

# THE Freethinker

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## Bible Assassins.

DR. PARKER is of opinion that the only cure for anarchy, turbulence, and lawlessness is a return to the Bible. He recommends that ancient volume as a panacea for all the ills that flesh—we beg pardon, spirit—is heir to. If boys and girls run wild, give them more Bible in their week-day and Sunday-schools; and if men and women are inclined to cut vicious or criminal capers, the remedy is still more Bible. Dose them all with it to the fullest possible extent. A little Bible, perhaps, is a dangerous thing; but give them plenty of it, and they will soon be fit for the kingdom of heaven.

This may be well-meant. It may also be professional. Dr. Parker is what the profane call a Bible-banger. He gets his living by recommending his "book of books" to the universal attention of mankind. Some people, therefore, will incline to think that his advice is not disinterested. We do not say so ourselves. We merely state what is conceivable.

Whether the oracle of the City Temple is perfectly honest or considerably otherwise, there is no harm in reminding him that his Bible remedy for social diseases has for a long time been very extensively applied. The Bible is greatly in evidence in all the so-called Voluntary schools. It is much in evidence in nearly all the Board schools. It is all over the shop in every one of the Sunday schools. Yet the fact remains that about ninety-five per cent. of all the criminals in our gaols have been Sunday-school scholars.

Dr. Parker's laudation of the Bible was suggested—at least he said so—by the news of the death of President McKinley. He observed that Anarchism would expire, and assassination would disappear from the political world, if the Bible were studied and revered as it ought to be.

This seems to us a colossal joke—not unworthy of Dr. Parker's reputation. The Bible might almost be called the assassin's text-book. Of course there are texts in it of a whiter character. It says in one place, "Thou shalt not kill." But, as a matter of fact, the Lord's chosen people were constantly engaged in killing their enemies, or each other, at his express command. Just in the same way, the Bible says, "Look not upon the wine when it is red"—which, be it observed, doesn't seem to exclude chablis, sauterne, hock, and other "white" concoctions. But, on the other hand, it recommends strong liquor to certain other persons who are always sufficiently numerous; bidding them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more. A good excuse for a fortnight's "drunk."

There are two salient cases of political assassination in the Protestant Bible, and three in the Catholic Bible. This does not mean five cases in all. It means that the Word of God according to the Catholics goes one better than the Word of God according to the Protestants.

The first case is that of Ehud, who slew King Eglon. Eglon was the King of Moab, and he "oppressed" the chosen people, apparently with an army of ten thousand men, although the Jews were over three millions, and able, on their own showing, to put six hundred thousand fighting men into the field. We are not told how Eglon did it. If he were living now he ought to be sent out to South Africa. But he did it somehow, and it was galling to the House of Israel. Now a deliverer was raised up in the person of Ehud. He was a Benjamite,

a left-handed man, and he conceived the idea of disposing of Eglon in a left-handed manner. With great ease he obtained an interview with the king of Moab, who had no detectives to watch him, and spies to watch the detectives, and other detectives to watch the spies. "I have a message from God unto thee," he said. This message he produced from under his cloak. It was a two-foot dagger, and he thrust it into Eglon's abdomen. Then he made tracks, leaving the message from God sticking in. Eglon did not find it pleasant; in fact, it killed him.

The second case is that of Jael. The chosen people were fighting—as usual—and this time they got the best of it. Sisera, the enemy's general, fled from the battlefield. In his flight he met a lady he reckoned as a friend. Her name was Jael. She invited the hunted soldier into her tent, gave him refreshments, and induced him to lie down and sleep, trusting to her hospitality, which in the East is considered sacred. While he slept she brought out *her* message from the Lord. It was a tenpenny nail. She drove it through his head with a hammer and fastened him to the floor.

"Blessed above women" this Jael is celebrated in the Bible. We call her a cat. If Old Nick, hot from hell, wanted a wife, she was cut out for his partner.

The third case occurs in one of the books which the Protestants regard as apocryphal, though it is a part of the Catholic Bible, and doubtless as much inspired as all the rest. The chosen people were fighting again, and this time they had the worst of it. It occurred, therefore, to a beautiful widow, named Judith, to assassinate the commander-in-chief on the other side. Oh, those widows! General Holofernes didn't know them like Mr. Weller. When she came to see him, dressed in all her Sunday finery, with every charm artificially heightened, he capitulated on the spot. What followed is best left to imagination. But the catastrophe came in the night. The fascinating widow turned his head first, and cut it off afterwards. Judith left the bleeding trunk there, and carried off the bleeding head to her own people. The sentinels did not stop her, nor look what she had under her mantle. They simply winked and said "It's the general's mash."

Judith's exploit is related as highly praiseworthy. The chosen people honored her all her days. Many of them wanted to marry her, but she would have none of them. Perhaps she had a sneaking fondness—these revulsions of feeling do occur—for the love-drunken warrior she had done to death.

Ehud, Jael, and Judith are a precious trinity of assassins. They are Bible characters, a hero and heroines of the chosen people, friends of the Lord of Hosts, minions of the Bible God. To imitate them must surely be a virtue. And it must be admitted that they have found imitators in the very persons whom Dr. Parker so vehemently condemns. He praises the Bible, and they practise its teachings. And as he is handsomely paid, and they get nothing but the electrocuting chair, the guillotine, the scaffold, or life-long solitary imprisonment, we conceive that he has the most intelligence and they have the most honesty. When the rogues and fools get properly assorted it is wonderful how often they falsify the popular estimate.

We have done with Dr. Parker, for this time. It is clear that he made no hit, but a very bad miss, in his sermon on President McKinley's assassination. And it is to be hoped that those who heard him will not follow his advice, or we shall have a fresh crop of political murders.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Pathetic Religion.

THE other day the Paris correspondent of the *Morning Leader* sent to his journal an account of the annual departure of pilgrims to Lourdes, which forms at once the most pathetic and the most grotesque reading. Every year hundreds of wretched sufferers, in all stages of physical agony, make their way to Lourdes in the hope that the God who, they believe, has thus afflicted them may see fit to change his mind, and give them health and strength, if they say prayers enough and go through enough genuflections and touch enough relics and pay enough toll to the earthly lessees of the shrine. The superstition, no less than the physical pain, calls for our pity and sympathy. Here is a description at which only the most callous could laugh when one realises all that it sums up and all the human suffering that lies behind the journalist's graphic prose:—

"Every half-minute one heard a commanding cry of 'Place, s'il vous plait, messieurs, place,' and stretchers bearing the wasted forms of those 'who had spent all their substance in doctors' were carried past towards a certain door at the far end of the station front. That door, I think, was the gate of Purgatory. Behind it was an enormous bare *salle d'attente*—I don't call it a waiting room, because a waiting room suggests chairs and tables and railway guides. The third-class *salle d'attente* in a French station sometimes contains a few benches. But yesterday these were all cleared away; the windows were darkened, mercifully; the air was heavy with antiseptics; there wasn't a stick of furniture in the place, except the dreadful stretchers. The stretchers lined the walls, head to the partition, feet out into the room, and each stretcher bore some sad witness to the darker side of life. They lay very patiently and quietly, these poor sick folk, while grave Sisters of Mercy tended to their wants."

Catholic rhetoricians, and even some Protestant ones, are in the habit of asking us to look on the heroic and human side of this kind of thing. And doubtless it has a human and heroic side like most things: the pathetic hope in the hearts of the poor sufferers, the devotion of the nurses and attendants. The correspondent from whom we have quoted tells us how dozens of "athletic exquisites" from the Faubourg St. Germain, dressed in knicker-bockers and shooting jackets, acted as stretcher-bearers, and "there was no shred of self-advertising pity among the lot of them." Here is another equally touching fragment:—

"There was a luggage van in the middle of the train fitted as a kitchen. Ten sisters were going to travel for twelve long hours in this little box, crowded in with cauldrons of water and milk and crates of restoratives, yet not one of them, though the sweat was pouring down their foreheads as they glided about in their hot black robes, gave a single thought to her own discomfort."

But the pathos of the whole affair only serves to set off the crass superstition which leads to such gross inhumanity. Rhetoricians are always asking us to look at the heroism of war, and the commonest begging-question put to the opponent of a given war is, whether he thinks the young men, who have gone from field or city to defend what they conceive to be their country's honor, do not present a noble spectacle? They do—and so do the nurses and attendants on the Lourdes' train. But such mistaken heroism, such nobility wasted, only serves to increase our sadness. The sight of the most precious qualities in human nature allied to ignoble or useless actions is deplorable. These unfortunates, dragged a long and painful journey by train in stuffy carriages, in order that an infinitely merciful God, who could have cured them in their homes, or never let them suffer at all, may cure them in a remote French town—these poor people, in all humanity, would be better a thousand times at rest. There is positively something barbarous in making a traffic of human agony in this way. That healthy people should journey many miles to take part in a superstitious orgie is sad enough; but, at any rate, there is no physical suffering involved. When it comes to paralytics and cripples, consumptives and others, leaving their sick-beds, one would think common humanity would cry out.

There is only one other point about this Lourdes affair that suggests itself, and it is well to take the opportunity of pressing it upon the English Protestant. It is the same point as Hume made over the "miracles"

alleged to have been worked on the tomb of the Abbé Paris; and Hume's point is as cogent as ever. Here in Lourdes, to-day, attested by numbers of witnesses, "miracles" abound. There is, on any law of evidence, vastly greater testimony to the Lourdes "miracles" than can now be produced for those of the Gospels. Yet no one in England—no English Protestant—bothers about them. No one assumes that, if any cures are effected, they are in any way "supernatural." By what law of evidence, or on what philosophical grounds, does the Protestant ask us to believe in the Gospel miracles whilst he himself discredits the better-attested Lourdes miracles?

In truth, the English Protestant, anxious to justify his own scepticism concerning Lourdes, must perforce fall back on some such argument as Hume's, which, when applied to the Gospel miracles, the same Protestant will declare invalid or seek to evade. The fact is that, if it is not unreasonable to doubt the truth of "miracles" wrought to-day to which numbers of living persons would testify, it is assuredly not unreasonable to doubt "miracles" two thousand years old for which no living witnesses can be produced to-day at all.

FREDERICK RYAN.

## The Triumph of Intellect.

ONE of the principal features of the nineteenth century was the marvellous intellectual changes and advancements which took place in the various fields of human thought. This progress is certainly the more remarkable when we remember the many difficulties with which it had to cope. As Lecky says:—

"It is, indeed, marvellous that Science should ever have revived amid the fearful obstacles theologians cast in her way. Together with a system of Biblical interpretation so stringent, and at the same time so capricious, that it infallibly came into collision with every discovery that was not in accordance with the unaided judgments of the senses, and therefore with the familiar expressions of the Jewish writers, everything was done to cultivate a habit of thought the direct opposite of the habits of science. The constant exaltation of blind faith, the countless miracles, the childish legends, all produced a condition of besotted ignorance, of grovelling and trembling credulity, that can scarcely be paralleled except among the most degraded barbarians. Innovation of every kind was regarded as a crime; superior knowledge excited only terror and suspicion. If it was shown in speculation, it was called heresy. If it was shown in the study of nature, it was called magic. The dignity of the popedom was unable to save Gerbert from the reputation of a magician, and the magnificent labors of Roger Bacon were repaid by fourteen years of imprisonment, and many others of less severe but unremitting persecution. Added to all this, the overwhelming importance attached to theology diverted to it all those intellects which in another condition of society would have been employed in the investigation of science."

There can be no reasonable doubt that, in the future, the law of evolution will operate more on the intellectual than on the mere physical plane. For many past decades reason has been asserting itself in the regulation of emotion, and individual judgment has been arrayed against ecclesiastical usurpation. During the last century, and especially during the past sixty years, the physical sciences have had it almost all their own way. The wonderful growth in our knowledge of the material universe, the wonderful progress of discovery in every direction, the wonderful expansion of fields of observation, the wonderful pace at which cosmical phenomena have been registered, and the wonderful sagacity with which the great laws which govern these phenomena have been interpreted—all this, and the extraordinary literary ability which has characterised the great leaders and teachers of the new learning, have contributed to attract and fascinate the most intelligent portion of the community. Thus it is encouraging to the friends of progress to contemplate the results of the scientific labors of a Lyell, a Faraday, a Herschell, a Darwin, a Clifford, a Tyndall, and a Huxley; to dwell upon the literary efforts of Coleridge, Tennyson, Browning, Thomas Carlyle, and Ruskin; to behold the fruits of the noble social work of Robert Owen, Richard Cobden, and John Bright; to remember

the marked effect of the Freethought struggles of Richard Carlile, Hetherington, Watson, Southwell, Holyoake, and Bradlaugh; and even to recognise the theological activity of such men as Newman, Pusey, Caird, Martineau, and the many exponents of what is termed the "Higher Criticism."

Taking a retrospect of the persistent endeavors of the above pioneers to aid the advancement of the intellect from the domain of stagnation, it is gratifying to see the marked improvement which is manifest in the realms of science, literature, sociology, Freethought, and of theological advocacy. Scientists no longer heed the clamors of the Church; men of literature write regardless of the pretensions of the orthodox faith; social reformers pursue their labors independently of clerical dictation; Freethinkers have won the right to expound their views; and theologians have been compelled to give up doctrines which were once held to be essential to their faith. The great obstacle to all advancement has been the teachings of the Church, with its inculcations of fidelity to traditional beliefs and its aversion to all secular improvements. As Buckle aptly puts it:—

"A people who regard the past with too wistful an eye will never bestir themselves to help the onward progress; they will hardly believe that progress is possible. To them antiquity is synonymous with wisdom, and every improvement is a dangerous innovation. In this state Europe lingered for many centuries; in this state Spain still lingers. Hence the Spaniards are remarkable for an inertness, a want of buoyancy, and an absence of hope, which, in our busy and enterprising age, isolate them from the rest of the civilised world. Believing that little can be done, they are in no hurry to do it. Believing that the knowledge they have inherited is far greater than any they can obtain, they wish to preserve their intellectual possessions whole and unimpaired."

Among the most remarkable changes of modern times is that which has occurred in pulpit preaching. The old style of sermons, with their vivid pictures of man's natural depravity, of the horrors of hell torments, of a personal devil who is described "as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter v. 8), and with their dissertations of the efficacy of Christ's blood, has, among the more intelligent professors of Christianity, been changed for a more human and secular order of preaching. As a fair sample of pulpit exhortation up to a few years since, we may take a Methodist minister. He objected to levity, and denounced the pleasure of the world as "the temptations of the evil one." His favorite text was, "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards"; and when he sang, which was in the most hollow and sepulchral tone, he selected hymns of the type of the following, far from cheerful, one by John Wesley:—

No room for mirth or trifling here,  
For worldly hope or worldly fear,  
If life so soon be gone.

Just fancy, when one heard such words drawn out as an orthodox preacher alone can give them forth, what an impression it must have made upon an intelligent audience as to the happy influence of Christian profession! The fact is that, so far as the pious singer was concerned, life might as well not have been at all, and that the sooner it "is gone" the better for his comfort. In this world he was clearly out of place, and could well be spared from the busy haunts of men. The prattle of little children and their frolicsome romps were, to him, the inductions of original sin. This kind of preacher, where he is now to be found, abhors a joke, calls a pun a miserable perversion of the meaning of words, hyperbole lying, metaphor absurd, and fiction the quintessence of falsehood. He says he belongs to the "little flock," which is a blessing for which we cannot feel too grateful; for a big flock composed of such as he would make life intolerable to everybody outside their fold. He has no abiding city here, which is a mercy; and he seeks a home in the skies, although he never seems anxious to reach it, but stays in this world as long as possible, a trouble to himself and a nuisance to all with whom he comes in contact. He delights to picture a heaven beyond the skies; but "distance lends enchantment to the view." He is serious while other men laugh, and solemn while they are joyous. He is akin to those ancestors of ours pictured by Charles Lamb who lived before candles

came into general use, and who, when a joke was cracked in the dark, had to feel around for the smile. In his case, however, there would be no smile to feel for, inasmuch as the preacher exclaims: "Woe unto you who laugh"; "Blessed are they that mourn"; "Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness." One writer says that laziness begets laughter; but in this pious minister's case it produces the very opposite effect. He is lazy and grim at the same time, robbing life of its beauty and rapture, and ignoring the possible brilliancy of time for the gloomy anticipations of eternity. In the language of Byron, he lives and acts—

In hope to merit heaven by making earth a hell.

Fortunately, the intellect of the age has triumphed over such mind-degrading pulpit utterances, except perhaps among some of the Salvation Army—a class of professed Christians whose preaching will never attract intellectual listeners.

The *Christian World* for September 26 reports a sermon recently delivered in Norwich by Dr. Barrett on "The Gains and Losses of Modern Preaching." Among the losses, the Doctor mentions the secularised tone given to much of the preaching of the present time; the changed views as to the person of Christ; the increased love for man in lieu of the veneration once manifested for God; the altered conceptions of the Atonement; and the indifference shown as to the Judgment Day. Now, instead of regarding these changes as "losses," we should pronounce them "gains," secured through the triumph of the human intellect over traditional belief. It is quite true that what success the Churches can fairly claim is due to such secular agencies as singing and music, and also to the compliance with the demand for short sermons dealing not with the blood of Jesus and hell torments, but with the practical duties of daily life. This is an age of mental activity and reliance upon the authority of reason. The critical faculty is more than ever exercising its power, and theology is impotent to arrest its force. If it were possible to entirely ignore or suppress reason, fanaticism, with its manifold evils, would once more predominate. If the authority of reason had not proclaimed liberty for speech and pen, it is impossible to estimate the number of errors and abuses that might have been consecrated by time, and held to be the incontestable axioms of human wisdom. There is no device that hypocrisy and tyranny have not employed to thwart the power of reason, and to force silence upon mankind. And, unfortunately, wherever the would-be destroyers of reason have been successful, ignorance and gloom have filled the minds of men, and choked the seeds of that liberty which gives to life its force and lustre.

CHARLES WATTS.

## Vanishing Theology.

WHATEVER ingenious explanations may be offered by the pious, the fact remains that the once dominant theology is falling rapidly into decay. It is suffering from a malady which, having regard to its effects, may be described as rapid consumption. The process of attenuation has already reduced it to little more than skin and bones. Its vitality has fallen to so low a point that life seems to hang upon a mere thread. All the old robustness is gone, and a semblance of active existence is preserved only by specifics of which it would have scorned to avail itself in centuries gone by. This diagnosis is not founded upon mere antagonistic desire. It is the legitimate conclusion from admissions and laments by religionists themselves, and is supported by individual and impartial observation of the symptoms.

It would be absurd to affect any regret that the various theological systems are undergoing a drastic change, marked by a serious diminution of prevalence and power. They have had their day, and, in the endless march of progress and of time, to which a century is but as a second, will eventually cease to be. The sooner the better, it will be thought—at any rate, so far as their special and distinctive features are concerned. Nothing but the ethical element—which does not belong to these systems exclusively, but which they have assimilated, and, to a large extent, distorted—has preserved them so long.

The professional expounders of the Christian theology are eternally confronted with the one overshadowing fact that, do what they will, they cannot draw the masses of the population into their churches and other conventicles. We can make allowances for the inertia that falls upon exhausted working-people in regard to nearly everything outside their mere physical existence. But the Christian theology claims to be a divinely-revealed system, with unparalleled rewards and penalties. God is represented, not simply as being at the back of it, but permeating it through and through, and bestowing his blessing on its propagation. We might, therefore, reasonably expect better results, especially as God is said to have created the people of the world, fixed their powers of receptivity, selected the time and conditions for the presentation of his Will, possessing from the beginning a knowledge of how it would all work out. These are vital considerations, which cannot be lightly passed over, and which certainly militate against the claims made on behalf of Christianity.

The religious weeklies are full of lamentations. For instance, the *Examiner*, a Congregationalist organ, in an article on "The Religious Outlook," says that, though on special occasions, and where popular preachers are to be heard, the general aspects may not cause foreboding, the every-day appearance, which alone is a criterion, is anything but encouraging. It says: "We seem to be on an ebb-tide. Attendance on public worship is less than it used to be; pleasure-seeking on the Lord's Day is more in evidence than ever it was." People, it complains, are given to week-end trips, and the Sunday-schools are often forsaken and forgotten. "There is a great outcry over a diminished church attendance, and it is commonly attributed to the minister, but he hardly explains everything. If there is a general decline in religious duties, it is useless and absurd to lay it at the door of any one class." Similar complaints appear in the Church of England press.

*Apropos* of the Church Congress, the *British Weekly* discusses, from a Dissenting point of view, what should be an ideal Ecclesiastical Assembly. It finds that those at present held are disappointing in the extreme. They do not discuss with all earnestness the present problems of the day. "One is the decline in Sunday-schools. We have known it dealt with in a house which was practically empty. We know no Church gathering that has really faced it in a serious and painstaking spirit." On vexed questions which are apart from the practical work of the Church, it says, "words have been spoken that rankle and fester in the minds of those against whom they are directed, which have startled and shocked outsiders, and have moved them to despise the Church and to reject the faith." It further says: "There is not a shadow of doubt that much of the alienation from Christianity in our day is traceable to the fact that ministers and representatives of Churches have borne themselves in controversy in such a way as would be thought infamous in secular debate."

These points affect rather the business side and personal spirit of the religious organisations. They do not at all account for the general decay. That has a much deeper-seated cause in the growing unbelief on vital doctrinal matters. And it is in this respect that many Christian leaders, in the vain hope of retaining dissatisfied adherents, have been "unloading" to what must appear an alarming extent in the eyes of orthodox believers. Thus it is that we have the spectacle of a rapidly-vanishing theology—of a faith which is becoming thinner and thinner day by day, dwindling into an emasculated, skeleton-like form which bids fair to be divested in time of all identifiable features. Modern Biblical criticism is disposing of so much that formerly was held to be historically true and authoritatively binding that Christians may well begin to consider what is likely to be left.

The other week Professor Denny addressed the Dundee and District United Free Church on the Bible in relation to modern criticism. Though by no means heterodox himself, he perceives the fatuity of some of the methods whereby orthodoxy endeavors to preserve portions of Scripture, which are obviously doomed. According to a report in the *Dundee Advertiser*, he said:—

"There was one short and easy way of disposing of all

difficulties which was radically false. It was the assertion, repeated in a thousand forms, that spiritual certainty belonged to a totally different world to that with which historical criticism deals. If historical criticism was able to show that Christ was not what they believed him to be, and that he did not do the things on which their faith depended, it was transparently absurd to say that such criticism could not affect their Christian life. In its results it might affect it seriously. God did not mean them to have a faith independent of history. Another evasive solution was that it was God, and not the Bible, that was the true object of faith. But take the Scripture away and they took Christ away along with it. It was only half a truth to say revelation was one thing and the historical record of it another. The questions the critics asked had to be answered somehow by believers and unbelievers alike. Speaking generally, the questions were of two kinds—literary and historical. While in purely literary questions the Church was not much interested, it was closely touched by the historical."

This shows a very clear perception of the impossibility of drastically stripping and lopping the Biblical tree without sapping and destroying whatever life it may be supposed to have had. We cannot, however, understand Professor Denny's remark upon Genesis, that "it seemed to him possible to say both 'yes' and 'no' if a person asked if these stories were true." He says that "our Lord took the Book of Genesis as he found it." But that was exactly what he ought not to have done, unless he was indifferent to the perpetuation of error. That he did so is pretty good evidence that he was no wiser than others of his time as to the unreliability of that book.

But, as we see from a recent work by Dr. Menzies, Professor of Biblical Criticism at the University of St. Andrews, New Testament "history" is also undergoing a remarkable process of whittling down. Rev. Dr. Marcus Dods, reviewing this latest production, says: "We fear that the resulting impression on the mind of the reader will be uncertainty, if not hopeless uncertainty, regarding the truth of the Gospels." Truly the Christian religion is getting into a parlous state!

FRANCIS NEALE.

### St. Callistus, Pope and Martyr.

TO-MORROW (October 14) is the festival of St. Callistus, and those who wish to understand the character of the early Christians should study the career of this pontiff, who sat on the papal chair from August 2, 218, to October 14, 222.

Before the year 1842 nothing was known of the life of St. Callistus, except that his name figured in the Roman Martyrology; but in that year was recovered the lost treatise of Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus, entitled *The Refutation of all Heresies*, in which the episcopal writer gives a full account of the Pope's career. This career is of such a nature that we can well realise why the Church chose to have it discreetly forgotten. Callistus is first known as a slave in the household of Carpophorus, "a man of the Faith," who was himself a libertine, or freedman, of the reigning Emperor Commodus. The name "Callistus" was a common one for a slave at that period. The word is Greek, meaning "the best"; and the peculiar excellence of St. Callistus will appear in his story. The libertines of the emperors were usually men of strong but abandoned character, who became the intermediaries of the imperial favor, and were thus able to amass large fortunes, while they escaped the consequence of tyrannical and illegal acts by their position in the imperial court. The Emperor Commodus was the bad son of Marcus Aurelius. His reign was stained with every kind of vice, cruelty, and oppression. He kept up an establishment rivalling that of King Solomon; and his chief mistress was Marcia, a member of the Christian Church, who eventually had him assassinated. With such surroundings the character of St. Callistus was quite in keeping, and he is described by Hippolytus as a cunning and subtle rascal, solely engrossed with his own interests. Carpophorus, recognising the talents of his slave, entrusted Callistus with a considerable sum of money, and set him up as a money-lender, his place of business being the public fish market at Rome. It was the custom of the ancients to allow their slaves to

carry on various businesses, in return for some specified rental; and the slaves frequently prospered, and amassed a sufficient sum to buy their freedom from their masters. As it was known that the transactions of Callistus were backed by the wealthy Carpophorus, he soon obtained a reputation, and many of the Christian widows and poorer brethren entrusted their little properties to him. Callistus, however, managed to make away with all the money committed to him, and, moreover, became involved in financial difficulties. This came to the ears of his master, Carpophorus, who demanded an account of his stewardship; but, instead of receiving the account, he was notified that Callistus had absconded. Losing no time, Carpophorus pursued him, and found he had already embarked upon a ship at the mouth of the Tiber. Carpophorus, therefore, rowed out to the ship in a boat, to claim his slave; but the cunning rascal leaped overboard on recognising his pursuer. The sailors pulled him out of the water, however, and handed him back to his master, who set him to work on the treadmill, to grind the corn for the household; as this heavy and monotonous labor was the common punishment reserved for refractory slaves. Work, however, was not to the taste of Callistus, who got it bruited abroad that his confinement to the mill prevented him from collecting debts due to him which might enable him to pay off a proportion of the sum of which he had defrauded his depositors. Several of the brethren, therefore, came to Carpophorus, and represented this to him very strongly; and at length he consented to liberate Callistus to prosecute his claims. Callistus, however, had no intention of getting back the money, but looked out for some opportunity to embroil himself with the authorities and so get imprisoned, when he would be sure to obtain the sympathy of the Christian community, and get the reputation of a martyr for the faith. His first act, therefore, was to go into a Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath day and create a disturbance. The Jews very naturally seized him, and took him before the prefect, charging him with brawling in a place of worship. Callistus loudly acclaimed himself a Christian, who was being persecuted by the Jews, and caused great excitement among his fellow-believers. But Carpophorus, hearing of this, came forward and represented that the sacrilege was only an artifice on the part of the slave, who had made away with his money and defrauded other Romans. The prefect might have taken this view, but the Jews looked upon the intervention as a Christian trick to prevent their obtaining justice. They, therefore, raised a loud clamor, and the prefect ordered Callistus to be severely scourged, and condemned him to serve in the mines in Sardinia. Some time after this Marcia, the chief favorite of Commodus, being very religious, like many ladies of her profession, was persuaded by Pope Victor to obtain from her lover, the Emperor, a pardon for all the Christians undergoing penal servitude at the mines, there being a large number there, condemned for various offences. Marcia, being all-powerful at the time, easily obtained the decree; and Callistus returned to Rome along with the other liberated criminals. Victor was not too pleased to see him back, because his case was notorious among the brethren; and he, therefore, sent Callistus to Antium, where he was supported some time by the alms of his co-religionists. While Callistus abode in Antium, however, serious matters went on in Rome. Marcia entered into a conspiracy with the libertine Eclectus to murder the Emperor, to whom she administered poison. As the poison did not work perfectly rapidly, Eclectus became alarmed that Commodus might recover from it, and called in the aid of a professional athlete, who finished the victim by strangulation. Marcia (whose piety is also vouched for by Lampridius) had successively been the mistress of a Roman noble and a Roman emperor, not to mention minor indiscretions; and she now sought a more legal liaison by marrying her fellow-murderer Eclectus. But her wedded bliss was short. Publius Pertinax had been acclaimed emperor upon the death of Commodus, and had occupied himself with the disposal by public auction of the plate, cattle, dresses, and furniture of his predecessor, which realised a vast sum, which was duly paid into the public treasury. He next took in hand the Pretorian Guard, but the soldiers mutinied and killed him, after a reign of eighty-seven days.

With the head of Pertinax upon the point of a spear, by way of standard, the Pretorians put up the Imperial position to auction, and it was purchased by Didius Julianus for a large sum. Didius soon learnt that L. Septimius Severus was marching against him with a large army, and he suspected Marcia of being in correspondence with the enemy. Marcia and Eclectus were, therefore, executed; "and of such is the kingdom of heaven." Didius was murdered by the Pretorian guard after a reign of sixty-six days; and shortly afterwards Severus marched into Rome, and proclaimed himself Emperor without the slightest opposition. The fate of Carpophorus is unknown, but he was probably put to death during these troubles, as he is not mentioned again. About A.D. 197 Pope Victor died, and was succeeded by Zephyrinus, who is described by Hippolytus as being an ignorant, illiterate, covetous man. Zephyrinus recalled Callistus to Rome, as he was an old acquaintance of his, and made him keeper of the Catacombs. The early Christians, following a Jewish custom, quarried galleries in the earth, and interred their dead in the niches dug out of the walls on either hand. These galleries, or catacombs, were protected by the Roman laws regarding sepulture, and were dug in the land belonging to the Christian community. The office of keeper of the cemeteries was a very lucrative one and quite to the taste of Callistus, who, with his native cunning and experience of financial methods, soon gained entire ascendancy over his ignorant friend Zephyrinus, and formed himself a strong party in the Church, so that, upon the death of Zephyrinus, Callistus was elected to the vacant chair, which he occupied during the short reign of Elagabalus. His death is somewhat obscure; but, according to tradition, the Pope was thrown out of a window in his palace, and killed, in a popular riot. The cause of his murder cannot have been a religious one, for even Alban Butler, the historian of the saints, points out that Alexander Severus, in whose reign the event occurred, was not a persecutor, but rather in favor of the Christian faith. It may be that Callistus had started another bank.

In any case, this rascal is venerated by the Catholic Church as pope, saint, and martyr, and on the 14th October the following collects are said in his honor:—

"O almighty God, look down upon our infirmity; and, because the weight of our own deeds oppresses us, let the glorious intercession of blessed Callistus, thy martyr and bishop, be our protection."

"O God, who dost gladden us with the yearly solemnity of blessed Callistus, thy martyr and bishop, mercifully grant that, as we celebrate his birthday to immortality, so we may also rejoice in his protection."

"O God, who seest that we fail by our own weakness, mercifully restore us, we beseech thee, to thy love, by the example of blessed Callistus, thy martyr and bishop."

CHILPERIC.

## Acid Drops.

"THE Church and the War" is the heading of a pastoral letter which the Archbishop of York has issued to his "Reverend Brethren." Eighteen months ago he expressed to them his conviction that the "sparing success" achieved up to that date by the British arms in South Africa was "the chastening of God for our national and personal sins." He is of the same opinion still. What the nation most urgently wants is not more men, more horses, or better officers, but "a national humiliation." His lordship is in that line of business himself. He is ready to superintend the national humiliation—at least, in the northern part of the kingdom—and he has every confidence that the Black Army will beat the Khaki Army hollow in settling the hash of the Boers.

The worst of it is that the Boers have got to the windward of us—to use the language of yacht-racing. They had their Day of Thanksgiving on August 8, and their Day of Humiliation on August 9; and the result seems to be, as the Archbishop of York broadly hints, that they still hold the field by the Lord's help, in spite of our apparently overwhelming strength. What we have to do is to get to the windward and blanket them. Indeed, the Lord appears to be anxiously expecting that manœuvre on our part. "It may be," the Archbishop says, "that our Heavenly Father is only waiting to be gracious." His Celestial Majesty wishes us to win, and that as quickly as possible; but while the Boers keep

praying hard and humiliating themselves—which we don't—he is bound to give them the proper reward of their pious exertions.

Evidently we must not expect our Heavenly Father to be guided by reasons of justice or humanity. According to the Archbishop of York, we need not "doubt the justice of our cause nor the beneficial results which our victory would bring, even to the very people with whom we are now at war." That is to say, it would be a benefit to all concerned if the Britishers licked the Boers speedily; but the Lord won't let them do it, as he is obliged to sustain his own reputation, which is of paramount importance. Those who flatter him most get his assistance, irrespective of their true interests or the justice of their cause.

Well, if this is true, all we can say is that the sooner we go in for "national humiliation" the better. It will be far the cheapest way of bringing the war to a termination. But, alas, there are two sides to the picture; or, to put it differently, the argument cuts two ways; for the Boers, in their official proclamation, declare that their wonderful success in the appalling struggle makes it "manifest that God has no desire for their downfall." Both sides, therefore, are at loggerheads in their theology as well as in their politics, and there seems to be no remedy but the bitter, costly, and brutal one of a fight to a finish.

The Archbishop of York, for his part, has a thorough belief in the God of Battles. So has President Kruger. The Archbishop believes that this God, at bottom, wants the British to win. President Kruger believes, at bottom and top too, that this God wants the Boers to win. Our own impression is that both gentlemen are mistaken. We are not at all sure that there is a God, but if there is he seems to be minding his own business, and leaving us to mind ours. Oh no, says the Archbishop; he exists, and is active enough when he chooses to be; but at present he is "withholding definite success from us," because the Boers tickle his ears best at prayer-meetings. What we have to do is to tickle them still better; then he will take practical command of the British army in South Africa, Lord Kitchener will be only his lieutenant, and the Boers will promptly be swept to the Devil! So says the Archbishop, at least in substance, and literally where we have quoted his words. But let those believe it that can.

*Harper's* has a story of the venerable Dr. Thurston, who is said to be much more at home in the mazes of theology than in the amenities of social life. Not long ago he was introducing to a younger clergyman a handsome widow, a former parishioner of his own, no longer young, and extremely sensitive to the fact. "My brother," said Dr. Thurston, leading the lady forward, while his face beamed with genuine affection, "this is Miss Almeda Jennings, one of my old sheep."

The Sunday superstition is trenchantly dealt with in a recent leader in the *St. James's Gazette*, apparently *apropos* of the discussion at the Brighton Congress. The writer says it is undeniable that the sanctity of the Sabbath does not possess its former hold upon any section of English society, "and we are by no means sure that the change is altogether so deplorable as the speakers at Brighton assumed."

The *St. James's* makes a very sensible observation, which is worth repeating from such a source. It says: "It must be remembered that the best sort of rest from labor is not idly twirling the thumbs, but occupation of a different character from the daily task. We are not at all certain that the Continental Sunday, which is such a bugbear to many excellent people, is less wholesome or improving to the masses of men than our English puritanical Sabbath, which provides no change from the grimy and overcrowded homes except the public-house."

The writer adds: "It is positively amazing, therefore, to find that a speaker at the Church Congress held that people who do their religious duty in this matter should exert themselves to stop Sunday bands, concerts, museums, picture galleries, cycling, golf, lawn tennis, and suchlike amusements and occupations on Sunday. These are the very things which it should be our object to encourage on the day of rest."

The last Earl of Bristol in 1769 bequeathed £30 a year for the vicar of Sherborn to preach a sermon on the anniversary of his death. The vicar preached this year's sermon a day or two ago. It occupied fifteen minutes, being at the rate of £2 per minute. That is not too much for a panegyric "to order" on someone of whom nobody knows much, if anything, except that he seems to have been very egotistical and had a belief in the power of cash. We know some impetuous men of ability who would not prostitute their talents in such a way for thrice £2 a minute. Needless to say they are not parsons.

Canon Hemsley Henson, in the discussion on sermons at

the Church Congress, made a very pertinent remark. "Many of the clergy," he said, "preach too much, and some ought not to preach at all." This "over true" observation elicited laughter and applause.

Rev. Herbert Handley is a great deal too sanguine if he thinks that the masses are to be won to the Church by the reduction of the Archbishop of Canterbury's stipend to £5,000 per annum, the Bishop of London's to £3,000, and the diocesan Bishops to £2,000 each. The *Examiner* says with truth that it will require something more than the reduction of episcopal salaries to induce the working man to come to church. Generally speaking, the *Examiner* writer thinks the son of toil is "as hostile to the humble chapel as to the richly-endowed church." From the working man's standpoint, "the Church seems to pander to the rich, to uphold class distinctions, to accommodate itself to the powers that be, to extend its patronage to monopolies and abuses, and to wink at—and even excuse—the drink traffic, to uphold and glorify war."

The Bishop of London is announced to preach on the question, "Why I am a Churchman." No doubt he is, in the first place, a Churchman from spiritual conviction; but, having that faith, "the things added thereunto," such as £10,000 a year, a palace at Fulham, and a town house in St. James's Square, with all the authority and adulation attendant upon his position, are quite sufficient to account for his *remaining* a Churchman, in spite of all that now or hereafter might be said against Church polity, doctrine, or even the essentials of belief.

It seems that the Wood Green District Council have decided that the *Church Times* is not to be admitted to the Reading Room of the Free Library. The *C. T.* seems to be more than a little "nettled" over the exclusion, and it publishes a leaderette on the subject. But all that it says equally applies to the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from most of the municipal news-rooms. We have never noticed that the *C. T.* offered any protest against this kind of "grandmotherly" restriction on the part of local authorities until it has now become affected thereby itself.

The re-establishment of capital punishment has been introduced into the Dutch Government program, and a clergyman named Rudolph has publicly stated that, "if no one can be found to carry out the execution of the death sentence, he will do it with his own hand."

In his book on *Travels in the Land of the Rising Sun*, Canon Tristram says a popular Japanese deity is the God of Strength, who is represented with enormous arms and calves. His shrine was heaped with offerings of pairs of tiny clogs and old sandals, and his devotees pray to him that their calves may develop muscles as strong as his. He is the popular deity of the jinriksha men, the clean-limbed, active men who perform the work of cab-horses of Japan.

Canon Tristram might have added that the Japanese belief, that strength is represented by enormous arms and calves, is, at any rate, more rational than the Old Testament suggestion that it consists in a man's hair, *vide* the story of Samson and Delilah.

Dr. Moule's lament in the October number of the *Churchman*, on the lack of learning and letters displayed by young Evangelical clerics, is obviously well-founded. He has made no special discovery. The fact has long been well-known. It has been emphasized by the superior airs assumed by these fledgelings of Christ, these sucking doves of the Church, who disport themselves in clerical attire, and without the semblance of a hair on their upper lips or chins, and with hardly an original idea in their heads, call themselves "reverend," and punctiliously expect to be addressed as such.

*Apropos* of this adolescent arrogance, a contributor to the *British Weekly* mentions that an eminent minister, who is at present in charge of an important missionary college, told him last week that each candidate is required to state in writing what books he has read. The results, he says, are often deplorable. The reading of many of the young men seems to have consisted largely of missionary magazines and religious booklets. Few have their minds enriched by the study of the great English classics in prose or poetry.

The Lord was hardly gracious to his faithful in regard to the opening sermon of the Church Congress at Brighton. Dr. Alexander, Archbishop of Armagh, undertook to preach, but, as the date approached, found that his weight of years and growing infirmities necessitated his backing out. Dr. Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon, undertook to act as substitute, but his aged mother's death broke this engagement also.

Then Dr. Welldon, Bishop of Calcutta, was selected, but, during the singing of the hymn before the sermon on Tuesday, Prebendary Hannah, vicar of Brighton, was seen to ascend

the pulpit. He expressed great regret that a recurrence of Dr. Welldon's Indian fever disappointed them of the expected preacher's presence, but Dr. Welldon had sent his manuscript, and under the command of his diocesan he would read it. Mr. Hannah, we are told, read the sermon with much vigor, and with an appetising accent. "Alo-an," "Fai-ith," and so on rolled out in a way reminiscent of Tennyson's "Northern Farmer."

Dr. Welldon, in a paper also read by proxy, fell foul of Rudyard Kipling. He said that that popular author is largely responsible for conveying a wholly erroneous idea as to Europeans in India. But it seems only the other day that Dr. Welldon was vegetating at Harrow. He has had but a limited experience of India though he has contrived to be laid up a few times with fever. But we must be permitted to believe that Kipling, with all his faults, generally knows what he is writing about, and has lived a trifle longer in India than the present Bishop of Calcutta. Moreover, he has moved about there, and mixed in the kind of general Anglo-Indian society which would be closed to the Metropolitan, or which would put on its finest manners if the Bishop approached. On the whole, we would sooner accept Kipling's estimate than that of Dr. Welldon, estimable man as he seems to be.

"A China Missionary" takes strong exception, in the *Record*, to a speech at the Methodist Ecumenical Conference by Dr. Allen, in which he said: "Our superior education and superior knowledge and greater civilisation had made such a great impression on the Chinaman that he was now humiliated at his own shortcomings." "Nothing," continues "A China Missionary," "could be more contrary to the reality. This superiority of tone, moreover, is the greatest offence to the Chinese, not to say humiliating to ourselves. It is my earnest conviction that the adoption of such a tone in China is a positive danger. Just so far as missionaries pose as apostles of the Powers or of civilisation they are a cause of irritation. The Chinese are tolerant of a new religion, but not of new customs."

Here, at last, we have the plain truth admitted by a Church missionary to China. It bears out all that has been said by liberal-minded people who have sympathised with the Chinese in their troubles, brought upon them by the rampageous religionists who have invaded them and flouted and insulted them, and were then surprised that the Chinese turned round eventually and resented the domineering intrusion.

The fever of what is called "missionary enterprise" found expression at the Church Congress, where Canon McCormick "insisted" on the right of the Christian Church to send its missionaries to the Soudan, and even into Khartoum, "where the memorial to Gordon was a college in which no Christian teaching was allowed." This is just what was expected when the college was founded. The funds were subscribed with the clear understanding that they should be applied in a non-sectarian way, for sufficient reasons which were then adduced. We said at the time that sooner or later the Church Missionary Society would interfere, and Canon McCormick seems to be preparing the way.

Dr. Parker has been preaching on "Mean Prayers." There are more than a few supplications addressed to the high heavens which would come under that category. Curiously enough, he founded his sermon on one of the fiercest of the imprecatory Psalms—namely, Psalm xxxv. "David is here," he said, "in one of his lowest moods. This Psalm is the meanest thing in Christian records. It is the cheapest, meanest talk ever breathed in the face of heaven. The roots of the Cross have been in the earth for two thousand years, and yet there are men who can still pray like this. I have read the psalm again and again to see if I could find a jewel in it. It is full of conceit and boasting; the man does not see the heaven he is talking to. He calls his enemies around him, and by the mere act of naming them gives them an advantage over him..... Oh, the bitterness and carelessness, the godlessness of some prayers! Bless, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our little garden. Never mind the garden over the wall. The owner of that garden has given me good ground for offence. I want the rain to come straight and steadily into my plot, and let him learn, by his want of rain, not to insult me any longer."

This is pretty good for Dr. Parker. But he had more to say in the same strain: "We love to make God a convenience, a superior, upper servant." That is a sentence worth preserving for praying Christians to ponder over.

Mr. Eugene Stock, the editorial secretary of the Church Missionary Society, seems to be overpowered by what he calls the "great honor of having been commissioned as a Diocesan Lay Reader by Bishop Temple." This appears to have impelled him to add the infliction of a paper to the quite too overburdened program of the Brighton Congress. He

had nothing very special to say, as might be expected, but he undertook to speak for the laity. In an airy kind of way he said: "I for one am not in the least afraid of modern critical investigation into the date and authorship and structure of the books of the Bible. If they compel us to modify somewhat our traditional interpretations and inferences, that is only what has happened before without disturbing the unique position of Holy Scripture."

But Mr. Stock fails to see, or forgets for the time, that all these unanswerable objections in regard to date, authorship, and structure of the Bible have a most serious effect on his so-called Divine Revelation. As he truly says, the Scriptures occupy a "unique position," for they are full of narratives of startling and miraculous events which require the clearest and most indisputable evidence to ensure their acceptance. They bristle with incredible wonders. Is it, then, of no importance that the narratives are doubtful in date and authorship? Or that, at any rate, some modifications have had to be made in regard to the testimony on which they are founded?

Several curious discussions and doubts have arisen with respect to the Pope's signature, P.P., which has succeeded to the humble subscription of Servant of Servants. Some people think it means the "Prince of Priests"; others interpret it "Paris and Petersburg," implying his situation between these Courts; but an Irish professor assures us the whole difficulty arises in our vile English pronunciation; if you will *spake* it out, it is *Pay-Pay*—.

The *Record*, in reporting the ordinations of St. Matthew's Day and the following Sunday, has compared the number ordained in each diocese with the totals for the same ordinations in 1900. The totals for 1901 are—deacons 111, priests 55; for 1900 they were—deacons 135, priests 54. "The fall," it says, "is again most serious." The really "serious" thing is that modern rationalistic criticism has barred the Church to many University graduates who have made themselves acquainted with the conclusions of modern thought, and have scruples about preaching what honestly they can't defend.

The laity are now protesting against the coarseness of parts of the marriage ceremony as prescribed by the Church of England. One such protest appears in the correspondence columns of the orthodox *Church Times*. The writer approves of the omission from the service of the first two statements as to "causes for which matrimony was ordained." He "ventures to think that the majority of the educated laity regard these two clauses with dislike, bordering on disgust."

Now, isn't this exactly what has been said from time to time in the *Freethinker*? The whole service is founded on the low and coarse estimate St. Paul entertained of women. But there is no reason why it should be perpetuated even in Christian Churches. The writer in the *Church Times* says the laity would "hail the erasure of these two clauses with the greatest relief, as no longer forcing them to tacitly participate, at a somewhat sacred moment, in a breach of truth and good feeling."

He goes on to say that "it is contrary to fact to inform the average educated English bride and bridegroom that children are the primary motive of their marriage. The theory is Jewish, not Christian, as Charles Kingsley pointed out. Oriental ideas on the subject are not likely to prove acceptable to Europeans, who are accustomed, with tolerable reason, to regard their own treatment of marriage as superior to that which prevails in the East. There are few of us to whom marriage represents nothing more than the miserable *pis aller* of the second clause." That clause, as we quoted it last week, is as follows: "It [matrimony] was ordained as a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication, that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body."

The writer mentions—what is generally understood—that the whole preamble to the Marriage Service was borrowed by Cranmer from a German Lutheran service. And, he adds, "it might be re-written with advantage to twentieth-century England." But, then, the Marriage Service from beginning to end is solemn nonsense, which escapes criticism at the time because, in the whirl of emotions, no one listens to it, except it may be some cynical relatives or friends in the rear; and even they are not much edified, or moved to fix their minds on the supposed "spiritual" aspect of the affair. The high contracting parties, of course, are absolved from hearing a word. And really the whole ceremony seems to have been framed and perpetuated for the sole purpose of adding to the importance of "the priest" and his fees.

It is usually acquiesced in by the bridegroom as a concession to the sentimental notions of the bride, but most of all to afford the bridesmaids an opportunity of displaying their

bewildering and bewitching costumes, and for the fathers-in-law elect to look very severe, solemn, and pious—a dignified aspect in the morning which usually melts into "moppiness" before the night is over.

Considering the general absurdity of the words of the service, to say nothing of the portions which move even a Churchman to speak of them "with dislike, bordering on disgust," it is obviously better to be married at a Registrar's office. There are fees there, it is true; but there is at least an immunity from coarse, sanctimonious humbug. And the ladies may exhibit all their finery just as well at the wedding breakfast.

Rev. Silvester Horne has sent a note of protest to the *Westminster Gazette*, which recently affirmed that clergymen and ministers have always adopted a self-protected method of stifling criticism by warning critics of the wickedness of finding fault with what is said in the pulpit. "Clergymen and ministers," says Mr. Horne, "do not look for much mercy nowadays, but that 'always' is surely a little less than kind or true."

Possibly the word "always" was a trifle too comprehensive. But "generally" would very nearly hit the mark. As for the mock plea that "clergymen and ministers do not look for much mercy nowadays," the answer is obvious. They don't deserve it.

The Bishop of Ripon, interviewed by Mr. Raymond Blathway—prince of interviewers—thinks we are getting terribly materialistic in the present age. 'Tis true, but it isn't a pity 'tis true. We must hasten, however, to explain that the materialism Dr. Boyd Carpenter has in his mind is not so much the sordid lust of gain, the greed and avarice arising from fierce commercial competition and reckless speculation and chicanery, as the general indifference to Christ. And that we do *not* regard as any serious evil, for the major part of the teaching ascribed to Christ is impracticable, being altogether inapplicable to modern conditions and absolutely absurd and extravagant *per se*.

Czolgosz (pronounced "Coalgosh") was educated in Roman Catholic parochial schools. Booth, the assassin of Lincoln, was a Romanist. Guiteau, another assassin, posed as an opponent of Ingersoll at Y. M. C. A's. Still, the *Christian Budget*, in its blindness, offers a little sermon on this wretched, foolish murderer Czolgosz, as if he were a representative of "infidelity," which, it says, means "a blinding of the moral perceptions."

Aren't there every year scores of equally insane murderers "jerked to Jesus" who have been obviously "blinded in their moral perceptions," but who occupy their last moments in writing letters full of sickening, maudlin nonsense about their "blessed Savior," and their hope of heaven, with heaps of other canting phrases? A number of them have been brought up in Sunday-schools, and no suggestion is made that they are "infidels." The prison chaplain hovers around them and assures all inquirers that they are dying, repentant, in the Christian faith.

Rev. Silas K. Hocking says that "the plain commands of Jesus have been so whittled down by preachers and theologians that ordinary people are in doubt as to whether they have any serious meaning. Anything like a literal interpretation of the words of Christ is deprecated to-day in many quarters. The Beatitudes have been so interpreted that they have been made to mean something almost totally different from what they appear to mean."

This is very sad, but we shouldn't have thought that the Almighty, having determined upon revealing his will, would have left it so much to the interpretation of "preachers and theologians" that ordinary people were immersed in doubt as to whether the commands of Jesus have any "serious meaning" or not. This sort of thing is more than a trifle trying to the faith of many people who might be disposed to listen to a message from on High, but cannot be expected to flounder about under the conditions described by the Rev. Silas K. Hocking.

The *Rock* considers the recent Church Congress as not likely to rank otherwise than "an agreeable ecclesiastical outing." The local people did not seem to be vastly impressed—one main object, it is supposed, of such gatherings. Nor was the other purpose too successfully achieved of fusing different "schools of thought" in the Church. Dr. Wace and Lord Halifax managed to kick up a bit of a stir, but otherwise the Congress was "tame, flat, and unprofitable."

The Eastbourne gentleman to whom was entrusted the preparation of the Official Guide to the Church Congress has come in for some censure from high quarters, as we expected he would. There is no sense of humor about the

people who attend these Congresses. They are strait-laced and infused with an extraordinary notion of their own importance, and have Puritanical notions which resent a joke as an insult. A High Church organ sentimentally pronounces as follows: "We have always understood that a Church Congress was a gathering of serious church-folk, met together to discuss in a serious manner questions in which we are all interested. That does not seem to be the official view, if we may judge by the *Guide*. There are times when a little fooling is not out of place. *Dulce est*, we are even told, *desipere in loco*. It might be considered amusing, on some particularly festive occasion, to adorn a dinner *menu* with tags from the works of 'the late Mr. William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon,' but to make a comedy of a religious meeting is the best way of destroying all sense of its usefulness. That can hardly have been the idea of the compiler of the *Guide*." But it seems that that was the result.

Then there is a very acidulous remark in the same Ritualistic print which shows how much these Christians love one another. "We must also complain of the needless custom of receiving deputations from outside bodies. Why in the world a number of people cannot meet together without the intervention, however kindly meant, of other folks, we cannot understand; and, in saying this, we object just as much to Churchmen obtruding themselves on Dissenting gatherings as to Dissenters haranguing us."

The Harvest Festival season has been marked by the usual "decorations," and special services in churches and chapels. But, according to the correspondent of the *Christian World*, a morbid kind of novelty has been introduced at a mission-hall in South London. In the centre of the platform there was a large wax figure clothed in white, and wearing a string of glass beads round its neck. The correspondent assumed that it was intended as a representation of Ruth, but he found the effect to be "uncomfortably corpse-like."

How silly it all is! As if the Deity—or even rational worshippers—desired, as the proper expression of gratitude, a wax-work show, or any other of the usual "decorations," including carrots and parsnips, or the turnips, which, however, might perhaps be excused as representing the heads of the ultra-pious.

According to the Rev. B. Moir Duncan, there has been a change in the attitude of the Chinese in Shansi towards the missionaries. But the Rev. Dr. Edwards writes to the *North China Herald* that the people are sullen rather than repentant. Another writer in the *Herald* declares that it is only a small minority who are pleased to see the foreigners again, and that there are thousands ready to repeat last year's outrage if they had those willing to lead them.

A returned missionary from India, named Albert Edward Keet, and his housekeeper, Rosa Jennings, have been sentenced at Liverpool to three months' imprisonment for stealing bed-clothes. Keet was educated at a Church missionary college at Islington, London. They must be proud of him there, though perhaps after all he thought he was only following the example of God's chosen people and "spoiling the Egyptians."

Rev. Z. B. Woffendale launches upon the Christian Evidence waters a new venture called *The London Evangelist*. We see it is characterised by his usual accuracy. Dealing with our article on "Praying for President McKinley," he quotes our statement that "the religious frame of mind induces a man to take an exaggerated view of trifles," and he then goes on to say that these "trifles" are the "shooting of President McKinley and the wickedness of Czolgosz." We need not tell our readers that this is Woffendale's own classification. We never so much as hinted that murder was a trifle. On the contrary, we protested against "assassins of any persuasion, whether they commit murder on a large scale or a small one." Woffendale simply does in this case what he has been doing all his life. He is quite incapable of either accuracy or veracity when writing or speaking about Free-thinkers. He forcibly reminds us of the definition of a preacher as one who tells lies for a living.

Dr. Agar Beet, a Wesleyan Methodist divine, has published through the Religious Tract Society a book entitled *A Key to Unlock the Bible*. How strange it is that God Almighty's revelation was *locked up* for nearly two thousand years, and that the world had to wait until now for a gentleman to find the *key*. But better late than never—that is, if the key is the right one—which is doubtful.

When a Swedenborgian came to Thomas Paine and said that the New Jerusalem Church had found the key to the Bible, which had been lost for so many hundreds of years, the great heretic replied: "Dear me! It must be very rusty."



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 13, Sylvester Sage's "Empire," Grimston-street, Hull: 11, "Anarchism and Assassination"; 3, "Mr. Hall Caine's Dream of Christian Democracy"; 7, "The Meaning of Death."

October 20 and 27, Athenæum Hall.

November 10, Camberwell; 17, Bradford; 24, Leicester.

December 15, Liverpool.

### To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 13, Camberwell; 17 (Thursday); Wood Green. November 10, Athenæum Hall, London; 24, Birmingham. December 8, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 15, Glasgow; 22, Camberwell. All communications for Mr. Charles Watts in reference to lecturing engagements, etc., should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 13, Leicester; 20, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 27, Liverpool. November 3, Birmingham; 10, Stanley; 17, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 24, Athenæum Hall. Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

J. FULTON.—Very glad to see your handwriting again. We trust you are in a good state of health for your advanced age.

J. T. HILL (Bristol).—There are other readers of the *Freethinker* in Bristol, though your newsagent had never heard of this journal before. Perhaps if we give your address (Crown Cottage, High-street, Staple-hill) you may hear from some of them. We are glad to hear that your wife has also thought herself out of the Christian superstition. Sorry we cannot provide you with Dr. Sturge's address. We only saw a newspaper report of it.

R. DAVISON.—We regret to hear of the accident, and hope you may soon forget it. Thanks for your letter and sympathy. The donation is acknowledged elsewhere. We are unable to send you, or refer you to, any English tracts on Anarchism. Most of the literature we have seen on the subject is in foreign languages. There used to be an Anarchist journal in England, but we have not heard of it for years.

J. E. FINLAY (Johannesburg).—Pleased to have your friendly and encouraging letter. You say you are "amazed beyond your powers of expression at Mr. Anderson's ruthless vindictiveness," and you praise what you are good enough to call our "indomitable pluck." We don't like printing such things, but, as we have said before, one's friends are entitled to be heard when one's enemies are seeking one's ruin and humiliation. With regard to the state of affairs where you are, we can quite understand that the chaos is well-nigh insufferable. Apart altogether from the old discussion as to the origin of the war, the general impression over here is that proper steps have not been taken to bring the war to a close. The government does not seem to know how to achieve peace with honor or to wage war with success.

A. KOHN.—Thanks for your promise. We had seen Mr. Woffendale's new venture, but, on glancing at the copy you send us, we note the statement that the late Robert Forder "was Mr. C. Bradlaugh's private secretary." He was never anything of the kind.

A. B. MOSS.—Received with thanks. Proof in due course.

D. KERR.—Pleased to hear that the Belfast Ethical Society opened its winter session so successfully on Sunday. Thanks for the cuttings, though they arrive too late to be dealt with this week.

T. and W. H. BOWMAN.—Glad to have your appreciation and good wishes.

JOHN A. ALLAN.—Correction made as desired. It is so easy to make mistakes in proper names. We thank the Glasgow friends for the further list of subscriptions to the Fund for Mrs. Foote.

M. F. LEE.—Acknowledged as requested. Thanks.

J. FISH (Chester) writes: "There is no doubt that slander of the worst kind (concerning your debts) has been crawling about for years. Some funny stories have reached even as far as Chester. The 'saints' here are glad to see that the mountain has been reduced to a mole-hill."

E. A. CHARLTON.—All right.

C. R. VINCENT, sending on behalf of a few Truro Freethinkers, says: "The policy that led to the bankruptcy we can quite see through, and there is but one word for it—scandalous!"

T. E. GREEN, subscribing to the Fund for Mrs. Foote, trusts "it may be fully proved that Freethinkers are not unmindful of your work."

W. TIPPER.—Thanks for your good wishes.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for the welcome cuttings.

D. FRANKEL.—Glad to hear the East London Branch is making headway. Branches may always do that if they will only work and take care to fight the common enemy instead of amongst themselves.

A. C. BOOTH.—We have noticed the Archbishop of York's nonsense. Perhaps, as you say, his lordship could best humiliate himself by giving up a big slice of his noble salary.

W. KYLL.—We hope we have deciphered the second name correctly. We will write you shortly on the other matter.

W. ROBERTSON.—Sorry your letter was overlooked till now. See this week's list.

W. R. DOWSETT.—Thanks for copy of the correspondence, but James Marchant's statements are not worth so much trouble. You evidently don't know him.

M. ROGERS.—You are literally correct. It was "for" in Mr. Holyoake's letter, but he obviously meant "from," and we silently made the correction, as an editor is bound to do in such cases. Thanks all the same.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Liberator—Blue Grass Blade—Truthseeker (New York)—Edinburgh Evening News—West Nottingham Observer—Sydney Bulletin—Umpire—Freidenker—Lucifer—Discontent—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Free Sunday Advocate—La Raison—Crescent—Public Opinion (New York)—Progressive Thinker.

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.

NOT having yet obtained the official document referred to in last week's *Freethinker*, I have to say that, while it would be very useful, it is not absolutely indispensable, and I do not intend to wait for it any longer. I mean with respect to the Final Statement which I promised to make in these columns, and which will certainly appear in the next issue of this journal.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE delivers three lectures at Hull to-day (Oct. 13). The St. George's Hall and the Cobden Hall have been refused by the directors of the Friendly Societies' Hall, although the Secularists have been meeting there for the last twelve years. First they stopped the musical evenings, then the sale of literature, and then again the distribution of programs. Now the use of the large halls is refused, and the boycott is practically absolute. Fortunately, although after much trouble, another place has been secured for Mr. Foote's lectures; namely, Sylvester Sage's "Empire," in Grimston-street. No charge for admission can be made, but there will be a few reserved seats, tickets for which must be obtained before Sunday from Mr. Naewiger, 12 Sydney-terrace, Londesboro'-street. A silver collection will be taken at the entrance to the lounge and balcony. It is to be hoped that the Hull "saints" will do their utmost to make these meetings successful.

Hull was the scene of Mr. Foote's defiance (several years ago) of the Chief Constable, who thought it his business to frighten the lessee of the Alhambra Music Hall, and thus prevent the taking of admission money at the doors, although the bills had been posted over the town for more than a week. Mr. Foote could not help himself on that occasion, but he returned to Hull not long afterwards, engaged a hall for a week, lectured free every week-night and charged for admission on the Sunday, defying the Chief Constable to take proceedings against him. But that officer thought discretion the better part of valor. It should be added that the local "saints" held the fort day and night during the whole of that week, in order to prevent the landlord—under the promptings of the Chief Constable—from regaining possession.

Once a year the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch has the use of the Town Hall granted by the mayor. Last year a Free-thought Demonstration was arranged, at which addresses were delivered by Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Watts, C. Cohen, and H. P. Ward. The local expenses were about covered by the collections; all the other expenses, which were considerable, were borne by the Central Executive. Naturally the Branch wished to have another Demonstration this year, but the Executive did not feel able to bear the cost again so soon. It was therefore arranged that Mr. Foote should address two meetings by himself. Unfortunately the weather on Sunday was very unpropitious. The streets were swept with wind

and rain from morn till night. As luck would have it, too, the Sunday Lecture Society opened its winter program at the theatre in the evening, and this was a serious counter-attraction. In the circumstances, the Town Hall meetings were not quite as large as last year's; still, they were much larger than might have been expected. The evening audience was a fine one, and was particularly appreciative and enthusiastic. Prior to the lecture some excellent vocal and instrumental music was given by local friends and heartily applauded by the assembly. It is pleasant to note that the collections represented a better average than on the previous occasion.

A report of Mr. Foote's afternoon lecture on "Anarchism and Assassination" appeared in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* under a special heading. Of course the reporters fought shy of the evening lecture on "Mr. Hall Caine's Dream of Christian Democracy."

The chair at the Town Hall evening meeting was occupied by the veteran, Mr. J. H. Ridgway. He is now seventy-five years of age and somewhat enfeebled, but the old fire still burns in his heart. He had a sympathetic reception.

Mr. J. Partridge, the quiet but indefatigable secretary of the Birmingham Branch, reports that there was a good sale of literature in the Town Hall on Sunday. No less than 180 copies of the *Freethinker* were disposed of, and fifty copies of the new *Age of Reason*, besides a lot of other publications. Mr. Partridge stuck to the bookstall all the time at both meetings, in spite of a nasty neuralgia.

Mr. Watts lectured to a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Frequenters of the place will please note that there will not be any lecture there this evening (Oct. 13). This date has been reserved by the proprietor for a private purpose. Next Sunday evening (Oct. 20) the Freethought meetings will be resumed. Mr. Foote is to be the lecturer on that occasion.

Mr. Watts lectures this evening (Oct. 13) at the Camberwell Secular Hall, his subject being "Agnosticism Tested by Human Reason." We note a report in the *Derbyshire Times* of Mr. Watts's recent debate at Chesterfield with Mr. G. H. Bibbings on Spiritualism. "Mr. Bibbings," it says, "without doubt stated his case most forcibly in favor of Spiritualism, emphasizing his points with consummate skill; but it must be admitted, from an impartial point of view, that he was unequal to the Secularist advocate, who has had an experience of forty years in public debate."

The East London Branch had a good audience at the first of its series of indoor meetings on Sunday evening at the Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney. Mr. A. B. Moss delivered a much-appreciated address on "Brain and Soul," which was followed by some discussion. This evening (Oct. 13) Mr. F. A. Davies opens a discussion on "Patriotism"—which will doubtless be lively.

Mr. H. Percy Ward revisits Birmingham to-day (Oct. 13), and delivers three lectures in the Prince of Wales Assembly Room. On Tuesday evening he is to be the Branch's guest at a Complimentary Concert at the Victoria Hotel, John Bright-street. The function commences at 8 o'clock, and the tickets are sixpence each, obtainable from Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street.

*Humanity*, the organ of the Humanitarian League, for October, maintains its usual good character. We commend this little publication—is only published at a penny—to the attention of all who are interested in the checking and suppressing of cruelty. We see that the editor replies to the charge that he has hurt people's feelings. Good old feelings! "We should be sorry indeed," he says, "to think that a word had ever been said in *Humanity* which could give pain to any quiet, inoffensive reader, whether a humanitarian or not; and we do not think any such passage can be pointed out. But we do not pretend to feel the least scruple or regret for the fact that we have dealt out sharp and salutary treatment to a considerable number of rude and pompous personages who have constituted themselves the advocates of various forms of cruelty; on the contrary, there is nothing that gives us greater satisfaction than the knowledge that we have frequently silenced these sophists by making them publicly ridiculous."

The October number of the *Leicester Reasoner* opens with an excellent short article on "Citizen Sunday," in which Mr. Gould contrasts the Church of England calendar with the Positivist calendar of Auguste Comte. We see by the "Secular Society Notes" that the work at the Secular Hall is in full swing again. The latest department is an Ethical Guild. The Twentieth Anniversary Fund now exceeds £300. Mr. Sydney A. Gimson adds a quarter to all amounts contributed—a handsome generosity.

Mr. William Heaford has been very active in the outdoor propaganda during the past summer. He has delivered

forty-nine lectures in various parts of London; two on each of eight Sundays, and three on each of eleven Sundays. Of course this is very hard work while it lasts. Fortunately, however, it has not in any way affected Mr. Heaford's health, nor even his voice. He eats well and sleeps well—two indispensable conditions of bodily vigor. We trust he will be able to say the same for many years to come.

The late Empress Frederick, of Germany, was reputed to be something of a Freethinker. She ordered in her will that no sermon was to be preached at her burial. Many years previous she had stood by Strauss when he was persecuted and ostracised for his bold scepticism.

Mr. Joseph Symes, in the last number of his *Liberator* (Melbourne) to hand, writes as follows on a subject with which our readers are now pretty familiar:—"We are pleased to learn that Mr. Foote is getting sympathy and support too in his trouble. His cowardly assailant appears to be of a temper and disposition very similar to that of Ripper's, or those who egged Ripper on against Mr. Symes, seven years and a-half ago. We hope soon to learn that Mr. Foote and family have escaped from the clutches of this English Ripper. A suggestion has been made, we see, to secure a fund for Mr. Foote's use to prevent him getting into difficulties again. If Freethinkers are true to their own cause, they will do this. It is not to their credit to starve those who devote their lives to their interests, although such is the usual course with them. Freethought leaders have no superstition, no terrors, by which to extort money from their people; they can offer no heaven, threaten no hell. They can but act as honest men and teach what they know. Therefore, because they are honest, they are allowed to starve!"

Freethinkers will be sorry to hear that Miss E. M. Vance, the Secretary of the N. S. S. and of the Freethought Publishing Company, has been laid low by an attack of diphtheria. They will be glad to hear, though, that she is on the road to recovery. She is being nursed at her own residence by a devoted friend, Miss Mary Lovell, who has herself, of course, to keep isolated from the world until her task is over. Convalescence is generally slow work after this malady, and we shall see that Miss Vance has an opportunity of recuperating at some favorable spot in the country or at the seaside. She has been most assiduous and devoted in her labors for the movement, and this seems a fitting occasion to say how much we appreciate her active loyalty to the "good old cause."

### The Fund for Mrs. Foote.

J. G. Finlay, £1; J. Fulton, £1; R. Davison, £2; T. Bowman, 2s. 6d.; W. H. Bowman, 1s. 6d.; Stamps, 1s.; W. H. (Oldham), £1; F. Goodyear, 2s.; Truro Freethinkers (J. Bamfield, S. J. Jennings, W. Currow, W. Cundy, A. G. Laing, C. R. Vincent), 8s.; T. E. Green, £1 1s.; W. Wilson, 2s.; P. Rowland, 5s.; W. Tipper, 2s. 6d.; T. A., 2s. 6d.; J. Pringle, 1s.; W. Kyll, £1; Mr. Self, 4s.; Mr. Abutt, 1s.; Mr. Scopes, 1s.; W. Robertson, 1s.; J. Phillips, 1s.; G. Kemp, 1s.; W. Pugh, 2s.; J. T. Jones, 10s. Glasgow Branch (second list):—A. Haddow, 5s.; W. D., 5s.; Mr. Webb, 10s.; Mrs. Webb, 2s.; Mrs. Muir, 2s.; D. Carson, 1s.; Friend, 6d.—Total, £1 6s. 6d.

*Correction.*—J. Hamson, 5s., in former Glasgow list, should have been J. Harrison, 5s.

### Consolation.

"TAKE heart, my friend, for God is good!"  
I hear these words where'er I go.  
They say that Jesus shed his blood  
For me. Perchance 'tis true. I know  
That *this* does not assuage my grief—  
That *this* brings nothing of relief.

"Take heart!" They say it meaning well,  
But it was not *their* babe who died  
Of hunger in an earthly hell,  
Where crime and shame and famine hide.  
"Take heart!" But 'tis *my* bairn who's dead,  
And they—they'd give me Christ instead!

God is an empty name to me;  
The hand which surely might arrest  
The march of wrong must idle be,  
And "God is good" 's a mournful jest.  
If he exist, he little cares  
For all man's sorrows, all man's prayers.

The portly parson raised his hand  
When in this strain I spoke of God:  
"Good woman, you don't understand,"  
He said, "for, smarting 'neath the Rod,  
You scarce know what you say or do—  
Come, praise the Lord that he spared *you*!"

J. YOUNG.

## The Real Value of Jesus.

It is, I suppose, only to be expected that the public should have constantly impressed upon it the value of belief in Jesus. No matter what may be the real grounds of Christian belief, or the real nature of the forces that uphold Christian institutions, Jesus remains the ostensible source from which all Christian organisations derive their validity, and to surrender him is to surrender all. Nor does it seem to make much difference that the belief in the Jesus of the Gospels as an historical character is one that has been pretty well demolished by modern criticism. The clergy still go on talking of him, and appealing to his teachings, as though his existence were as unquestionable as that of Julius Cæsar, and as though his alleged utterances in the four Gospels were as authentic as the *Commentaries*. They know that the results of criticism take a long while to sink into the minds of the majority of people, and meanwhile there are the feelings associated with Jesus that can be appealed to, and *their* validity troubles gentlemen of the black robe but little.

But, according to a writer in the *Christian World*, it really matters little whether Jesus ever lived or not. It is admitted, indeed, that we *know* little or nothing concerning him compared with what we think about him:—

"The world contains no monument of Christ, no authentic picture. The early fathers who venture descriptions of his personal appearance fall into hopeless contradiction. Apart from the doubtful correspondence with the King of Edessa, we have not a line from his hand. We know Shakespeare by *Hamlet*, and Goethe by *Faust*, but Christ published no book. Even that part of his career of which alone we have any written details, the period of from one to three years of his public service, we do not know how coherently to piece together. All we can say is, there is a personal history, but as compared with the totality of our Christ of to-day it is a fragment, a suggestion."

I do not think that any Freethinker will quarrel with the closing words of the above sentence. All that the Churches have concerning Jesus is, indeed, a suggestion; but, by a series of manoeuvres, this "suggestion" has been treated as though it were historic fact, and, by a further process, not altogether unknown to hypnotism, repeated insistence has persuaded the general public to believe in the reality of the transformation. But this is a somewhat risky proceeding after all—risky because there is a constant danger of being found out; and now that this danger is getting very real, indeed, the more astute are beginning to "hedge" by declaring that the historical character of Jesus is of small importance—the really important thing is the type, the character portrayed, and this has, they say, undoubtedly influenced the world for good during the past eighteen centuries. And this good has been achieved, according to the writer just quoted, because in each generation there has been a growth in our consciousness of Christ—not in our knowing more about him, but in our ability to believe more concerning him. Or, in other words, it has been possible to tack contemporary ideas and ideals on to the somewhat vague picture of Jesus that the Churches have held up, and then to persuade ourselves that these ideals really have been extracted from the Gospel Jesus. I do not question the reality of this process, but I do question most thoroughly its legitimacy and its value.

To an impartial mind there is something supremely ridiculous in this continuous harking back to an uneducated Syrian peasant for advice upon the problems of modern life. There is neither honesty nor sanity in such a procedure. There is not honesty, because the only straightforward way to estimate any man's teaching is not to take him at what he *might* have meant, but at what he probably did mean. And the only way to get at what a teacher really did mean is to take him in relation to the times and circumstances amid which his life was passed. It is easy enough to make a great many ancient thinkers propound the modern doctrine of scientific evolution, provided that their statements are general enough, and that we close our eyes to the then existing state of scientific knowledge. It is when we ask ourselves the crucial question, "What really did these people *know* of the workings of natural forces at

that time?" that we discover, however close the similarity of the language used then and now may be, it could not have *meant* the same, since the knowledge upon which modern evolution rests did not then exist. What is really done in the case of Jesus is to take certain Gospel statements that are sufficiently vague for it to be impossible to fix any precise meaning upon them, and then read our own ideas into them. It is in this manner that identical texts are seized upon by different schools of believers, and used as an authority for diametrically opposed teachings and actions. It is in this way that Anarchist and Conservative, Radical and Socialist, Protestant and Catholic, all alike appeal to the teachings of Jesus for justification. Martin Luther finds in the Gospels ample warranty for advising the nobles and magistrates to treat the peasants who were demanding the abolition of serfdom as "mad dogs," and it is the same Gospel in which the modern Christian socialist finds his warranty for an almost complete retaliation.

Clearly there is something radically wrong about such methods. It is all very well saying that the superiority of Jesus is shown in his being an inspiration to men in all ages; but the truth is that people find him an inspiration because he happens to be the official figure-head of the official creed. The same people would have found quite as much inspiration in Buddha or Mohammed or Zoroaster. There is no more intrinsic value in people in a Christian country clothing their moral aspirations with the name of Jesus than there is in a Turk utilising Mohammed for the same purpose. And, in addition, this ability of men of the most diverse opinions to find a sanction in the character of the Gospel Jesus is but a fresh proof of his worthlessness as a teacher. It is not so much, it must be remembered, that people find an inspiration in his teachings as they might in Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* or in Seneca's essays; nor is it even that they learn to appreciate the depth and applicability of his utterances, as is the case with many scientific or philosophic writers. It is that actually contradictory meanings are attached to his alleged utterances by different people and generations. And when this is the case, we can only attribute such a result to a haziness of teaching, which is itself a fatal disqualification for a teacher. A guide-post which to one man pointed to Aberdeen and to another pointed to Penzance would certainly not be considered over-trustworthy, and it is impossible to resist drawing the same inference in the case of Jesus.

The truth is, as I have indicated, that, if a teaching is only vague enough, it can be made to mean anything; but its very vagueness detracts from its utility. Whoever doubted, for example, that "the laborer is worthy of his hire"? Certainly not the sweater, wringing the life out of men and women at a starvation wage; and certainly not the sweated, who finds himself or herself the victim of social and economic forces against which struggle is almost hopeless. Both might subscribe to the teaching in perfect honesty, and yet find themselves as far as ever from a desirable settlement of what wages one ought to pay or receive. Or whoever doubted the advisability of rendering "unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's"? If by Cæsar is typified a governing class, no one would doubt that it ought to get what is its due; but, again, the problem is to find out what proportion of the results of a common social effort such a class is entitled to. Is the land the rightful property of Cæsar, or does it properly belong to his subjects? What help do such vague generalisations as the above give towards the settlement of such questions as I have mentioned? They give none; and only serve to obstruct inquiry by satisfying with a phrase where otherwise there might be an added incentive to further effort.

And if this continuous harping upon the supreme value of the Gospel Jesus does not lead to honesty of judgment, it certainly cannot help in other matters. Intellectually, the world owes nothing to the Gospels. The Jesus of the Gospels is so far an unintellectual character that it is only saved from positively bad teachings in this direction by an almost complete ignoring of the culture of the intellect. Far below the best scientific and philosophic thought of Greece and Rome, he accepts all the superstitions of his time with a readiness that has always served as an incentive to superstition in later times. The belief in a literal

heaven and hell, legions of angels and devils, demoniacal possession and exorcism, a flat earth and a circumscribable sky, may all appeal for support to the New Testament; and how deadly was the support given by this character to the witch-burners of the Middle Ages all students of history know. The earnest search for truth, the careful testing of evidence, and suspension of judgment were matters that seemed quite foreign to his mind; while a foolish exaltation of credulity and blind belief, and an equally foolish condemnation of unbelief, are characteristics so marked that they have impressed themselves upon all classes of his followers. Indeed, this is about the one point on which they have all agreed.

It is impossible to successfully set against these faults the so-called moral beauty of his character and teachings, for here, again, a very large discount has to be made from the popular or the clerical estimate. Taking the character as it stands in the Gospels, it is neither as well balanced as Socrates, nor as wholesomely human as Marcus Aurelius. The bursts of peevish passion shown in such episodes as the cursing of the fig-tree, while pitiful in a man, are contemptibly theatrical in a God. The denial of help to the Syro-Phœnician woman on the ground that it was not right "to cast children's bread to dogs," and the assertion that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel, show that he never rose above the tribal limitations of the Jews. Of his positive teaching it is a truism to say that his moral precepts were household currency at the time, and that they meet us in a far saner form among contemporary Pagan writers. And the general conception of the nature of morality likewise leaves much to be desired. The Pagan writers had given the world a conception of morality as covering the whole field of life. The moral man was one who did his duty to self, to family, and to society. With Jesus, and still more with his followers, morality was based upon a mystical belief in God, and gradually became so contracted as to cover little more than mere sexual relationship and the non-observance of religious forms and ceremonies. The inevitable result followed. Exhortation took the place of a rational inquiry into the necessary conditions for the existence of a sound morality; along with added and empty appeals to be moral there went on an increased and increasing neglect of the conditions that rendered morality possible, and it has taken generations of labor to partly rectify the evil wrought in this direction by the long reign of Christianity.

Least of all can it be said that the world owes anything to Jesus from the standpoint of social science. So far as can be honestly gathered from the Gospels, nothing was farther from the mind of Jesus than anything in the nature of a social revolution. The great slave question was left untouched, the relations between capital and labor were unnoticed, obedience to the powers that be was encouraged. And his silence upon these matters is actually more damning than speech would have been, no matter how faulty the judgment. Wrong teaching would have shown—at least, have indicated—that there existed some recognition of man as a social being, and of the necessity of regulating his relations in that capacity. But his silence compels the inference that a social science was as much outside his intellectual purview as was the philosophic thought of Athens. It is, as John Stuart Mill said, to Rome and Greece, or even to Mohammedanism, that we have to turn for some conception of the State, and for a discussion of its functions. The Gospels have contributed nothing to this, and right through its history the set tendency of the Christian Church, in all its branches, has been to ignore that aspect of human life without which man sheds the greater—and the better—portion of his humanity.

No, the world owes nothing to Jesus intellectually, socially, or morally. Good teachings may have been associated with his name, but they have been born of other times than his, and often by men who had least of his spirit. The essence of the whole question lies in the fact that he is a stalking-horse for the clergy, the figure-head of a number of trading concerns masquerading under the names of church and chapel. The Jesus that was followed by the early Christians—that is, if there were any such character to follow—was not the social reformer, but the miracle-worker and

thaumaturgist. When the belief in the miraculous broke down, the Churches played the card of Jesus as a good man, a sublime moral reformer. Now that some of the foremost critics are beginning to doubt his existence altogether, we are informed that it really does not matter; the main thing is that the character has been a source of inspiration for ages. And it is merely a question of time for this apology to go the way of its predecessors.

C. COHEN.

## The Sea.

"The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea"

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THIS is the sea, the great throbbing sea, glistening and basking in the sunlight. It is the sea at its happiest, not the wild-beast sea which snarls at the rocks that enclose it on some abrupt coast with great beetling brows, not the mill-pond sea in some sheltered estuary, but a sea ruffled by a bickering wind into green waves.

This is the sea which was a barrier between worlds, which divided nations, which made a gulf of silence between languages. This is the sea upon which it was heroism to sail. They were *men* who went down to the sea in ships, who felt

Like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

The sea is the next greatest thing in fancy to the sky. It is a vast unknown. It is the road to everywhere. We glide over its glistening waves, but below there is darkness, and we ride in light on the back of this huge concealed night, in the dark depths of which the continents of the future are being formed. What strange things exist in that nether Erebus, where no sound is, no cry of the wind, no rolling shingle, no beating waves, but utter unbroken silence, as of some place of death and sleep.

We know the sea is the grave of many; it is the recipient of all rivers; it is the maker of all the clouds; but what goes on in the inky depths only the mermaids know.

The ocean is a continual glory, filling and soothing the mind with unspeakable peace. Not even the greatest poets have succeeded in adequately expressing the grandeur of the sea. Its vastness, its freedom, its joy, its beauty, overwhelm the mind. All things else seem puny beside it.

How beautiful beneath the bright blue sky  
The billows heave! One glowing green expanse,  
Save where along the bending line of shore  
Such hue is thrown as when the peacock's neck  
Assumes its proudest tint of amethyst  
Embathed in emerald glory.

Sometimes it shines in the sun, a wilderness of shimmering silver; sometimes its long waves are black, smooth, glittering, and dangerous. Now, instinct with superb wrath, its huge masses rise, and clash together, and break into crests of foam—a very witches' cauldron. Again, it is grey and quiet, as if in sleep. Often the white mist broods upon it, and deepens the sense of mystery by which it is for ever enwrapped. At night its surging billows are furrowed with long streaks of phosphorescent fire; or, it may be, the waves roll gently under the soft light of stars; or all the waste is dim, save where, beneath the moon, a glorious pathway broadens to the far horizon. At such a witching hour images of old-world mythology return to us; we see Aphrodite cradled in some hollow of the waves, and holding court with hoary Neptune:—

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,  
And hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Even in its lighter moods the sea is a thing of mystery rather than of pleasure. Its pale groves and hollow spheres intrude themselves on the mind. The deep moaning with many voices; the wintry sea, with its thunders breaking on the cold, grey rocks; the perils of the seething harbor bar; the towering crests of the tides; the merciless waters burying their dead, suggest images of terror. The aspects of the sea, when it is sane, invite easy description. But how to describe the ocean when it is mad, when the demon of the storm sits astride it and launches it at the shuddering land,

when deep calls unto deep, and the clouds have blotted out the stars, and the rain lashes the waves as if every drop were the knot of a whip. Ah! who can do justice to these weird moods? Could you follow the dire fortunes of some crawling ship over the black waters, you would rend your heart when you heard the vessel scrunch on the rocks, and knew the fate of all those who were coming home in her, with their hopes high, their arms stretched out to the land.

How the tides appeal to the imagination, with their vast, watery strides round the world. They rise and fall like a mighty heart, and are felt like pulses in every creek and river. The ocean, with its "pure ablution round earth's human shores," takes all the filth of desecrated rivers and deals with it:—

What chemistry!

That the winds are really not infectious,  
That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the sea which is so amorous after me,  
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over with its tongues,  
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have deposited themselves in it,  
That all is clean forever and forever.

Few town-bred people really love the sea. Her unadorned beauty is not enough for them. The sight of a lonely white beach, or a long stretch of ribbed sand, or the measured surf beating on the shore, has no attraction for their eyes. They must take some of their city abominations with them in the shape of bands, niggers, Punch and Judy shows, hawkers, and evangelists. The sea does not give her best to them. She waits for the true lover whose breast broadens and whose eyes brighten at the sight of his beloved, and who wants no other company; who loves her in all her various moods, and does not flee when she ceases to smile. To him she not only gives health, but in calm enriches his fancy with witching melody, and in storm stirs his being with choral harmony. Unlike mortal mistress, she causes her lover no anxiety, but thrills him with a constant joy in her presence. He on whom her spell once falls hath indeed suffered

a sea change  
Into something rich and strange.

MIMNERMUS.

### Novizio.

(From the Italian.)

ALONG the muttering aisle pent,  
The friars' rhythmic monotone—  
Rising and falling somnolent—  
Dies in a groan.

"Have pity on us, Lord, we pray!  
Have pity on thine own elect!  
O, in thy fury damn us not for aye  
With the flock reject!"

The friars are chanting down the corridor,  
Patched mis'ry on each monkish brow.  
He bends a vulture's eye, can weep no more  
Over a yellow curl. Ah, see him now!

He walks alone, by fancy led,  
Through azure visions of the long ago,  
Sighing: "Dead to the world, for ever dead;  
I am not called. Ah, no!"

"I love the fields, the kiss of poesy,  
The horizon free and unconfined;  
Art's fascination—harmony.  
Jesus, I am condemned!"

"Thou art the life, but here they give me death.  
For me a golden wisp o'er smiling eyes.  
Come, father guardian, open me the door,  
O, I renounce your paradise!"

GEORGE WOODWARD.

The San Francisco *Argonaut* tells this as a true story: "When the Transvaal war was at its height, Paul Kruger sent a commissioner to England to find out if there were any more men left there. The commissioner wired from London to say that there were four million men and women 'knocking about the town'; that there was no excitement, and that men were begging to be sent to fight the Boers. Kruger wired back: 'Go north.' The commissioner found himself in Newcastle eventually, and wired to Kruger: 'For God's sake, stop that war! England is bringing up men from hell, eight at a time, in cages!' He had seen a coal mine."

### Future Reward and Punishment.

THE writer of a philosophical treatise may, I imagine, at this advanced era of human intellect, be held excused from entering into a controversy with those reasoners, if such there are, who would claim an exemption from its decrees in favor of any one among those diversified systems of obscure opinion respecting morals which, under the name of religions, have in various ages and countries prevailed among mankind. Besides that, if, as these reasoners have pretended, eternal torture or happiness will ensue as the consequence of certain actions, we should be no nearer the possession of a standard to determine what actions were right or wrong, even if this pretended revelation, which is by no means the case, had furnished us with a complete catalogue of them. The character of actions as virtuous or vicious would by no means be determined alone by the personal advantage or disadvantage of each moral agent individually considered. Indeed, an action is often virtuous in proportion to the greatness of the personal calamity which the author willingly draws upon himself by daring to perform it. It is because an action produces an overbalance of pleasure or pain to the greatest number of sentient beings, and not merely because its consequences are beneficial or injurious to the author of that action, that it is good or evil. Nay, this latter consideration has a tendency to pollute the purity of virtue, inasmuch as it consists in the motive rather than in the consequences of an action. A person who should labor for the happiness of mankind lest he should be tormented eternally in hell would, with reference to that motive, possess as little claim to the epithet of virtuous as he who should torture, imprison, and burn them alive, a more usual and natural consequence of such principles, for the sake of the enjoyments of heaven.

My neighbor, presuming on his strength, may direct me to perform or to refrain from a particular action; indicating a certain arbitrary penalty in the event of disobedience within his power to inflict. My action, if modified by his menaces, can in no degree participate in virtue. He has afforded me no criterion as to what is right or wrong. A king, or an assembly of men, may publish a proclamation affixing any penalty to any particular action, but that is not immoral because such penalty is affixed. Nothing is more evident than that the epithet of virtue is inapplicable to the refraining from that action on account of the evil arbitrarily attached to it. If the action is in itself beneficial, virtue would rather consist in not refraining from it, but in firmly defying the personal consequences attached to its performance.

Some usurper of supernatural energy might subdue the whole globe to his power; he might possess new and unheard-of resources for enduing his punishments with the most terrible attributes of pain. The torments of his victims might be intense in their degree, and protracted to an infinite duration. Still the "will of the law-giver" would afford no surer criterion as to what actions were right or wrong. It would only increase the possible virtue of those who refuse to become the instruments of his tyranny.

—P. B. Shelley.

### Correspondence.

#### BIGOTRY IN THE BANK.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Being a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, I was somewhat annoyed to-day, on going into Parr's Bank with a copy of your paper in my hand, to be told by the cashier, who is evidently a Christian suffering from "swelled head," not to bring such a book into their bank! On my stating my intention to do as I chose, and that it was a sensible publication and not obscene or lying—as the Bible was—he told me it was worse. If the real *heresy* is thus allowed to pervade our banks and places of business, and results such as above stated allowed to go on, where is the efficacy of Christ clearing the "benches"? Hoping you will find room for the above, and a reply in your paper,

A. E. GRAMME.

The *Elkhart Review* is responsible for the following:—The pastor of one of our churches had occasion to speak to a little girl, a member of one of the classes in Sunday-school, about not being present the Sunday before, and incidentally remarked: "I hear you swear sometimes." The little girl asked: "Who told you so?" "Oh, a little bird." After a moment of thought the child looked up, and, with apparent innocence of doing wrong, said: "I'll bet it was one of those damned sparrows."

Lord Chesterfield said: "If we know a man's religion, we still inquire as to his morals; but if we know his morals, the question as to his religion seldom arises."

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

## LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Hall closed.

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Watts, "Agnosticism Tested by Human Reason."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, H. Snell, "Marcus Brutus."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, J. M. Robertson, "Emerson."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, G. Jackson, C.C., "The Life and Work of Lord Shaftesbury."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stephen, E.): 7, Discussion on "Patriotism," opener F. A. Davies.

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Hyde Park): Lectures every Thursday at 7.30 p.m.; Sundays at 11.30 a.m.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

## COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall): 3.45, J. H. Gilliland, "Paley's *Evidences and Biblical Criticism*."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): H. Percy Ward—11, "Radicalism and Socialism"; 3, "The Philosophy of Materialism"; 7, "An Impeachment of Christianity."

BRADFORD (Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 17 Little Horton-lane): S. H. Pollard—3, "The True Origin of the Christian Religion"; 7, "Is Christianity Opposed to Science?" October 15, at 8, Social Meeting. October 17, at 8, H. Percy Ward, "The Philosophy of Materialism."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, G. Spiller, "God and the Good Life."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—S. Haines, "Within the Realms of Space"; 6.30, Social Meeting.

HULL (Sylvester Sage's "Empire," Grimston-street): G. W. Foote—11, "Anarchism and Assassination"; 3, "Mr. Hall Caine's Dream of Christian Democracy"; 7, "The Meaning of Death."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, C. Cohen, "The Problem of the Criminal."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, B.Sc., "Presidential Addresses at the British Association."

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, Lecture or reading.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Quarterly meeting; 7, G. Berrisford, "Some Objections to Socialism."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A Reading.

H. PERCY WARD, 1 Victoria-chambers, 17 Little Horton-lane, Bradford.—October 13, Birmingham. November 3, Sheffield; 10, Huddersfield. December 8, Glasgow; 15th, Failsforth; 22, Birmingham.

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