

THE Freethinker

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Sweating the Bishops.

THERE is an illicit process known as "sweating" gold coins. It reduces their bulk and value to some degree, while leaving them still fit for circulation, unless they happen to come across a testing machine.

This process, though he does not regard it as illicit, is recommended by a Church clergyman as usefully applicable to the Bishops. *The Fatal Opulence of Bishops*, by the Rev. Hubert Handley, M.A., vicar of St. Thomas's, Camden Town, London, has already been referred to in our columns, and we now propose to give it a more extended notice. He dedicates his book as follows:—"To the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Fathers in God, the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England, in the desire to express for their high character, honor; for their sacred office, veneration; against their present social condition, revolt." Not being a Bishop, Mr. Handley is free to tell the prelates what he thinks, and what a good many others think, of their extravagant and "un-Christ-like" wealth. He hopes to see their incomes reduced, and to see them shifted out of their palaces into more modest dwellings. Which shows, if it shows nothing else, that Mr. Handley is a very sanguine gentleman.

What is a Bishop? Etymologically he is simply an overseer. He has the supervision of a diocese. He is the chief shepherd of the district, and is supposed to use his pastoral crook—generally costly and well jewelled—to draw out those of his sheep who have fallen into pits and ditches. When the sheep go astray morally he is supposed to rebuke them; and, in doing so, to show himself, like God Almighty, no respecter of persons. Such is the theory, but the fact is very different. Did not the great John Ruskin, many years ago, challenge the then Bishop of Peterborough to say whether he had ever publicly rebuked the sins of any man who was known to have more than £300 a year? And did not the Bishop maintain an obstinate silence in face of the challenge?

According to Mr. Handley—who does not wish to have the number of prelates diminished, but rather increased—a Bishop is "an ambassador of Christ." Just fancy now! Jesus Christ, as the Gospels tell us, was as poor as a church mouse. His "ambassadors" have thousands a year. Jesus Christ had one suit of clothes, which was not worth dividing at his death, and his executioners ruffled for it. His "ambassadors" wear a lot of expensive frippery. One of them, indeed, in this book, includes an item of £100 for "robes" in the catalogue of his expenditure. Jesus Christ "had not where to lay his head." His "ambassadors" live in palaces, with lots of spare bedrooms. Altogether, it is one of the most screaming farces ever acted on the stage of the world; and that the people do not laugh it off is a supreme proof of their gullibility. Those who respect a Bishop as an "ambassador of Christ" are capable of anything in the way of solemn absurdity.

The incomes of our English Bishops range from £4,000 to £15,000 a year. Those who get most feel they could not do with less, and those who get least feel that they could do with a good deal more. It takes a terrible lot of money to fix up a Bishop. He is the costliest functionary in existence—after the sovereign. Mr. Handley tells the story of the abortive attempt, in 1889, to found a bishopric at Birmingham. Money was to be raised to provide the intended

Bishop with £4,027 7s. 2d. a year (how precise!) and a free residence. Enough was raised to provide about £2,000 a year, in addition to the house. But that was not sufficient, and the project was dropped.

What a change since the primitive days! Fancy £2,000 a year and a big house rent free being offered to Jesus Christ and the twelve apostles! Why, they would have moved into it in less than twenty-four hours; and Judas, the cashier, would never have rattled for thirty half-crowns.

Some of these "ambassadors of Christ," during the past century, have left enormous sums of money behind them—no doubt because they were unable to carry it with them; for, if they went to heaven, it could not be pulled or pushed through the narrow gate; and, if they went to the other place, it would certainly melt. Mr. Handley notices a list of such cases, published in 1886, "apparently by foes of the Church." "A melancholy list," he says it is, "of some forty Bishops whose wills had been proved between 1856 and 1885." The amount of personalty varied from £140,000 to £12,000. Some of the larger amounts were as follows:—Bishop Baring, of Durham, £120,000; Bishop Jacobson, of Chester, £65,000; Bishop Fraser, of Manchester, £85,000; Bishop Wordsworth, of Lincoln, £85,000; Bishop Jackson, of London, £72,000. "It does not sound apostolic," says Mr. Handley. Why no; but it sounds very episcopal. Even the good, the admirable Bishop Fraser, who is Mr. Handley's hero, and to whom he devotes a special chapter, stands well up in this "melancholy list." Bishop Fraser hated ostentation, and could not bear living in a big expensive house; but, after all, his motive seems rather to have been that of an economical bourgeois than that of an apostle of the gospel of poverty and renunciation. What he did not spend he saved, and kept it in the family.

In spite of these colossal savings of so many Bishops, it is argued that it would be impolitic, or even impossible, to make a serious reduction of their incomes. Dr. Ingram, for instance, our new Bishop of London, derides the notion of "a cheap Archbishop." He does not believe that "an Archbishop living in a villa at Tooting, and travelling to and fro on a tram," would be "so good or so useful in the end" as the one we get under the present system. No doubt this view is natural enough on the part of a man still comparatively young, who was Bishop of the stepping-stone of Stepney when he spoke thus, who has since become Bishop of London, and who may be presumed to have an eye on a still loftier appointment. But it is awkwardly out of harmony with Bishop Ingram's unctuous talk about the sadness he felt in leaving his good, honest, horny-handed friends in East London, in having to reside in a palace, and in having to ride about in a carriage and pair. All that is an affliction, which the poor Bishop must reluctantly submit to, when he addresses his former (interim) flock around Bethnal Green. But when he addresses a different audience he stands up for it all as a thing not to be meddled with; and the lament over the official equipage changes into a sneer at a Church dignitary riding on a tramcar.

It seems to us that the top of a tramcar, especially when it is crowded, is just the place for an "ambassador of Christ." He would have a fine opportunity of putting in a word for his Master, whose name is frequently heard on such occasions. The cry of "Here comes the Bishop" might put the outside passengers on their good behavior. It may be, however, that this would only last for a while, that familiarity would breed contempt, and that when

they grew accustomed to the Bishop's presence they would go on saying "Christ!" with a most unclerical accent.

But let us return to Mr. Handley. What he proposes is that the Bishops should have smaller clear salaries, that all their purely official expenses should be borne by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and that they should reside in humbler dwellings. Take the Archbishop of Canterbury, for instance. This gentleman should live in "some part of the ancient Palace of Lambeth"—letting out the rest, we suppose, to lodgers; and his emolument should be "about £5,000" a year, free of alien charges and encumbrances. Probably this *looks* a drastic reform. But is it *really* so? Five thousand pounds is as much as we pay the Prime Minister, who has many expenses to meet out of his salary. Mr. Handley proposes, therefore, that the Archbishop of Canterbury should still be blessed with a larger salary than the First Minister of the Crown.

Many will regard this as sufficiently ridiculous. But this is not all, nor even the worst. In our opinion, at least, if an "ambassador of Christ" is to have £5,000 a year, there is no reason, short of impossibility, why he should not have £10,000 or £15,000, or even £15,000,000. It has been said that he who breaks one commandment breaks them all. In the same way, he who is right outside the field of probity may just as well be a thousand miles distant. As an "ambassador of Christ," it is clearly the duty of a Bishop to live up, at any rate approximately, to the message of his Master. Some allowance may be made for the frailty of human nature. It is not easy for flesh and blood to conform rigidly to the maxims of "the impossible creed." But the allowance ought not to run to the extent of £5,000 a year. If that is as near as an Archbishop can get to the Sermon on the Mount, it is perfectly evident that his faith is humbug and he is a hypocrite.

The truth is, though Mr. Handley does not see it, that the Church of England is merely one of the "institutions" of the country. It comes down to us from the old barbaric ages. It has always prated a great deal about "the poor," but it has always been the Church of the classes, and its dignitaries will always have to keep up a certain social position. When that ceases to be true the Church will soon disappear. For it is really one of the strongest outposts of Privilege, and its existence depends upon its serving the necessity of its establishment.

The Church of England has produced some fine literature. In the plenitude of its power and authority it boasted a Hooker, a Taylor, a Barrow, a South, and a Butler. But with Butler the roll of the great divines came to an end. When a Newman arose the Church could not keep him. He saw the curse upon her, in Scriptural language, of barren breasts and a miscarriage womb, and he turned to the more comprehensive and satisfying Mother Church of Rome. Mr. Handley sadly notes that the English Church has never produced "a single book, conned, thumbed, loved by the poor." How could it? The inspiration was lacking. Shakespeare himself could not have produced a great poem if he had been born and bred among Kaffirs or Hottentots. His environment would have been too unpropitious. And the environment of the Church of England is too unpropitious for the "book" which Mr. Handley suggests. How can the Church of the classes ever make a direct and successful appeal to the masses? Certainly it has not done this, and will not do it, by running a cheap imitation of the Salvation Army.

We have just a word for Mr. Handley in conclusion. Does he seriously think that the Bishops can be sweated down to the slim proportions that will enable them to go through the eye of that needle? Does he fancy that a man who lives up to say a thousand a year lives up to the Sermon on the Mount? Having food and raiment, therewith to be content, was Paul's ideal of a true apostle of Christ. But it is possible that Mr. Handley thinks an "ambassador of Christ" should be a more splendid and imposing personage. Well, we do not; and we regard these dazzling and luxurious "ambassadors" as vulgar traders upon the ignorance, folly, and credulity of mankind.

The Master of the Show.

"They wanted a reinforcement of the supernatural. They wanted to see, not only the show of nature, but to see the Master of the show."—REV. R. F. HORTON.

"THE indestructible element of religious aspiration," to use a pulpitering phrase, needs tremendous efforts to save it from extinction. Not only is it apparently necessary that a large army of people should be maintained to impress upon the public the value of religious beliefs, but these latter also must have every care taken of them—must be protected by legal enactment and social custom from direct attack by those who have somehow managed to get rid of an "ineradicable" element of their nature. The satire of the situation never seems to strike the believer. Yet the incongruity of writing bulky volumes or preaching windy sermons to prove the truth of "a self-evident belief," or fighting to preserve an "indestructible element," should be apparent—even to a parson. If the truth of certain beliefs is self-evident, argument on their behalf is waste of time; and, if religion is indestructible, to defend it from attack is an impertinence.

Of course, religious beliefs are neither self-evident nor indestructible, and one may reasonably assume that those who assert otherwise either do not understand the language they use, or do not themselves believe what they say. Thousands of people every year *do* cease to believe in fundamental religious doctrines, and it is one of the plainest of facts that the religious sentiment needs careful cultivation and protection in order to keep it alive. Why, otherwise, should the clergy be so anxious to give children religious instruction, to perpetuate laws that aim at compelling people to be at least professedly religious, and to boycott persons and literature that may tend to cast doubt upon their doctrines? The plain truth is that religion nowadays is very largely an artificial product—artificial, that is, in the sense of not being a normal result of our intellectual and social environment. Prevailing religious beliefs are not born of *our* knowledge, but of that of our ancestors; they come to us, with many other things, from the more ignorant, more superstitious, less humane past. The result is that they need continuous protection, and public interest in them requires to be systematically and persistently stimulated. The principle of use and disuse works as inevitably in the region of ideas and beliefs as in that of organs and functions, and the clergy find that, in spite of their efforts, the religious sentiment, being without the intellectual support it once claimed and received, is steadily weakening before the advance of civilisation.

One can sympathise, therefore, with Mr. Horton's anxiety to see a revival of the supernatural, as well as to catch a glimpse of "the Master of the show." It is requesting so little, and it would mean so much. How easily might the drooping spirits of the believer be revived, and how effectually would the unbeliever receive his quietus, did the "Master" deign to give some unequivocal sign of his existence! But, alas! he does not reveal himself save to the ignorant, whose testimony is of so little value, and to others whose sanity is not beyond suspicion. And even to these his appearance is more or less a matter of ancient history. Even an Assistant Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis* has failed to find any clear trace of his speaking to man later than 33 A.D., and where a skilled detective fails it would be presumptuous on the part of others to hope for success.

Although, at the first blush, Mr. Horton's request may sound to religious ears a trifle blasphemous, yet it is an eminently reasonable one. The believer has, at least, the moral right to demand that, when he does so much for God, God should in return do something for him. And the unbeliever may reasonably urge, in defence of his scepticism, that little blame attaches to him if, after having carefully searched, he has failed to discover the Master's hiding place. A very little would satisfy the yearnings of one class and remove the doubts of the other. "The Master" need not reveal himself fully;

* Mr. Anderson, whose book I noticed in last week's issue of the *Freethinker*.

just a portion, as much of his anatomy as he once disclosed to Moses, would suffice. We do not need to know *all* about him; only to be convinced that there is someone to know anything about. As matters stand, the "Master" has to thank himself for the increase of unbelief. Doubt came to be expressed in the existence of Betsy Harris, despite Sairey Gamp's asseveration of her actual being; can we wonder, therefore, that the "There ain't no Betsy Harris" type of mind is gaining ground in matters theological?

In the distant days to which we have to go for the origin of all religions, Christianity included, our most primitive ancestors thought that they did really see the Master of the show—or rather, to be quite accurate, the show and its Master were then one and the same thing. The theory that nature is an ingenious arrangement of puppets moving at the will of a concealed manipulator is a relatively modern conception. It belongs to the apologetic period of religious history. At first natural phenomena are regarded as actual living intelligences; it is at a later stage that the face of nature dies away to mechanism and the gods move behind the screen. In one respect, therefore, the savage has a distinct advantage over the civilised worshipper. The former sees his gods, the latter only imagines them.

The early Jews, again, carried their god round in a box, and his worshippers could, therefore, take a peep at his godhead whenever the fancy nipped them. That is, if they were prepared to run the risk. For looking into the ark of the Lord was not without its dangers, if we are to judge from the fate that overtook the men of Beth-shemesh. Fifty thousand and seventy of these were killed for trying to see "the Master of the show," on which occasion, says the Bible, "the people lamented." Evidently even at that date the people were not so bad as their deity.

But this possibility of seeing God, while it may be a personal convenience, is hardly a religious advantage. A god that one can see and handle is not such a social danger as one that is invisible. The plebeian, hail-fellow-well-met kind of a god one can easily dethrone, and there are not wanting races of people who, when their deities fail to give them good weather, or fortunate hunting, or success in warfare, ignominiously dethrone them and appoint others in their place. It is the aristocratic, stand-offish deities that are so troublesome to get rid of. It is not so much that distance lends enchantment to the view as it is that people have a great difficulty in getting near enough to understand them and to find out their real nature. It is the unknown that rouses the greatest fear; it is what man does *not* know that keeps him religious, not what he understands. The missionary grabs the wooden idol of a savage and cries out that it is nothing; and the savage might fairly retort that, if the missionary could get to as close quarters with his own deity, he would not find it any better.

There was a time when the "Master of the show" made known his presence by the working of miracles. This, in its way, was what might have been expected. If there be a God, what more reasonable than to expect that he should arrange the weather, counteract a storm, move mountains or suchlike trifles, for the benefit of his creatures? True, one could not always be certain that it *was* God that worked the miracles; for the Devil, too, could perform them when it suited his purpose to do so. Still, a miracle worked by the Devil would be evidence of a supernatural somewhere; and, failing the "Master of the show," I do not doubt that Mr. Horton would consider it a "godsend" to his creed if he could catch a glimpse of even the Devil.

But this sign of the presence of the "Master" has now ceased; and Mr. Horton, with that sturdy common sense and immaculate logic that characterise English Nonconformity, is foremost amongst those who denounce Roman Catholic miracles as so many impostures. True, he accepts the same kind of miracles when narrated in the Bible; but this is only a sign of his open-mindedness. If he rejected all the miracles, both Biblical and patristic, and asserted that stories of the blind being given sight, of the dead being brought to life again, of the miraculous feeding of multitudes, or of men safely walking on water—if he asserted that these stories were equally ridiculous whether they occur

in the Bible or in the Lives of the Saints, that would be put down to sceptical bigotry. But in accepting them as true in the one instance, and damning them as false in the other, he is only evidencing that strength of mind and clearness of reasoning which fit him so well for the Nonconformist pulpit.

But this by the way. The important thing is that this method of seeing the "Master of the show" is no longer open to believers like Mr. Horton. His dilemma is a sore one, and, in all seriousness, I can sympathise with him. For I, too, should like to see the "Master"—that is, if there is any Master to see. So many puzzling questions might be answered, and so many mysteries cleared up, if only Mr. Horton's wish could be realised. We might learn why man has been blessed with a revelation that reveals nothing, and as to the meaning of which no two who believe in it can agree. We might discover why the "Master's" gospel of peace has sown so much hatred and jealousy and ill-feeling that the presence of the representatives of two Christian sects on the same platform without fighting is hailed as one of the most remarkable signs of the time. We might also learn why it is that those who search most earnestly for the "Master" find least trace of his existence; while those who search little, and think less, are most confident of his existence. Yes, take it all in all, we really *should* like to see the "Master of the show." At present all that we see are his self-appointed agents, sitting in well-built, commodious pay-boxes, taking money for entrance into a theatre of the very existence of which no man can be certain.

C. COHEN.

Things Sacred and Profane.

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE, in his *Ten Great Religions*, says: "The Romans distinguished carefully between things sacred and profane. This word 'profane' comes from the root 'fari,' to speak; because the gods were supposed to speak to men by symbolic events. A fane is a place thus consecrated by some divine event; a *profane* place, one not consecrated. But that which man dedicates to the gods is sacred or consecrated. Every place which was to be dedicated was first 'liberated' by the augur from common uses; then consecrated to divine uses by the Pontiff. A 'temple' is a place thus separated or cut off from other places." As the word "sacred" has been used with several different meanings, it may be serviceable to briefly refer to some of them.

Things Relating to God and Religion.—These have in all ages been considered sacred, for reasons that will appear obvious enough, judging from the standpoint from which they have been looked at. Worship and devotion have been viewed as the very highest pursuits in which man could possibly be engaged, for the reason that such are acceptable to, and enjoined by, some supreme power or powers. All, therefore, that relates to these exercises has been termed sacred, as being distinct from the ordinary affairs of life and elevating mankind above the commonplace duties of earth. The supposed other world has had so much precedence over this—indeed, so great in men's minds has been the contrast between the two worlds, arising from the disproportion in their joys and the duration they were to continue—that the duties relating to the two have been regarded not simply as differing in degree, but also in their very nature. They lay in separate grooves, after running, not side by side, but with a marked and ever-increasing divergence. Hence, the more ardently the one was followed, the greater was the neglect of the other. The matters, consequently, relating to the one have been termed sacred, while the duties of the other have been designated profane, or, as we should now say, secular. Thus in most religions there have been "sacred mysteries"—that is, mysteries of a much higher and of a far more important character than those which have had to do with philosophy; mysteries the peering into which by profane eyes has often been considered the most heinous offence, the only fitting punishment for which was death. Closely allied to these we have had "sacred feasts," which in certain forms still remain among us, always with a religious significance.

Religious poetry is called sacred poetry, and this name it retains however great may be the nonsense it teaches, or however inferior it may be in its artistic construction. Hardly anywhere is it possible to come across such a mass of doggerel as is to be found in most of the hymn-books in use in the churches at the present time. If religious people met elsewhere with such faulty rhythm, such halting measure, as they sing every Sunday in their churches, they would make exceedingly merry over it. And they would do so here, but that there is a sacred, or, at least, a *quasi*-sacred, character attaching itself to the hymn. If we take up any hymn-book and criticise it as we would a volume of secular poems, we shall speedily discover the kind of stuff we are dealing with. Of course, it is not intended here to imply that all religious poetry is bad. Undoubtedly, much of it is beautiful, and could only have been written under the influence of genius. But the admittedly excellent poetry is sacred not by virtue of its excellence, but because it has to do with a god or religion, and is an element of worship. Then the books of the Bible are called sacred, and are spoken of as the sacred scriptures. Perhaps there is an additional reason for this being done, which is that they are said to be inspired by God. It does not alter the fact, however, that their sacredness depends upon their religious character. They are said to be of divine authority, which is only another way of saying that they have to do with God and with another life.

Consecrated, or Set Apart.—A thing is sometimes called sacred when it is set apart for a particular use, even when the use may not be an exclusively religious one. Thus Dryden says:—

O'er its eastern gates was raised above
A temple *sacred* to the queen of love.

Religious things are frequently called sacred for this reason, in addition to the other. But still a sacred thing, in this meaning of the word, need not be exclusively religious. A church or lecture hall might be, in this sense, sacred—that is, set apart for a particular purpose; but, as the former will invariably be called sacred, and the same designation be persistently denied to the latter, it is clear that such is not the meaning attached to the word in this case. The "consecration" of a building by a bishop means more, much more, than the mere setting of it apart.

Very Superior.—This is a legitimate enough sense in which to use the word sacred, and one to which we can have no objection whatever. Poets and other writers have occasionally so employed it. Thus Cowley remarks:—

Poet and saint, to thee alone were given
The two most *sacred* names in earth and heaven.

From the fact that the poet is here coupled with the saint, it is evident that the word "sacred" is not used in this instance in a religious sense, but to mean great intellect or moral superiority—a meaning which properly belongs to it, and one which might be universally adopted without giving offence to anyone. Thus Shakespeare and Milton and Byron and Longfellow and Bryant and Whittier, and all the men who have by their genius raised their race to a higher position, morally, socially, or intellectually, and given a charm to life and a beauty to nature by virtue of their transcendent powers, would be henceforth known as sacred characters.

Inviolable.—Thus we speak of a bond, or a promise, or a secret as being sacred, and in this sense it is quite legitimate and very appropriate. What should be more sacred than the friendship existing between two persons who thoroughly trust each other and are trustworthy—who would sooner die than betray each other's confidence? Such friendship is not based upon selfish desires and the absorbing passion to secure pecuniary gain from personal associations. Such a mockery of friendship as this is as hollow as it is degrading, and can only be found among those who have to learn the highest instincts of a true man:—

Friendship, above all ties, does bind the heart,
And faith in friendship is the noblest part.

In the last three definitions of the word "sacred" there is really no actual difference—at least, except in degree—between the sacred and the secular. Not only

can they both exist together, but the former is included in the latter, and imparts to it a charm which, in the special cases considered, it would not otherwise possess.

The alleged sacredness of the religions of the world is extended to the men who officiate in connection with them. The church is sacred, the rites are sacred, the day of meeting is sacred, and the books used are sacred; the prayers are a sacred form of words; sacred vestments are worn. But all this would be of little value if the men who officiate were not sacred also. Hence comes in a priesthood composed of men who, by virtue of their alleged sacred ordination, claim superiority over the rest of the world. And this is not a mere setting apart of men for a particular work who are well qualified to perform the duties devolving upon them, to which no kind of objection would be offered. It is the attempt, by virtue of a spurious form, to endow those who subject themselves to it with a power to which they can lay no legitimate claim—a power of at least a *quasi*-supernatural character. The whole thing is exceptional, and might almost be called "miraculous." It is a religion of artificial inventions. No one who accepts it judges of it by the standard of sober thought and common sense. Large numbers are willing to consider every place profane but the church, all days profane but the Sunday, all men profane but the clergy, and all things profane except those which the Church has consecrated. This, while unnecessarily elevating assumed sacred persons and things, gives a kind of licence to do pretty much what one likes as regards the others.

Probably in no domain in the service of humanity have the evil effects of priestcraft been more unfortunate than in connection with the education of the masses. In their assumed sacred character the priests of all denominations have more or less diverted education from its legitimate channel. They have made the instruction of the young a means of inculcating the errors of theology in preference to unfolding the truths of nature. Though the progress of knowledge, the discoveries and generalisations of physical science, the improvement of criticism, and the unrestricted exercise of the reasoning faculties have (to say the very least) induced the wisest and most learned persons to entertain grave doubts with regard to the Bible, its revelation, inspiration, and authority; though all this is now well known to those who can pretend to be acquainted with the world of man and its modern characteristics, nevertheless among the mass of the people the old system of imparting theological instruction to the young is rigidly adhered to. The influence of the parent is here supplemented by that of the priest or minister; from the mother's knee the child goes to the church and its Sunday-school, there to have cruel and mystic doctrines driven home and rivetted by means of sermons, prayers, creeds, catechisms, and texts. The consequence is that, instead of inculcating by example, as well as by precept, the practice of benevolence; instead of taking the best means for developing the young intelligence and the young affections, is it not the custom from the first to environ children with all that can tend to vitiate their natures? The books given them are records of deeds of brute courage and daring in war; their toys are soldiers or animals of prey and carnage, wooden swords, toy guns, and imitations of the weapons of destruction which their elders put to such deadly purposes. Revenge, injury, selfishness, and superstition—all these lie at the very basis of our system of education.

Thus it will be seen that, through the unwise interference upon the part of priests in the instruction of our children, shams have been produced, follies created, prostration caused, superstitions fostered, and delusions perpetuated. The work of the Secularist is to correct these drawbacks, and to proclaim that those persons only are sacred who delight to dwell within the precincts of humanly-consecrated spots, made holy by their virtues, and sacred by their lofty and ennobling associations; that the truly sacred duty is that of enforcing the truth that right and wrong have their foundation in the mind of man, and not in supernatural ideas; that a cultivated reason and a well-trained judgment are the surest guarantees for upright conduct, and that self-endeavor and self-reliance are not passive duties, but must be practically carried out, or life will be barren of all useful results.

CHARLES WATTS.

Prayer Everywhere.

THE Omniscient may not know, and it will hardly be kindness to inform him, that he is about to be assailed in an absolutely unparalleled fashion. A prominent lady in the religious world of Chicago, with the unromantic name of Mrs. Grupp, has conceived a great scheme of simultaneous prayer. She calls it "The Whole World Soul Communion," and the idea is to girdle the globe with prayer at a given time. The Lord isn't to know anything about it until it comes off, and then—won't he be surprised! You bet!

There will be prayers rising to him from north, east, south, and west. Thousands of people will be appealing to him from all parts of the globe, and all at once. Then he will be expected to open his eyes, scratch his head, and say with astonishment: "What the devil does it all mean?" But, of course, he won't know until he listens to the prayers, which will be mainly appeals for the evangelisation of the world. It is supposed that he will then give some kind of favorable response, though it is as likely as not he will say, especially if he is waked up from his afternoon's nap: "Dash it all, what do they want?"

Perhaps we are giving the show away—for the Lord is more likely to read the *Freethinker* than the *Church Times*—if we state the arrangements which are being made. After all, he will only be in the position of "Royalties," to whom loyal addresses are presented, and to which they hand back replies already prepared. When we tell him seriously, and with detail, what is going to be done in the way of approaching him, we shall have but a poor opinion of him if he doesn't "Buck up." Mrs. Grupp, we know, will be sadly disappointed, and so will Judge Maguire, who has joined her in the "Whole World Soul Communion."

We have a portrait in front of us of Judge Maguire. He looks the kind of idiot that might be associated with such a scheme. Some years ago Dr. Knight, the superintendent of a palatial home for lunatics in the Midlands, took the present writer over his institution, and introduced him to some of his patients who were not labelled "Dangerous." There was a curious glint in the eyes of all his poor friends that showed, unmistakably, brain trouble. Some of them talked rationally enough, but it was obvious they were insane, and the majority of them seemed to be crazy over religion. Judge Horatio Maguire—unless his photograph does him an injustice—has exactly the same kind of uncanny look in his eyes. As to Mrs. Grupp, we have no photograph of her, but hope, for her sake, that she bears no resemblance to Mrs. Carrie Nation, who comes from the same part of the globe.

The Lord should be proud of these two great organisers—Mrs. Grupp and Horatio Maguire—who are proposing to take him in a wholesale fashion by the ear. They are his creatures, for he made them, and they are projecting for him a tremendous surprise. They have realised that this is an age of international postal systems, of ocean cables, of steamships, of wireless telegraphy, and they find it possible to establish a connection with almost every country in both hemispheres. Mrs. Grupp has many followers, and the Society she has originated is rapidly gaining converts throughout America and also in Europe. Its adherents believe that the world is now on the verge of a new dispensation, and that the salvation of the universe depends upon the bringing together of the people of all nations, at the same moment of time, in one great prayer.

The One Above may wonder, as we do, when it was that he asked for such a universal and simultaneous appeal. We don't remember having read of any demand or desire in the New Testament that the world—on the tick of the clock—should go down on its knees and raise its voice in a simultaneous shout. He may feel flattered by this world-wide attention, and it is just as likely that he may feel offended. A great deal will depend upon taking him at the psychological moment. He may exclaim "Let 'em all come," or he may say "Depart from me, ye accursed." But, whether he likes it or not, he has got to be approached from both hemispheres at a particular time, and he may please himself what he does.

An elaborate and carefully prepared system of timetables adjusted to all parts of the earth will enable the "Whole World Soul Communion" to fall upon him like an avalanche. We are not quite sure as to the date, but it will be well for him to find it out and make a note in his celestial diary.

In Chicago the first service is to begin at 2.30 o'clock in the afternoon of the day fixed. In New York the service begins at 3.15 p.m., in London at 8.11 p.m., in Honolulu at 9.15 a.m., in Jerusalem at 10.31 p.m., and in Constantinople and St. Petersburg at 10.10 p.m. The time is set in the schedule for silent prayer in every city in the world, and all that is necessary to organise the great service is to send the date to the heads of all Churches, missions, and religious orders over the entire world. The "call" will also be published in all the leading dailies in the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany. It will also be given publicity in the Mohammedan and Buddhist countries.

The date, as we have said, does not appear to be yet fixed. May we venture to suggest All Fools' Day—April 1?

We cannot profess to entertain much regard or respect for the idiots who have hit upon this idea of simultaneous prayer. But we do offer our condolences to the Deity who is made the stalking-horse for the absurdity. A self-respecting God would be ashamed of such silly creatures. Often he must be inclined to exclaim: "Preserve me from my worshippers"; and, perhaps, in no instance would he be disposed to infuse so much heartiness in the exclamation as in this. It is just this sort of thing that makes one feel how sad and tiresome and irritating an occupation it is to be a god.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held on Thursday, May 2; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, W. Beech, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, B. Munton, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, C. Quinton, E. W. Quay, H. J. Stace, E. E. Sims, T. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, G. J. Warren, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The principal business before the meeting was the preparation of the notices of motion for the Conference Agenda, which, in accordance with the usual custom, will appear in this issue of the *Freethinker*.

Messrs. C. Cohen and T. Wilmot were elected as an Agenda Committee. Notices of motion were received from the Finsbury, Glasgow, and Birmingham Branches, and the President was asked to write the last-mentioned Branch.

An application from the West London Branch for the remission of certain fees was granted.

The Secretary reported upon the various places suggested at the last meeting for the Annual Excursion, and the final selection was left in the hands of the Officers, when fuller details concerning the accommodation were to hand.

Mr. Quinton's notice of motion, adjourned from last meeting, was discussed, and the President presented a statement of the total amount received for the Twentieth Century Fund, and also of the expenditure in connection with the special lecture work and chargeable to this Fund.

It was resolved that, with the concurrence of the Secular Society, Limited, a grant of £60 be made, and transferred to the N. S. S. account.

This being the last meeting of the present Executive, the President addressed the members briefly, and hoped to meet them in the coming year. EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

"Young man, do you ever drink?" asked a mild-looking man, accosting Jones. "Well, yes, thank you, as it's a cold morning, I don't mind," replied Jones, removing his quid of tobacco. "Don't do it any more," replied the mild man, "or you will eventually be damned. Good morning. God bless you."

The late Dr. Hodge, of Princeton Theological Seminary, once asked a student for a definition of eternity. The student, after some hesitation, replied that he used to know the definition, but it had escaped his memory. "What a calamity!" exclaimed the doctor, bringing his hand down forcibly upon the table. "What a calamity! The only man in the universe who ever knew what eternity is has forgotten!"

Acid Drops.

MR. FRANK T. BULLEN was turned on as a speaker at the hundred and second anniversary meeting of the Religious Tract Society, at Exeter Hall. Mr. Bullen is one of the few popular writers who are available for such functions. We are bound to add that he justified his selection. He delivered an ideal Exeter Hall speech. It reeked with cant and unctiousness. Mr. Bullen declared that "God had much work to be done for the spread of righteousness in the world," and that he had "selected the British-speaking race to do it." Whereat the British-speaking folk there and then assembled burst out into loud applause. It was a most exhilarating tribute to their self-esteem. Mr. Bullen admitted that "there was iniquity in London," but he doubted if "anywhere there was so much real Christianity"—which, for all we know, may be true enough, for Christianity and iniquity have always had a way of getting together in big cities. Finally, Mr. Bullen put in a good word for "the Press"—his own profession. Somebody had spoken of a corrupt Press and an unclean Press, but they should discriminate. The great daily papers were sound and true. Mr. Bullen was sure of it. Moreover, he offered proof. Out of the hundreds of reviews of his book, *With Christ at Sea*, only one paper had slated it, and he (Mr. Bullen) was proud when he read the criticism in the *Freethinker*.

We are very glad, of course, that we were able to excite that noble feeling in Mr. Bullen. It is not exactly one of the feelings that are praised in the New Testament; still, it is distinctly agreeable, and we are entitled to Mr. Bullen's gratitude, especially as we infer that the hundreds of other reviews did not make him feel "proud." On second thoughts, however, we are inclined to put a lower estimate on our own contribution to Mr. Bullen's pleasure. It seems to us that an author must have a very large and active pride to adduce the fact that his own book has been favorably noticed in proof that the Press was "sound and true." Just in the same way, we imagine, Mr. Bullen regards the British as the chosen people because he happens to belong to them.

Speculation was rife as to how Cardinal Vaughan, who is a Prince of the Church, would act when he went with the Catholic deputation to the Court of St. James to pay homage to Edward VII. Would he kneel and kiss hands? Or would he show in some way that the spiritual was higher than the temporal power? Well, the Cardinal settled the question for all surmisers. He knelt before the King, and kissed his hand. This mighty problem is, therefore, at rest. At least for the present. Should the Catholic Church ever get the upper hand again in this country, the case would be altered, and the problem would perhaps be reopened.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and Canon Malcolm MacColl are at loggerheads in the *Westminster Gazette* as to the true site of Golgotha, the "skull hill" where Jesus Christ came to grief. The question is one of very trivial importance, even if the story of Jesus Christ is fact instead of fiction. Perhaps it is for this reason that the disputants betray so much heat. Mr. Hughes declares that the Canon's letter contains a greater amount of error than he ever before saw compressed in so limited a space, and further accuses him of "intolerable dogmatic arrogance." What a happy family!

Emerson was, in his way, a great Freethinker, as well as a great man of letters. We are, therefore, to some extent concerned about his reputation. It is for this reason that we refer to a very silly observation in a *Star* review (signed by James Douglas) of Mr. Howard Paul's new volume of Essays. "Delightful," the reviewer says, "is the dry remark on the use of translations: Emerson read Plato in Bohn, and his admirers consider the result satisfactory." Now this involves ignorance on the part of Mr. Douglas, and either ignorance or something worse on the part of Mr. Paul. Emerson did not "read Plato in Bohn." He read Plato in the original Greek, and his lecture on Plato in "Representative Men" was written and published before the Bohn translation was accessible. The real fact behind all this Paul-Douglas or Douglas-Paul nonsense is this, that Emerson took advantage of the opportunity afforded by the appearance of the Bohn translation to add a long Postscript to his lecture—a review, as he called it, of "Plato up to date." This is clear enough to any one who will take the trouble to read Emerson. But, alas, in these days there is too little reading of great writers, and too much reading of essays, articles, and even cackle about them.

A Brooklyn man named Truman, who seems to have belied his name, is opposing his wife's application for a divorce from him. He says she is not entitled to it because she wrote "bosh" and "tommyrot" in her Bible against the place where the duties of a wife to her husband are set forth. Her punishment for this explosive veracity must be to go on living with Truman. That seems to be his opinion. Perhaps the Court will differ.

Mrs. Nation, the Gospel Temperance orator and saloon-smasher, is said to have made fifteen thousand dollars out of her recent anti-liquor crusade. If this be true, there is a good deal of method in her madness. She is said to have cost the state of Kansas quite half a million dollars. Perhaps her madness lies that way.

America and Russia, the two extremes of freedom and despotism, are the lands of strange sects. Count Tolstoi, who has just been excommunicated by the Holy Synod of the Greek Church in Russia, takes the teachings of Jesus literally, but he judiciously stops short at a certain point. Some of the simpler peasants, however, improve upon his example. Ivan Plotnikoff, for instance, a peasant, twenty-eight years of age, residing at Bielovodsk, in the government of Kharkoff, read in the Gospel the text, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," and resolved then and there to perform a rough surgical operation on his own dexter optic. But, not finding an awl about, he took an axe and chopped off one of his hands. Then he walked between fifteen and twenty miles to the Starobielsky Hospital, where he now lies in a precarious condition. That is what "following Jesus" thoroughly leads to.

One of Dr. Dowie's disciples has got into trouble at Chicago. A little girl of his was badly burnt in a fire, and Dowie's disciple refused to let her receive medical treatment. In preventing the doctors from examining the child he held her arm till the burnt flesh came off in his hands. Had he not been arrested, the crowd would have lynched him. We daresay he was fond of his child, but his brains were addled by Old Dowie's teaching, which is, after all, that of the New Testament.

Peculiar People seem to exist in Ontario. A woman at Arthur was dying, and asked for a doctor, but as the sect she belonged to had no faith in such "profane" agents, her brother-in-law would only agree to mount a horse and bring whatever doctor the animal, guided by Providence, took him to. The gee-gee went along a no-doctor road, and the woman died. It is said that the Government will investigate the case. While they are about it they may as well investigate the Bible.

"Bobs," as Lord Roberts is vulgarly called, has availed himself of another opportunity to show that he is a supporter of Church as well as State. One is rather disappointed that a man who was distinctly brave, and given to independent action, should kow-tow to the fetish of the British nation. His pious attitude probably arises from the stupid stuff "religious" journalists have written about him. It seems to have entered his soul, and inspired him with the idea of tacking on to his laurels as a soldier the emblematic cross of a saint. Canon Humphreys, of Fakenham, recently wrote to Lord Roberts, complaining that the Easter manoeuvres were carried out on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. This is Lord Roberts' reply: "The Commander-in-Chief much regrets that this should have taken place, and has issued such orders as will prevent any such thing occurring in the future. He is much obliged to you for bringing this matter to his notice."

Of course, he ought not to be obliged to anyone for "bringing it to his notice." He ought to have known it himself. And, knowing it, he shows a keener regard for the clergy than the convenience of the volunteers who take part in these manoeuvres, which are specially fixed for Bank Holidays, when business men are able to attend.

"Bobs" has become a pious, truckling dodderer. He has been spoiled by pressmen who have written him up on the religious side till he doesn't know where he is—except when he wakes up in church after the sermon, or the offertory bag comes round.

Reviewing vol. ii. of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, the *Church Times* says: "Professor Schmiedel and Dr. Abbott are responsible for the longest article in this volume, that on 'Gospels,' which covers nearly sixty-nine pages. Exactly the same spirit pervades their work as that of Dr. Cheyne. For example, Dr. Abbott says: 'The possible influence of symbolism combines with other causes to *oblige us* [the italics are ours] to reject as non-historical Luke's account of the raising of the widow's son.' And the whole of the section by Professor Schmiedel, 'Credibility of the Synoptics,' will fully bear this out—*e.g.*, the words of our Lord about taking up one's cross 'cannot have taken up their present shape till after the death of Jesus.'"

"It is quite clear," continues the *Church Times*, "that he does not accept what he calls the miracle-narratives. He has the audacity to assert that our Lord's appearance in Jerusalem after His resurrection 'to the two women (Matthew xxviii. 9f.) is almost universally given up.' 'The statements that Jesus was touched, and that he ate (Luke xxiv. 39-43), are seen to be incredible.' 'The statements as to the empty sepulchre are to be rejected.' Well may the Professor go on

to say: 'The foregoing sections may have sometimes seemed to raise a doubt whether any credible elements were to be found in the Gospels at all.' As a matter of fact, he leaves us nine passages which, he says, 'might be called the foundation pillars of a truly scientific life of Jesus.' How very condescending of him!"

Amongst other observations by the *Church Times* on this alarming book are the following: "The story of the Passion, says Dr. Bruce, 'even in its most historic version, is not pure truth, but truth mixed with legend.' It is true that this statement is qualified, shall we say, by the following: 'When criticism has done its work the Passion narratives remain in their main details history, not legend.' We do not think we should be doing any of these writers in Dr. Cheyne's Dictionary an injustice—including himself—if we were to say that they all practically deny the Divinity of Christ and the wonders of His Incarnation. It seems as if, in this new century, the old controversy is to be revived in all its intensity, and the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ must be fought for with all the ancient Athanasian fervor. It is because so much of this volume is saturated with destructive criticism that we look upon it as meriting nothing but condemnation. It is a work not to be lightly placed in the hands of any but those who can see their way clearly through the jungle that it makes of the whole Biblical history from end to end."

Clerical arithmetic is always peculiar—apart from the standing puzzle of the Trinity. A sympathetic Church paper says that, though the Bishop of London's salary is £10,000 a year, the rates, taxes, insurance, and maintenance of his two large residences—Fulham Palace and the St. James's Square House—can scarcely be less than fifteen per cent. on that sum, "so that his income is at once reduced to £8,500."

Poor man! What an infliction to have to pay rates, taxes, insurance, and maintenance out of a miserable £10,000 a year. As if other people hadn't to pay rates and taxes *and rent as well* out of very much less per annum. Of course, his income is reduced fifteen per cent. And still he has £8,500 a year remaining. According to this process of calculation, which seems peculiar to the clergy, a bishop or a parish priest has nothing at all per year—*after* he has paid his household expenses, provided for his family, allotted a sum for holidays, bought books and pictures, and made other disbursements. His idea seems to be that his stipend should be pocket-money to be saved up, in spite of Christ's injunction against "laying up for yourselves treasures upon earth."

Dr. Nicoll, who edits the *British Weekly*, recently assented to the occupation each week of two of his columns by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of Brighton. Now he probably wishes he hadn't. The two columns are supposed to be occupied with replies to correspondents—which is rather a funny idea, seeing that the editor replies to his correspondents in another part of the paper. The object is apparently to afford an opportunity to Mr. Campbell to show how many books he has read—and how many he hasn't. In regard to the latter, Mr. Campbell makes a great display. Some of his better-informed readers must feel sorry for him. His ignorance is vast.

It is not at all certain that the anxious inquirers who appeal to the Rev. Campbell have an actual existence. Their indefinite description in the way of names and addresses suggests that they are merely texts—pegs to hang a little dissertation upon. For instance, there is "*Apologist* (Ireland)." A trifle vague, don't you think? He, it seems, is a minister who, in the course of his pastoral visitation, has "met with an avowed Atheist." This is mentioned as if it were an astounding encounter. The "avowed Atheist" is a "clever controversialist, very alert and positive in the assertion of his anti-Theistic theories." He is not, of course, a "well-educated man," probably because he is not a reader of the *British Weekly* and of Campbell's two columns of illumination.

We like this term "avowed Atheist." As if the Atheist, after secretly nourishing Atheism in his bosom for a time, is at last emboldened to make an avowal. He never told his doubt, but "let concealment, like the worm i' the bud, feed on his damask cheek"; he "pined in thought with a green and yellow melancholy," and then at last he outs with it!

"Our correspondent," says this Brighton mentor, "is desirous of leading the avowed Atheist to faith in the Christians' God, and wonders whether there is a book written in the popular style in defence of Theism, which he could put into the hands of this man. From what you say, I am afraid that the list of books on apologetics which has been given already in these columns would not meet the case, and I am not acquainted with more popular works on the subject. A book which seems to be well spoken of is Professor Mackintosh's *Primer of Apologetics*, published by Elliot Stock. I do not know what your experience has been in regard to controversy, but I cannot remember a single

instance in which an avowed unbeliever has been won over to the Christian position by argument only."

Nor can we. Argument is the last thing to be applied. Best to let him see that you will try to ruin him in his business, or that socially he is under a cloud, turn the cold shoulder to his wife, sneer at his children, say "he's no class," and that the Devil will have him when he dies. That's the effective way of dealing with an "avowed Atheist."

"Intellectual self-sufficiency," continues Mr. Campbell, "I find to be the greatest barrier we have to break down" in "getting at an Agnostic." "Do you think you could get this person in whom you are interested to see the worth of true humility? The heart of a little child is now, as always, an essential qualification for entrance into the kingdom of God." Such is the kind of drivel that "this person" of the Campbell ilk turns out from week to week. Is it necessary for him to tell us that humility, imbecility, childishness, are essential to belief? Don't we know it?

Dr. Nicoll, in another part of the *British Weekly*, says in answer to "A. R.": "We have been trying to explain that some results of some higher critics are fatal to Christianity." True; he has tried to enforce that fact, but believers are so dense. When you have metaphorically wiped the floor with their Gospels, they still think that somehow or other it is all right, and that their faith remains undisturbed.

Football mania, according to the Bishop of Wakefield, is one of the hindrances to the Church's growth. He mentions the case of a dying man, who asked with his latest breath, not "Is Christ ready to receive my spirit?" but "Has the West-Bromwich Albion won?" There is even worse behind. Wakefield says: "Young men attending church confess that they cannot take part in public worship because their minds are pre-occupied with the matches of the day before." Poor old Christianity, that cannot engage the attention of young men who are within hearing of its teachings. Poor old Christianity, that has to take a back seat whilst the echoes are still lingering in the ears—perhaps long ones—of "Play up, Spurs!" "Play up, Blades!" "Three goals to one!" and other delightful cries.

The *Church Times* will get itself into trouble. From time to time it speaks most disrespectfully of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In its latest issue it says: "It might be expected that, with a responsibility so grave and exacting as the overseership and good government of the Church in England, the aged Primate might leave the temperance question to be dealt with by younger and, it must be confessed, more interesting speakers."

Truly, Dr. Temple is not a very entertaining speaker when he discourses on temperance, or any other subject. Perhaps the time has arrived when he should retire. But every additional year means another £15,000 to leave behind when his time comes to approach the Lord, who said "Blessed are the poor."

The Rev. Butler Doherty, vicar of St. Matthew's, Kingsdown, Bristol, died suddenly while addressing a meeting of welcome to his new curate, the Rev. D. C. O'Connor. The Lord had in reserve a golden crown and harp for him, but it was rather a blundering kind of thing not to have allowed the poor man to get home and die comfortably in his bed.

"Boldness of speculation" is a sign of the times which occasions much alarm in the bosom of the *Church Times*—even more than little Johnnie Kensit, whom it affects to despise, but dreads. Says the *C. T.*: "There are two matters that press for action. One is the growing boldness of doctrinal speculation within the Church. We are not for the narrow constriction of theology. We respond heartily to the plea put forward last year by Mr. Balfour in defence of open questions. We have no desire to close those which are legitimately open. But there are limits no less to the manner than to the matter of speculation, which are being freely overpassed. Reckless doubts are being cast abroad; questions are being forced into general notice which are fit for handling only by experts. In less than fifty years the public opinion of the Church has passed from the narrowness that could not tolerate a Maurice to a laxity that gladly endures men whom Maurice would have denounced as unfaithful. We look to the bishops for discipline."

But the bishops themselves—those who have any brains—are engaged in "bold speculations." In less than the fifty years the *C. T.* speaks of we shall see transformations in theological teaching which will be wonderful indeed.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer, who has just returned from America, says: "I am growing sick and tired of this controversy with the Higher Critics." No doubt he is, and no doubt it is the feeling of many other sky-pilots. The Higher Criticism is disturbing because it has arisen in the Church itself. Its conclusions, if not its methods, were all anticipated

in the writings of Freethinkers twenty years ago. The Higher Criticism seems to have been providentially sent as a direct support, from the inner circle, of the *Age of Reason*, which holds its place to this day as an unanswerable attack on so-called "Divine revelation."

"Most mischievous tendencies" are ascribed by the *Church Times* to the contributions of Canon Cheyne and Professor Schmiedel to the now popular and, as some say, "notorious" *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Says the *C. T.*: "The former, with whom we are more concerned as an English Churchman, is never so happy as when he is altering—shall we say, reading his own ideas into?—and emending a sentence from the Hebrew Bible. The dictionary becomes more and more, as it proceeds, a one-man book, so greatly does Dr. Cheyne's influence pervade the whole. How far and in what way he can reconcile his position with that not only of a Church Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford, but also of a Canon of Rochester, is for his own conscience to determine. At any rate, others can protest, as we do, against the idea that the Church can in any way be committed to his opinions."

The cupola of the Greek Church at Klissura, in Epirus, fell during service, killing fifteen persons and wounding many others. The killed, we suppose, have gone to Abraham's bosom. The wounded are left to agonise their injuries out on their own. Meanwhile the Lord, of course, is suffused with his usual self-complacent smile. The safety of his worshippers is no concern of his. His absorbing occupation is numbering the hairs of our heads and watching the sparrows as they fall. Good old Lord!

The German Sunday-rest statute, says the *St. James's Gazette*, now requires all automatic machines erected in Berlin to stop delivery of goods during the prohibited hours on Sunday! There was a Scotsman who used to tie up his weathercock on Sundays, and a very High Church young lord of the manor, who came suddenly into his estate without a rudimentary knowledge of farming, once telegraphed to his steward: "Lent just begun; stop lambing at once!"

In his newly-published *History of Exeter College, Oxford*, Mr. W. K. Stride quotes a story which was current in the days of Sir Charles Lyell: "One of our men, being examined for his degree, was asked, for the first question in divinity, 'Who was Moses?' 'Moses?' he answered. 'Know nothing 'bout Moses; but ax me 'bout St. Paul, and there I has ye.'"

That the Puritans are not yet all dead appears from the recent refusal of the Massachusetts Legislature to relax the Sunday laws so as to permit golf-playing on the Lord's Day. The galleries were full of the W. C. T. U. (which wags interpret as "we see to you"), who came to see that their representatives voted right. The innovators were defeated by a vote of 120 to 85.

The sky-pilots in South Africa have at last arrived at a pretty accurate estimate of Tommy Atkins. One of them, belonging to the Colonial Missionary Society, writes from Johannesburg: "The right way to tackle Tommy, it seems to me, is to lay aside the parson and show one's self to be his friend. At first he is very shy and suspicious of strangers—especially parsons. He does not like being 'missioned,' and he objects to the 'dear brother' style of address. He likes to be treated as a rational being, and not as an interesting receptacle for tracts."

These observations are equally applicable to Tommy's relatives and friends at home, though pious missionaries are too dense to perceive it. Working-people have long been suspicious of parsons, and, if they desire anything, it is to be treated as rational beings.

Now we know who invented the religious May meetings—many of which, by the way, are held in April and some in June. A "Minister's Wife" has given it all away in the *Christian World*. They are held, she says, about this time of the year, "simply that the ministers, each and all, might have a sound, ready-made, and incontestable excuse for escape from the annual domestic upheaval known as spring-cleaning. They do not own it, even to each other, when they meet in twos, threes, and hundreds, old college chums or friends of long ago, in the sacred precincts of the City Temple or Exeter Hall."

Still, this seems to be a very good reason, and it affords a better excuse than would have occurred to the ordinary male mind of a sceptical cast. At any rate, it is an excuse for these pious meetings at this particular part of the year. The minister is sent away to beat the wind at Exeter Hall whilst his household carpets are undergoing a drastic trouncing, and the merry paper-hanger and the reckless paint-slinger can perform in peace whilst the minister, still less artistically, is daubing great oratorical pictures of heathenism, at home and abroad, praying on its knees to be told of Christ. It is well to have this information from inner sources.

But whilst the industrious Mrs. Minister is engaged in superintending the beautifying of her house, is she quite sure that her beloved spouse is exclusively engaged at Exeter Hall or the City Temple? We have heard—well, no matter; the ungodly are fruitful in the way of malicious suggestions.

American journalists are nothing if not modest. "We do not wish to brag," says the *Hartford Post*, "but duty compels us to allude to the historic fact that within an hour after our prayer for rain was published yesterday afternoon people had to raise their umbrellas. The public can draw its own conclusions."

The congregational craving, especially of the feminine sex, for young men in the pastorate is described in the *Advance* as "the preference for veal."

There are, it would seem, Jesuits even amongst idolaters. A sojourner in Korea, it is said, asked a native priest: "Tell me why you people kneel down before a stone or a piece of wood, or any inanimate object, and pray to it? Why not pray to God as Christians do?" "I will explain," said the devout idolater. "Christians close their eyes and look up without seeing anything as they pray. The Koreans do not pray to the piece of stone or wood, as you imagine, but to the same good God, and select the inanimate object merely as an emblem. Instead of seeing nothing they gaze upon God's handiwork, for God made the stone." We don't suppose that any such conversation took place. But is it an invention of Protestants against Roman Catholics, or the other way round?

Mr. Clement E. Stretton, in his *History of the Midland Railway*, says: "The heavy fast goods-trains, composed of covered vans or waggons sheeted over, which may be seen making their way up to London on Sunday, consist almost entirely of perishable food traffic. If it were possible for one Sunday to stop these trains running for twenty-four hours, the result would be that on Sunday and Monday morning the people of London would be starving." What do the London Sabbatarians say to this? After all, they are about as keen as other folks on the "meat which perisheth."

A well-known divine recently delivered a sermon upon "Faith." He spoke of the blind faith of the client who puts himself at the mercy of a lawyer, and of the confidence of the sick in entrusting themselves to the physician. "A case of blind faith," said the clergyman. "The doctor writes out a prescription. Oftener than not you cannot read it; you don't know what it is. He tells you to take it. 'Yours not to reason why; yours but to do and die.'" Whether or not the preacher meant it, there was a distinct ripple throughout the congregation.

Assuredly we can't test the priest's prescription for a future life until we are dead—and then, perhaps, it won't matter what it was. Any way, we can't make him responsible for it, seeing that it is supposed that we shall have to answer for ourselves.

Though we have no special reverence for things "religious," we do think that religious people—especially in the States—are given to "play the game down rather low." Free supper at church is the latest innovation. Dr. Hillis has inaugurated this feature at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, U.S.A. He plans to hold a reception, and he wants the people to stay—especially the young people. The supper is offered as an inducement. Plymouth Church, it is announced, has a well-equipped kitchen. Here the free refreshments will be prepared, and the ladies of the church will take turns in serving them. While the congregation are eating, Dr. Hillis will be getting acquainted with its members.

What with up-to-date "loaves and fishes" handed out from a "well-equipped" kitchen by fascinating ladies, the young men should fall easy victims to Dr. Hillis when he starts on his rounds. But, unless Dr. Hillis means to continue indefinitely this sugar-coating on his Gospel pills, he would have done well not to have begun it at all. Are not these incongruous devices suggestive of the sad straits into which religion has, in these latter days, fallen?

Among old Scottish matrons the minister, or "meenister," as they call him, is a fruitful subject for discussion, and many amusing stories are told of certain worthy divines. The other Sunday two old women were returning from church, and were, as usual, deep in discussion concerning the ordinances of public worship. "Ay," remarked one, after a number of matters had been criticised, "but it was a grand sermon the doctor gied us the day." "Humph!" exclaimed her companion, who apparently had not enjoyed the discourse very well. "Dae you think the meenister's as clever as he used to be?" "Clever?" said the first, in the tone of one who knew everything. "He's far cleverer; but o' course we dinna understand him noo!"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 12, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.; at 7.30, "Dreyfus and God: or the Martyrdom of the Devil's Island in the Light of Infinite Benevolence."

To Correspondents

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—May 12 and 19, Sheffield; Monday, May 13, Chesterfield.—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.

ROBERT BELL, who applies for a Share in the Freethought Publishing Company, and sends order for literature, is asked to forward his *full address*. His letter bears the name of the *street* he lives in, but not the name of the *town*.

SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED.—Miss Vance, secretary, acknowledges the following donation:—Dr. R. T. Nichols, Ilford, £1 15s.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance, secretary, acknowledges:—Dr. R. T. Nichols, Ilford, £1 1s.

F. H. WATTS.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. S. FERGUSON.—Received and under consideration.

J. ELLIS, secretary, Liverpool Branch, desires us to notify that the Alexandra Hall will be closed to-day (May 12).

JAMES NEATE.—Glad to hear you had such a successful meeting in Victoria Park. See paragraph.

J. BARRY.—Mr. Alcock did not give the correct—that is, the usual—form of the proverb, but it is hardly worth a correspondence. Thanks all the same.

OLD FREETHINKER.—Many of the late Charles Bradlaugh's writings are still in print. They are published by his daughter and son-in-law, A. and H. Bonner, but you could order them through our publishing office if you chose.

LETTERS from O. Drewell and W. W. Strickland have unavoidably to stand over till next week, owing to the demands upon our space in the present issue.

JAMES JACK.—Thanks; but we do not think it would much interest our readers. The correspondence in the *Northern Chronicle* (Belfast) moves on a level which they have long left behind them.

F. W. L. (Portsmouth) writes: "Thanks to all concerned for the new *Age of Reason*. I have made a hole in three dozen, and hope others will do better. They must be pushed by all who are able to do this kind of work."

H. PERCY WARD.—Thanks. List shall appear next week.

W. K. LEWIS.—There is not room this week. Pleased to have your high opinion of *Crimes of Christianity*. We are still waiting for the leisure to write the second volume, the materials for which have long been collected.

S. P.—Shall appear.

M. E. PEGG.—We hope Mr. Treharne-Jones will have good audiences at Manchester. He has done a bold thing in leaving the Church.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your cuttings, though we have not been able to make as much use of them this week as usual.

H. J. BARRETT.—A fictional conversation in the *Free Lance* is not enough to overthrow the historical authority of Gibbon or the accuracy of Emerson.

EDMUND FORD.—You honor us too much by including us in your suggested list. No doubt such biographies would, generally, be interesting and useful.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—People's Newspaper—Sydney Bulletin—Freidenker—Blue Grass Blade—Public Opinion (New York)—Lucifer—Truthseeker (New York)—Eastern Evening News—Two Worlds—Torch of Reason—La Raison—Progressive Thinker—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Searchlight—Belfast Witness—Northern Chronicle—Glasgow Herald—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Leicester Reasoner—Reynolds' Newspaper—Yarmouth Mercury—Neues Leben—Christian World—Railway Herald—Dumfries Advertiser—Zoophilist—Free-thought Ideal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the Athenæum Hall again this evening (May 12). His subject will be "Dreyfus and God: or the Martyrdom of the Devil's Island in the Light of Infinite Benevolence." This lecture will be in reference to the Letters and Diary of Captain Dreyfus, which have just been published simultaneously in Paris and in London, as well as in other capitals. The book is profoundly interesting, and contains things that should be of special interest to Freethinkers.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured three times in Glasgow last Sunday. He was in his best form throughout the day, and his treatment of the varied subjects of his lectures won marked appreciation. The audiences were not so large as generally attend Mr. Watts's lectures, but probably this was caused through the great interest now being manifested in the Glasgow International Exhibition, which is at present the one absorbing topic in Scotland. Several questions were asked after each lecture.

This afternoon, Sunday, May 12, Mr. Watts lectures in the Hall of Science, Rockingham-street, Sheffield. In the evening Mrs. Charles Watts will, by special request, occupy the same platform, giving readings and recitations. As Mrs. Watts seldom now "performs out of town," no doubt the friends will muster in full force on this occasion.

Mr. Watts has accepted an invitation to lecture to-morrow evening, Monday, May 13, in Chesterfield, taking for his subject "The Delusions of Spiritualism." We are informed that the Spiritualists are very numerous in Chesterfield, and it is expected that Mr. Watts will have rather a lively time of it.

The Bethnal Green Branch began the new season's open-air propaganda in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon. Mr. Cohen lectured on "Christianity" to a large audience, and with great satisfaction, in spite of his severe cold. A capital collection was taken up; eighteen copies of the new *Age of Reason* were sold, and more could have been disposed of if the supply had not run out; and every copy of the *Freethinker* was bought up by the crowd. This is an excellent beginning. May it be an augury of a splendid summer's work.

Mr. T. Robertson, the level-headed, energetic, devoted, and invaluable secretary of the Glasgow Branch, assures us (and we can well believe it) that every effort will be made to achieve success for the N. S. S. Conference on Whit-Sunday, and to provide for the comfort of delegates and visitors. Mr. John Allen, 7 Kenmure-street, Pollokshields, has undertaken to see to the latter matter. Delegates and visitors are therefore requested to communicate with him, stating the class of accommodation they will want, and how long they will want it. Such communications should be sent to Mr. Allen as early as possible, as there is sure to be a difficulty in securing accommodation in Glasgow, in consequence of the enormous influx of visitors attracted by the magnificent Exhibition.

A dinner, or luncheon, as you prefer to call it, will be arranged for at the North British Station Hotel. This will be at 1 o'clock. Those who mean to join in the repast should let Mr. Robertson know. His address is 1 Battlefield-crescent, Langside, Glasgow.

The Conference itself will be held in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, morning and afternoon. The evening public meeting will be held in the Waterloo Rooms. The large hall there, pretty centrally situated, will hold about 1,500 people. The list of speakers will include Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Watts, C. Cohen, and H. P. Ward, and perhaps others. Such an oratorical display ought to draw a crowded audience.

The Glasgow friends contemplated arranging a country excursion on the Monday, but they have come to the conclusion that the Exhibition will be the great attraction for all who have a brief time to stay in the district. Accordingly a corps of guides is being organised, who will do their best to facilitate the progress of delegates and visitors in "doing" the Exhibition, which is the grandest ever yet provided in Great Britain, science and art being both represented on the most superb scale. Those who stay after Monday will find local friends ready to act as their guides on trips to the glorious scenery of the West of Scotland.

M. Victor Charbonnel, the Paris editor of *La Raison*, the international organ of Freethought, writing in reply to a letter from Mr. W. Heaford, consents to accept the Executive's nomination to a vice-presidency of the National Secular Society. "I am profoundly moved," he says, "by the honor which our friends of the N.S.S. confer upon me. Heartily I accept the invitation to be on the list of vice-presidents of that Society, whose organisation and admirable propaganda I am well acquainted with. I shall only regret that I cannot

join my active co-operation with my sympathy. I shall only be able to participate in your work by my labors on my journal." That is enough. M. Charbonnel would be an honor to any movement. He was a priest of the Catholic Church, but he came out from it to be the servant of his convictions. He is a brave man and an eloquent advocate.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "The Crucifixion Fable." We are glad to be read occasionally by the Canadian Freethinkers, to whom Editor Ellis still provides an interesting and useful weekly budget. We hope his paper meets with increasing success.

The *Railway Herald* has the courage to chronicle the fact that a railway thief lately sentenced in India to one year's rigorous imprisonment and twenty stripes was "a native Christian, whose antecedents were known to the police." Evidently our contemporary has not a large circulation among missionaries.

Reynolds' Newspaper, noticing the Twentieth Century Edition of Paine's *Age of Reason*, says that "No one need now say that this one of the most epoch-making books ever published in England is beyond his reach." That was the idea of the issuers, to give this great work a fresh circulation amongst the masses of the people.

Mr. J. W. de Caux contributes a long, well-written, and valuable letter on "The Sunday Question" to the *Yarmouth Mercury*. It is really a first-rate essay on the Sabbath, and it should do a great deal of good in the pages of an ordinary newspaper.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, in his trenchant weekly *Sun* notes, wishes the Liberal party had a Gladstone, a Bright, or a Bradlaugh left, and makes no apology for bracketing the third name with the other two. He also refers to our "Sugar Plum" of last week. Mr. Bottomley says that he was in court during Mr. Foote's trial before Judge North, and heard that "Mr. Justice" pass "the cruel sentence" of twelve months' imprisonment like a common thief. "And as Mr. Foote left the dock," Mr. Bottomley continues, "(left the dock, my good reader, towards the close of the nineteenth century!) his parting words to the Court stung me like an arrow, pierced my heart and conscience. 'My lord,' he said, 'I thank you. It is worthy of your creed.'" Mr. Bottomley adds that he did not approve of Mr. Foote's plan of campaign. He wouldn't laugh at any man's religion, and doesn't like his own laughed at. But he hates the idea of sending Mr. Foote, or any man, to prison for such a "crime." Of course we don't quite agree with Mr. Bottomley on the subject of ridicule; nevertheless, we thank him for speaking out on the side of toleration and fair play.

Mr. Treharne-Jones, of South Wales, who recently left a Church of England pulpit for the Freethought platform, delivers three lectures to-day (May 12) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. We hope the local "saints" will give him a very hearty welcome.

National Secular Society's Annual Conference.

GLASGOW: WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 1901.

AGENDA.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report. By PRESIDENT.
3. Reception of Report.
4. Financial Report.
5. Election of President.
Motion by Finsbury Branch: "That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."
6. Election of Vice-Presidents.
(a) The following are nominated by the Executive for re-election: George Anderson, E. Bater, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, J. F. Dewar, R. Forder, J. Grange, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, James Neate, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, W. Pratt, E. W. Quay, Victor Roger, J. H. Ridgway, T. Robertson, F. Schaller, W. H. Spivey, H. J. Stace, Joseph Symes, T. Thurlow, J. Umpleby, E. M. Vance, G. J. Warren, Charles Watts.
(b) The following are nominated for election by the Executive:—F. Wood (Camberwell) and Victor Charbonnel (Paris).
(c) The following are nominated by the Glasgow Branch:—Donald Black and John F. Turnbull.
(d) The following is nominated by the Birmingham Branch:—Charles Steptoe.
7. Election of Honorary Treasurer.
Motion by the Executive: "That the Conference do

not appoint another Treasurer, approving the method adopted by the Executive on Mr. Hartmann's decease of banking the N. S. S. funds with the Secular Society, Limited, in a special sub-account."

8. Election of Auditors.
9. Motion by the Birmingham Branch:—
"That the Executive should not warn Branches against engaging any particular lecturer on their platforms without accompanying the warning with a written statement of the reasons."
10. Motion by the Birmingham Branch:—
"That the necessity be urged upon the Executive of extending to the provinces the scheme of Freethought propaganda that is carried on in London."
11. Statement by President re Twentieth Century Fund.
12. Motion by Mr. C. Cohen:—
"In view of the changed and changing conditions of Freethought propaganda, this Conference is of opinion that steps should be taken as early as possible to (a) equip and train Freethought advocates, (b) found a central library for the use of the same as well as for lay members of the Society, and (c) supervise from headquarters in a more efficient manner the conduct of the propaganda in London and the provinces."
13. Motion by the Executive:—
"That the best thanks of this Conference be tendered to the Secular Society, Limited, for undertaking the issue of the Twentieth Century Edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* in first-rate style at the low price of sixpence; and that this Conference urges Freethinkers throughout Great Britain to do their utmost to put this work into circulation amongst the masses of the people."
14. Motion by the Executive:—
"That the Freethinkers of this country should be strongly advised to give all the pecuniary support they can afford to existing agencies, which are quite numerous enough in the present state of our affairs, and all of which are greatly in need of funds for their operations."
15. Motion by the Executive:—
"That, in view of the very great assistance which the N. S. S. has derived from the Secular Society, Limited, this Conference expresses the hope that Freethinkers will remember this Society in their wills, and as liberally as possible, whether the bequests be large or small; and that Freethinkers may be assured that such bequests will be legally secure, and will certainly be applied to promoting the purposes for which they are intended."
16. Motion by the Executive:—
"That the N. S. S. participate in the effort that is being made by a distinguished Continental committee to raise a memorial of Auguste Comte in the form of a statue in the city of Paris."
17. Motion by G. W. Foote:—
"That the Executive be instructed to consider and report upon the whole question of Branches, subscriptions, and membership, with a view to securing an increased revenue and a more satisfactory list of adherents."

The Conference will sit in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow; the morning session lasting from 10.30 to 12.30, and the afternoon session from 2.30 to 4.30. A public meeting will be held in the evening at 7 in the Waterloo Rooms. The President of the N. S. S. will occupy the chair on each occasion. A luncheon for provincial delegates and visitors will be provided at 1 o'clock at the North British Station Hotel.

By order of the Executive,
G. W. FOOTE, *President*.
E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

Obituary.

ANOTHER staunch and consistent Freethinker has just passed away from the group of dour and earnest Glasgow veterans. To the names of John Gentle, John Lang, and Hugh Irving, all of whom have died within the last few months, has to be added that of James Walker, who expired suddenly on the 27th ult., at the age of sixty. Mr. Walker had been a quiet, but persistent, advocate of Freethought during his whole life, and was one of those who, by their manly qualities, gave respect to the name of Freethinker. The funeral was a Secular one, in accordance with the wishes of the deceased, and was conducted by Mr. J. F. Turnbull, of the Glasgow Secular Society. Mr. Walker leaves a grown-up family of sons and daughters, the former of whom, thanks to their father's care and example, help in carrying on the work which will bring to fruition the ideals of their much-respected parent.—THOMAS ROBERTSON.

An Old Friend in a New Dress.

The Age of Reason. By THOMAS PAINE. With a Biography and Annotations by G. W. FOOTE. The Twentieth Century Edition. 1901. Price 6d.

THACKERAY, in the beginning of his famous lectures on "The Four Georges," makes affectionate mention of an old friend whose life extended far back into the eighteenth century. "I often thought," he says, "as I took my kind old friend's hand, how, with it, I held on to the old society." Even such a link with the past is Thomas Paine, whose live writings bridge the gulf between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

In this admirable reprint of the *Age of Reason* Mr. Foote tells anew the story of Paine's life. This biographical introduction should be read by every Freethinker who takes an interest in the history of the Freethought movement. On this account alone this new edition of Paine's masterpiece deserves to be bought, and kept; for he who has read it is sure to find need at times to refer to its instructive and suggestive pages.

Paine's share in the making of the American Revolution and his doings in the French Revolution stir the blood. These and the other events of Paine's life are described by Mr. Foote in a graphic manner that interests; and yet this is a sober history, in which there is no striving after effect, written without favor or bias; a good example of a faithful record, after patient and judicious study of the authorities.

The fog of misrepresentation that surrounds Paine's life still obscures the judgment of the average reader. This new edition will help to dispel this darkness. It is a popular misconception that Thomas Paine was merely a seditious pamphleteer. But Mr. Foote shows us that a study of Paine's career supports the opinion formed of him by his most devoted admirers. It is well to remind Freethinkers that Paine wrote admirably and wisely. As a writer, he is not wanting in the more finished graces of imagery and metaphor. Even Burke himself might have envied the illustration of his own too exclusive compassion for the sufferers of the Royal Family in the French Revolution: "Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but he forgets the dying bird." Shelley thought this so excellent that he used it as the title of one of his own pamphlets—"much to the bewilderment of the whole tribe of Shelley critics," Mr. Foote tells us, "who never thought of looking into the pages of so ostracised a writer as Thomas Paine."

The Age of Reason needs no praise. It is, on the whole, unanswerable. The opponents of Paine fully recognised this, and, in default of argument, replied, characteristically, by insult and untruth. Hence the stories of Paine's drunkenness and his death-bed, which are retailed by the Religious Tract Society and unscrupulous people even now. Paine is being reckoned at his true worth at last, in spite of such religious venom. It is a liberal education in orthodox tactics to know the real Paine from the "Sunday-school bogey" set up so long by Christians. Paine did good service when he helped to pilot the infant Republics of America and France through the rapids of revolution; but he did better work when he brought the light of rationalism into many dark and narrow places. Wisdom is ever justified of her children. Emancipation of intellect from dogmatic thralldom has already justified itself by vast results in science and literature. But free thought is to be followed by the freed heart, evolving a finer man, a lovelier woman, a healthier child, a happier home, than the old order can produce. May it be our task, as it was that of Thomas Paine, to hasten the coming of that glorious day when the world will be one country, and to do good will be the only religion.

MIMNERMUS.

Cashier (to president of his bank)—"I wish you would call in an expert, please, to examine my accounts and see that everything is all right." President (startled)—"Why, what's the matter?" Cashier—"Oh, nothing; only I have been a teacher in our Sunday-school for three years, and have just been made superintendent."

Two Models for the Twentieth Century —Jesus and Ingersoll.

AN ADDRESS BY L. K. WASHBURN

(Editor of the "Boston Investigator").

I AM not going to pay any unmerited compliment to Jesus out of respect for the common mistaken notion regarding this person. If Jesus lived on earth, and lived a great, grand life, he was extremely unfortunate in not having some companion who was sympathetic and intelligent enough to picture his life to the world.

There is a history of the time of Jesus, but there is no history of Jesus. The age of Augustus Cæsar was an age of letters, of art, of philosophy. Great poets, great artists, great philosophers, great historians, were contemporary with Jesus, but not one of them refers to his existence. The only work which makes a pretence of relating the life of Jesus is the New Testament. Outside of the four gospels there is absolutely no trace of this man. The character pictured by the gospel-writers has not the proportions of human nature. The incidents of his career, from his birth to his resurrection, contradict every cradle and every grave.

In considering Jesus as a model for the twentieth century we shall not take any estimate of him as divine, as the Messiah of the Jews, or as the God of the Christians. If he was not a man, then he is no model for men. We cannot keep step with gods. We cannot use divine speech or perform divine acts. Not only our hands and feet are limited by humanity, but our heads and hearts, our thoughts and feelings. We cannot think as a god, we cannot feel as a god, and if Jesus was a god, while his career on earth may excite wonder in our breasts, it cannot inspire imitation. We may surpass the highest example of man, but we would fall forever at the feet of God. So we will dismiss the notion of Jesus as divine, and regard him as human.

What is the Gospel standard of action? If Jesus said to mortals, "Come and follow me," in what were men to follow him?

The earliest account of Jesus in any of the gospels is when he was about twelve years old. This is the only scene of his boyhood that we possess. He had gone up to Jerusalem with his father and mother "after the custom of the feast," as the narrative relates. When his parents were a whole day's journey towards their home they missed their son. Upon inquiry in the company he was not to be found. So they returned to Jerusalem, and, it is said, "found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." Mary chided Jesus for his behavior, saying: "Why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

The first act of Jesus recorded in his biography is one of filial disrespect. The only incident of his childhood which his biographers record is that of deserting his parents. We cannot hold up Jesus as a model for the children of the twentieth century.

It is generally taught that Jesus began his public career when about thirty years of age. A prophet or preacher by the name of John had attracted considerable notice. His fame reached the little village where Jesus lived. Jesus left Galilee and went to Jordan, where he was baptised by John. He must have been quickly converted, or else found in the words of the prophet the confirmation of his own faith.

The first person that Jesus met, after coming out of the water, was the Devil. The Devil was looking for worshippers, and he tempted the new convert in several ways, finally offering him all the kingdoms of the world if he would fall down and worship *him* instead of God.

Who is the Devil? Who is this rival of Deity? What has become of him? Are we to accept this Satan episode as true? If not, why should we accept any part of the Gospel narrative as true? How are we to know falsehood from truth in this narrative? The intelligent world does not judge nature and man by what is in the Bible, but it judges the Bible by what it knows of nature and of man, and the intelligent world says: There is no Devil, and never was a Devil, and this story was false in every line.

A man may teach and a man may preach, and we can

believe that Jesus talked to the people of his day about religious things. According to the report of a sermon, which he delivered in a certain mountain, he did not always talk sense. He was not above the superstitions of his time. He believed in a God, who lived in heaven, in angels and devils, and in hell. He never told a human being to live for the glory of humanity; never told a man to live for the smile of his wife, the love of his child; never said, Make your life rich in the good things of earth, for the happiness of man here; never said a word in favor of marriage, of home, of that sweet companionship between man and woman—the loveliest thing the heart can dream, the holiest thing the mind can picture; never spoke for human liberty, for the blessings of political freedom; never urged men to gain knowledge of nature or of man; never pointed to the stars with the finger of wonder, or referred to the flower with feelings of rapture; never taught the dignity of honest toil, the satisfaction of honest thought; never uttered a sentence to lighten the heavy burden of labor and to encourage the patient plodder; never said to his fellows: Live in the sunshine, ring the bells of joy, fill the air with the music of laughter, make glad your own heart and the hearts of others, take into your soul every vision of beauty, so that deformity cannot enter it; never said: Love the truth and fearlessly speak it, love the right and bravely do it, love your fellow-man and do not wrong or oppress him; never condemned slavery or praised independence. The fact is, Jesus knew nothing of the mighty virtues of his age, knew nothing of science, of civilisation. He did not know that there were any other people besides Jews and Gentiles. He did not know whether the earth was round or square, whether the moon was a green cheese or a Japanese lantern, whether there was one ocean or twenty. Jesus was an ignorant, superstitious peasant, whose importance in life has been most dishonestly exaggerated. We are not blaming him for his ignorance. We are only stating the fact about him. He lived in an age when but few were educated even in the poor knowledge of that time. He taught probably what he believed, but most of what he believed is not on a line with reason and intelligence to-day.

I hold that Jesus taught what is not true. He not only held up to men an impossible or a foolish ideal, but he founded much of his teaching on unreal things. His notion of a heavenly Father who would provide food and raiment for the children of men is not borne out by the history of mankind. We all know that the skies are pitiless to human appeals, that hunger would die on its knees ere any Father in heaven answered its prayer for bread, that angels and devils inhabit only the world of disordered brains, and that hell is the crystallised hate and cruelty of barbarism.

Jesus was always a religious teacher. He put God before man, heaven before the home, and worship before charity or goodness. His counsel to men was, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Jesus said to men: Pray to God in the closet, and God will answer your prayer in the street. No one ever knew a prayer to come out of a closet alive. If there is one thing that ought to convict a person of lunacy, it is faith in prayer in the face of human experience. It is almost a crime to teach a child's knees the attitude of prayer; for, if he lives, he is bound to find out the deception practised upon him. I hold that nothing which has been taught to man has wrought greater moral injury, or flooded human life with sadder disappointment, than the religious falsehood that there is a Father in heaven who will care for the men and women of earth, and who will heed their cries for help. I find much in the words of Jesus that is false, and I find much that is cruel. The man who said, "I came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword," and "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law," is not the man for men to honor in the twentieth century.

(To be continued.)

Mrs. A.—"Why, what possible objection can you have to Miss Withers? She is a saint, if ever there was one." Mr. A.—"Stick her in the calendar, then, but don't ask her to the house."—*Brooklyn Life*.

Mark Twain's Religion.

It perhaps is not generally known, but the fact no longer need be concealed, that Mark Twain is not especially religious. He smokes the fiercest kind of big, black cigars, punctuates his conversation with many swear words—when Mrs. Clemens is not present—and at stag parties reveals a command of an underground vocabulary that was the envy of the late Eugene Field.

All of which is not here recorded to the discredit of Mark; it is merely mentioned in the interests of truth, that's all.

As further apology I will add that my experience is that men who swear a bit, or occasionally tell "Lincoln's stories," are neither better nor worse than those whose speech is immaculate, and in a few instances I have known men who never in public voiced an off-color word, yet whose souls were full of rottenness and dead men's bones. On the other hand, some of the gentlest, most generous, and manly men I ever knew told stories on occasion that would make your hair curl.

There is a good-goody tale going the rounds, and recently published in Rev. De Witt Talmage's *Christian Herald*, of how General Grant, at a party strictly buck, sniffed a bit of facetiae from afar, and arose and informed the company that he could not remain in the presence of those who indulged in remarks not viséd by Anthony Comstock. This, however, is a beautiful vagary worked out by Dr. Klopsch for the edification of the undiscerning. General Grant was no fool. The man who reads Balzac's *Droll Stories* with relish may be a very saintly character; and if he hand-illuminates one of these stories, as Mark Twain sometimes does, and gives it out in public, it is no proof of his depravity. Possibly this is God's plan of allowing a man to tap his moral pus cavity; but what can you say of the white-chokered prig who bottles his badness up in him, refusing to give it vent for fear someone will think him indelicate!

And this brings us up to Mark Twain and George W. Cable, who travelled together for three weeks and never spoke to each other, excepting on the stage. It all began by Mark telling a few warm ones to Major Pond in Cable's presence. Cable, fearing he would be smirched, or wanting to prove his purity, flew. At other times Mark would swear ultramarine streaks over nothing while George was studying his International Sunday-school Lesson Leaves.

Finally George decided he would win Mark over to the Lord's side. To that end he made an appointment with him where they were to meet at a certain time to talk over a matter "of great and serious import."

Mark thought it was some business deal, and made no objection. When they met, Cable began the trouble by locking the door, dropping on his knees, and praying aloud that Mark would cease his unhallowed ribaldry, quit tobacco, abstain from smoking, and give his heart to Jesus. Mark lit his pipe while the prayer was in progress, and finally said: "Hell!"

Then Cable got up and rasted with Mark as to the sin of smoking, especially smoking in bed; the folly of turning in at three o'clock in the morning and eating breakfast at noon; the vice of profane swearing, and the heinous sin of telling tales that bring the blush of shame to the cheek of innocence.

Mark was urged to fall on his knees right there and make an appeal to the throne of grace for pardon. He was urged to resolve then and there to live a clean, wholesome, Christian life, to have family prayers, say grace at meals, and go to church on Sunday.

"Burn your tobacco pipes, throw the budge bottle out of the window, and promise me now you will never use another swear word; do it now, Mark, in the name of your sainted mother, do it now."

And the little man, with his arms around Mark's neck, tried to force him to his knees.

But the big man, still smoking, finally said: "George Cable, inventor of the Creole, you keep your religion and be damned, and I'll keep mine."

Then Mark indulged him in a demonstration of ill-concealed weariness, and, going to the door, he unlocked it and called in Major Pond, and requested him to take the runt out and buy him a Scotch high ball to steady his nerves.

Cable was furious with disappointment and rage. He declared Mark had grossly insulted him. He protested that all he had said and done was done in love and for Mark's benefit, and he declared he would not again speak to Mark until he apologised.

Major Pond was sorely troubled. There were seventeen dates ahead, and if these men parted now it meant the loss of thousands of dollars. The Major begged Mark to apologise and heal the breach, but Mark smiled grimly and said the little Creole-catcher could go to the Devil he believed in for all of him.

Yet Major Pond, by his masterly diplomacy, managed to hold the combination together, and every night for three weeks Mark Twain and George Cable read from the same platform and made sly remarks about each other before the audience, and the audience thought it only kindly banter.

But never did they speak when they met, although they

travelled together five thousand miles, ate at the same table, and stopped at the same hotels. Whenever Cable would enter a room where Mark and the Major were, the entrance of Cable was the cue for Mark to indulge him in a knock-wood demonstration.

Mark says he holds no enmity towards George, but he has ever refused to apologise, and thinks that George should apologise to him for trying to take away his religion, which consists in Every Man Minding His Own Business. On the other hand, Cable has given Mark up as lost—irretrievably lost.

And there the matter rests.

—*The Philistine* (Boston).

Correspondence.

THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Watts implied quite truly a short time since that you had never declined a letter from me. For such courtesy I am exceedingly grateful. I trust you will be good enough to insert the following reply to his onslaught on the character of Christ. I shall try to compensate by strength of argument for his strength of language. His letter is in eight paragraphs.

The first is occupied to its final sentence by a series of strong assertions, whose value may be judged from that commencing—viz., "the imbecility and hypocrisy associated with the Christian profession," etc. Now, forty-nine out of every fifty respectable Englishmen are professing Christians; when a man, then, who belongs to the fiftieth portion, reviles the preponderating majority as imbecile hypocrites, it is clear he employs an unusual method of reasoning. The last sentence argues that, as Christ said "My kingdom is not of this world," He can have taught "nothing that was of any intellectual, physical, or ethical value." I give the true explanation of Christ's statement, and leave your readers to estimate the comment of Mr. Watts. Pilate thought Christ might be opposing Cæsar's government, and received the quoted explanation (John xviii. 36), which means that at present He rules only over minds and hearts and consciences, and meddles with no earthly sovereignty. In every part of the world are men who will testify that Christ's influence upon their will has enabled them to break the bondage of foul, besetting sins, and that, since they became subjects of His spiritual kingdom, they have had a blessed experience of the greatest "intellectual, physical, and ethical value." Nor is their knowledge to be refuted by the lack of such information in those who refuse the Gospel salvation.

Paragraph two begins with a discussion of perfection. I accept the definition that to be perfect is to be "incapable of improvement." Such I am well able to prove Christ was, and I reject, root and branch, Mr. Watts's assertion that I must be perfect myself ere I can see the life of another is "incapable of improvement." Having thus refused his premises, I am released from following his reasonings deduced therefrom. Next we have quotations from certain authors to show they did not think Christ perfect. Surely it is needless to say an established Christian cares nothing for such views, and could produce on the other side a hundred opinions for every one at the disposal of an Agnostic. Next we have Gospel quotations to show Christ's relatives had no confidence in Him. Most Sunday-school teachers could explain the cause was that these Galilean peasants expected Messiah would be an earthly conqueror. Subsequently His relatives changed their minds, and became devout believers.

Paragraph three begins with a sad blunder. We have quoted "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Hebrews vi. 1.). The consequent comment is, "This is an admission that perfection was not in the doctrine." It is a pity Mr. Watts did not consult some commentary ere writing thus; then he would have learned that "principles" meant only the elementary doctrines and first lessons of Christianity, such as described in the verse itself, as "repentance from dead works and faith towards God." Instead of never getting beyond these "first principles" (so New Version), we are to go on to perfection—namely, the strong meat belonging unto them which are of full age, mentioned in the preceding verse (Hebrews v. 14).

Space forbids my examining the paper at length just now. But, as you have this letter the day after I saw it, your readers may guess whether I expect any trouble in meeting its remaining arguments. I propose, unless you forbid in an editorial note, sending you a further letter next week.

Let me wind up (overlooking objections which intervene) by discussing the final attack of Mr. Watts, which I have seen him advance previously. This is, that Christ "rode into Jerusalem upon an ass and a colt." We are not given the passage on which this marvellous assertion is made; it must be, however, Matthew xxi. 5 to 7. Mark and Luke say Christ rode on the colt only; and I ask your readers whether it is likely the objection may not, therefore, be a gross blunder—even more gross than the last discussed. We read: "They

brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes; and they set Him thereon." What does "thereon" mean? This inquiry settles the question, and strict grammar and common sense teach that "thereon" means the clothes which were on the back of the animal selected. The disciples, not knowing which animal would be chosen, had put clothes on both.

HENRY J. ALCOCK.

THE CANAANITES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Coles's communication would be far more valuable if he would be good enough to give us evidence of the alleged wickedness of the seven nations of Canaan. It is all very well to throw out rhetorical statements about abominations; but a halfpennyworth of proof is worth a ton of rhetoric. His references to the Dead Sea, Bashan, and Gath are still more vague, because he omits to inform us how any of those places give testimony, and what the testimony is. Mr. Coles refers us to Sodom and Gomorrah. Perhaps it would be too much to ask him to prove that any such places existed; but I would ask him to point out any moral offence alleged against Gomorrah.

In Genesis xiv. that great warrior, Abraham, defeated an invading army, for the purpose of recovering the property of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; and it is surprising to learn, a little later on, that the people he took such pains for were such a bad lot that the Lord had to destroy them. Evidently Abraham was wasting his time in helping such people.

C. VAUGHAN.

"CHRIST AND THE SWORD."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I understand that some doubt has been expressed concerning the consistency of the teachings of the divine Pumblehook.

As one of his devoted followers, I hasten to defend him.

It is true Pumblehook contradicted himself. Sometimes he taught that flesh diet was admirable; at others he advocated rank vegetarianism. On one occasion he declared strongly in favor of bloomers; at another he lavished all his damns upon them.

Does it follow that Pumblehook was inconsistent? Not at all; he was the best of guides. If I want to know whether or not to shave on Sunday morning, I refer to Pumblehook. He says "Yes" and "No." I then decide which advice suits me best, and adopt it. You will readily perceive the enormous assistance I thus derive from Pumblehook.

Permit me to add that all objections brought against Pumblehook's recorded sayings might be as easily met as this.

E. R. WOODWARD.

"CHRIST AND THE SWORD."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The Rev. Henry J. Alcock suggests that we should use discretion in regard to the contradictory injunctions ascribed to Christ. Doesn't he think that discretion should have been used by Christ in giving utterance to these injunctions? Clearness and consistency are the least things that we might expect from a teacher who pretended to be a God on earth.

The very respectable sect known as the Society of Friends are convinced that Christ was opposed to war under any circumstances. The Church of England appears to think differently. Which is right? And why, on so important a point, did Christ leave the world in doubt? Perhaps he didn't know his own mind. That seems to be the rational explanation of his irreconcilable precepts. Worldly proverbs may be conflicting, but they are not supposed to be inspired. We expect certainty when a God speaks.

When the Rev. Alcock has disposed of this little matter, he may talk generally and largely about other objections. At present he is rather premature.

ZENO.

WILL HE DEFINE GOD?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you kindly permit a plain man to ask the Rev. J. J. B. Coles a plain question in the *Freethinker*—viz., Is the "long-suffering God" he (Mr. Coles) professes to believe in an intelligent, omnipotent, omnipresent, prescient power? To which I ask Mr. Coles to give a plain answer, without evasion or mystification, by which straight questions are usually met.

J. R. WEBLEY.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Dreyfus and God: or the Martyrdom of the Devil's Island in the Light of Infinite Benevolence."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, A lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, John M. Robertson, "The Law of Decadence in National Life."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11, Meeting, "The Ethical Movement and the Temperance Mission."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, E. White, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A lecture.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, A lecture.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Religion and Common Sense."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "The Resurrection."

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, C. Cohen, "The Fate of Christianity."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY: 7.30, E. White, "From John the Baptist to Judas Iscariot."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, C. Cohen, "A Few Obstacles to Faith"; 3.30, W. Heaford, "Religious Problems and Pious Resolutions"; 7, F. Davies, "God and Mammon."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Clergy and the Bible"; 7.15, C. Cohen, "The Message of Secularism."

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, C. Cohen, "Can Religion Live?"

VICTORIA PARK: 3.15, A. B. Moss, "The Mission of Free-thinkers."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—11, the Bull Ring; 3, near Ship Hotel, Camp Hill; 7, Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street, "The Dream of Heaven." Wednesdays, Bull Ring at 8. Fridays, Nechall's Green at 8.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, R. P. Edwards, "The Natural History Museum in Relation to Christianity."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Business Meeting; 6.30, J. F. Turnbull, "Vaccination a Delusion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Which First: Law or Conscience?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): E. Treharne-Jones—11, "Christianity: Pagan, not Jewish"; 3, "Does the Bible Agree with Science?"; 6.30, "Priestcraft." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Charles Watts, "My Reasons for Rejecting Christianity"; 7, Mrs. Charles Watts, Readings and Recitations.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Important Business—Glasgow Conference.

Lecturer's Engagements.

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