion?

David's next war was with Hanun, king of Ammon, who had insulted his ambassadors. General Joab besieged Rabbah while the king "tarried still at Jerusalem," where he amused himself by debauching a married woman and murdering her husband.

From the roof of his house, one evening, David saw a beautiful woman washing herself. She was the wife of Uriah, a valiant soldier at the siege of Rabbah, risking his life in the king's service. Such a consideration should have been the best protection of his honor, but David listened only to the voice of passion, and, sending for the woman, he "lay with her."

Adam Clarke suggests that Bathsheba tried to entrap David into an amour. "How could any woman of delicacy," he inquires, "expose herself where she could be so fully and openly viewed? Did she not know that she was at least in view of the king's terrace?" But this is only special pleading to diminish the king's guilt. Bathsheba was probably as ignorant of being watched as Susannah; and what the text does not hint, it is unfair to assume.

Dr. Gill, catching at a sentence in the fourth verse, gives a pious and prurient turn to the story. Bathsheba was washing herself, "not for health and pleasure, and to cool herself on a hot day, but to purify herself from her menstruous pollution, according to the law in Leviticus x. 9." This is the reason "why she the more easily consented, and he was more eager to enjoy her. She was the more apt for concept, as Ben Garson notes."

Bathsheba proving with child, David endeavored, by a most contemptible trick, to father the bantling upon Uriah. The poor husband was summoned home, and David told him to sleep in his own house instead of spending the night in the palace. But Uriah declined any personal indulgence while his comrades were bearing the brunt of war. David then made him drunk, but even in that condition Uriah was capable of self-restraint. The wretched strategy had failed; the cuckolded husband had not shared the couch of his dishonored wife, and the king's bastard could not be saddled upon the abstemious soldier.

Saint David was in a fix, but he had not exhausted the resources of piety. There was one remedy left—the murder of Uriah. This he resolved on. With his own hand he wrote a letter to General Joab, and dispatched it by the hand of his victim. It contained this execrable order: "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." The order was obeyed, and Uriah was basely done to death. Josephus says he fell bravely, surrounded by enemies, many of whom he slew. According to a Rabbinical tradition, he was actually set to guard the Ark, whose champions could not fly, but were obliged to conquer or fall. Happily the poor fellow was spared one pang. He died ignorant of his wife's dishonor. Perhaps the vision of her beauty hovered before him as the blood oozed from his veins and the death-film clouded his eyes. Perhaps the voices of his children stole softly through his dying brain, and his last breath expired in a fancied kiss of beloved lips.

Uriah's corpse was probably eaten by jackals and vultures, but they were less pitiless than his treacherous king. Should there be a day of judgment, how will Saint David look as Uriah the Hittite strides up to denounce him?

Bathsheba became David's wife. But the thing "displeased the Lord," who sent his prophet Nathan to rebuke the sinner. David repented when he was threatened. The Rabbis say he cried so much that every now and then he drank a cupful of tears; indeed, during forty days and nights he shed more tears than the whole of Adam's posterity.

God punished David by killing Bathsheba's child. The poor creature was not even despatched quickly; it was "very sick" for seven days, and died to show the vicarious justice of its Maker. David then "comforted" Bathsheba. In the expressive, if inelegant, language of the Holy Ghost, he "went in unto her, and lay with her." Solomon was born of this intercourse, and "the Lord loved him."

(*To be concluded.*)

The life of the dead rests in the remembrance of the living.
—*Cicero.*

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, Charles Watts, "What Does the World Owe to Christianity?"

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Fable of Jesus Christ: With Special Reference to the Resurrection."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "Influence of the Drama on Life."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Raleigh College Hall, Effra-road, Brixton Hill): 7, John M. Robertson, "Imperialism in Action."

BATTERSEA ETHICAL SOCIETY (455 Battersea Park-road): 31.5, W. Heaford, "International Freethought."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11, Professor Earl Barnes, "Modern Tendencies in Literature."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11 and 7, R. P. Edwards.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, E. Pack.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.13, W. Neve.

COUNTRY.

ABERDARE (Court-room, Canon-street): C. Cohen—11, "Man—Whence and Whither?"; 2.30, "Ought we to Believe in God?"; 6, "Why Secularism is Better than Christianity."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward—11 (in the Bull Ring), "The Wickedness of God"; 3 (near Ship Hotel, Camp Hill), "Christian Ministers"; 7 (in Assembly Rooms), "What is Secularism?"—preceded at 6.30 by musical selections. April 17, at 8, Bull Ring, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secularist Platform." April 19, at 8, Nechell's Green, "Christian Ministers."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A lecture.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): Miss Lilie E. Goyne—11 and 6.30.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, A lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7; Mr. Rhodes, "A Secularist's Outlook."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, W. A. Rogerson, "Evolution: Geological Evidences." Lantern illustrations; slides by A. Flatters.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Quarterly Meeting; 7, G. Berrisford, "What the Bible Teaches." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "Modern Humanists—I. John Stuart Mill"; 8, Important business.

Lecturer's Engagements.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—April 14, Birmingham. 28, Glasgow. May 4 and 5, Stanley; 12, Birmingham; 19, Birmingham.

ATHENÆUM HALL, 73 Tottenham Court-road, W.

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between the

Rev. HENRY J. ALCOCK & Mr. C. WATTS

will be held in the above Hall on

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