

THE Freethinker

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Cradled in Lies.

THERE are very often unexpected and unintended revelations in the use of exceedingly simple phrases. A single word may tell more of a man's antecedents, his character and habits, than would a lengthy disquisition. There is, too, a curious and subtle sympathy between our inmost feelings and our language, and, be we ever so guarded, this relation will often make itself evident. Talleyrand's opinion, that language was useful for the purpose of concealing thought, might admit of an easy retort in the shape of the counter assertion, that we quite as frequently betray as conceal our real feelings by the language we employ.

It might well be argued that this unconscious self-revelation is accomplished in the use of the word "truth" by religious speakers. Truth, one would imagine, is the same to all, and hardly needs an accompanying qualification to explain what kind of truth we mean. Consequently, when we are introduced to "Religious truth," "The truth as it is in Jesus," etc., we begin to suspect that there may be more in the phrase than meets the eye. And our suspicions do not lack confirmation. The division of truth into two kinds—truth as it is in religion, and truth as it is outside of religion—creates a distinction both necessary and significant. For not only does religious truth differ from the ordinary article in an entire absence of all the marks by which truth may be tested, but a great deal of it might well be characterised by a term of a quite opposite description. Not only do the supporters of one religion denounce the "truth" of another religion as being a downright lie, but in the case of any one religion we find one generation denouncing the beliefs of its predecessors as being largely made up of falsehood and delusion.

And not without good warranty; for a brief glance over the past nineteen centuries of Christian history makes plain the somewhat ugly fact that the Christian conscience has been fed and sustained upon falsehood, sometimes of unconscious growth, but very often due to deliberate fabrication. Putting on one side various passages in the Old and New Testaments, which might be quoted in order to give the practice of "Lying for God's sake" the highest (to a Christian) authority, it is undeniable that, for robust lying, there are few periods that can compete, with any chance of success, with the first four centuries of Christian history. We need not dwell for evidence upon the testimony of writers like Mosheim, who declares that "It was a maxim of the Church that it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when by that means the interest of the Church might be promoted"; or of that of many others that might be cited. There is indubitable evidence in the mere existence of upwards of seventy distinct documents—the Apocryphal Gospels—that were deliberately forged by the Christians of the second and third centuries, and palmed off upon the credulous multitudes as inspired productions. Nor is the accepted New Testament free

from traces of the same practice. The famous trinitarian text is now admitted by the authors of the Revised Version to be a deliberate fabrication, and the recent article of Professor Schmiedel in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* declares that practically all the reported sayings of Jesus are fabrications, and, by a curious irony, pitches upon the belief of the relations of Jesus that he was mad as one of the few genuine utterances upon which dependence may be placed.

What may be called the documentary lying of Christian writers is, indeed, almost endless. Not only has the Christian conscience been reared upon lies in the shape of documents fabricated in the manner of the apocryphal Gospels, but the same method has been adopted with most of the ancient documents that have passed through Christian hands. Suetonius, Pliny, Tacitus, Josephus, have all been "doctored" to suit Christian claims, to say nothing of the hundreds or thousands of writings that have been destroyed in order to bolster up Christianity by a species of *suggestio falsi*. The early centuries of Christianity gave birth to a perfect "carnival of lies," and, when we add to such as those above mentioned the manufacture of bogus martyrs and relics, the shameless impostures and deceits that flourished when there came a lull in the more artistic methods of "lying for the greater glory of God," we may perhaps realise the hatred of the Christian Church to inquiry, and understand the slight importance attached to the intellectual virtues during the Christian ages of the world.

If we turn from documents to doctrines, we find the same evidence of the manner in which generations of believers have been fed on falsehoods. Take, as an example of this, the belief in miracles and in the direct interposition of a special Providence in human affairs. To generations of believers these doctrines served as the real grounds for their belief in Christianity; yet from hundreds of modern preachers there comes the assurance that these beliefs were more or less of a delusion. There were no miracles; there were only mistaken interpretations of natural occurrences. There are no special acts of Providence; only a general ordering of affairs for the general welfare of the race. Nor is there any direct answer to prayer; there is only a "strengthening of the human conscience in being brought into closer communion with God." And so the beliefs of the past were false, and the people who held them were simply lulling themselves into quietude with an idle delusion.

How much, again, does Christianity not owe to the belief in hell and the Devil? For one who embraced Christianity through love of God there have been a hundred—nay, a thousand—who believed from fear of the Devil. The sermons of earlier generations of preachers were filled with descriptions of the torments awaiting sinners, and the utterances of the lower order of evangelists to-day are but a faint echo of a teaching that was once general with all classes of Christian preachers. Who among preachers with any reputation believes in a literal Devil and a literal hell to-day?

Not many. On the contrary, they are loud in assuring us that the whole thing is a myth; that, in some ill-understood manner, the Devil was only intended by the Bible to mean the evil impulses in man's heart, and hell the feeling of remorse after the perpetration of an ill-deed. And so, from one direction after another, there comes the admission that the Church has, generation after generation, fed the people upon lies, and has only been partly cured of the practice owing to the persistence of modern criticism.

I have mentioned above the fact that the Churches not only lied positively concerning their own documents and their own doctrines, but also negatively concerning the character and teaching of their opponents. For centuries the character of pre-Christian civilisation and of pre-Christian writers was systematically vilified and misrepresented by Christian malice and Christian ignorance. Only within the last century and a-half has something been done to clear up these matters, and place the ancient world in something like a fair light. As it is, the first task of all serious students of antiquity is to clear away the load of lies and misrepresentations which the "extreme unverity" of Christian writers—to use Lecky's phrase—has put forward as truthful accounts of non-Christian civilisations.

The stream of lies has run with even greater strength where Christianity found itself face to face with modern Freethought and modern Freethinkers. What have been the strongest weapons wielded by the Churches against Freethinkers during the last three hundred years? Lies, lies, and yet more lies. "We must have boldness, boldness, and yet again boldness," said the fiery Danton. The Church said: "We must tell lies, lies, and yet again lies." And as Butler said:—

They kept on till their own lies deceived 'em,
And, oft repeating, at length believed 'em.

Spinoza, one of the sweetest-tempered and simplest-hearted of men, loving truth with a simple devotion not often met with, and living content on a few pence per day rather than sacrifice his independence and his study, was pictured as a gluttonous, libidinous profligate, aiming at little but the destruction of all morality and decency. Voltaire, who beneath an easy jesting exterior hid a heart that throbbed with indignation against all injustice, who labored for years to reinstate the name and memory of a poor man wrongly accused and punished, and whose writings did more towards killing a cowardly superstition than any other single man of his age, was likewise pictured as a monster of iniquity, to whom cleanliness was a detestation and morality an insult. And Paine, the man whose voice was raised against wrong in both hemispheres, the foremost in advocating the liberation of the slave, the equality of the sexes, and in all else that concerned the abiding welfare of the race, was hawked about in numberless religious publications, and held up before numberless religious audiences, as an idle, drunken, dirty, dissipated scoundrel.

There is no need to lengthen the list. Every opponent of Christianity has to run the gauntlet of religious vilification, and, to a very large extent, the vindictiveness of the religious attack has been an indication of the value of their services to their kind. True, these lies are no longer told or believed by Christians of any standing. But they still form part of the mental outfit of the ruck of the Christian world. And how many of the clergy have the honesty to point out the falsity of these and similar stories? Not one that I know of. They stand without courage to tell the lies themselves, but quite willing to reap all the advantage that may accrue from their being told by others.

And the moral of my story? This: for centuries generation after generation of Christian believers have been brought up to pin their faith upon what are now admitted to be falsehoods. Documents forged and others suppressed; doctrines invented and afterwards discarded; stories concerning opponents fabricated to be exposed by the criticism of a later generation. What dependence can be placed upon a creed with a past such as Christianity possesses? Can any Christian be absolutely certain that his present stock of beliefs rests upon any firmer foundations than those he has discarded? May it not be that time will sweep away these as it has swept away others? Heine said that in time to

come the Christian era will be known as the great sickness period of humanity. It is quite as probable that it will be known as the lying period of humanity, the period during which unverity was raised to a fine art, and which has bequeathed to the world some of the most shameless examples of fraud and imposture contained in the history of man.

C. COHEN.

Development of Freethought.

By Freethought is here meant an intellectual condition unfettered by theological teachings and untrammelled by stereotyped faiths. A consistent Freethinker is one whose conduct is not influenced by belief in the alleged supernatural; who yields to no authority in matters of opinion except to cultivated reason; who is prepared to receive the truth from whatever source it emanates; who regards action as of more consequence than belief; who considers the duties of our present existence of greater importance than speculations about a life beyond the grave; who regards moral conduct of more service than religious profession; who judges the Bible by what good it may contain, irrespective of any consideration as to by whom or by what power it was written; who recognises work as of more value than prayer; who relies upon self-help instead of depending upon Christ; who willingly grants to others the same freedom of thought that he claims for himself; and whose one desire it is to keep the mind free from everything which would interfere with its legitimate operations. No thought can be free if it is hampered by hopes of heaven or fears of hell. Intellectual freedom cannot co-exist with anxiety to please God or to gratify the priests. Such considerations as these must necessarily tend to cramp the mental faculties, and to limit human thought by the narrow traditions of the past. Both man and woman have become so improved through modern culture that they rebel against the restraint which creeds and dogmas would impose upon it. Even those who prefer to be thought religious form a very different conception of what the term means from that held by believers, say, fifty years ago. Practical religion has now more to do with man and the earth on which he lives than with any God and the heaven in which he is supposed to preside.

The history of Freethought is a record of the various stages of development through which it has passed. The marvellous advancement of intellectual liberty during the past century has not been confined to one section of the community; it has penetrated into every domain both of public and private life. In science, politics, ethics, works of fiction, and the domestic circle, theology has lost the sway it once held. The limited freedom which a quarter of a century ago satisfied the aspirations of the human mind is now found quite inadequate to meet the enlarged demands created by the continual development of that Freethought which is the great characteristic of the present age. This never-ceasing progress of mental freedom is undoubtedly the result of a persistent warfare which Freethinkers have carried on against the encroachments of the Church and the machinations of the priests. The conflict has been a long and severe one, but fortunately many of the obstacles which once impeded intellectual advancement have now been overcome, and to-day we stand upon the vantage-ground of a solid victory. The Church no longer controls thought in the realms of intellectual activity; priests no longer hold undisputed sway over the conduct of the masses; theological doctrines, once supreme, are now discarded; and honesty of conviction is rapidly gaining the approval once bestowed upon the fanaticism of profession.

The modern development of Freethought may be said to date from A.D. 1600, when Bacon gave to the world his *Novum Organum*, a work which was the foundation of much subsequent liberal thought. It was at this period that Deism arose, the adherents of which discarded the belief in the God of the Bible for that of the "God of Nature." Personally, I have no faith in either of the supposed Gods, as it appears to me the existence of any Supreme Being is inconsistent with the prevailing misery, wrongs, and inequalities. Still, to give up

allegiance to the Christian Deity and the orthodox belief in the Bible indicated some progress. Moreover, instead of relying upon "Special Providence," the order of nature and the law of cause and effect became recognised facts. Thus a new field of investigation was opened to man, and observations and experiments were conducted upon a natural plane, undisturbed by the dictates of the capricious will of an angry God. The Theism of Voltaire and of Thomas Paine did not interfere with their freedom of thought in exposing the follies of the Church, the vices of the priests, and the fallacies of the Bible. This was a step in the right direction. But this was not all the Deistic form of Free-thought did. It substituted for the old orthodox injunction, to "glory God and enjoy him for ever," Pope's advice to make individual "happiness our being's end and aim."

The Deistical aspect of Free-thought has been greatly modified within the last few decades. Deists there still are, but they are few and far between. Instead of Deism, we have now either Agnosticism, Atheism, or what is known as Spiritualism, each of which is more heretical as to the existence of God than are the views expressed in the writings of Thomas Paine. According to my experience of the leading Spiritualists with whom I have come in contact, many of them are less theological in their views than were the Deists of the seventh century. Candidly, in my opinion Atheism or Agnosticism is the only logical position to take in reference to any gods. I hold no brief for the Spiritualists, whose teachings as to "spirits" appear to me to be the very height of absurdity; and I have nothing whatever to do here with the truth or otherwise of what they teach. My present object in referring to them is only to note the fact that Spiritualism is one of the stages in the development of Free-thought, but by no means the final one; it is, as it were, the bridge leading from the old to the new ideas regarding the "unseen world." Before the dawn of modern Free-thought the world was deluged with the profession of crude and fantastic machinations of "the Evil One." "Revelations" and "spiritual exercises" were the order of the day. The "history of the Moravians, the Shakers, the Jumpers, and the Methodists afford ample proof of this. Luther and Wesley were firm believers in what the Bible teaches as to the reality of a personal devil and of witchcraft. With the progress of Free-thought the old forms of these superstitions disappeared, but there still remained those in whom the emotions predominated over reason, and whose minds were not illuminated with the facts of science. Such persons, while no longer believing in the popular tenets of Christianity, accepted Spiritualism as a gratification to their emotional aspirations. The past reveals the fact that with the advancement of scientific and general knowledge most of the old superstitions have gone, and we have no doubt that in the future, as Free-thought develops more and more, other theological delusions will disappear, and then man, instead of prostrating himself in "the house of God," will delight in the treasures of the temple of humanity.

As Secularists, we are, of course, proud of the great advancement of Free-thought in this country. It is gratifying to know that the most intellectual portions of society have grown weary of theological shams and priestly interference; the yearnings for personal liberty and independent thought are stronger than ever; the exposition of our principles, with few exceptions, is respectfully listened to; and our literature has an extensive and increasing circulation in all sections of the community. These advantages inspire us with hope for the future, and stimulate us to do our best to ensure the greatest good for the greatest number. Heavy duties are still before us, for destructive work as well as constructive has to be continued. No one would rejoice more than myself to know that there is no necessity to longer attack theological errors and follies. But thousands of men, women, and children are having their minds poisoned by orthodox teachings. Moreover, in the face of the present conduct of the clergy with regard to the education of the young, it is a mistake to suppose that the time is past for destructive work. Theology is still our active enemy, and one that we must fight with all the energy at our command. Of course, such work should be done with discretion; and, while we seek to

destroy error, we should be careful to show that we have truth to replace it. By such means we trust to secure that condition of society for which the dauntless Freethinkers in the past toiled, and for which their earnest successors at the present time are working.

CHARLES WATTS.

A Welcoming of Children.

IN a recent issue I gave an account of an evening with the children at the Leicester Secular Hall, and I said I would describe the ceremony with which we closed the meeting. We were in two audiences—adults in the body of the hall, and some sixty children on the platform; and I mentioned that a hillock of flowers made a gay partition between the younger people and the elder. We were thus prepared for a Welcoming Ceremony, or what the Positivists would call a Presentation of Infants. Two mothers, carrying babes in arms, seated themselves in front of the elder audience, and I spoke as follows:—

"We are gathered here this evening—persons of all ages—in token that we have common joys, common sorrows, common temptations, common duties, and a common life. Though differing in age, in occupation, in tastes, and in opinions, perhaps, we yet feel that there is a union of spirit and aim. It is not a union merely to advance our views of religion or social progress. We take an interest in each other's personal welfare or misfortune, so that a death in any family touches us with a common grief; a marriage throws its cheerful reflection round the whole circle, and the advent of a child calls up a general sympathy. A child brings with it more labor, more sickness, more heart-ache into a family; but also it should bring more companionship, more happiness. As a community, therefore, we show our concern in the fresh duties and responsibilities which these little children bring into their parents' lives. We do not call upon the parents to make any promise or vow. The love in the mother's heart, the father's heart, is the best pledge that they will do their loyal best for the good upbringing of son or daughter. We shall greet these children in the name of our Society. But we ought to lift our ideas above the Society which assembles in this hall. We should look upon these children as members added to the great Human Family. We should wish well to them, because we wish well to the world."

Then this greeting was pronounced to each infant:—

"We welcome * * * in the name of our Society, and trust he (she) will grow up in the enjoyment of health of mind and body, and become a right-thinking and right-acting member of the Human Family."

In token of respect for the motherhood which has the care and labor of child-nurture, two girls stepped forward and presented bunches of flowers to the mothers whose infants had just been greeted.

The final address followed:—

"There is nothing more worthy of study than how to bring up our children. Many people to-day incline to think the training of children is rather the business of the teacher and the School Board. But the parent should be the principal teacher, and home is the school where the deepest impressions are made on the growing mind. While it is good for husband and wife to gain a livelihood and keep a house neat and tasteful, it is of yet greater importance to know how to treat a child with respect and wisdom. Above all, we should teach the child that the greatest wealth is good character; that getting on in the world does not simply mean earning fifty coins instead of forty; but it means a larger power to turn out useful work; a deeper sense of truthfulness; a greater willingness to oblige; a higher courage to stand for justice; a finer insight into that true democracy which feels the same neighborly regard for rich or poor, the villa or the cottage. We have greeted these children this evening both in proof of our goodwill and because we see in them guarantees of the continuance of the great Humanity of which we form a part."

Perhaps the preceding report may serve to draw the attention of Freethinkers more closely to the subject of recruiting our forces by due recognition and instruction

of the children of the members of Rationalist societies. I am far from supposing that the mere performance of ceremonies will effectively attach children to our views, or retain them in after-life. Only education, in the most liberal sense of the word, can do that. But we might at least take care that the parents be made to feel our sympathy and interest. It is a distorted Freethought which spends its energies in converting Christians, and neglects the more fertile field of a childhood which is comparatively free from the enfeebling influences of theology.

F. J. GOULD.

Education and Agnosticism.

(*A Discourse delivered before the congregation of the Church of This World, Kansas City, Missouri, and reported for the New York "Truthseeker."*)

OUR SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE YIELD US NONE OF THE RELIGIOUS DOGMAS.

A DISTINGUISHED prelate, during a recent visit to the city, said the universities produce Agnosticism. Since the business of the university is to lead forward the process of education, it is a fair inference that, in the judgment of the prelate, education and Agnosticism imply each other. The prelate further said that his mission to this country was to raise two millions of dollars for a university at Washington. He pledged his word that this particular university should not produce Agnosticism, from which we may also infer that this particular university will not educate.

Centuries ago one of the popes declared that ignorance is the mother of devotion, and for once an infallible pope was not mistaken.

EDUCATION IS THE POWER TO THINK.

He is educated who can think correctly and reach conclusions, warranted and approved by the nature of things.

Agnosticism is the confession of inability either to affirm or deny certain propositions. It implies not intellectual weakness or indifference, but rather fearless and formidable intellectual honesty. Knowledge is exacting and arbitrary; it is attained by all in exactly the same way; it knows no distinction of title, rank, or birth; it is no respecter of persons; riches cannot buy it, nor power compel it, nor arrogance humiliate it, nor selfishness control it. It is approached by an open road, wherein, alike and equal, travel cleric and layman, rich and poor, youth and age, doubter and believer.

Our sources of knowledge are four. First, we attain knowledge through sensation. The impress of the external world upon our senses is the foundation of all we know. The child at five years of age has learned more relatively to his age than he can ever possibly learn again in all the remainder of his life; he has formed an acquaintance with a world.

Then we learn by pure reason without the aid of our senses, save as tools. The absolute certainty of a mathematical proposition may be demonstrated. It is not the work of sensation, nor of experience, by which we come to the absolute knowledge that the sum of the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles.

ACCUMULATED EXPERIENCE.

Yet another source of our knowledge is hearsay and report. We are warranted in saying we know that the Mississippi River flows south and empties into the Gulf of Mexico, though we may never have seen it for ourselves, nor demonstrated it to be true. The accumulative experience of the world is a great and important source of our knowledge. We know with reasonable certainty tens of thousands of things that we have learned only by common report. In this matter the credibility of men is assumed, and their competency to give testimony implied. Every individual who is capable of seeing things as they are, and reporting them truthfully, adds to the reliability of this source of knowledge, and every falsifier tends to vitiate it.

The fourth source of knowledge is the one by which is attained the conception of universal law. A few

bodies or masses of matter are observed, and their behavior towards each other noted; a formula is made descriptive of their behavior. It is not knowledge as yet, it is only a guess—a scientific guess, an hypothesis. Then other bodies are observed, and still others, and the descriptive formula is found to apply equally to them; and so it is of any or all possible bodies, near or remote; this formula is found to describe their distances and their movements, and the conclusion is warranted that this formula, representing the law of gravitation, is universal.

PURPOSES OF EDUCATION.

These four are sources of knowledge—there are no others. From them must emanate all we know. Education has for its object the development of the human faculties, to the end that these sources of knowledge may enrich the mind. Education primarily has nothing whatever to do with theories, philosophies, speculations, religions, dogmas, beliefs, or creeds; its aim is the development of the powers of mind. It aims to give a man possession of himself, to enable him to see things as they are. It has not for its aim the inculcation of theories or beliefs. It does not so much aim to impart knowledge as to confer upon the individual the ability to acquire knowledge. Its purpose is not to establish theories and fixed conclusions, but to train and equip the man—to make him free and fearless, and competent to reach his own conclusions, determine his own beliefs, form theories for himself.

The educated man is not the believer; he is inevitably the thinker. Education has this for its sublime function. This is the task of the Universities which the Church fears. The only devil it cannot cast out is the devil of education. This is the kind that goeth not out save by fasting and prayer. The distinguished prelate was right. The Church, fearing education, substitutes in lieu thereof sectarian training. The denominational schools and seminaries are not established to produce educated men; their aim is to produce believers. Every school or seminary under denominational auspices has a theory to maintain; it is organized and maintained for the sole purpose of perpetuating a given theory, and any such object, any such aim, is fatal to the very genius and spirit of education.

The institutions have for their sources of knowledge none of these four already enumerated. Their source of knowledge consists of traditions and authorities. They have the truth to teach rather than the truth to find. They are not learners, they are repeaters; they are not seekers after truth, they are defenders of an alleged truth already found, or, as they say, "once delivered to the saints."

NARROWNESS OF SECTARIAN TEACHING.

The method followed with the youths that are under sectarian training is not one of development. It is not one that leads to mental emancipation; it is one of rigorous repression. Every man that meets the classes as professor, lecturer, or teacher must be a man that believes the theories for which the institution stands. The books the young men are instructed or advised to read must be books that are enshrouded in the same atmosphere of this theory. All the environments are of such a character as to emphasize and impress the particular ideas that are being inculcated.

In the college town I knew even the boarding-houses were kept by Baptist sisters. During a residence there of eight years there was but one lecturer appeared upon the college platform who differed from the commonly accepted theories—never but one, and he, a distinguished man, was brought there under the solemn covenant that his lecture should not trench upon religious themes. Take any young man and environ him with such conditions for the space of eight years, years of growth and acquisitiveness, the spirit and the mind aggressive, and let him be repressed by solemn authority, by the dignity of old traditions; let him be impressed by distinguished and striking personalities of professors and teachers; let him learn to love them and revere them, and to look up to them as worthy and well qualified to lead the inquiring mind, and the chances are a thousand to one that that young man will go out swearing that he has the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He has become a sanctified parrot.

GRADUATES WHO ARE MORTGAGED.

Add to all of these repressing influences the fact that the large majority of men thus trained are furnished with money, denominational money, that they are not said to owe—it is not regarded as a debt, but they are looked upon as the chosen servants of the Lord, having devoted, or to devote, their lives to the spreading of the Gospel, and it is only fitting that the Church to which they expect to come shall help equip them for their mission. So money is furnished, not as a personal loan, but in a certain moral way the young men are expected, after they reach their Church as ordained ministers, year by year to take up a collection for the same purpose, and to return it to the college in order that it may be passed on to other young men.

So by virtue of it every young man goes out, who has received such aid, practically under a mortgage, held by a chain; he wears out of that seminary shackles about his brain. I know one at least who upon leaving the Baptist Church was promptly notified by the secretary of the educational society that a certain sum was now due and payable, with interest, which they had figured at ten per cent. But it was right; it was justly payable, and was paid.

(DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthsseeker* (New York).

(To be concluded.)

Echoes from Everywhere.

FROM THE ANTI-SEMITES.

M. JULES GUERIN, the pantomime hero of "Fort" Chabrol, and founder of the egregious *Antijuif*, is once more painting himself scarlet, and sticking feathers in his hair. Like other humbugs nearer home, he works the patriotic vein.

"The Jewish question," he says, "is not entirely confined to the Dreyfus case. The agitation in favor of the Traitor was only a pretext for attacking the Army and injuring the country."

This choice morsel has a place all to itself in the *Antijuif*, with the author's name in capitals, as it might be—"Shakespeare." The ideas of patriotism and religion are, after all, so closely allied that we need scarcely wonder at seeing them keep such close and constant company.

FROM THE DECALOGUE.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Thus the commandment; but what does it mean? Does the italicised word indicate time, place, or manner? In the French edition, published by the Bible Society, "before me" is rendered "*devant ma face*"—literally "in front of my face." That appears to intimate that we may worship other gods behind his back. We must not let him see us at it. If this is an incorrect translation, the French Protestants are in a parlous state. Perhaps "before" indicates preference. In that case the possession of other gods is obviously permitted, so long as Jah occupies the top shelf. It is a pity the Lord did not make himself quite clear. As it is, one really doesn't know how many gods he may keep, or precisely what to do with them when he has them.

FROM CHURCH DOGMATISM.

"Belief" is the be-all and end-all of Christian sermonising.

How facile a form of ethics! The credulity of the thief may embrace a whole world's pantheon; he will not on that account become the worse thief, or the better man. Once teach him that morality's highest manifestation includes something other than *conduct*, and he will believe it readily; he will *want* to believe it; and he will thank you heartily for the information.

You see, it gives him a sort of moral status, without the accompanying inconvenience of decent behavior.

FROM ACROSS THE HERRING POND.

"At what time God will rise up and extirpate these evils I know not, nor whether He will do it by fire, or hurricane, or earthquake; but a holy God I do not think will stand it much longer."

Observe the touching modesty of the speaker. He knows not! He, Talmage—*Doctor Talmage, De Witt Talmage*—knows not! Impossible! But wait—there is still hope. He does not *think* God will "stand it" much longer! We may breathe again.

In the meantime, I venture to call God's attention to the above extract. He will note that the Rev. Doctor admonishes him to buck up. The means are all suggested—fire, hurricane, earthquake. These, applied simultaneously, should make the most hardened sinner sit up. If God defers much more, he will certainly forfeit the good opinion of Dr. Talmage, who is already constrained to hint that such conduct scarcely savors of holiness.

FROM SICILY.

According to *La Raison*, a young Sicilian woman has given birth to a strange infant possessing horns, and a tail, and other details of that sort. The mother had been much affected by a church picture representing His Sulphuric Highness. This is supposed to account for the phenomenon.

There is another possible solution, which I suggest with due trepidation. May not the hero of *Paradise Lost* have had his morals corrupted in some way? By reading the New Testament, for example?

Even Satanic integrity might falter before the ghostly suggestiveness of Matthew i. 18.

E. R. WOODWARD.

Ah Ling's Religion.

AH LING was short and fat. Moreover, he was religious. He sang hymns in a peculiar falsetto that made you feel uncharitable towards your fellow-man and be tempted to heave things at the singer.

He also went to church twice every Sunday. It was a treat to see him on that day. He was so chockful of goodness, he seemed to ooze sanctity all over. Ah Ling was my servant. His air of sorrow and commiseration for my ungodliness was vast.

It is a common saying in China that "it is impossible to convert a Chinaman." No matter how genuine the conversion may seem, it invariably turns out that, unless there is some direct gain in the matter, John backslides in the end. I was loth to think this of Ah Ling, but I was suspicious, nevertheless. In the first place, I knew he was robbing me, but I also knew he took good care that no one else did. This in itself was serious, but then I knew that plenty good Christians did the same thing.

His devotion to my interests (apart from that little "squeeze" I have mentioned) was touching. At this time I was a bachelor, but was going to get married.

How to break this news to Ah Ling was hard. I would fall lower than ever in his estimation, I felt assured. Eventually I did not break the news at all. I decided to let him find out for himself. I was married in Hongkong, and arrived at Shanghai at night.

When I knocked at the door, it was Ah Ling who opened it. He lifted his eyebrows when he saw my companion; and, when she came in, I thought he looked excessively pious. Happening to steal a side-glance at him, I saw him smile to himself, and there was a swift Asiatic wink in that oblique eye. Turning on him, I said, sharply:—

"What are you grinning at? You wooden-faced image, take those traps up to my room."

"Takee box belong girl 'long your loom, allee same?"

"Yes."

"All li."

I fancied I saw a wicked leer on his face as he spoke, but the next instant it looked guilelessly innocent again. What did the beggar mean? I determined to have a talk with him in the morning.

Later that night I happened to go past his room, and, hearing him speaking, stopped and listened. He was praying:—

"O Lord, wha'for you lettee Missa Blown do likee allee same Missa Smiff? One time I wolk long him; I sabee he plenty bad man.

"Allee time he have got plenty sisiter. Sometime sisiter come stop two, tlee day; go 'way. He talkee me.

"Ah Ling, my sisiter come look see me to-morrow. You sabee—sisiter?" Hiyah! I sabee.

"Wha'for he makee too muchee love-pigeon long he sisiter?

"Missa Jones he catchee girl to-night. Bime'bye he say: 'Ah Ling, my sisiter come stop long me two, tlee day.' O Chli!"

I waited to hear no more. Shades of morality! that was what the beggar meant. I decided that Ah Ling and I must part. We parted next day. I have not seen him since.

Also, about two hundred dollars' worth of our jewellery and silver have not been seen since.

—*Sydney Bulletin*.

ALEC. ZANDER.

Acid Drops.

WE see by the *Daily News*, which has turned remarkably pious of late, and has been giving special attention to church and chapel affairs, that a pastoral is being issued by the direction of the Wesleyan Conference to the Methodist world. It bears the signature of the President, the Rev. W. T. Davison, and the Secretary, Mr. Marshall Hartley. Thankfulness is expressed that, in spite of the manifold seductions and distractions of modern life, Methodism maintains its spirituality. This is a point, of course, on which outsiders can hardly be good judges, so we prefer to say nothing about it. But the next point is more general, and at the same time more definite. We quote from the *Daily News*: "During the century just closed Christianity has been the object of fierce, prolonged, and many-sided attacks. Criticism, armed with wide and brilliant scholarship, has assailed its Scriptures, its doctrines, its sanctions of human conduct, its interpretation of the history of man and of the world. Notwithstanding an equally learned and vigorous defence, so determined was the assault that even stout hearts sometimes trembled for the safety of the Ark of God. But, as the day of battle wore on, it became more and more clear that the 'foundation of God standeth sure.' From the furnace of historical criticism into which it had been cast the New Testament has come loosed from the thongs of tradition, made ready for wider service, and for more confident appeal by the witness of fire to its proof."

This part of the Methodist pastoral may be reassuring to the ignorant faithful, but it is hypocritical nonsense to all who are "in the know." In the first place, nothing is said about the Old Testament, which has been perfectly riddled by the rifle-fire of modern criticism. All the stress is laid upon the New Testament. And we venture to say that "the witness of fire to its proof" is one of those clap-trap phrases which are dear to the heart of believers, but ridiculous to the minds of the unbelieving and even the doubtful. What is meant by "proof"? If it is meant that modern criticism has left the miracles of the New Testament unharmed, we beg to give it the most peremptory denial. There are scholars within the Christian Church itself—yes, *within* it—who openly repudiate all the miraculous elements of the New Testament. Nor is it now taught, by any reputable scholar, that the four gospels were written by apostles and eyewitnesses. They are admitted to be the report of Christian traditions, written by unknown persons, and at times which it is impossible to fix with any sort of accuracy. Moreover, it is not denied that these "inspired" reporters—and therefore the traditions they worked upon—are often very seriously at variance with records of authentic history. Surely, then, if all this is "proof" of the New Testament, it must be confessed that the word is used in some other sense than that which is attached to it by men of honesty and intelligence.

After rejoicing in the continued "spirituality" of Methodism, and uttering that consoling nonsense about the New Testament, this pastoral proceeds (as usual) to denounce the spirit of the age, which is, somehow or other, always antagonistic to the "faith once delivered unto the saints." It is said that "the harvest of Materialism is ripening," that "a strange lethargy has fallen upon the people," that everybody is "in quest of riches," that drink, gambling, and other vices, bring myriads to destruction, and that the very "sanctities of home life" are seriously threatened. In view, therefore, of "the gigantic and accumulating evils" of the times, it is the duty of all Methodists to be "up and doing." Well, for our part, we have no objection to the Methodists bestirring themselves, though we are bound to smile at the notion that *they* are going to save the world. That is a task, on their own showing, which God Almighty himself has been laboring at for nearly two thousand years; and, if matters go from bad to worse, under the hands of Omnipotence, it is extremely difficult to see how an improvement can be effected by the insignificant "worms"—we borrow their own language—of the Wesleyan Methodist persuasion.

We have not the slightest belief in the existence of these "gigantic and accumulating evils" of the times. That has been the language of the pulpit from the beginning until now. And the men of God have cried "Fire!" so often when no flame or smoke was visible, and "Wolf!" when no such animal was in sight, that most people have come to look upon these exclamations as merely professional. We expect the men of God to declare that the world is as bad as it can be to-day, and that it will be worse to-morrow; for they live by dispensing medicine to cure our maladies, and the worse they make us feel the more they know we shall fly to them for remedies.

Old Dowie, the Zionist, of Chicago, the great pork city, has incurred a good deal of odium there by his denunciations of breakfast bacon. Being something of a Jew by temperament, though not by blood, and a devout believer in the Old

Testament, he cannot abide that unclean animal, the pig. And just as Booth makes the Salvationists swear off pipes and tobacco, Dowie makes the Zionists swear off sausages and rashers.

Old Dowie now claims to be the prophet Elijah. It appears that the idea was suggested to him twenty-five years ago by a Jewish gentleman who saw him manifest his "healing powers." At first Old Dowie scoffed at the idea, but it grew upon him, and he is now sure that Elijah is inside him—or perhaps that he is inside Elijah. But these little flights of fancy do not interfere with the old prophet's pursuit of the main chance. He keeps a steady eye on the dollars, and is said to be raking them in faster than ever.

John Alexander Dowie resembles William Booth in one respect at least. He keeps all the property of his movement in his own hands, and has it registered in his own name. On this point they beat Moses hollow.

Francis Mason, son of a Grimsby solicitor, shot himself dead at Fulstow, a Lincolnshire village. On the tombstone of a suicide in the churchyard he wrote: "God forgive me this deed." The very same words were written on a letter-card to his brother by William Simpson, an artist, who cut his throat in his studio, at 3 Seymour-place, Fulham-road, London. Nothing hangs to these facts except that the suicides were not Freethinkers, as, according to Talmage, they ought to have been; and that the fear of God, if it is the beginning of wisdom, as the old book says, does not deter men from taking their own lives.

The usual amenities occurred at a Nationalist procession at Magherafelt. Catholics and Protestants exchanged the customary civilities of the occasion, and a pistol went off, the result being a bullet through the head (we will not say the brains) of a Roman Catholic, named Thomas Devlin, of Coagh, County Tyrone. How they love one another!

A Sunday-school excursion from Dundonald, County Down, was spoiled by the rain. Another excursion of the same kind from Belfast got along splendidly, and returned home "feeling thankful to the Almighty for the favorable weather." This sentiment implies that the Almighty lades out the weather to suit his own taste in Ireland. Why, then, did he try to drown the Dundonald excursion while shining on the one from Belfast? Will the godly please explain?

The Dundalk Board of Guardians has had a discussion on the burial of deceased paupers. The corpses are jolted to their last resting-place on a donkey-cart, driven by an old woman. This sounds rather odd, but is less so when you reflect upon it; for an old woman may as well drive a cart as an old man; and, as for the donkey, did not Jesus Christ himself ride into Jerusalem on an animal of that species? It appears, however, that the deceased paupers have a worse grievance; they are buried without proper religious rites, at least in many cases. About ninety Roman Catholics die in the workhouse every year, and the Roman Catholic chaplain generously offers to bury the lot (by instalments) for the sum of £20 (extra), provided he puts them underground before ten o'clock in the morning.

Owing to the great exodus of holiday-makers from Blackburn, some of the chapels were closed on August 11. This inspires the *Examiner* to observe generally of Lancashire that, "desirable as holidays are, it seems a pity that places of worship should be closed, even on one Sunday in the year, through the feverish breaking-away of the workers for a time from their toil." Why shouldn't the toilers break away when they have the chance? And why should the chapels complain? The closing of these conventicles on a summer Sunday is a blessing to the flocks, if we have in view the kind of teaching given when the chapels are open. Anyhow, the flocks make a bolt off to fresh air and new scenery, and go for a complete change; and who can blame them—except the chapel deacons and the *Examiner*?

One is glad to observe that Sunday travelling for pleasure is still on the increase. During the summer about 500 pleasure-boats pass through Boulter's Lock on the Thames on a Sunday, and 100,000 people leave London by excursion trains.

Clergymen sometimes get answers they do not expect, even from children. A minister was questioning a Sunday-school class about the man who fell among thieves on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho. Bringing the story to a point, he asked: "Now, why did the priest and Levite pass by on the other side?" "I know," said a lad. "Because the man was already robbed!"

Some may remember (says the Dean of Bristol, in his auto-

biography) the following amongst many anecdotes of Archbishop Magee. A servant at a dinner-party spilt a plate of soup over his "best." Quietly looking round the dinner-table, he asked: "Is there any layman present who would adequately express my feelings for me?"

The following is given out at open-air Christian meetings, according to the *Sunday Companion*, and is said to be sung vigorously:—

It's a good old thing, religion;
It's good enough for me;
'Twas good enough for Peter
When he walked upon the sea;
'Twas good enough for Daniel
When in the lions' den,
And surely it is good enough
For common working men.

Yes, it is probably good enough for *common* working men. The other sort prefer something better.

There is a gambling-house in the East-end of London which is said to employ an automatic church organ instead of a look-out man. "The scheme," says a writer, "has worked beautifully, and neither the neighbors nor the police of the district are aware of the deception. When the organ is started you might think, in passing the house, that a prayer-meeting or revival service was in progress behind the closed blinds, for it plays nothing but hymns. All the evening it switches from 'Nearer, my God, to Thee' to 'Rock of Ages,' and then to 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains.' And all the time the dice are rattling and the stakes being paid. No one thinks of raiding a gaming-house where an organ is heard playing 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'!"

The infallibility of Leo seems to have landed his Holiness in an awkward hole, according to a Rome correspondent. The Pope had solemnly cursed the Anglican pious society—to which several Bishops belong—known as the "Third Order of St. Francis," because the Order in question did not follow the true rule of its founder. The other day it was discovered by Sabatier that St. Francis's own rule is exactly followed by the Englishmen, while that of the Roman Order is incorrect. Hence his infallible Holiness is puzzled as to whether he must accept as right the rule of a heterodox community, or solemnly curse St. Francis's own directions. For the present, uneasy lies the head that wears the tiara—in spite of its infallible brain.

The August number of *Round About*, which has evolved from Mr. W. T. Stead's Wedding Ring Circle, contains some interesting advertisements. Here is a sample: "B 329, London," is a young lady of twenty-five, an admirer of the Greek spirit in art and literature. Wishes to correspond with some person, preferably one not brought up in the Christian faith, so that she may be helped out of religious prejudice; an admirer of Aristotle, Carlyle, and Emerson." An Irish Journalist, "twenty-five (feels forty), sensitive, and a mild cynic," would like to correspond with a young and vivacious lady. Another gentleman, yearning for intellectual friendship, states: "Religion Mosaic, but Freethinker."

The Army Chaplain who has been through a small portion of the South African war continues his narratives in the *Church Times*. He makes one admission which is worth mentioning. "The pictures," he says, "of chaplains administering the Blessed Sacrament to the wounded in the midst of the fighting on a battlefield are mere fanciful illustrations, and are not really 'sketched from life by our special artist.' After a battle, when the searching parties are out over the field, the chaplain may be called upon to administer the Last Sacrament to some dying comrade, but scarcely in the heat of the conflict. In the firing line the chaplain's movements will attract the enemy's fire, for which the men will not be grateful; and on the field, where ambulance-men and doctors are at work, he is likely, in his official capacity, to be decidedly in the way."

There does not seem to be much reason why the chaplain should be there at all. He is obviously, as this one says, "in the way." At the hospital base his pious, but only partially understood, ministrations might have a chance. But a hospital nurse would be a thousand times more useful.

The fact is the army chaplain is an unnecessary adjunct, and he begins to feel it. Some have the sense to confine themselves to sympathetic talk, and to conveying home messages from those who are disabled; but there are many who are absolutely useless impedimenta, who draw pay, and are not, even in a spiritual sense, worth their salt.

Edward VII. has shown some sense by reducing the ecclesiastical establishment of the Court. The German services

at the Chapel Royal, St. James, have been discontinued as another item of the reduction. These services owe their origin to the fact that there was a time when the English sovereign could not speak the language of this country!

The *Daily News* has made the amusing suggestion that opportunities should be given to Dissenting divines "to take part in services at which the Royal Family should be present." "Only thus," it is added, "can their Majesties hope to arrive at a true conception of the religious beliefs of their subjects."

If it comes to this, why should not their Majesties be invited to hear a few Freethought discourses? The *Church Times* shudders at the light-hearted indifference to kingly ease implied in the suggestion that the Sovereign should be compelled "to listen to the discourses of preachers of hundreds of conflicting Protestant sects, the sum-total of whose tenets amounts to the rejection of every single article of the Christian Faith. Moreover, if this experiment is the only means by which their Majesties can arrive at 'a true conception of the religious beliefs of their subjects,' upon what principle would they be forbidden to listen to Romanist divines?"

Ten lads at Weymouth, while being dressed in wadding to represent animals in Noah's Ark for a hospital parade, were injured through one of them setting fire to himself in lighting a cigarette. Where was Jehovah?

The *Examiner*—the Congregationalist organ of that name; not, alas, the *Examiner* of the old days, which was full of free and liberal opinions—publishes a poem on "Modern Apologists." Here are the opening verses:—

From out the troubled pilgrim band,
Who tremble on the perilous way,
With ancient foes on either hand,
Comes forth the Greatheart for the day.
To fight with Doubt that dims the end,
And blots from tear-dimmed eyes the crown,
The fears that with the landscape blend
And wear the pilgrim courage down.

It would be a dreadful pity to blot a crown from "tear-dimmed eyes." But one must be quite sure that there is a crown to blot.

But this Greatheart—on Bunyan's lines—has his work cut out, and is not particularly successful, as will be seen by the verses which follow:—

Not clearer now the Prince's Land,
Nor dead the foe by Greathearts pressed!
Though scarred they crouch on either hand,
In modern armor freshly dressed.
For every age must have its Guide,
Its Greatheart, clad for modern bout;
Nor can we in the past abide,
And count for dead the ageless Doubt.

Doubt is truly described as "ageless," but it has for its progeny people of absolute Disbelief.

During a terrible storm which occurred at Vigo, the Church of St. Andres was struck by lightning whilst a celebration of Mass was proceeding. A portion of the structure fell in, killing one woman on the spot, and injuring several others. The officiating priest fainted; but the Lord seems to have been, as usual, absolutely indifferent both in regard to the house dedicated to his worship and the personal safety of his worshippers.

The *Christian World* says that the Babylonian origin of the story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis, or rather of the materials out of which it has been constructed, is one of the points on which most modern critics are agreed.

A modification of this view is recommended, in an article in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, by Professor Morris Jastrow, the author of a notable book on Babylonian and Assyrian religion. The general correctness of the received opinion is admitted; but more stress is laid than by most writers on the subject on divergencies between the Hebrew and Babylonian accounts.

There are several features of the priestly narrative which, according to the Professor, show a divergence from the Babylonian epic—the direct assertion that God created the heaven and the earth, the creation of light and the sun, which are not mentioned; the absence of any allusion to the conflict between Marduk and Tiamat, which is the central feature of the Babylonian story; the addresses of God to mankind, and the division of the work of creation into six days.

Still, whilst the Professor admits that the third verse seems to be a protest against the idea that Marduk, a sun-god, was the creator of the world, he places the time when the Hebrews became acquainted with Babylonian ideas about creation at a much earlier point than is fixed by most commentators.

The death of Rev. John Jasper, the eccentric colored minister, calls to mind the famous sermon which he delivered in hundreds of pulpits in the United States. From *Town and Country* we quote Brother Jasper's peroration: "Bredren, ef de Bible say de sun rise an' set, den it do rise an' set. An' how ken it rise an' set ef hit don' move? In de tenth chapter o' de book o' Joshwy, an' de twelf, thirteenth, an' fo'teenth verses, dar is proof strong ernuff for us all.....Bredren, ef de sun stood still once when 'twas a-movin' an' den stahted to movin' ergin, hit is a-movin' now! Dey say de earth is roun'! Dat ain't so, bredren; it can't be so, for de Book o' Revelations, chapter vii., verse 1, read: 'An' I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth.' Ef de worl' is roun' an' turn over ev'ry night, how we hol' on? Is we got claws on our feet like woodpeckers?"

Most people are acquainted with the Rev. Carlile's announcements, if not with his church; having read the former with some amusement. The other week it was the "Late Empress of Germany," and, after the monsterphone had bellowed forth a speech of the Bishop of London, some pictures of Her Majesty and of Germany were thrown on the screen. An orchestra of six concertinas, a trumpet, and drum discoursed "strange, rare" music, while the rector ascended the pulpit and assisted with the trombone—an effort which necessitated the discarding of his surplice.

Poor Mr. Carlile! One sympathises with him in his endeavors to blow the trombone during the recent hot weather.

A dispatch from London says that Henry Mayers Hyndman, for twenty years a prominent English Socialist, has withdrawn from the party organisation, and declares that English Socialism is a failure. The same seems to be the case in America. All efforts to establish Socialistic colonies in this country have proved to be failures, and the two Socialistic political parties are so busy fighting each other that they have very little time for anything else. Industrial emancipation is impossible so long as the mind of man is bound in chains.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, in the *London Sun*, falls foul of the Bishop of London for trying to soothe an old man, whose wife and daughter were burnt to death, by writing to him about "God's loving hand." "I don't know," Mr. Bottomley says, "whether the Bishop has a wife and son and daughter; but, if so, I ask him whether, if such a calamity overtook them, he would appreciate the consolation of being told that it was the work of God's loving hand. I fancy that, like myself, he would see, rather, the work of the Devil in it."

Dr. Ingram doesn't relish this sort of criticism. Naturally. So he protests against it, and says that Mr. Bottomley has brought "an odious charge of hypocrisy and meanness against him." This, by the way, is an allusion to the fact that the Bishop did not send the poor old bereaved father a subscription, but only a shake of God's loving hand. Mr. Bottomley, however, replies that he wasn't thinking so much of the non-appearing subscription as of the "blasphemous claptrap" of the Bishop's letter. Mr. Bottomley also pokes fun at the Bishop for having to pay (as he says) £8,000 during the last two months in entering upon the see of London. What a colossal expenditure for one whose Master told his disciples not to carry scrip or purse!

St. Kilda, the remote Atlantic islet famed for sea-birds, romantic scenery, and the parson who used to pray for "the inhabitants of the adjacent island of Great Britain," is the mother of eminently practical theologians. The sturdy islanders resent the action of their new minister, who favors the movement for reunion among Scottish Presbyterians, and has given his adhesion to the United Free Church. As a result, the steamer which recently visited the island, and brought his year's supply of coal and groceries, had to return to Glasgow with that part of the cargo still on board, for so strongly do the local boatmen disapprove of their pastor's alleged heresy that they refuse to land the goods necessary for his winter sustenance. Communication with the island is possible only in summer, and, unless the United Church promptly dispatches a relief expedition, the recalcitrant minister must either suffer martyrdom or capitulate.—*Daily Telegraph*.

There's a sharp boy at Kingston-on-Thames. He was a

witness at an inquest, and the coroner asked him if he understood the meaning of an oath. "Yes, sir," he replied; "kissing the Bible." That is all there is in it. The boy had it in once.

A Canon of the Armenian Cathedral of Lemberg, the capital of Galicia, bearing the dreadful name of Mar-dryosiewicz, is now doing eight months' imprisonment. He did not confine his attention to the affairs of the next world, but concerned himself a good deal with the affairs of the present one. He robbed the poor in order to speculate, to advance money to his friends, and to live in riot and extravagance. Had he not been found out so soon, he would probably have succeeded to the Archbishopric.

Looking in a certain news vendor's window, we noticed what seemed a boys' paper called *Famous Fights*, with a front picture showing one stripped pugilist knocking another stripped pugilist out of time. Right under it was a piece of music called *Nazareth*. We smiled, and walked away, reflecting on the wonderful way in which Christianity has elevated the popular mind in the course of nineteen centuries.

The following advertisement appeared in the *Western Morning News*: "A Barrel of Lord's Prayer delivered free, 6d. each, by the Maker.—A. A. Carver, Jeweller, Falmouth." Have they found out down there that the Lord's Prayer, instead of being original, has an ancient and fish-like smell? Or has Jesus Christ taken up his residence in Falmouth? We pause for a reply.

George Newton, a San Francisco evangelist, having had a "long experience in the Christian ministry," and being anxious to make a bit for himself in a lawful way, advertises his readiness to receive money from his "brethren in Christ," and to invest the same for them advantageously. And as there are a lot of fools among the said brethren, we dare say the dear, good, self-sacrificing Evangelist will find customers.

Canon Arthur Towneley has resigned the rectory of Burnley, which he has held for nearly fifty years. The living is worth about £5,000 a year. But the next rector will only get £2,000 a year, as the balance will go by statute to the endowment of six new churches in the town. Still, it is well worth having. £38 9s. 3d. a week furnishes a pleasant amount of consolation to a pilgrim through this wretched vale of tears. We don't suppose the job will go begging.

An eccentric man named Mortimer, at the quaint little Cornish town of Saltash, which used to return two members to Parliament in the old rotten-borough days, went madder than usual one morning, and killed his wife, his children, and himself. According to the newspapers, he did not believe in a future life, and this heresy—which is really the practical belief of more than half the people of England—is made the occasion of some ridiculous homilies. It is suggested that there was a certain connection between Mortimer's heresy and his mad action. But no such connection between belief and action is suggested when a Christian makes a holocaust of his family. The truth is, we take it, that unbelievers commit crimes so seldom that when they do they set the Scribes and Pharisees talking. The unusual phenomenon is a natural subject for gossip and innuendo.

The *Outlook* is a clever sort of paper, but we were hardly prepared for its finding positive satisfaction, from a religious point of view, in the increasing emptiness of the churches on Sunday. Congregations, it seems, improve in quality, though they decrease in quantity. Fewer people go to church for the sake of "respectability," and a larger proportion attend to worship. What a monster of religious devotion the last church-goer will be, when the piety of all the departed worshippers is concentrated in his single personality!

What Did the Thief Say?

Mr. G. W. Foote, the Secularist writer and lecturer, is learning that misfortunes never come singly. He has long been struggling to conduct a propaganda which has landed him in the Bankruptcy Court, and now he has lost his luggage from the top of a cab. It was the first time in his life, he says, that he had ever allowed his own bag to be put on the top of the cab, and that very time it was stolen. But if Mr. Foote's case is hard, how much more cruel is that of the thief, who, when he got the hardly-won bag to safety, must have found its most weighty contents to be a new work on *Religion and Evolution*, and another on *The Early Christians*. He at least must be under no delusion as to the unsatisfying character of modern negations!—*Star*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

- Sunday, September 1, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, W.: 7.30, "The Future of the Freethought Party, and My Position in it: With a Reference to Recent and Passing Events."
- September 8 and 15, Athenæum Hall, London.
- September 22, Manchester.
- September 29, Glasgow.
- October 6, Birmingham.
- October 13, Hull.
- November 24, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

- ALL communications for Mr. Charles Watts in reference to lecturing engagements, etc., should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.
- W. P. BALL.—Your second, and still larger, subscription to the Fund for Mrs. Foote is a compliment and a testimonial which we have special reasons for valuing highly.
- D. SEDDON.—Thanks for the goodwill expressed in your letter.
- JOHN PAYNE, a Bolton veteran, eighty-seven years of age, sending a subscription through Mr. Levi Wood to the Fund for Mrs. Foote, says it would be a shame not to help the wife of "a man like her splendid husband, who could spend twelve months in a brick vault for a cause that belongs to everybody."
- W. ROWLAND.—Accept our best thanks for your further donation.
- A. PAYNE.—Difference of sex is no more in favor of the Design Argument than any other fact of adaptation. Of course we cannot deal with such a question in this column. There is an excellent book on *The Evolution of Sex* by Professor Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson in Walter Scott's "Contemporary Science Series."
- W. H. SPIVEY wishes Mrs. Foote and family "a successful issue from the present sea of trouble."
- "AN OLD FRIEND," who is a well-known public man, writes: "You have my sincere sympathy in the treatment you are receiving at the hands of Mr. Anderson, and I am happy to subscribe the enclosed £10 to Mrs. Foote's Fund."
- J. CHAMBERLAIN, an old follower of Charles Southwell from 1843 to 1854, hopes Mr. Foote "will be able to defeat what seems Mr. Anderson's mean spite."
- E. SELF.—Miss Vance has handed us your touching letter. Pray accept our sympathy as we accept yours.
- EDWIN PURCHES.—Certainly there ought to be a Secular propaganda carried on in Portsmouth, as there was some years ago. Pleased to hear that you and your wife are "great admirers" of Mr. Foote, and that your sympathy is with him in the present trouble.
- S. NEWSON hopes "in the near future to have some adequate reason given for placing Mr. Foote in his present unpleasant position." We do not think this hope is destined to be fulfilled. We published the lame letter which Mr. Anderson sent us some weeks ago, and his subsequent silence is simply due to the fact that he has nothing more to say. He thought his money would carry everything, but he is mistaken, as rich men are when they run against what is stronger than money—the spontaneous force and courage of the human heart. "Thy money perish with thee" is one of the really great texts of the New Testament.
- W. HEAFORD writes: "I am sorry Mrs. Foote is passing through the present trial, but to us outsiders the recent events come as a reassuring relief. We had been told to expect a fabulous indebtedness and reckless expenditure, but now find only a wee mouse crawling out of all this big mountain of suspicion."
- "JUVENIS" calls his subscription to the Fund for Mrs. Foote "A poor return for the personal benefits received from your husband's literary work."
- N. A. ROGERSON, subscribing to the Fund for Mr. Foote, says: "I have known and respected Mr. Foote for many years, and wish my means would allow me to do more."
- STAMPS.—Yes, the holiday was very beneficial. Thanks.
- D. A. BLODGETT, an American Freethinker, and a good supporter of the cause in his own country, is cosmopolitan enough to read the *Freethinker* weekly, and to take an interest in the movement in England. He sends £5 to the Fund for Mrs. Foote, with a letter in which he hopes that she will be able to save her home and her husband's books. He further hopes that "the Freethought party will forthwith fix this matter up," as "such an unfortunate affair is an injury to our cause, and should not exist." Mr. Blodgett trusts to hear that all matters are settled between ourselves and Mr. Anderson. He will have learnt by this time, however, that Mr. Anderson turned a deaf ear to all proposals for a settlement. His only terms are "unconditional surrender"—and the man who offers them to the President of the N. S. S. and editor of the *Freethinker* has a good deal to learn. We thank Mr. Blodgett for his sympathy, and assure him that we did our utmost to prevent this scandal.
- T. KELSEY.—No doubt the gentleman *did* intend Mr. Foote's ruin; indeed, he said so, and boasted of being ready to spend a thousand pounds in effecting it; but he has not succeeded. Others have tried to ruin Mr. Foote before, in some way or other, but they have all failed. The task was harder than they imagined.
- J. FERGUSON (Glasgow) writes: "To avoid troubles like your present one you should show more deference to the whims of

those who can differentiate where there is no difference. You ought to try to conciliate every crank and petty person, and be generally 'reverent' to all in and outside the movement. You ought, in short, to allow yourself to be but the nominal leader, instead of the real leader, as at present."

W. WAYMARK.—Your subscription was duly received. We regret its omission (somehow) from the list of acknowledgments. It is included this week.

HOWARD ROSS writes: "I have been pleased to see the Fund for Mrs. Foote gradually increasing, although, in my opinion, its increase is a little *too* gradual. You have done a great deal for the Freethought party, and I think it is but fair that the Freethought party should do something for you when the opportunity occurs."

D. KERR.—Thanks for cuttings and accompanying letter.

E. O. PALM says: "One cannot express too much scorn for the contemptible manner in which you have been treated. The mantle of Isaac Gordon has indeed fallen on unexpected shoulders."

J. C. BURROWS.—You must please send Lecture Notices on separate slips of paper. We cannot undertake to extricate such things from letters and rewrite them for the printer.

W. V. KEEBLE.—Thanks.

G. AUTENRIETH asks: "Is the *Freethinker* discontinued? My bookseller says it is. I should be very sorry." This is one of our perennial difficulties. Newsagents allow bigotry, or some other base motive, to influence them; they refuse, or will not take the trouble, to supply the *Freethinker*; and then they tell lies to screen themselves from blame. It may not be the bookseller or the news vendor; it may be the wholesale newsagent. But the guilty parties are somewhere, and we should like to run them down.

W. ROWLAND.—It is the man's real name, but he is only the "sedulous ape" of his great brother. The tract you send us from his pen is beneath contempt. It is only a very belated Christian who stands up for the story of Noah's Flood nowadays.

W. R.—Yes, we have seen the "answers" you refer to. They show the sometimes corrupting power of a rich man's money, and the truth of the French epigram that gratitude is a lively sense of favors to come.

G. E. C. NAEWIGER.—Date booked. Subjects in due course.

C. A. W. refers to the exposure of the Salvation Army that is appearing in *Reynolds'*, and commends the articles to the attention of Mr. George Anderson, who seems in love with the methods of that organisation. This correspondent further suggests that the Fund for Mrs. Foote should be kept open *after* the redemption of her home, partly because a surplus may be necessary, and partly because *all* will then have an opportunity of subscribing.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—*Reynolds' Newspaper*—*Crescent*—*La Raison*—*Discontent*—*Public Opinion* (New York)—*Two Worlds*—*Sun*—*Lucifer*—*Truthseeker* (New York)—*Progressive Thinker*—*Literary Guide*—*Torch of Reason*—*Free Society*.

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.

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 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.

Personal.

PERHAPS my readers will pardon my referring again to such an insignificant matter as the loss of my bag, which I had reason to refer to in last week's *Freethinker*, as some unanswered letters were among its contents. I recur to this matter for another reason. I believe that bag contained, in a special packet, a certain letter which I prized beyond money. It was the last letter I received from my late friend, the N. S. S. treasurer—Mr. S. Hartmann. In writing on his death, in the *Freethinker* of December 16, 1900, I alluded to this letter as follows:—

Only a few weeks before his death he wrote me a touching letter that brought tears to my eyes. He wanted to make a sacrifice for me, though I could not accept it. And now I shall treasure his letter as one of those rare, inestimable things that help to sweeten memory and correct the inevitable bitterness of public life.

I believe that letter is lost, and lost for ever, for

learnt from the detective that the papers and books in my bag have probably—almost certainly—been burnt; which is, perhaps, better than their floating about indiscriminately.

Since I am in a communicative vein, while this bankruptcy trouble is upon me, I will break through the reserve I had intended to maintain, and tell my readers what that letter of Mr. Hartmann's related to. My dear old friend had been much concerned about the action initiated against me by Mr. Anderson, of which I had given him complete information. He had spoken to me about it several times with evident anxiety. His solicitude was of a dual character. He felt that an open rupture and a public scandal might be injurious to our movement, and especially to the Freethought Publishing Company, of which he was from the first a Director. He also feared that I might suffer a great deal personally if Mr. Anderson proceeded to extremities. He told me that he had lain awake at night thinking over this matter. At last he wrote me the touching letter which I prized, and which I have lost. He asked me to let him become surety for whatever sum I was supposed to be indebted to Mr. Anderson, or even to let him assume the entire obligation, if Mr. Anderson would agree to its transference. My reply was prompt and decisive. I said that I was deeply moved by his extraordinary kindness, but that I was quite unable to avail myself of it, and could not consent to the transference of any debt of mine in such a fashion. I had better be indebted to a wealthy man than to one who was in a less fortunate worldly position. And there the matter ended. I do not think I ever saw or heard from my dear old friend again. His death occurred soon afterwards. He died quite alone in his bedroom at the Manchester Hotel; and often, when I was myself a victim of insomnia, and the darkness spread over me like a pall, and imagination was at work in freedom from the trammels of the senses, I have pictured him expiring in that forlorn state, and wished that I could have cheered his last moments, although I am sure that no note of fear ever sounded in the recesses of his brave heart, for he had long been intimate with the expectation of death, and he was naturally a man of calm and constant courage.

I turn now to the more sordid subject of the bankruptcy into which I have since been driven. I wish I could end what I have to say upon it this week, and close this wretched chapter of my history. But unfortunately that is impossible. Publicity has been forced upon me, and I have promised it shall be complete. What I intend to do—and I hope to do it next week—is to state my exact position once for all. The Freethought party shall know precisely what debts are proved against me before the Official Receiver, how much of those debts represents *interest* ridiculously piled up against a poor man, and consequently how much of actual *principal* I owe to my creditors. I am sure they will be astonished at its amount, after the extravagant rumors that have been put into circulation; indeed, this is already a theme of general amazement.

I will also state the amount of money that was invested, many years ago, by various persons, in what is technically called my "business," and which I paid back to the investors. The best plan, I think, will be to give a list of amounts without names, or with only the surname initial, or perhaps with only a number.

I will further state the exact amount acknowledged up to date for the Fund for Mrs. Foote, and the circumstances of the redemption of her home, which may almost be considered now as an accomplished fact.

With regard to Mr. Anderson, I have to report that he has put in a considerable bill for legal expenses, over and above the amount for which he obtained the receiving order, and this is accompanied by the intimation that a suit for a balance of £147 is still pending. That balance represents nothing but *interest*, and this fact alone is a sufficient answer to the nonsense about Mr. Anderson's "letting me down lightly." This nonsense, by the way, appears to be whispered and insinuated by one who ought to know better; but it is difficult to get those who hear it to face the responsibility of an open declaration, so I do not name the culprit—at present.

The Board of Directors of the Freethought Publish-

ing Company passed a resolution several weeks ago, calling upon Mr. Anderson to take the Shares which he had authorised me to announce publicly that he would take on the Company's formation. That resolution was transmitted to Mr. Anderson, who did not reply himself, but instructed his solicitors to do so. They promised a reply "in a few days," and applied for certain information in the meantime. It was supplied to them, but their reply has not arrived yet. The Board has therefore instructed the Secretary to send Mr. Anderson a final request for a definite and immediate answer. So I suppose I had better give him another week's grace before telling him, in plain language, what I think of his dereliction.

A meeting of the National Secular Society's Executive was held on Monday evening, and I was bound in honor to make it officially cognizant of the fact that I had been made a bankrupt. The President is not elected by the Executive, but by the Conference; the Executive's judgment, therefore, could not be decisive; nevertheless, it would be very influential, and I felt that I ought to take it. The meeting was a full one, and the following resolution was carried unanimously:—

"That this Executive, in full cognizance of the circumstances of Mr. Foote's bankruptcy, records its unabated confidence in him, and calls upon him to continue his occupation of the N. S. S. presidency."

Mr. Heaford formulated and moved this resolution, it was seconded by Mr. Gorniot, and voted for by all present, including representatives of Branches as well as vice-presidents. We have no member of the Executive whose name begins with A. But between B and W—between Bater and Watts—there was not a single dissentient. Mr. Anderson's attack, therefore, will not induce me to vacate the presidential chair for a single moment. As long as I am elected by the Conference, and have the full confidence of the Executive, I shall sit in spite of all the Andersons and all the Bankruptcy Courts in the world. As I have said before, one may be a prisoner without being a criminal, and one may be a bankrupt without dishonor.

I leave myself, unhesitatingly and fearlessly, in the hands and to the judgment of the Freethought party. I have made, as I went along, from week to week, a full and (I hope) a clear statement of this unfortunate affair, in all its bearings. I printed, without a word of alteration, the only letter that Mr. Anderson sent to the editor of the *Freethinker*; and I offered to print, if he would send them, the things he insinuated he could say about his "monetary transactions" with me. Not only did I invite him to send them, I *challenged* him to send them. I believe my readers are satisfied that I have been honest and straightforward in what I have written.

I hope to have done with this matter in next week's *Freethinker*. I say I *hope*. I do not know, and I cannot promise, for I am unable to see into the future, and I am ignorant of what may be sprung upon me. Not that I expect anything. But one is never certain, and he was a wise man who said that we should never prophesy unless we know. George Eliot, too, in her fine sarcastic way, said that prophecy was the most gratuitous form of error. So I will not play the prophet. Besides, I have not quite lost my sense of humor; and I still realise that the cocksure man is a fool worth exhibiting.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Fund for Mrs. Foote.

B. L. Coleman (second sub.), £1; W. P. Ball (second sub.), £2; J. Chamberlain, £1; An Old Friend, £10; W. J. R., 10s.; B. S. Shearman, 10s. 6d.; J. Mitchell, 5s.; W. Fleming, 5s.; S. Newson, 5s.; E. Self, 2s. 6d.; Juvenis, 2s. 6d.; E. Purches, 2s. 6d.; J. Fothergill, 2s.; A. Cayford, 2s. 6d.; C. Edwards, 3s.; J. W. J., 1s. 6d.; Seneca, 6d.; H. Snell, 10s. 6d.; E. Moorhouse, 2s. 6d.; W. Rowland (further sub.), 5s.; Levi Wood, 2s. 6d.; John Payne, 5s.; D. Seddon, 10s.; W. Heaford, 10s.; R. C. N., 10s.; H. H., 10s.; A. E. W., 5s.; P. Rowland, 5s.; R. Richards, 5s.; J. Robertson, 2s. 6d.; H. Crougham, 2s. 6d.; J. Maclean, 5s.; W. Pike, 2s. 6d.; W. Leat, 2s. 6d.; A. Friend, 1s.; Tom Jones, 5s.; W. Waymark, 5s.; D. A. Blodgett, £5; T. Kelsey, 2s.; Miss Kelsey, 1s.; T. Charrington, 1s.; Stamps, 1s.; N. A. Rogerson, 5s.; Howard Ross, 10s.; F. J. H., £1; Bath, 5s.; E. O. Palm, 10s.; G. B. (Edmonton), 3s.; F. N. Vivian, £1; A. C. Brown, 2s. 6d.; A. Firth, 2s. 6d.; Well Wisher, £1.

Sugar Plums.

AFTER being closed through the whole of this wonderful summer with which the twentieth century has so magnificently opened, the Athenæum Hall is now being reopened for Sunday evening Freethought meetings. On the first three Sundays in September the platform will be occupied by Mr. Foote, who will be followed by Mr. Cohen and other lecturers. This evening (September 1) Mr. Foote will deliver a special address, which, while it may be of inferior interest to Christians, is likely to prove exceptionally interesting to Freethinkers. His subject will be "The Future of the Freethought Party, and My Position in it: with a Reference to some Recent and Passing Events." No doubt his London friends will be anxious to hear what he has to say, and there will be some fairly plain speaking on several important topics.

Mr. Foote will try to visit the provinces rather more during the approaching winter. Early Sundays are already booked for Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham, and Hull. Other towns that would like a visit from him should make prompt application. He is desirous to visit the West of England and South Wales again, and would be glad to hear from Plymouth in particular. Are there no friends in that town (his birth-place) who could engage a good hall and see to the advertising and other arrangements?

We were glad to see a notice of Mr. Robert Forder's death and funeral in *Reynolds's Newspaper*. But it was rather odd to read that the funeral took place "in the presence of a large gathering of the deceased's relatives and Radical friends." Why is our contemporary so sedulous in omitting reference to Secularism in general and to the National Secular Society in particular? It will hardly do to plead ignorance, as a copy of the *Freethinker* is posted to our contemporary's office every week. As a matter of fact, Mr. Robert Forder's funeral was attended principally by Secularists, and there was only one address at the graveside, which was delivered by the President of the National Secular Society, at the family's request. Some time ago we gave Mr. W. M. Thompson a private warning that, if he wanted to be fair to the N. S. S. side of the Freethought movement—which is, after all, the most important side in respect of numbers and activity—he should keep an eye upon his staff; and we now venture to repeat the warning more openly. Not to mention Mr. Foote at all, or his chief colleagues, is of course a consistent policy, whatever else might be said of it; but it is a very mixed arbitrariness to give immediate publicity to his bankruptcy (for instance) without a word of sympathy or explanation, and at the same time to slur over other things of a more pleasant character. We do not believe that Mr. Thompson is personally to blame for the ground of our complaint. It is high time, however, that he gave a broad hint to the responsible subordinate.

The East London Branch opened a new lecture-station on Sunday morning at the West India Dock Gates, Poplar. Mr. Ramsey was the speaker, and there was a good and attentive audience. This morning (Sept. 1) another meeting will be held at the same spot at 11.30. Mr. Easton will be the lecturer, and the local "saints" should rally round the platform. At 3.30 the Branch will hold its usual meeting at the Stanley Temperance Bar, High-street, Stepney, when the business will be followed by a discussion, to be opened by one of the members.

Mr. Harry Snell, who has for some time been working in the Ethical Movement, but is still a good Secularist, and one of "the best fellows" going, sends us a letter dated August 22, with the following postscript: "I don't suppose that you desire to use this letter in any way, but if you should you may." Well, we do so desire. We think Mr. Snell's letter is an interesting one; and, instead of making extracts, we shall print it *in extenso*.

"I only returned home a day or two ago," Mr. Snell says, "from a two months' leave of absence, and as no letters or papers followed me I have only just learned about the Anderson trouble. I am shocked that difference of opinion can be carried to such extremes between one Freethinker and another. It seems to show that with all our philosophy we are no less intolerant than people of narrower views. If Mr. G. A. had power to put you on the rack I fancy you would suffer. I have never approved of the public homage this man has received at the hands of the Freethought party, to the neglect of more sterling but poorer men, and I am happy to say I have never been guilty of eating one of his dinners. Had he been a person of real character he would have made better use of his money; whatever he has given to the work has been given in a misguided way, and on the whole for an adequate return in esteem of poorer men. It is shameful that your home should be attacked. Even though the Official Receiver would be compelled to act, I hesitate to believe that in the end a rich Freethinker would be guilty

of this crowning shame. But it is well to place no trust in him, and I hope there will be no need for his generosity. I have never earned enough to permit me to have a home of my own, but if I ever have one I hope it may never be scattered by the strangers' hands. I wish that I were better off, but I have spent all my earnings during the past year or two in trying to get well again; nevertheless I have the hardihood to offer the enclosed cheque to the Fund for Mrs. Foote, asking you to believe that the amount is by no means the measure of my feelings."

We call that a manly letter, and as the world is all the better for a bit of manliness, seeing that it is by no means a superabundant commodity, we make no sort of apology for printing every word of Mr. Snell's letter between the "Dear Mr. Foote" and the "Yours faithfully."

The Bible God.

I HAVE no love for any God who believes in polygamy. There is no heaven on this earth save where the one woman loves the one man, and the one man loves the one woman. I guess it is not inspired on the polygamy question. Maybe it is inspired about religious liberty. God says that if anybody differs with you about religion, "Kill him!" He told his peculiar people: "If anyone teaches a different religion, kill him!" He did not say: "Try and convince him that he is wrong"; but "kill him." He did not say: "I am in the miracle business, and I will convince him"; but "kill him." He said to every husband: "If your wife, that you love as your own soul, says, 'Let us go and worship other gods,' then 'Thy hand shall be first upon her, and she shall be stoned with stones until she dies.'" Well, now, I hate a God of that kind, and I cannot think of being nearer heaven than to be away from him. A God tells a man to kill his wife simply because she differs with him on religion! If the real God were to tell me to kill my wife, I would not do it. If you had lived in Palestine at that time, and your wife—the mother of your children—had woke up at night and said: "I am tired of Jehovah. He is always turning up that board bill. He is always telling about whipping the Egyptians. He is always killing somebody. I am tired of him. Let us worship the sun. The sun has clothed the world in beauty; it has covered the earth with green and flowers; by its divine light I first saw your face; its light has enabled me to look into the eyes of my beautiful babe. Let us worship the sun, father and mother of light and love and joy." Then what would it be your duty to do—kill her? Do you believe any real God ever did that? Your hand should be first upon her, and when you took up some ragged rock and hurled it against the white bosom filled with love for you, and saw running away the red current of her sweet life, then you would look up to heaven and receive the congratulations of the infinite fiend whose commandments you had to obey. I guess the Bible was not inspired about religious liberty. Let me ask you right here. Suppose, as a matter of fact, God gave those laws to the Jews, and told them: "Whenever a man preaches a different religion, kill him," and suppose that afterwards that same God took upon himself flesh and came to the world and taught and preached a different religion, and the Jews crucified him, did he not reap exactly what he sowed?—*Ingersoll*.

Christ, the Nazarene.

THE copyist group was gathered round
A time-worn fresco, world-renowned,
Whose central glory once had been
The face of Christ, the Nazarene.

And every copyist of the crowd
With his own soul that face endowed,
Gentle, severe, majestic, mean;
But which was Christ, the Nazarene?

Then one who watched them made complaint,
And marvelled, saying, "Wherefore paint
Till ye be sure your eyes have seen
The face of Christ, the Nazarene?"

—*Constance Naden*.

The author of a great reformation is almost always unpopular in his own age. He generally passes his life in disquiet and danger. It is, therefore, for the interest of the human race that the memory of such men should be held in reverence, and that they should be supported against the scorn and hatred of their contemporaries by the hope of leaving a great and imperishable name. To go on the forlorn hope of truth is a service of peril. Who will undertake it, if it be not also a service of honor? It is easy enough, after the ramparts are carried, to find men to plant the flag on the highest tower. The difficulty is to find men who are ready to go first into the breach.—*Macaulay*.

Jehovah-Worship; Its Origin and Destiny.—II.

(Continued from page 534.)

I WANT now to contrast the personality of Jehovah with the personality of the heathen gods, and the characteristics of his religion with those of theirs. I mean the gods strictly so-called, as distinguished from the spirits of departed heroes, who were venerated with a species of worship like that which Roman Catholics give to the saints at the present day. I understand it to be well ascertained, from researches in Sanscrit, that the heathen gods were originally, however much the fact may have been afterwards forgotten by some heathen nations, simply the cosmic forces, as those forces were then understood. And, on looking recently into a book which treats of the gods of Chaldea, of whom Abraham was, in his earlier days, a worshipper, I find that they, too, were the active powers of nature. We must remember that early men did not know the sun as a ponderous mass, nor the thunder-cloud as water in a vaporous condition, nor the storm-wind as gases in motion. They simply knew these things as force, and by their effects. And, if they also worshipped the earth and the ocean, it was on account of their energy. And they attributed the operations of all to will-power, as the ultimate cause of action.

The idea of an unconscious eternal force is quite modern. But they knew that these things possessed vast and mysterious powers, often exercised for good and often for evil, and they did not know that they operate according to fixed sequences (or, as we awkwardly term them, "laws"), and they thought it important to propitiate them. Nor did the ancients confine their prayers and offerings to the forces at work in the physical world. They also recognised those other forces, no less real, which operate in the heart of man. Affection, passion, military and prophetic enthusiasm, every emotion which carries a man out of himself, or which presses on his soul whether he will or no, was attributed to a conscious psychic force; and Eros, Aphrodite, Ares, and many another god unconnected with the physical world, received a share of homage. But these gods were acknowledged by every nation in the heathen world; they were not the special gods of any tribe; no personal bond of love and loyalty bound together them and their worshippers—cold and distant: all the generations of men were in their sight accounted but as grasshoppers. They were feared, they were propitiated, they plagued men in their wrath, and their favor was sometimes won; but they did not love, and they were not loved.

Far otherwise was it with Jehovah, when Abraham first covenanted to become his liegeman in the lonely wilderness. No covenant was ever made with the powers of nature. They dealt with man according to their will, and he worshipped them because he must. But Abraham became the liegeman of Jehovah by covenant, and Jacob only promised to continue the relation on condition that the God should protect him in his journey. Nay, at a later period, we find Joshua saying to the Israelites as a nation: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods whom your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." And the people answered: "God forbid that we should forsake Jehovah." And they gave as reasons the way in which Jehovah had preferred them to other nations in their then recent history. The covenant was made because Jehovah was not a cosmic force, and therefore had no relation with his people by nature.

Nor was he omniscient, for he did not know whether the people of Sodom were wicked, except through information received, and he was not satisfied of its correctness, but had determined himself to go down and inquire. He was a sociable God, and does not appear to have been credited with omnipotence, nor to have extended his jurisdiction far beyond the neighborhood of the mountain; but, though represented in folk-lore as a man in appearance, and so little distinguishable from a "son of man" that he was sometimes mistaken for one, yet in all the stories he is credited with super-

human power, and his nature is hereby invested with aⁿ element of mystery. He was a desert God, for not only was he found by Moses at Horeb, not only did he bring the Israelites to himself by bringing them to that mountain (it is the same as Sinai, the two being different sides of the same mountain), not only did Elijah go thither to commune with him, but the men who took the Nazarite vow in order to conform their character more closely to his abstained from grapes because the wine was not a product of the desert solitudes, but one of the luxuries of Canaan; and the Rechabites not only observed the same rule, but also dwelt in tents, as became Arabs of the desert.

But the most striking characteristic of Jehovah was his impassioned love and jealousy. The modern conception of Jehovah's jealousy, as a mean, ill-natured dislike to see anyone loved as much as himself, is due to the cold temperament of the Christian nations, who rarely feel, and hardly understand, the passion of jealousy. But in no instance in the Old Testament is Jehovah represented as jealous of any affection save that bestowed on the heathen gods. "Jealousy," in the Old Testament, means the determination to take and give a whole heart, to submit to no rival in the affections of the beloved one. The heathen gods were not jealous. They could not be; for, as all the cosmic forces possessed equal power, and all were served from fear, it would have been useless for any one to have opposed the equal claims of the rest. And, as their power is equally felt among all nations, it would have been impossible for them to have claimed a peculiar allegiance from any one. But Jehovah would submit to no rival in the affections of his people.

The covenant between them was a marriage covenant; and, though before it was made by the nation they might have chosen other gods, yet after it all worship of other gods was consistently esteemed adultery. Joshua warns the Israelites of this trait in Jehovah's character. And through all the writings of the later prophets his fury and his love—not the love of calm beneficence with which his worshippers delight to credit him now, but the hot love of a deathless passion; that love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it; that love which is strong as death; that jealousy which is cruel as the under-world—rage continually against unfaithful Israel, yet always yearn to reclaim her whom he still acknowledges as bound to him by an indissoluble bond. The character of Jehovah, as depicted in the Old Testament, is the most impassioned to be met with in literature. Othello and Romeo show poor and feeble beside it. The passionless, unchanging God of the Christian theologians is antipodeal to it, and serves only to show how completely the foreign elements have effaced the very fundamentals of the religion, for Jehovah was unchanging in nothing save in his love for Israel.

Whence came this remarkable conception—so unlike the mind or minds back of nature—so unlike what we call "God"?

It was the theory of the ancients that the emotions are due to the operation of superhuman intelligences. They noticed, as we do, that scenery produces on the soul of man an effect corresponding to its nature; and they attributed this effect to a spirit haunting the spot, which spirit they called its genius. I own I cannot find that any but the Romans are known to have believed in the geniuses of places; but the belief is so obvious an inference from the general tenor of thought in the ancient world that I think we may well impute it to the wandering tribes who frequented the Sinaitic peninsula. Now, can we not trace the germ of the Jehovah religion to the effect produced on the soul by the scenery of Mount Horeb? It is not a mount of flowers and glades and rills. It is not calculated to fill the mind with thoughts of voluptuous beauty or selfish ease. Rather is its sublime desolation fitted to produce a feeling of awe, not unmingled with austerity. To the hot temperament of the Arab, his brain seething between the burning sun and the burning sand, more absorbed than the European in impassioned love, as the universal approbation of polygamy testifies, the effect would be to develop in a high degree that passion by which the passion of love is purified and elevated—the passion of jealousy. These characteristics, in a sublimer form, would be imputed to the guardian spirit; and he would be adopted as the superhuman guardian, chieftain, and

friend of the more devout among those who visited the sacred mount. From such feelings the theory of the marriage-covenant would naturally spring.

H. W. BOYD MACKAY.

—*Freethought Magazine.*

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

ATHEISM AND MORALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In answer to the appeal by "S.," who wishes me to resume the controversy on the above subject, I may say that I can do but little work, and that I prefer to reserve my efforts for tasks of a more useful and agreeable nature than the unravelment and correction of the misconceptions and irrelevancies poured forth so copiously by Mr. Kingham. I have no hope that controversy with such a disputant would satisfactorily "thresh out" the question of the alleged incompatibility of morality and Atheism. I referred Mr. Kingham, for instance, in my letters to Darwin's chapters on the evolution of the moral sense by purely natural causes. This was the backbone of my argument, but Mr. Kingham does not care to examine and refute those chapters. Instead of doing so, he endeavors to lead me a dance at his own pleasure over all manner of broken ground in pursuit of *him*. If he studies the chapters I mentioned, or if he regards the facts around him instead of the theories in his own head, he will see that the elements of morality are permanent portions of human nature, and that they exist, though in less highly developed forms, in the lower animals, as may be seen in the affectionate care which many animals bestow on their young, in the faithfulness of the dog, and in the social instincts of bees and ants. If he accepts the instruction for which he pleads, but which at the same time he rejects, he will have to admit that the social instincts have nothing to do with supernaturalism, that the moral sense (like the "five senses") exists independently of theological belief, and that Atheists can be good men—in which case his accusation against Atheism falls to the ground. Seeing, however, that Mr. Kingham does not care to meet my main argument except by a statement concerning natural selection which I showed to be distinctly untrue, he (as I said in my last letter) "must not expect me to undertake the laborious trouble involved in the exceedingly tedious and unprofitable task of attempting to follow and understand his own bewildering compositions."

The difficulty of understanding Mr. Kingham's position and arguments is so great that he says himself that I have never once paid him the compliment of understanding him. This may be true; for I believe he does not understand himself, or he could never have written such puzzling and incoherent statements as he puts forth in his letters. His main thesis, for instance, is (so far as I can understand him) that "morality stands or falls by the existence of the supernatural sanction"; and yet he repudiates the idea of suggesting a connection between Atheism and immorality. So that he holds (1) that morality depends on belief in the supernatural, and (2) that morality does *not* depend on such belief. This second position—which contradicts and overthrows his primary accusation against Atheism—is strengthened by his admission that "there were gentlemen among Atheist writers," and by the curious fact that he attributes alleged ungentlemanliness on my part to the "old leaven of Christianity," which he supposes still "clings" to me and causes the bad manners of which he accuses me. In my previous letter I pointed out a closely similar incoherence between Mr. Kingham's defensive statements and his previous remarks associating the determinism of the Secularist with moral irresponsibility; and I reminded him that "I fail to see the use of arguing with a disputant who is so blindly oblivious of the substance and purport of his own remarks." The dubious and perplexing nature of many of his often abstruse or irrelevant or illogical or incomprehensible observations only strengthens me in my conviction that further discussion would be futile.

I may as well, perhaps, say a few words in self-defence concerning the charge of being so ungentlemanly as to use such terms as "incredibly ridiculous assumption," "ridiculously perverse idea," and "long-winded reiterations." A gentleman whose principal (though incoherent and partly contradicted, but still unwithdrawn) contention is that morality cannot exist without belief in God—which must mean that we Atheists are destitute of morality, and therefore are murderers, adulterers, thieves, and scoundrels of the deepest dye—is shocked that an Atheist thus attacked by him should dare to speak of *his* ideas as "incredibly ridiculous," or "ridiculously perverse," or should take the liberty of describing his reiterations as "long-winded." I admit that "long-winded" is not a particularly elegant expression, and, if it is thought offensive, I will willingly withdraw it, and substitute some other word, such as "lengthy" or "tedious." But I cannot admit that to describe certain ideas as ridiculous

or perverse is ungentlemanly. Would anyone say that Euclid was no gentleman because he often employs the phrase, "Which is absurd"? Is Mr. Kingham ungentlemanly because he describes a particular idea as "more than ridiculous"? Or are Mr. Kingham's ideas invested with a special sanctity which entitles them (like Biblical absurdities) to peculiarly reverential and euphemistic treatment? I hold that in such cases everything depends on the *truthfulness* and *appropriateness* of the description. I maintain, indeed, that in characterising Mr. Kingham's main idea—namely, that Atheism is incompatible with morality—as "ridiculously perverse" I adopted a mild, charitable, and thereby not ungentlemanly, view of the matter; for otherwise I might have been compelled to describe his monstrous accusation in some of the severest terms of which language is capable.

W. P. BALL.

"MONISM OR DUALISM?"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The postulation of morality involves the admission that man has inherited moral faculties from and through billions of dead-and-gone organisms, whose base was carbon; hence, no carbon, no mental activity and no volition.

Everything or force in nature is relative—nothing absolute or free from limitations; hence no free will. There is reciprocal relation between each sense organ and external phenomena—no light, no eye. There is a cause for everything, even for volition, and there is nothing free throughout the cosmos—bring in a single *free* force, and you have chaos.

Volition is a link in the chain of cause and effect, and a perfect chain must have no *free* link. If one phase of mental activity were free—viz., volition—mental anarchy would result; we would have volition run amok. We have no cognisance of any being whose will is independent of natural restraints, or influences, or circumstances, or environments.

The term "voluntary" can only be applied when we leave out of consideration the antecedent. Mr. Kingham *resolved* to criticise Mr. Watts's article. Mr. Watts's brain power influenced Mr. Kingham's brain activity—hence, the latter's resolve to criticise; his will was *caused*—a demonstration of "mental dynamics."

We are moral beings because we are heirs to moral grey matter—moral nerve—through evolution; and the guarantee for human actions comes from man. Bill Sykes had not much moral nerve, but I have no doubt that it could have been improved, and that without invoking the aid of an imaginary "second self."

When we attempt to induce a man to "cease to do evil and learn to do well," we simply influence, or stimulate, or arouse his dormant moral sense into normal activity, and there is no necessity to "lug in neck and crop" a ghostly entity—a second self—to assist us in the attempt. The causes of one's desire, or resolve so to do, are many. Love of one's kind, of itself, is incentive quite powerful enough.

W. JONES.

The Praying Knee.

A CAPUCHIN monk in Detroit has incurred a serious disease of the knee from continued kneeling at prayer. The case is an aggravated one, and it is feared it will be necessary to amputate the leg. The sufferer is Father Paschal, an inmate of the Capuchin Monastery on Mount Elliot-avenue.

In America, at least, this peculiar disease of occupation is almost unknown. Few people know anything of the disease, or its remedies. Father Paschal has spent many hours regularly each day during his long life upon his knees.

In Italy this attitude of devotion, continued for generations, causes deformity of the knees in a large number of people. In the case of Italian women, especially, the knees are often ugly. This fact is recognised among Italian artists, who rarely employ Italian models in painting the lower limbs. In painting pictures it is customary to employ Italian women as models for the face and French models for the lower limbs.

—*New York World.*

There may be, for aught I know, upon the shore of the eternal vast, some being whose very thought is the constellation of those numberless stars. I do not know, but if there be, he has never written a Bible; he has never been in favor of slavery; he has never advocated polygamy; and he has never told the murderer to sheathe his dagger in the dimpled breast of a babe.—*R. G. Ingersoll.*

One has said and insisted that such a passage meant such a thing; another that it meant directly the contrary; and a third, that it means neither one nor the other, but something different from both; and this they call understanding the Bible.—*Paine.*

That a gradual transition, passing through countless intermediate gradations, exists between man and animals, both in mental and corporeal characteristics, can only be denied by those who insist upon setting their own opinion above facts.—*Büchner.*

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, "The Future of the Freethought Party, and My Position in it: With a Reference to Recent and Passing Events."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11, J. A. Wilkes: "The Necessity for Faith."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Gospel of Atheism."

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, A lecture; 6.30, A lecture.

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

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A lecture.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, C. Cohen, "Something in its Place."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, W. Heaford, "Is Religion Necessary?"

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, W. Heaford, "Belief and Blasphemy."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY: 7.30, R. P. Edwards, "What must I Do to be Saved?"

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): R. P. Edwards—11.30, "Religions of India"; 3.30, "Progress of Thought."

REGENT'S PARK (near the Fountain): 6.30, F. A. Davies, "Creed and Conduct."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Prayer and Praise"; 7.15, C. Cohen, "Can Religion Live?" Wednesday, September 4, at 8.15, W. J. Ramsey.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Bible as a Guide."

VICTORIA PARK: 3.15, C. Cohen, "Can Religion Live?"

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and War."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Brockwell Park, near Herne Hill Station): Lectures every Sunday morning at 11.30.

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (Open space, bottom Morley-road): H. Percy Ward—3, "Bible Jokes"; 6.30, "What Think Ye of Christ?" September 2, at 7, S. H. Pollard, "Is Religion Necessary?"

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

HULL (No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies Hall, Albion-street): 7.30, Special meeting to discuss Mr. Foote's forthcoming lectures.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Adelaide Anne Procter's Poems."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Adjourned discussion, "Federation Schemes: Old and New."

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