

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Dear Bishops.

"The Archbishop of York and the Hon. Mrs. Maclagan have returned from town to Bishopthorpe Palace, where they will entertain a house-party during the session of the Northern Convocation at York."
—*Westminster Gazette*.

This interesting announcement is common enough. We do not refer to it on account of its novelty. Indeed, if it were less common it might excite more attention. If the average Christian were not used to such things he would "sit up," as the man in the street says, at the idea of a right reverend father-in-God figuring in "society" news like a sporting nobleman, a notorious actress, or a parasite-haunted millionaire. What an effort of imagination it involves to picture Jesus Christ giving a swell party, or Peter and Paul looking in at a fashionable at-home! Fancy the announcement that Jesus Christ had just left his town residence for his country seat, where he was going to entertain a number of distinguished guests! Fancy a newspaper paragraph to the effect that (say) John had just returned from a long holiday at Ostend or Monte Carlo! The incongruity is quite staggering. But the case is altered since the infancy of the Salvation Army, of which General Booth's affair is only a small contingent. The religion of poverty became a road to riches. The religion of humility became a path to honors and dignities. The religion of the next world became the way to the best places in this world. It was a wonderful transformation change. Nothing like it was ever seen in a pantomime. And when the startling change was once effected it went on as a going concern. From the days of Constantine, the first Christian emperor—though it is doubtful if he ever *was* a Christian—the representatives of Jesus Christ, the poor Carpenter of Nazareth, have affected wealth and display. Even now the Pope reckons himself above any Emperor, Czar, or Kaiser on earth. Cardinals count themselves as little less than Kings; in fact, they *are* Princes—of the Church. The Bishops of the Church of England sit in the House of Lords. That is, when they take the trouble to be present. They seldom attend unless the interests of their own order are directly or indirectly at stake. Even the Nonconformist ministers play up to their position for all it is worth. Did not the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes go to Court dressed in silk stockings and silver shoe-buckles? And does not General Booth travel like a patrician? We have seen him sailing up the platform to his private carriage, followed by a crowd of uniformed satellites, one carrying this and another that, and all crowding after him as though they were going to rush in after him through the gate of Paradise.

But to return to the Bishops. We call them the dear Bishops. And are they not so? We pay the poorest of them some £4,000 a year, and the richest £15,000. Lord Salisbury receives £5,000 a year as Prime Minister of the British Empire. Dr. Temple receives £15,000 a year as Archbishop of Canterbury.

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He is commercially worth perhaps a twentieth part of that figure. It would probably puzzle him to earn a thousand a year in the open labor market. As the chief apostle of Jesus Christ in England he ought to receive far less. A hundred a year should be the outside salary of a Christian preacher. In the case of a bishop fifty pounds a year should suffice. No doubt he would find it hard to live on that income if he did not trust a good deal in the Lord. But he *ought* to trust a good deal in the Lord. What is he a bishop for otherwise? He should show an example to the flock. They are expected to have faith, and he should have it more abundantly; in fact, if he had faith enough, he would be able to live without any salary at all. Meat and drink and clothes would come supernaturally. "For the Lord knoweth that ye have need of such things."

John Stuart Mill said that a Bishop might not be a hypocrite, but he certainly looked like one. Living up to a sunflower, or a piece of old blue china, is nothing to living up to a Bishop's costume. No man has ever done it. No man will ever do it. An honest Bishop is an impossibility. He may be all right as a man, but as a Bishop he is an impostor. Good to his wife he may be, kind to his children, amiable to his friends, and considerate to his acquaintances; but in his public capacity he is always a fraud. "Blessed be ye poor," he says with his tongue. With his hand he rakes in the shekels. He talks of the Son of Man who had not where to lay his head, and can hardly tell off-hand the number of bedrooms in his own palace. He professes to lead others in following one who was despised and rejected of men, and he insists on having a good place near the front in every earthly procession. He preaches "Labor not for the meat that perisheth," and lives on the fat of the land. Generally he reaches a good old age, sticks to this world with all his strength, keeps out of heaven as long as possible, and only goes "home" when he can no longer live abroad. The longevity of Bishops is proverbial.

How curious that all this contrast, and all this hypocrisy, should be displayed in the cause of religion! It is like keeping drink-shops in the interest of temperance, and brothels in the interest of morality! But when you look into it more closely the curiousness disappears. Religion has been used, all over the world, to deceive and exploit the people. Those who speak in the name of God are eager after the "goods" of men. Those who preach felicity above make themselves as comfortable as they can below. Those who promise mansions in the sky get hold of good residences on the solid ground. It is really a wonder that the multitude do not see this. The fact is gross as a mountain, open, palpable. But the people (we suppose) are caught so young by these clerical tricksters, and are so thoroughly imposed upon in their childhood, that they seldom recover their common sense in adult life, but go down to their graves in the firm belief that the fellows who have told them lies and robbed them are the appointed teachers of a God of truth and justice.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Religion of Despair.

THERE is often far more descriptive power in a nickname than in a patronymic. The one is ours by heredity, the other by right of having earned it. We do not always earn it willingly, but we have deserved it by some trick of form or gesture, some mental quality or physical peculiarity, and it is thus some sort of an indication by which we may be known. This is as true of systems as of individuals. Amidst all the titles that have been given to Christianity, the one that really describes it is that of "A religion of suffering." Where is the accuracy—unless it be intended as a satire—in describing official Christianity as bringing "glad tidings" to man? Here is a religion which for centuries through its official organisations assured the world that the far greater proportion of the sons of men were doomed to eternal torments, which propounded a doctrine foredoomed to rejection by thoughtful and unprejudiced people, and yet the rejection of which rendered damnation certain—a religion which asserted that all human instincts were essentially evil, all amusement a snare of the Devil, and all beauty to be obliterated or concealed if we would be quite safe, and which yet describes itself as bringing "glad tidings" to mankind!

No, its real description is a religion of suffering, for this is the characteristic it has always displayed during its periods of real earnestness. Joylessness is stamped upon every page of its history, and upon the countenance of almost all of its great teachers and leaders. Look at the traditional pictures of its traditional founder, at the anguish-wrung face, at every feature expressing the utmost physical and mental agony, and ask what amount of joy *that* could have brought into the world. The pagan gods, with all their faults, were frankly human—human in all their lights and shades, in their joys and sorrows, in their weaknesses and their strength. The Christian Deity emphasised but one lesson—that of weakness and misery and patient suffering. The pictures of the old gods impress one, even to-day, with something like admiration for the human nature that gave them birth, and give one at least a taste of the joy of life. Let anyone turn from the contemplation of the pagan statuary to that of the Christian effigies of Jesus, and then ask what had the world to gain in giving up one for the other. Even the pictures of the Madonna and Child are always touched—sometimes permeated—with the sorrow that seems inseparable from Christianity. There is none of that half-wistful, ill-suppressed joy of motherhood, only a sadness that can almost be handled. What the effect of the incessant contemplation of the crucified Christ has been upon the lives of weak-minded, neurotic men and women, the annals of pathology tell only too plainly. And the effect of this religion of gloom upon European civilisation is to be read in an even clearer manner.

The difference between the Pagan and Christian creeds has been put in a vivid and powerful manner by one whose life, heavily scored by suffering though it was, yet left him responsive to happiness and beauty. Here is the passage:—

"Suddenly there came gasping towards them [*i.e.*, the pagan gods] a pale Jew, dripping with blood, a crown of thorns on his head, bearing a great cross of wood on his shoulder; and he cast the cross on the high table of the gods, so that the golden goblets trembled and fell, and the gods grew dumb and pale, and even paler, till they melted into utter mist. Then there were dreary days, and the world became grey and gloomy. There were no more happy immortals, and Olympus became a hospital, where flayed, roasted, and spitted gods went wearily, wandering round, binding their wounds and singing sorrowful songs. Religion no longer offered joy, but consolation; it was a woeful, bleeding religion of transgressors."^{*}

The Pagan religions had at least the redeeming feature that they were religions of *life*; Christianity, on the contrary, was a religion of death—of eternal life, Christians would say; but then, historically, eternal life has not infrequently been a synonym for temporal death. What is certain is that gloom and misery

increased tenfold under the Christian reign, and for centuries the symbol of a crucified, suffering Savior would have served well enough for a symbol of humanity itself. In some respects this aspect of Christianity was a reflection of the decaying civilisation around—a decay which it in no small degree helped to hasten and perpetuate; but, more strongly still, it was an expression of its inmost nature. Emphatically, Schopenhauer was right in placing Christianity among pessimistical systems. What else could he do with a religion which regarded the world as a valley of tears, man as essentially vile, treated the existence of the family as due to man's fallen nature, and had as its chief emblem an instrument of torture? And he was further right, although in a slightly different sense to what he intended, in treating Christianity's pessimism as the real source of what strength it ever possessed. Maintain the ascetic and pessimistic note, and Christianity persists by attracting to itself a constantly existing temperament; eliminate this, as some Protestant sects have tried to do, and it inevitably and insensibly glides into Rationalism, and so on to destruction.

Could anything be more pessimistic than the orthodox Christian's treatment of human nature? The Pagans found human nature self-sufficient for all its needs, and for all improvement. The evil in it they, of course, recognised and lamented; but there was nothing morbid or anti-social in their view of man. The Christians found human nature anything but adequate, and the world anything but enjoyable. Man was incurably vile—only to be kept from being openly criminal by the bribe of a heaven or the terrors of a hell. "The sooner the race came to an end the better" was the open teaching of more than one of the early Christian Fathers. To bring children into the world was to provide more souls for hell, and the most serviceable life was that which was passed in tears and closed in solitude. Thousands of sermons have been preached, and thousands of books written, even in modern times, with the object of proving that human nature by itself, unassisted by supernaturalism, is simply incapable of decent conduct. "All that is evil in our lives is the result of our unregenerated human nature; all that is good is the outcome of our imbibed supernaturalism," is the sum and substance of much of the orthodox theology, and much also of the staple attack on Free-thought.

Could we have a more profound, a more distressing pessimism than this? The unbeliever *may* be in error—that much is possible in any case; but, belief for belief, it can hardly be denied that those who recognise that the normal forces of human nature, unaided by any external agency, are capable of enriching life with harmless enjoyments and useful actions, have a more dignified and helpful view than that which knows no higher incentive than a policeman or a prison. Distrust of human reason, of human morality, and of human nature, as a whole, is more characteristic of genuine Christianity than of any other religion that the world has ever seen. It has been pessimistic in the very worst sense of the term—distrusting all the finer and healthier instincts, without offering even the compensation of intellectual strength.

The lot of the Christian was to suffer. What the effect of this teaching was on life, Scotland under Presbyterianism, England under the Puritans, the asceticism that has never been quite suppressed in the Churches, all show. And as the lot of the Christian was to suffer, pain and misery and disease had obviously a divine function to fulfil in the world, and the misapplied energies of Christian apologists have furnished scores of arguments to prove that these things were here for our benefit. Here, for example, are a couple of excerpts from two Christian writers who are dealing with the question of suffering:—

"There is an ennobling quality in suffering," says number one. "Pain, trial, bereavement—these are the experiences that write lines of spiritual dignity and strength upon human faces, which deepen and sweeten human hearts, and make life silently serious and purposeful. Note the face that is thinned and scored by years of physical suffering. What a strange, sweet nobility it has! Pain's refining chisel has been at work there."

* Heine, *Pictures of Travel*.

And here is number two:—

"There are great tracts of life which cannot be developed except through suffering. How should we bring out sympathy? How should we bring out all the gifts of the gifted and trained nurse, of the devoted medical man, of the strenuously determined sanitary inspector?.....Great catastrophes of nature—earthquakes, avalanches, storms; some of these things will be, and must be, left that they may develop our international sympathy."

It is the old cant, or the old stupidity—perhaps a little of each. Could anyone but a Christian seriously argue that diseases were useful because they helped to train medical men and nurses, or bad drains beneficial because they produced "strenuously determined sanitary inspectors"? Really, if the argument is a sound one, we ought not to complain if a medical man in want of practice were to inoculate a few people with smallpox virus. He would be helping to develop highly-gifted nurses, to say nothing of other incidental benefits. And what a benefit to the community are bad drains, etc. But for them we should be unblessed by the presence of sanitary inspectors, to say nothing, again, of those who live by selling disinfectants. Seriously, if there is anything that could make one despair of human reason, it would be a Christian apologist's attempt at ratiocination. Even a Christian ought to be able to realise that we could well dispense with the inspectors if we could only get rid of the bad drains, and we could likewise dispense with both nurse and doctor if only we could get clear of disease.

There seems more stupidity than cant about number two, but number one reverses the order. Of all the cant I have ever heard, that which is always harping upon the beneficent nature of suffering is the most detestable. Thoroughly Christian it is, I admit, and no better evidence could be given of its demoralising tendency than this. There is nothing ennobling in suffering, and there is nothing purifying in pain. There are some natures that remain sweet and pure in spite of suffering, and there are thousands who are made worse by it day by day and year by year. One might as reasonably say that good health is derived from impure food and foul air as to say that a desirable character is formed by pain and misery. As a sober matter of fact, the general effect of pain is to deaden one's sensibilities rather than expand them; and, if the pain is at all prolonged, this result is certain.

But these two I have cited are, after all, only types. And they have been produced by a religious philosophy which has been blind to the brighter and more cheerful aspect of life, and has concentrated attention upon only its darker and more cheerless aspects. Not that in any philosophy of life pain can be, or should be, ignored; only it is certainly wiser, and so, in the long run, more profitable, to take it for what it is—as an evil to be faced, and, if possible, mastered—and not console ourselves with sickly sentimentalities about "Pain's refining chisel," or the "spiritual dignity" brought about by suffering. Whenever a man writes about the "strange, sweet nobility" of a face "scored by years of physical suffering," we may safely write him down an ass and have done with it.

After all, the real art that should occupy our thoughts—the art of living—is one that Christianity never seriously set itself to master. It had much to say about the art of dying, and its presence and influence may have done something towards making people less reluctant to quit this life than they otherwise might have been. And, thanks to Christian influences, the art of living is the one in which we moderns have the least skill. We live in a rush, and often die in a panic. We are skilled in the art of getting over huge distances in a brief time, in extracting wealth from the most unlikely places, and in numerous other devices; but we are not skilled in how to get real, lasting happiness out of the years and opportunities that are ours. Thanks largely to the paralysing power of Christianity, we have yet to realise that human enlightenment and human happiness are the terms in which every civilisation should be judged, and the civilisation that does not make for these is but a monument of wasted effort and misdirected energy.

Let us, then, have done with the "woeful, bleeding religion of transgressors," and commence with the

religion of human strength, love, and mutual helpfulness. Take down from our flag the picture of an emaciated, pain-drawn Jewish peasant, whose alleged sufferings have never yet filled his followers with kindly feelings towards those who disagreed with them, and place in its stead the picture of a strong, healthful, self-reliant man, as an ideal for us all to aim at. Let us, in Landor's words, warm both hands at the fire of life; and let us, at the same time, see that the flames are powerful enough to reflect a glow from the faces of all the sons of man.

C. COHEN.

Christianity and Persecution.

THE history of the human race presents no more palpable moral than that of the utter inability of persecution to stifle ideas and principles when once they have obtained a place of germination within the human mind. In ancient Greece the authorities endeavored to root out atheistical principles by banishing, and sometimes even executing, those who inculcated them. For a brief period it appeared as though these processes were likely to prove effectual. The reign of unbelief was succeeded by that of the disciples of Socrates and Plato. The doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of the existence of a great all-powerful Being, to whom man was primarily and immediately responsible for his conduct, were taught in language of considerable force and wondrous beauty. Lewes calls the Socratic teachings "the poetry of philosophy"; but, however transcendental they were, they were purely imaginary; however pleasing they may have been to the Athenian authorities, political and sacerdotal, they were in no degree safer from criticism than were other rival doctrines. Hence we find their place being usurped by the scepticism of Pyrrho; we see doubt again asserting itself from its "impregnable stronghold," despite the fact that unbelief and Atheism had been punished by the State and ridiculed by the "poetical philosophers."

It is but fair to point out that the Church of Rome has been foremost in putting into operation the engines of persecution against all who have ventured to act or think or speak in a manner foreign to that which the Papacy has decreed to be right. This Church has declared toleration to be an evil, and it is but just to admit that this so-called evil has never existed within the confines of the "Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church." It would, however, be a mistake and an injustice to credit Rome with a monopoly of the spirit of persecution. On the contrary, a large portion of that spirit rightly belongs to Protestantism, which is even now by no means disposed to carry out its cherished theory of universal toleration to any fair or logical extent. Protestants have been no less ready to use other weapons than reason and expostulation against Freethinkers than were their Catholic predecessors. The impartial student of history will discover that when the adherents of the Reformation professed to favor inquiry it was, as a rule, when they lacked the ability to persecute. Still, the first place in the list of inventions designed to suppress freedom of thought is confessedly due to the Inquisition. Both on account of the magnitude of its operations and of the extraordinary, though misdirected, energy and zeal displayed by its officials, this tribunal deserves the invidious notoriety it possesses. It differed from every other institution devised by intolerant bigotry—primarily because of its widespread authority, and secondly because it continued active for many centuries. The Roman Church is, and must be by its very nature, intolerant, since it avows itself to be a Church established by Christ himself, without which men cannot be sure of salvation. To rebel against its authority, or to dissent from its doctrines, must be, on this hypothesis, to incur a heinous crime. This crime, instead of being left to the justice of their deity, Catholics have ever considered as one liable to spiritual and temporal punishment. It follows from this that the odium of persecuting belongs to Christianity itself—that is to say, to the recognised Christian Church from its period of power. Of late years it has become the fashion to refuse to call those

principles Christian which were once almost universally accepted by the Church. It is possible—though we doubt it—that there are sects in existence to-day which would not persecute if they were exalted into power. This, however, does not alter the fact that the Christianity of the past was essentially intolerant, believing in and making use of various engines of persecution in order to maintain its authority. The absence of systematic persecution within the last few decades is not to be attributed to the spread of a purer form of religion, but is, on the contrary, a result arising from the public appreciation of the proved fact that Christianity has no more right to persecute than has Mohammedanism or Brahmanism.

In reference to Protestantism we recognise that the Church of England, direct offspring of Tudor tyranny and cupidity, was from its very beginning an instrument devised to oppress and keep in subjection the noblest aspirations of the English people. Its earliest bishops and dignitaries were truckling time-servers, men like Cranmer and Latimer, who never scrupled to lend a religious sanction to the crimes and vices of the tyrants whose tools they were. The spirit of persecution was so strongly developed in these "holy reformers of the Church of England" that Cranmer, Ridley, and a few lay members of the Privy Council—in the reign of Edward VI.—would not rest until they secured an Act of Parliament which made penal the exercise of the very liberty they themselves had just used in dissenting from Rome. Under Elizabeth the work of intolerance was pursued unchecked, the officers of the Church of England lending themselves willingly to the hateful task. Imprisonment, banishment, and death were the penalties inflicted for the exercise of "private judgment." Under James I. the Church of England endeavored still further to rivet the fetters of intellectual slavery upon the nation. It would allow a man neither to criticise nor to express his dissent from the canons and Thirty-nine Articles, and strenuously and violently insisted that all should profess to believe as the Church had decreed, whether they could do so conscientiously or not. The immediate consequence of the system of organised cruelty which was rampant during this pious reign was the colonisation of the northern seaboard of the vast American territory now known as the United States. Englishmen were not so easily dragooned into slavery as were many of the less resolute Continental peoples, and, rather than submit to the intolerable exactions of King James and his persecuting Church, thousands renounced for ever the country of their birth and their affection, and sought toleration or justice in the regions of the West, across the wide waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Under the successor of James an attempt was made to convert the Limited Monarchy of England into an absolute despotism. The prime agents in effecting the purposes of Charles were the statesman Strafford and the Churchman William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. The latter had determined to exalt the Church of England, much as Hildebrand exalted that of Rome. To do this it was thought necessary to break the spirit of a free people, even as the Inquisition had destroyed the manhood of Italy and Spain. In the hands of Laud the Courts of the Star Chamber and the High Commission became altogether inquisitorial. Priestcraft was in the ascendant, the King gladly gave his sanction to the designs of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and moderation became a quality which the tyrants would not allow even bishops and priests to exercise. Fortunately, this Protestant Church can no longer pursue men and women to the gibbet or the pillory, because, like that of Rome, her poison-fangs have been drawn, as Indian jugglers are said to draw the teeth of the deadly snakes which they exhibit. This Church can now only express her fury by vain gnashing of the teeth, and by periodical displays of intolerance towards the unbaptised dead, and towards the more liberal expounders of Freethought among the living. Against all churches and parties and sects based upon theological teachings, from the huge fabric of superstition, whose central point is the Vatican, to the Salvation Army, Freethought is waging a triumphant contest. Truly this contest has been victorious, for defeat has never rested upon our flag. Every part of the Christian superstition which we have attacked has crumbled, more or less, beneath our efforts. No

weapons that bigotry and ignorance, cruelty and falsehood, could devise have the Christians scrupled to use against us, and yet they have failed to destroy our principles or to crush our hopes and aspirations.

We hear much about the martyrs of the Church, but what of those of Freethought? The former have gone to death buoyed up with the hope of an immediate remuneration for all their sufferings, while the latter had only the consciousness that they died in the service of truth. Consequently, their magnanimity has been all the greater, and the nobility of their sacrifice much more enhanced. Theirs has been the consciousness of dying without the stimulus afforded by a hope of immortality in heaven. Many of them were not so entirely emancipated from the influence of education as to look forward to a long sleep—a "sleep that has no ending." Nevertheless, they went to death firmly and courageously, because they suffered for a truth which their reason forbade them to deny. All honor to their glorious memories, and may their successors of to-day feel a pride in endeavoring to emulate their heroic conduct in the work of intellectual emancipation from the fetters of superstition and the beguilements of theological ignorance.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Bible Creation Story.—IV.

THE next Christian perversion of the Bible Creation story is with regard to the sacred writer's account of the work of the first day—viz., the creation of light. Upon this subject I remarked that it is clearly evident from the narrative that the writer believed daylight and darkness to be forms of matter (say, like the atmosphere), which, after their creation, were confined in separate places, and let loose alternately upon the earth. Light, we now know, is not a material substance at all, but merely the effect produced upon the sense of vision by a disturbance of the ether which is propagated in waves from the sun to the earth.

The first contention of Bible reconcilers as regards this matter is that the narrator of the story does not say that light *was* created—he says only that it was "called forth"; consequently the words "Let there be light" should be rendered "Let light appear." This argument is mere word-juggling. Other created things were "called forth" in precisely the same manner. We read: "Let there be a firmament"; "Let there be lights in the firmament"; "Let the waters bring forth abundantly"; "Let fowl fly above the earth." Light was created in exactly the same way as the firmament, the sun and moon, the fishes, and the fowl; the command being given, the objects named appeared. "For he commanded, and they were created" (Ps. cxlviii. 5).

Next, with regard to the Bible statement that Elohim "divided the light from the darkness," it is contended that the Hebrew word *badal*, translated "divided," literally means "distinguished between"; consequently the sentence should read "distinguished between the light and between the darkness." To this it need only be said that the author of the story employs the same word in his account of the second day's work (verse 7). This reads: "And Elohim made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." Here, it will be seen, the verb *badal* signifies something more than "distinguished between"; it means "parted" or "separated" by some kind of partition—the latter in this case being the firmament, the upper portion of which was supposed to be of a solid nature.

Now, the only certain way of obtaining fresh light as to the meaning to be attached to the statement in Genesis is by ascertaining, if possible, what were the general ideas upon the subject in the writer's time, or prior to the Christian era, and then to compare these beliefs with what the writer has said. It has, I think, already been sufficiently proved that this writer's inspiration did not reveal to him any knowledge of scientific facts unknown in his day.

Following, then, this rational method, we turn first to the prophet Enoch, whose veracity, knowledge, and prophetic powers are vouched for by the apostle Jude (v. 14). And here, it may be remarked, though the Book of Enoch is a work of pure fiction, it contains

upon some matters evidence of what was believed in the writer's time. That writer, in concocting a story of revelations made to him by the "Lord of Spirits," could not, when speaking of natural phenomena, do otherwise than give expression to the ideas prevalent in his days. Had he said anything upon such a subject which was contrary to the received opinion of his time, his book—which could not be tested as regards his alleged visions and conversations with angels—would have been rejected by his contemporaries as a mass of lies. We know, as a matter of history, that that book found a ready acceptance amongst the Jews, and was regarded as an inspired work by the early Christians, one of whom (Jude) has quoted a passage from it, and even goes so far as to say that Enoch prophesied of the people of his days.

This prophet believed the sun and moon to be hollow, transparent globes, filled with light, as a balloon is with gas, which, when inflated, were borne up and moved by winds. In his account of celestial visions which the Lord of Spirits graciously permitted him to behold, he says:—

"Twelve gates I beheld in heaven at the extremities of the earth, through which the sun, moon, and stars, and all the works of heaven, pass at their rising and setting.First proceeds forth that great luminary which is called the sun.....Its chariot upon which it ascends, the wind blows.....The moon.....its chariot upon which it secretly ascends, the wind blows; and *light is given to it by measure*. Every month at its exit and entrance it becomes changed.....Uriel likewise showed me another regulation, *when light is poured into the moon*, how it is poured into it from the sun" (lxxiv., lxxi., lxxii., lxxvii.).

The apostle Jude, of course, firmly believed all this, as did also, no doubt, all the other Christians of his time.

Reverting now to more reliable Bible "history," we find that the patriarch Job believed light and darkness to be tangible substances, which were kept confined in separate places. He did not, however, happen to know the exact locality where either was stored when withdrawn from the earth; and so the Almighty, when teaching him humility, found it easy to convict him of ignorance. Says the Hebrew deity:—

"Where is the way to the dwelling of light? and as for the darkness, where is the place thereof, that thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldst discern the paths to the house thereof?..... Which is the way to the place where the light is?" (Job xxxviii. 19, 20, 24).

This passage is conclusive as to the popular belief at the time the book of Job was written.

Returning to the story in Genesis, we are now enabled to see what the writer of the narrative meant when he said that Elohim "divided the light from the darkness." That deity skilfully separated the two substances, and kept them for ever afterwards in places widely apart, so that there was no chance of their getting mixed.

The next apologetic contention is that light is in its nature entirely independent of the sun, and may be produced by the action of other causes, the northern light being instanced as a case in point. Upon this subject the editor of a Christian Evidence publication says:—

"The cavillers of the nineteenth century cry: 'How ignorant Moses must have been! He has the stupidity to state that there was light on the first day, and yet the sun was not created before the fourth day.' But tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon..... for science confirms the profound wisdom of Moses, and exposes the gross ignorance of Voltaire and all his followers. Why, there is not at the present day a single scientist, worthy of the name, who would dispute the fact that there is light, altogether independent of the existence of the sun."

This is one of the stock arguments one so often hears on the so-called Christian Evidence platforms. Readers will, no doubt, recognise the style and the characteristic mode of reasoning. But the question at issue is not whether electric or other light can be produced independently of the sun, as the writer of the paragraph above quoted appears to imagine, but *what was the nature of the light* which the author of the story in Genesis says was "called forth" on the first creative day. This is the question, and the point can be ascertained only by referring to the narrative itself.

Let the Christian Evidence Bible reconciler endeavor to grasp the meaning of the following simple statements:—

"And Elohim said, Let there be light, and there was light.....And Elohim called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night."

Here it is stated in the plainest terms that the light which Elohim created three days before the sun was the ordinary daylight, commonly called "day," as distinguished from the darkness which is termed "night." We have already seen, when dealing with the word "day," that one of its meanings was the enlightened portion of the twenty-four hours. The following are a few more examples of this signification:—

Gen. xxxi. 40: "In the *day* the drought consumed me, and the frost by night."

Exod. xiii. 21: "The Lord went before them by *day* in a pillar of cloud."

Judg. xix. 9, 11, 26: "Behold, now the *day* draweth toward evening.....behold, the *day* groweth to an end.When they were by Jebus the *day* was far spent..... Then came the woman in the dawning of the *day*."

Amos viii. 9: "I will darken the earth in the clear *day*."

It is thus clearly established, beyond the smallest possibility of doubt, that the light which is said to have been called into existence before the creation of the sun was the ordinary daylight, commonly spoken of as "day." And no amount of Christian perversion can alter the fact or shake it one jot. Not all the fatuitous vaporing of the whole Christian Evidence fraternity can change the light which is stated to have been made on the first day into any other light than that whose source is the sun.

The Hebrew story-teller, there can be no doubt, "distinguished between" the bright light observable when the sun was shining and the less brilliant light always present in the daytime, even during rain, snow, and mist, when the sun could not be seen. The latter light, he says, was created on the first day, in order, no doubt, that Elohim might see what he was doing on the succeeding five days.

It is really astonishing, at this time of day, to hear uncritical Bible reconcilers talk of Moses being the author of the Creation story, and to hear their silly laudations of "the profound wisdom" therein displayed. There is, however, some small satisfaction in knowing that all Christian advocates are not of this unthinking and unreasoning class. Amongst these more rationally-minded Christians may be instanced the eminent Hebrew scholar, Professor Ryle, who, in a work entitled *The Early Narratives in Genesis*, says of chapters i. to xi.: "In these eleven chapters are recorded the popular and unscientific narratives which, in early Hebrew traditions, conveyed pictorially the prevalent conceptions as to the origin of the universe and the foundations of human society. Inspiration did not infuse into the mind of the writer accurate scientific knowledge of things unknown."

This is a mild way of saying that all the so-called Bible "history," prior to the Call of Abraham, is pure fiction, though why Dr. Ryle draws the line here is not easy to say. Perhaps, however, the above admissions are as much as we can expect from a Christian professor who has no desire to be ranked as a professed unbeliever. At any rate, he does not attempt to read new interpretations into, or endeavor to explain away, Bible statements which his common sense tells him are nothing but old Jewish fables. ABRACADABRA.

Dr. Fourthly was making a pastoral call. "Ah, my dear Mrs. Highmore," he said, rambling on in his absent-minded way, "when your children grow to manhood I trust—" "They are girls, doctor," interrupted Mrs. Highmore, with painful distinctness. "I was about to say," he resumed, promptly recovering himself, "that when your little girls grow to manhood, so to speak, as all girls do when the time comes, I trust they will grow, as it were, to noble specimens of manhood, who will be good husbands to them, and whom you can welcome into your family as worthy additions thereto." The conversation drifted to the church social to be held shortly for the benefit of the new organ fund, and presently the good doctor put on his gloves and took his leave.—*Chicago Record*.

Taking Life too Seriously.

(Concluded from page 75.)

RELIGION has never yet begun to reveal to man the dignity and grandeur of life; it has made him a seeker after something in the beyond, a terrified fugitive from something in the past. It never has had the ability or the courage to set man square upon his feet, fill his face and cover his forehead with the light of the sweet heavens, and bid him hope and dare and be strong. But in the darkness, in the gloom, in the morbid introspection, in self-distrust, through penance and pleading and prayers, religion has sought to make us white as snow, and fit us to grow wings for some other world. The idea is fundamentally wrong. We want life now; we want it here, we want it in large, abundant measure, with health and happiness and energy and strength and intelligence and common sense. If there is another world, we shall want the same things there.

I know well that misunderstanding is bound to arise when we come to speak about the religious interpretation of what is called sin, but I stand here to say that the dogmas of our religion have created an infinite bugbear about human sin. How or why they did it, what their motive or reasons were, it may not be necessary or even competent to inquire; but all their conclusions about sin rest upon hypotheses that will not stand in the light of the intelligence of the world. All the vagaries, all the Christian conviction about sin and its consequences, depend upon the hypothesis of the fall of man and the subsequent curse pronounced upon the pair and the world by an angry God. If the intelligence of the world has abandoned anything of the past, it has abandoned that old story about the introduction of evil into the world in Paradise.

The doctrine of sin, in its fearful, tragic, infinite consequences, goes with the old Eden fable. The doctrine of the necessity of forgiveness by the Infinite Being, and the doctrine that, in order that he might forgive, he must die himself, goes with the doctrine of sin. Is there anyone who cannot see that God does not need to forgive sin; that we may even say it is inconceivable that he could forgive sin? The forgiveness of sin involves two elements: one is the taking away of the consequences—that is, making it as though it had not been—the other element is the change in the mood, the mind, or disposition of the one who forgives. As to the first element, there is no reason to believe that God did, or does, or ever has, or ever will, interfere to suspend the law of cause and effect; no reason to think that he will intervene between an act and its consequences; no reason to believe that there is any device schemed by the brain of theologian or priest whereby any sinner, great or small, can ever bridge over and cross without entering the abyss he has dug before his own feet. The sooner the world gets away from that idea the better for the world will it be. The other element of forgiveness is that God has changed his mood; on the face of the Infinite the frown of anger has changed to the smile of love.

Does anyone believe that God alternates between smile and frown, between unreconciliation and reconciliation? Does anyone believe that? Does anyone believe that it was necessary for him to die in disguise in order that he might be kindly towards the creatures that he had made? Does anybody believe that now? The old doctrine of sin goes with the other superstitions of the past. This is in no sense minimising the effects of wrong; in fact, it is to increase them; it is to make those consequences more tragic, because they are more inevitable and inescapable; it is simply saying that there is no charity scheme, there is no clearing-house where the balance can be made right, there is no blood of man or beast or angels or God shed for the remission of our sins, by virtue of which we may escape the reaping of the harvest that we have sown. It makes life, then; it makes religion not a frenzied search after salvation; it makes an eternal and august reckoning for man with the consequences of his own deeds; it makes every man his own redeemer, his own savior, his own Christ.

The view of death which the Church and the world,

following its example, have taken is, in my judgment, unnecessary, unnatural, and unfair to the maker of the world. The separation, the pain of parting, and the loss that death brings, will never be removed in our present state of development. That will always remain. The tears, the agony, the grief, and the lonely way—nothing can be said or done to make that grief any the less poignant, unless, perchance, our friends, the Spiritualists, can sometime devise means, or lead on to a development, that will enable the living to commune with the dead. But all of the rest of the terror and the horror and the foreboding about death can be, and ought to be, taken away. When ages have come and gone, and intelligence, clear reason, and common sense have struggled with the old superstitions about death which religion has inculcated, then we may begin to look upon it from an entirely different view-point. Why should it be held in horror? It is as much a part of the plan of nature as being born is. There is no reason to believe that it is coming with any sort of tragedy or surprise that any moment of life might not have brought, or that being born did not bring.

The child born into this world begins with an exceedingly limited experience. Its life is intensely narrow, with no language but a cry, and no need or longing or desire except for something to eat. But there is the divinity of motherhood and the providence of love, and every want is anticipated and supplied. This is nature's way. If religion had been able to say something about the horror and terror of entering this world through the gates of birth, it would have made being born as terrible as going out of the world; but we knew something about birth, and therefore the lips of the pessimists were sealed. Knowing nothing about death, they have simply garbed it in darkest robes, in order that they might put men, through their fears and terrors, under tribute.

Nature has planned so wisely and divinely for the introduction of the newcomer into this world, why may we not assume that nature has done something for the exit from this world and the entrance upon another?

Socrates, walking with unflinching step to the dungeon where he was to drink the fatal cup, spoke with his friends in his simple and most natural way; there was no fear, no Christian piety; he reminded one of the friends that he owed a trifle to a certain one of their mutual acquaintances, and asked him to see that it was attended to; they spoke to him about the burial. "Oh," he said, "bury this body where you choose, but do not think you are burying Socrates." And finally he said: "We go our ways; I to die, you to live; which is better, God only knows!"

There could be, there can be, no more worthy religion—there can be nothing presumably more honorable before the Infinite—than the lives of men and women given solely to the realisation of life in its best, in its highest, in its noblest, to exalt and cultivate the influences that are sweet and fine, to sow with lavish and unstinting hand on the broad field of the world the seed of faith and hope and gladness, and to reap from the sowing a hundred-fold; to get away from the fear, the morbidness of pessimism, the despair, and the senselessness of superstition and religion, and to make life its own divinity, the world a heaven, and happiness here. There may come some time a religion that will be a religion of joy. Harps of happiness and crowns of rejoicing may yet be retained here. The pleasures of existence will not be deferred to some remote and uncertain world. This earth will no longer be called the vale of tears and the shadow of death, but will be a world filled with light and life, with happiness, and with song. Through the hearts of men there will thrill a new hope, on the faces of men there will shine the light of a new heaven and a new earth. The symbols of sorrow will be buried out of sight; the blood will no longer drip from the sacred gibbet, nor gods nor men will wear the perpetual crown of thorns. We will not approach the fullest destiny by the blood-tracked way of anguish and of pain, but with glad and blithesome feet. The old world may yet blossom with gladness, the future have no threat, no fear, and the face of destiny wear a smile.

(DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*The Truthseeker* (New York).

Acid Drops.

LONDON has lately lost one of its well-known figures—the man called John Day, who used to go about with the text “Prepare to meet thy God” round his hat. He was originally a gardener. He came to London to preach, but his *al fresco* discourses were not very successful, so he made himself a walking advertisement to the six million sinners of our mighty metropolis. When it came on to rain he used to put up his umbrella, which bore the same startling text as his hat. No doubt the poor fellow was actuated by a sense of duty. He thought people were in danger of hell, and he took trouble to let them know it. Still, it does seem odd that God’s children should need such a lot of preparation to meet their father. Family gatherings on earth are usually of a more cheerful character. But it seems to be different up above.

“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings” is the power of Christianity made manifest. Hence, we suppose, the fuss made over Jack Cooke, the “Boy Preacher.” There is a large portrait of him in Prophet Baxter’s *Christian Herald*. We hope it does him injustice; otherwise he is more an imbecile than a child of genius. There is very little forehead between his eyebrows and his hair. He looks a bit better in the three-quarter face portrait on the leaflet advertisement of his soul-saving crusade. According to this document, he “commenced public speaking at the remarkably early age of ten years”—a couple of years in front of Jesus Christ. The hero of the Gospels, however, kept quiet between twelve and thirty, presumably to give himself time to think. But the “Boy Preacher” didn’t want any time to think. He preferred something a good deal easier. He went on talking. And he is still at it. Whether he will “keep the boards” when the “boy” wears off is open to doubt. We daresay he will be a “boy” for a good many years yet.

We apologise for fathering this inspired youth upon America. He is an English lad, and hails from Manchester, where he made his “first public plea for Christ” one May evening in 1897 in the open air at the corner of Oxford-street and Grosvenor-street. The next year—he was then eleven, and must have wanted his mother—he did a soul-saving tour through the principal American cities. This accounts for our mistake in setting him down as a product of the land of the Stars and Stripes.

Jack Cooke saved a multitude of souls in Yankeeland. So his advertising agents say—and they ought to know. How he does the trick passes his own comprehension. He does not prepare his sermons, and some people say that is very evident. “He preaches,” we are told, “almost invariably without premeditation”—that is, without thinking. He just says the first thing that comes into his head, but it’s all right, for the Holy Ghost puts it there. Which things, as the Apostle says, are a mystery. “I don’t try to explain it,” Jack says; “the work is of God.” No doubt. Three cheers for the inspired juvenile! And another three cheers for the Christian crowds who swallow him! The whale’s performance with Jonah was nothing to theirs with the Boy Preacher.

Prophet Baxter assures an anxious Swansea correspondent that it is right “for a Christian who prospers to put by for a rainy day.” Not only is it right, but it *must* be right; otherwise, God help Prophet Baxter. He is well up in the “rainy day” arrangement.

An elderly Freethinker, whose income is only £1 per week, is besieged by gospel-shop beggars. He is favored with a Report of the Poor Parochial Clergy Society, and asked to give something towards increasing the incomes of men of God who are all better off than himself. Next comes a penny tract, written by the Rev. R. Middleton, of Norwich, entitled *What Do I Give? And Why?* This is on behalf of the South Africa General Mission. But why prolong the story? All these beggars want a bit of that elderly Freethinker’s pound a week. He only smiles. What *they* do is best left to imagination.

Reynolds’s is responsible for the statement that in St. Agnes Church, Bristol, there is a panel painting of the Lord’s Supper, with a football player in the foreground, and Lord Roberts kneeling in prayer, dressed in khaki, with spurs and revolver.

A Freethinker residing at Exmouth asks us to deny or confirm a story told to him by a Christian. During a debate with a reverend gentleman at Bristol, Mr. Foote acknowledged that Voltaire did die an awful death, seeing Jesus coming to him, etc. Such is the story. Of course it is an absolute fabrication. Perhaps the Christian gentleman who told it to our correspondent will kindly say who told it to *him*. Or was it his own invention?

Jehovah’s mark upon the Jews is not one that can be talked about freely in mixed company. Occasionally, however, we see something about it in the newspapers. An inquest has just been held concerning the death of Lipman Fisher, the son of a boot finisher, residing in Brady-street, Bethnal Green. The little fellow, ten days old, had succumbed under circumcision, having bled to death. The “mohel” who performed the operation admitted that there was “a religious reason” for not making the incision in the same way that a medical man would do it; and the Coroner remarked that “when a religious element entered into a case it was necessary to deal with it as carefully as possible.” Quite so. Religious prejudices must be respected—in order that the superstitionists of all denominations may keep each other in countenance. For our part, however, we seriously doubt if these pious operations on male infants should be tolerated in a civilised country. No doubt the Jews will maintain that they are sanitary, but everyone who has studied the matter deeply enough is perfectly aware that circumcision is merely a relic of savage blood sacrifice.

Freethought is not always hereditary. A granddaughter of Mr. G. J. Holyoake was recently married at St. Joseph’s Retreat, Highgate, a well-known Catholic establishment.

A correspondent sends us a copy of the *Banffshire Journal* containing a long review of *The Churchman’s Introduction to the Old Testament* by an Edinburgh minister, the Rev. Angus M. MacKay, rector of Holy Trinity Church. There is nothing new in this book, but it is an eye-opener north of the Tweed. Mr. MacKay allows that the stories of the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel were borrowed from Babylon. Of the Fall he says that it is “purely an allegory,” as much so as “any fable that Æsop wrote.” The prophecies of Daniel were written long after they were fulfilled, and the book of Jonah is a romance with a religious moral. And so on, and so on. All very true, and all set forth long ago in books by Canon Driver and others. But fancy these things published with approval in the country of John Knox! Stands Scotland where it did? Yes, it does; but the Bible doesn’t.

The *Athenæum* gives a column notice to the death of Dr. Andrew Davidson, Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages in New College, Edinburgh. After praising his character and attainments, our contemporary observes that he was, to a considerable extent, terrorised by Scotch orthodoxy. He displayed a “cautiousness which approached timidity,” having a dislike for “coming into conflict with popular opinion,” and a reluctance to “being made the subject of an ecclesiastical libel.” So he “took great care to express himself so as not to give offence,” and always “had to work under restraint.” And with what result? His works show thorough scholarship, and other good qualities, but “they are not what they would have been if he had been freed from ecclesiastical trammels.” What a satire on the Christian Church’s love of truth, especially in Scotland!

“Christian Science” is making great headway among “society” ladies in Potsdam. People with plenty of money and nothing to do, the idlers, the parasites of human society, generally catch on to the nonsense of the hour. They haven’t the brains for *real* Science, but *Christian Science* is quite another matter. Let us hope the Potsdam “society” ladies will not get into the toils of a “Horos” and a “Swami.”

Mrs. Sweet, wife of the Rev. Algernon Sidney Osmond Sweet, vicar of Fowling, near Newmarket, has obtained a separation order from her husband, with an allowance of £1 per week. The man of God seems to have circulated baseless tales of his wife’s unfaithfulness amongst his parishioners. He also turned her out of doors one night in winter. We understand that the Rev. Algernon Sidney Osmond Sweet still carries on the soul-saving business, and gets a living by showing other people the way to heaven.

Eli Hutton, a Bow milk dealer, who was fined at Worship-street police-court for adulteration, got into a dispute with Mr. Corser, the magistrate, as to when a day began and ended. According to the magistrate, a day runs from midnight to midnight; according to the milkman, it runs from midday to midday. This, he said, was borne out by the Bible, which said that “the evening and the morning were the first day.” “You are wrong,” said the magistrate. “Then we have been wrong since the world began,” said the milkman. And really, if the Bible is true, the milkman was right.

Three Northampton schoolboys have been birched (as if *that* would do them any good) for the crime of arson. The youngest is nine and the eldest thirteen. They set fire to a hayrick, and did £60 worth of damage. Their only object, they said, was to warm themselves. Many a grown-up man, unless history lies, has set a whole nation on fire for no better reason. So don’t laugh, or frown, too much at the boys.

In 1850 Mr. Charles Dickens founded a paper called *Household Words*. In the last sad days of January, 1902, Mr. Hall Caine, junr., is permitted to write in that journal, "if ever the head of mortal man had reason for being turned, I think it has been mine, during the past week." We recognize here the family style.—*The Outlook*.

The Bishop of London, at Convocation the other day, told a malicious story about the sobriety of the Jews. It was an omnibus story, and the long and the short of it was that "the Jews were too mean to get drunk"—the words being put into the mouth of a working man. This sort of thing is one of the penalties the Jews have to pay for co-operating in the Christian plan of salvation by crucifying Jesus.

The London *Daily Chronicle* referred to "Tom Paine the Atheist." A correspondent protested against this mixture of insult and falsehood. Whereupon the *D. C.* printed the following extraordinary apology: "It is perfectly true that his name was Thomas, and that he was not an Atheist. 'I believe in one God, and no more, and I hope for happiness beyond this life,' he wrote in the *Age of Reason*. The abbreviated Christian name, however, as well as the incorrect definition, have so stuck to the man that they serve as a description, and, we should say, hurt or deceive nobody." Was there ever a cooler piece of impudent villainy? Our contemporary says, in effect, that lies become respectable with age. Is that the reason of the success of Christianity?

We may observe that the phrase, "Tom Paine the Atheist," was intended to hurt and deceive. It was meant to injure the reputation of the great Freethinker, and to frighten people from reading the *Age of Reason*. This is one of the commonest tricks of orthodoxy. Lies were told with a similar object about the late Charles Bradlaugh. He has been dead eleven years, but some of them still enjoy vigorous health.

We have often had to refer to the obstacles to the circulation of the *Freethinker*. Some of these are created by sheer bigotry, and the following is a case in point. There was a poor man named H. J. Kelsey struggling to earn an honest livelihood as a news vendor at 19 Mare-street, Hackney. Amongst other papers he sold the *Freethinker*, and displayed it in his window. This displeased his landlord, the Rev. C. H. Clegg, of Swansea House, Ramsgate. That gentleman's agent nominally requested, but practically ordered, Mr. Kelsey to take the *Freethinker* out of his window, and cease to sell it. Being himself a sturdy Freethinker and Democrat, he declined to do anything of the kind, and called upon us for our advice. We counselled him to write direct to his landlord, and ask very politely for a complete list of the papers he wished not to have sold at 19 Mare-street. He did so, and that was enough—for the time. The man of God smelt a rat. He said he had perhaps exceeded his rights in the matter, and he would let it drop. Whereat, of course, Mr. Kelsey was delighted. He called and told us it was "all right." But he did not know the clerical nature. Parson Clegg had resolved to go another way to work. He allowed a little time to elapse, so that his attempt at coercion might blow over, and then he doubled Mr. Kelsey's rent. This had the desired effect. Mr. Kelsey could not pay twice the commercial value of his little shop, and he had to turn out. It was a pretty little trick on the landlord's part. "Oh," he could say afterwards, "I didn't turn the man out for selling the *Freethinker*; he had to go because he couldn't pay the rent."

The poor evicted newsagent got a stall and stood in the gutter outside his old shop. But he was not allowed to remain there peaceably. The Ramsgate man of God took care that applications were made for his removal. Of course the police were bound to tell him to "move on," but they knew the facts of the case and were not too peremptory. They just kept within the letter of the law.

Parson Clegg has defeated his own object as far as the *Freethinker* is concerned. Mr. Kelsey displays three of our contents-sheets on his stall, and his sale of this journal has increased from a few copies to a quire (twenty-seven copies) per week. But this is an accident. Mr. Kelsey happens to be a man of conviction, and stubborn withal. Ninety-nine newsagents out of every hundred would have caved in quietly.

We regret to add that Mr. Kelsey's daughter, who has minded his stall while he went round delivering papers, is ill; and this is a sad difficulty to a man in such a situation, and with no resources to fall back upon. Some of our friends in that locality might look him up and see if it is possible to render him any assistance. And if any reader of the *Freethinker* should be moved to send us a trifle for one who has made such a bold stand against clerical bigotry, we shall transmit it to him with the greatest pleasure. We only wish we were rich enough to play the whole game on our own bat. But it is pretty well known now that our resources are very limited.

Mr. Kelsey wrote to the Bishop of Stepney about his ill-

treatment by his clerical landlord. The Bishop regretted that he could not interfere, but he sent Mr. Kelsey a cheque for five guineas. From a public point of view, a protest addressed to the bigoted Rev. C. H. Clegg would have been more valuable. From a private point of view, however, the Bishop's action was sufficiently generous. We shall always remember it to his credit.

The romance of Jesus Christ's career depends a great deal upon his having lived (if he ever *did* live) some two thousand years ago. If his incarnation took place in the present age he would have to undergo a number of prosaic experiences. He would be vaccinated, for instance; unless his parents, under divine impulse, claimed exemption before the magistrates. This might give him a bad arm, or lockjaw, or some other interesting result of this medical quackery; and his case might figure in a multitude of the newspapers. In countries where the conscription obtains he would be enrolled in the army, and have to handle a rifle and learn shooting. This would be extremely awkward for the future preacher of the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus Christ took his turn on earth in time to escape all such troubles. But some of his followers are less fortunate. There is a French farm laborer named Grasselin who, four days after joining the army, refused to obey an order to open the breach of a gun. For five days his superiors urged, entreated, and threatened him. But it was all in vain. They brought him before a court-martial, where he was asked why he acted in that manner. "Jesus Christ," he replied, "said, 'Thou shalt not kill. Love one another.' I do not want to injure my neighbor." This was really too ridiculous. The Christian officers (most French officers are Christians now) laughed at the egregious simpleton. Fancy a fool of a soldier obeying Jesus Christ instead of his sergeant or captain! It was clearly a case of criminal insanity. So they gave the fellow two years' imprisonment.

Grasselin gave a very sensible reply to one question. He was asked what he would do if someone attacked him. "I would run away," he said. Well, if a Christian must never resist evil—and that is what Jesus Christ taught—it is better to run away from an aggressor than to stop and be licked. The court laughed at Grasselin, and perhaps thought him a coward; but he was only adding a little human common sense to the divine injunctions of his Savior.

No wonder that foreigners ask if English intellect is not decadent? Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster have circulated more than a hundred million copies of Spurgeon's sermons. And the sale is still immense.

Seriously, though, it would be well if Freethinkers would try to circulate their own literature a little more vigorously. We see by the *Daily News* that one enthusiastic admirer has paid for the advertising of Spurgeon's Sermons; while another, at an enormous cost, has had them inserted as advertisements in Australian newspapers. Something of this sort might be done by the wealthier Freethinkers with great advantage.

Colonel Ingersoll, who knew that the presumption is always in favor of liberty as an ingredient in moral improvement, used to say that the first great objection to Prohibition was that it did not prohibit. The same objection has been pointedly raised by Bishop Potter in addressing the New York Church Club. Wherever prohibition had triumphed, he said, it had educated a race of frauds and hypocrites. In prohibition States, like Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, certain "preparations" were more largely consumed than in other States. There was a sarsaparilla that contained seventeen per cent. of alcohol, and a brand of bitters that contained no less than sixty-one per cent. of alcohol, while there was only about ten per cent. in a good claret. Yet great multitudes of sworn prohibitionists were consumers of these compounds. Bishop Potter summed up Prohibition as "an impudent fraud and an impudent failure."

A few years ago there was a teetotal drink in great demand amongst Gospel Temperance people in the North of England. It attracted the attention of the Excise, and was found to contain about twice as much alcohol as bottled beer.

More "Providence." Hoglewood Parish Church, six miles from Derby, was burnt down last Saturday. "Providence" does not even look after the safety of its own buildings.

President Kruger says that God never abandons those who have faith in him. He forgets that both sides have faith in the same God. All this talk about God will have to be dropped if there is to be peace and a wise settlement in South Africa. Men who listen to God are too apt to be deaf to reason.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 9, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, W.: 7.30, "Mr. Thomas Hardy and the Poetry of Free-thought."

February 16 and 23, Athenæum Hall.

March 2, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 9, Camberwell; 16, South Shields; 23, Liverpool. April 6, Sheffield; 13, Bradford; 20, Glasgow.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 9, Liverpool; 13 and 14, Blackburn; 16, Bradford; 23, Birmingham. March 2, Athenæum Hall; 9, Aberdare, South Wales; 16, Pontypridd.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

ALERT.—Hardly up to the mark, from a literary point of view, for our "Independent Department." Besides, the Woman Question and the South African War ought not to be thrown together in one short letter.

F. M., after listening to the "Boy Preacher" in the Great Assembly Hall, in East London, says that his only remarkable characteristic is long-windedness. Perhaps he knows the Christians fairly well. "We talk about love," he said, "but there is no such thing in existence."

B. STANFORTH.—Mr. W. Chad Boscawen's letter to the *Daily News*, correcting the Rev. Dr. Horton, appeared some five or six days before the date of the *Freethinker* in which the extract was printed. We did not keep the number for future reference.

OBSERVER.—We should say that Max Nordau is an Atheist. He does not say so, perhaps, in express terms, but it is the legitimate inference from his writings. Thanks for the name of the mysterious "Secularist champion"—also for the cuttings.

T. CLARKE.—See "Acid Drops." Always glad to receive material for a paragraph.

R. FINCH.—Josh Billings is nobody in particular. Take away his imitation phonetic spelling, and what is left? We do not trouble ourselves about his views on "infidelity." The man who says that an "infidel" has no right to doubt the story of Noah's Flood until he knows why one apple is sweet and another sour, is—well, he is just fit to be an orthodox Christian.

E. PARKER.—We couldn't advertise Mr. Cohen's lecture at West Ham on February 5 in the *Freethinker* published on February 6, but we have given the course a general paragraph.

W. FREEMAN.—You will find a good account of "the starry Galileo" in Karl Von Gebler's *Galileo Galilei and the Roman Curia*, translated into English by Mrs. George Sturge. It is advertised in the Freethought Publishing Company's catalogue at three shillings (postage threepence), a great reduction on the original price.

THE FRANCIS NEALE FUND.—F. Deane, 5s.; E. Harvey, junr., 1s.; F. Wood, 2s. 6d.

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 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.

The human mind is weak. More than three-fourths of mankind are formed to be the slaves of the absurdest fanaticism. The fear of the devil and of hell is fascinating to them, and they detest the sage who wishes to enlighten them. The mass of our species is stupid and wicked. I look in vain among them for that image of God of which, the theologians assure us, they carry the imprint. Every man has a wild beast within him. Few know how to chain him; most men let loose the rein when the terror of the law does not restrain them.—*Frederick of Prussia, 1759.*

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE now occupies the Athenæum Hall platform for three successive Sundays. His subject this evening (Feb. 9) will be "Mr. Thomas Hardy and the Poetry of Free-thought." Mr. Hardy enjoys the distinction of being one of the two greatest writers of fiction now living in England—the other being, of course, Mr. George Meredith. Both are Free-thinkers, and both have written some remarkable poetry. Mr. Hardy's just published new collection of verse contains matter which a Free-thought lecturer, who is at all capable of dealing with it, ought not to let pass unnoticed. London Freethinkers are invited to come and hear this lecture of Mr. Foote's. They might also try to bring any of their friends who have heard of Mr. Hardy's genius and would like to hear more about it.

The cheerless weather thinned Mr. Foote's morning audience on Sunday at Birmingham; there was a marked improvement, however, in the afternoon, and the hall was crowded in the evening with a most enthusiastic assembly, who were evidently delighted with the lecture on "Good without God, and Happiness without Heaven." One very pleasant feature of the evening meeting was the presence of a considerable number of ladies. And they were not the least appreciative auditors. On the other side, some of the old faces were absent through the bitter weather. The veteran, J. H. Ridgway, and his wife were both kept within doors, but their daughter brought their best respects to Mr. Foote. Miss Baker also could not attend either meeting in consequence of having to nurse her mother, the aged widow of the late Mr. Daniel Baker. She also sent her good wishes.

The Birmingham Branch has had many difficulties to struggle against during the past few years, but it has always borne itself bravely, although the prospect has sometimes been very discouraging. Fortunately, there are some gallant workers on the committee who cannot be disheartened. They were quite beaming on Sunday evening.

Mr. Foote has been intending to write on behalf of the Free-thought Publishing Company on the subject of Mr. George Anderson's promised Shares. But he has been obliged to defer doing so until lecturing in London on Sunday gives him greater leisure for literary work. These dashes into the country—travelling on Saturday, undergoing the heavy strain of three lectures on Sunday, and travelling again on Monday—cut a big slice out of the week, besides being a tax on nervous energy. Mr. Foote is now in London for a month, and this matter (with others) will receive attention. What has to be said on the subject of the promised Shares will appear in next week's *Freethinker*.

The *Leicester Reasoner* for February celebrates the first anniversary of its birth. We wish it many years of bright usefulness. "So far as we know," the editor writes, "it is the only Free-thought Parish Magazine in the world. It represents a Society, a Hall, and a Cause; and its office is to build up the Secular Society, to criticise local expressions of theology, to encourage municipal and social progress, and to aid in making education more ethical and rational. Financially, the *Reasoner* is a pronounced and triumphant failure. We call the failure triumphant, because we have had a high aim, and we could not expect a high aim and popularity to go together."

South London Freethinkers are invited to lend a hand at the Secular Hall, Camberwell; particularly to swell the size of the Sunday evening audiences. Mr. Charles Watts lectures there this evening (Feb. 9) on "Is Immortality a Fact?"

Mr. Victor Roger calls in just as we are going to press, and, finding that no official notice has been sent in by the Camberwell Branch, asks us to draw attention again to the Conference already announced for Sunday evening, February 16, in the Secular Hall. This is all we can do in the circumstances. Details will probably reach us for next week's *Freethinker*.

Mr. Cohen delivers three lectures to-day (Feb. 9) in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool, for the local N. S. S. Branch. We hope to hear of good meetings on this occasion.

Freethinkers in the district are asked to attend a meeting this evening (Feb. 9) at 6 o'clock at the City Restaurant, Pontypridd. Arrangements will then be made for Mr. Cohen's approaching visit.

The East London Branch, at its annual meeting on Sunday, elected Mr. F. Malmsjo, 719 Commercial-road, Limehouse, as its new secretary. This Branch is of opinion that the Walthamstow district should be opened up for Secular propaganda. Freethinkers living there who are willing to

co-operate are requested to communicate with Mr. D. Frankel, 25 Osborne-street, Whitechapel.

The West Ham Branch has organised a course of four indoor lectures on successive Wednesday evenings in the Workmen's Hall, West Ham Lane, Stratford, beginning with February 5. Mr. Cohen opens and closes the course. The intermediate lecturers are Messrs. Davies and Ramsey.

Mr. H. Fielding, the author of that remarkable book on the Burmese, entitled *The Soul of a People*, and since the author of a notable book entitled *The Hearts of Men*, writing to the *Academy* from Burmah, under date of December 31, says that he has been abused by several orthodox critics, though none have tried to answer him. "As against them," however, he says, "I have to set such generous appreciation as I have received from you, and from many other papers—an appreciation that affects me as mere disagreement could not do. And there are the multitude of my correspondents who write to thank me, not that I have said anything new, but because I have expressed clearly in words what they have long been thinking. That my views were no single views I knew before; how very widely-spread they are I know only now. Underneath the arrogant authority of the Churches has been growing a thought that is free, that is religious, but never narrow; that is intense, but not fanatic. But the scientific theologians do not see; they are, as ever, the last to know. When their creeds are tumbling about their ears will they realise. But even then they will not understand."

Mr. Francis Neale is not able to foresee when he will be able to leave the Infirmary, but he bears up with wonderful fortitude in the circumstances, and takes a hopeful view of the situation. What he longs for most is natural human society. Mrs. Neale is slowly improving, but a considerable time must elapse before she could undertake any share in the nursing of her husband. We still commend the Francis Neale Fund to the best attention of our friends.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C., on Thursday, January 30; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. E. Bater, J. Cooper, C. Cohen, W. Heaford, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, E. Parker, E. W. Quay, C. Quinton, S. Samuels, T. Thurlow, C. Watts, and the Secretary.

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

Mr. Anderson's reply to the Secretary's communication* *re* the charges made by that gentleman against the N. S. S. was read to the meeting, and it was decided to pass to the next business.

A letter was read from Mr. G. J. Warren regretting his inability to attend our meetings in consequence of the increase of his work on the Board of Guardians of his locality, and the President was asked to write him expressing the regret of his colleagues at the temporary loss of his services.

A letter was read from the Secretary of the International Federation of Freethought Societies in Brussels, and further discussion was adjourned until next meeting.

Nine new members were admitted to the Society, five for the West London Branch and four for the parent Society.

The Secretary was instructed to send the usual notices to Branches, asking those who desired to invite the Conference to communicate.

A long discussion then took place on the Sub-Committee's report, adjourned at last meeting. Finally the following resolution was moved by Mr. Moss and seconded by Mr. Watts: "That the report of the Sub-Committee be accepted as a basis of future membership of the N. S. S., and that a complete draft be presented at next meeting."

Mr. Heaford moved, and Mr. Quinton seconded, as an amendment: "That it be presented at a special meeting." On this being put to the meeting it was lost, and the resolution carried.

The meeting then closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

Whoever dares to say, "God has spoken to me," is criminal before God and men; for God, the common father of all, would he have communicated himself to an individual? God to walk! God to talk! God to write upon a little mountain! God to become man! God man to die upon the Cross! Ideas worthy of Punch! To invent all those things, the last degree of rascality! To believe them, the extreme of brutal stupidity!—*Voltaire*.

* The communication here referred to was printed in the *Freethinker* for January 19.

The Infallibility Swindle.

A Letter by Joseph Symes, Editor of the "Liberator," to Dr. Carr, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne.

SIR,—As I am writing in January, to show that I feel no personal animosity towards you, I wish you A Happy New Year. At the same time, I must say, and that solemnly, I wish you would repent and do as the jugglers and impostors at Ephesus are said to have done (Acts xix. 19); only I would not have you burn your books as they did, for even such books as yours have their value. They will show to future generations the lowest tide-mark ever reached by what we must call human intelligence, and also the highest tide-mark ever reached by sheer imposture and mental and moral tyranny. The history of your party is that of a curious phase of human life—much too important to be lost or forgotten. Instead of wishing you to burn your books, I heartily wish your records were more complete. I should like to see you repent and become an honest man, devoting your life to honest work; but I would not have you act foolishly and destroy any scrap of the records or the details of the long-continued crime in which you have taken so prominent a part.

I have wished you A Happy New Year. In order to secure that boon, you must drop your imposture and become an honest man. You must at some stages of life have felt sick of the imposture you represent and practise; but you have no idea of the genuine happiness an honest man feels when he drops superstition and imposture and devotes his life to the enlightenment and emancipation of his fellow men. *Crede experto*. I was once partly in the run with you; I had been imposed upon in early life; I believed Christianity to be true; I preached it earnestly and sincerely until I found out its falsehood. Then I ceased to preach it. After years of incubation I developed into an Atheist, and devoted my life to the exposure of the Christian superstition and tyranny. If you would do likewise, you would feel surprised to find how happy a man can be while he is slandered, persecuted, ostracised, and boycotted all round, and for a lifetime too. You would not believe it. Try it, and learn for yourself.

There is but one ground of doubt I feel in respect to your case. Imposture, like other vices and habits, at length becomes the master and the tyrant of its devotee to such an extent that he could not probably be happy without it. Your race of imposition and pious lying has been so long-continued and so thorough that, like the perfect toper, you must follow your old and accustomed course or be wretched. I do not say positively that such would be the case, but I presume it to be probable.

Just fancy yourself in the pulpit telling the people in all sincerity that you know nothing about Christ or Peter or the apostles; nothing whatsoever of heaven, hell, or purgatory; that you do not know how popery began, or where; that you cannot trace any connection between yourself and a Peter who is alleged to have been in Rome in the first century of this era; that you have no reason in the world to believe that transubstantiation is true; that, in fact, you know it to be an impudent lie; that you know the pope or the popes were never infallible—fancy yourself in the pulpit, I say, uttering these wholesome truths! You would require a world of moral courage to perform such a task. And yet it is the only honest course open to you.

You may stand in the pulpit or at the altar and declare your belief in the clear falsehoods and tricks of your trade, but you cannot in private look yourself square in the eyes in a good mirror, in a good light, and say with a clear conscience: "I believe on good grounds that Peter founded the Church to which I belong; I believe that I am in the direct line of spiritual descent from him; I believe that Mary is all we pretend that she is; I believe the popes ever to have been infallible in doctrine and in moral teaching; I believe in the literal truth of transubstantiation; I believe in the power of the priest to release souls from purgatory, etc."

I feel confident you cannot do that; and my reason is this: If you honestly believe the leading dogmas of your sect, you have learning enough to enable you to furnish some rational and historic grounds for that

belief. You have never performed that task; you seem in no haste to do so. You can reply to Dr. Goe and other critics who are afraid to do more than skirmish with you; but to afford historic basis for your pretences or rational grounds for your belief is as far beyond your ability as it is to work a miracle. The best that can be said is that to bolster up your pretensions and claims you resort to wholesale suppression of truth, wholesale perversion of facts, wholesale thimble-rigging, and wholesale lying.

No doubt the temptations are great. You occupy a good position, wear a proud title, are the recipient of much respect and flattery; you get a large income and never publish a balance-sheet; your business flourishes even in the most depressed times; thousands of people, not otherwise insane, credit you to the full with the impossible powers, qualities, etc., which you so impudently claim, and the said people would feel very wretched if you were to be candid with them and told them the unvarnished truth. Even people who don't agree with you, and who sneer or laugh at your imposture as the most remarkable sham ever known, would probably call you a fool for dropping so lucrative and respectable a trade.

Yes, the temptation is great, I admit, which you would have to struggle against if you resolved to reform; and probably we have no right to expect a man to be honest in such circumstances, especially a man who occupies one of the highest posts in a long firm whose very existence rests upon fraud, forgery, and other species of lying and cheating.

Some people may fancy this is abuse; but history and truth justify, and more than justify, the course I am pursuing. I am no more guilty of abuse than a judge is who denounces a proved crime, than an honest preacher or moralist who thunders against vice and criminality, than a satirist who lashes the follies and the wickedness of mankind. And your own conscience, if not asleep, comatized, or dead, must testify in my favor.

I will wind up this letter with the story of Pope Honorius I.

You say you are infallible; that your popes have never erred in doctrine; that not one of them ever strayed into heresy. To admit that any one of them was a heretic would, of course, be equivalent to confessing that your Church was merely one among the rest, with no better claims than others.

I must explain. For many ages, it seems, Christians did not trouble themselves much to know whether Christ had two wills, or only one. But in the seventh century this question arose, and led to hot dispute, of course, as all theological conundrums have done. There arose a division in the one and only Church; those who held Christ to have two wills being regarded as orthodox—one cannot say why, except it was that the greatest puzzle and impossibility was preferred to plain common sense. However, the One-willers, or Monothelites, were dubbed heretics. Led away by their common sense, Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Cyrus, Patriarch of Alexandria, two of the most important personages in the Church, held this so-called heresy. Sophronius, a monk of Alexandria, opposed his patriarch, and the question, as usual, had to be settled by vote, and less reputable means. Settled! I refer, of course, to a Popish settlement of disputed points, which always means gagging opponents where that is possible.

Well, Honorius I. was Pope of Rome at the time this One-will heresy came to a head; and he, good man, not knowing his own infallibility, and not having faith enough to swallow the impossible double will in one person or fiction, adopted the heresy, and openly committed himself to it.

Of course, your writers have done their best to hide, extenuate, and deny the heresy of Pope Honorius; but they might as well have denied that he ever was pope. If you had had half as good evidence of Peter's being at Rome and the first Bishop of Rome as you have of Honorius's heresy, there would be no holding you.

Speaking of the third Council of Constantinople, or sixth General Council, in 680 A.D., Du Pin says:—

"In the seventeenth meeting, held 16th September, 781, at which the emperor assisted, they published a decisionimporting that there are two natural wills, and two

operations, in Jesus Christ.....This decision was approved by all the bishops of the Council, who pronounced an anathema against all the old and new heretics, and in particular against Honorius, who is always reckoned amongst the Monothelite patriarchs, and comprised in the same condemnation.....There is no doubt that Honorius was condemned in this Council. The Acts of the Council prove it, and there is no appearance of their having been falsified, as Baronius pretended, without any foundation. The Council acknowledged the condemnation of that pope in their letter; the emperor declares it in his edict; Leo II., Agathon's successor, says it in three letters; the whole Roman Church declared it in the forms of the oaths which they made the popes take, from the holding of this Council; and the two following General Councils make mention of the condemnation of Honorius.

"The only question that can be made about the condemnation is whether he was condemned as a heretic or only as a favorer of heresy. He is put in the same rank by this Council with Sergius, Pyrrhus, and Paul, who were evidently condemned as heretics; and he is included in the same anathema—namely, as having taught the same impieties and the same errors. In the thirteenth Act of the Council his letter to Sergius is condemned as contrary to apostolic doctrine, and in the fourteenth Act his second letter is declared to be conformable to the errors of the Monothelites; in short, he is not only condemned by the Council as a favorer of heresy, but as having fully consented to the tenets of heretics, and as having approved them by his letters. The Church of Rome has, in the oaths of the popes and in her ancient Breviary, placed him in the number of heretics."

A little later, Du Pin adds, speaking of the other heretics condemned, "the Council had reason to put him in the same rank, and it is in vain to go about to excuse him from having maintained that error."

There, Sir, is one proof of the infallibility of your popes, your line of popes. I do not quote a Protestant author, but one of your own. True, you don't like Du Pin; but his sole fault in Popish esteem is his honesty. You dislike him as any other criminals dislike an honest witness who appears against them in court, and for no other reason.

There are plenty of witnesses against you in this case. And we have as good evidence that Honorius was a heretic as we have that the above Council ever met, or that the rest who were condemned were heretics.

And here let me mention a most horrible thought—you have no good reason to doubt that you owe your ordination, consecration, and the rest of the mummery that made you what you are to Honorius the heretic. Much better, Sir, to have owed it to Judas Iscariot than to a heretic.

What a joke it all is, isn't it?

The world has seen wonderful things, but never anything to equal the impudence of your infallibility sham.

The Parson.

THE foolish farce which heralds every week
The temple's tenant must perform with zeal,
And of that Book of Words with reverence speak
Which sin-sick souls can heal.

He gives the wasted body creed for food,
And tells him who the over-load must bear
That God reserved for his especial good
Of ills a greater share.

He pats the fawning poor, ignoring him,
The shy, out-moded man men thrust aside;
For pride-with-penury the end is grim,
But, still—our Savior died!

The worship of the mystic Three in One
Has him from nobler reverence oft beguiled;
Man's Trinity, on which shines Reason's sun,
Is Home and Wife and Child.

Preaching's his trade, and bread we all must win;
But better be yon laborer, breaking stone,
Who never prates about his brother's sin,
And deems his "soul" his own.

JOHN YOUNG.

When the late Li Hung Chang visited Germany a few years ago, the Kaiser asked him: "How do our women compare with those of China?" "I really cannot tell," said Li slyly, fastening his eyes on the corsage of a lady who was present; "we never see half as much of our women as you do of yours."—*Argonaut*.

INDEPENDENT DEPARTMENT.

[With a view to broadening the scope of the *Freethinker*, and thus to widen its interest for its readers, we have decided to open an Independent Department, in which other questions may be treated than those that come within the settled policy of this journal. Such questions—especially political ones—may be of the highest importance, and yet questions on which Freethinkers may legitimately differ, and on which they ought not (as Freethinkers) to divide. Our responsibility, therefore, in this Department only extends to the writers' fitness to be heard. Freethinkers may thus find in their own organ a common ground for the exchange of views and opinions; in short, for the friendly enjoyment of intellectual hospitality. Writers may be as vigorous and uncompromising as they please, as long as they are courteous and tolerant.—EDITOR.]

Modern Slavery.

WE are not of those who praise "the good old times." On the contrary, we are convinced that their restoration would disgust their warmest admirers. Modern society is immensely better than the ancient, and every generation sees an improvement in the general condition of the people. We are better situated in almost every respect than our forefathers; better fed, better clothed, better housed, better educated, and better governed. And although, in some aspects of civilisation, we must acknowledge our inferiority to the elder world, it is certain that we far excel it in many others; especially in those which involve the welfare of the masses of the people. The people, indeed, can scarcely be said to have existed, in any real sense of the word, until recent times. The ancient civilisations were based on slavery; a few privileged persons enjoyed luxury, power, and fame, and all the rest were miserable, servile, and obscure. They were as much the property of their masters as the horses, sheep, and cattle. During the feudal period, which followed the fall of Rome, slavery continued to flourish; and we can easily trace its decline as towns arose and merchants and artisans laid the basis of a new state. We have seen the death of European slavery in our own age. The emancipation of the Russian serfs was the final act of dissolution.

Yes, slavery is for ever abolished. Man has no longer any property in man. The fetters have been struck off and flung away. All are amenable to the same law, and the humblest as well as the proudest is a citizen, with a right of property and liberty, a name and a home. He has an inviolable domestic sanctuary, freedom to labor for its maintenance, and in most countries a still larger freedom to participate in the national life of his native land.

All this is true, and yet we still retain many traces of the old evil. There is a modern slavery which is less hateful than its predecessor, but no less real, deriving its force from invidious law and inherited custom.

Look at our own country. The feudal lord no longer holds us as his serfs, but he still maintains his clutch on the land. The rich man cannot lash his slaves to their appointed tasks, but capital is in the hands of a few, who wield the whip of hunger over their laboring tribes. The meanest citizen may aspire to a lofty position, but privilege is still enthroned in the highest position in the state, and the hereditary principle which sustains it is embodied in a legislative chamber of peers. The rights of citizenship are extended to all, yet millions are outside the pale of the constitution, and taxed and ruled without their consent. Opinion is free, yet we still have a State Church, and laws on our statute-book against all heresy and schism.

Clearly, then, we are far from perfect liberty. Status, as the jurisprudents would say, lingers in our forms of contract. We have quelled the disease, but the virus has not been totally driven from the blood. Now, in so far as a man is not absolutely free, he is a slave; and it will be just to speak of modern slavery until the ideal of human liberty is attained to; until, in fact, we have fully realised the spirit of Walt Whitman's magnanimous exclamation: "I will have nothing that every other man may not have on the same terms."

There must be a large measure of slavery in England while its soil is monopolised and the monopoly is protected by law. Such a system virtually disinherits the people from their natural patrimony. The land of every country is the gift of nature to its inhabitants. It is

theirs by an older and a stronger right than is afforded by any parchment title-deeds. Their very life absolutely depends on it, and no greater insolence of selfhood was ever displayed than the claim of a class to its possession. Did the aristocracy of England create its soil? If they did, we must humbly sue to them for the use of it. But they did not. Its fields were green with grass and yellow with corn, cattle fed on its rich pastures, and sheep dotted its hillsides, millenniums before they were born; and even when the first sod was turned by the hand of man it was infinitely older than its cultivator. No, the land is the gift of nature to all her children, and should be no more an object of individual greed than the water we drink or the air we breathe. This primary economic truth is gradually being recognised, and we are beginning to see the complete meaning of Mill's dictum that "when the tenure of land is inexpedient it is unjust."

Practically our present system is fraught with evil. The people are landless, and therefore imprudent; for, say what we will of the "narrowness" of the rural population across the Channel, it is indubitable that the renovating power of France, which has enabled her to recover so rapidly from crushing disasters, lies in the industry and thrift of her peasants. On the other hand, it is admitted that our soil does not yield one-half of its legitimate produce. Our land laws not only fence round big estates, but keep out improved cultivation; and the result is that the necessaries of life are artificially restricted, and made dearer for every man, woman, and child. Professor Caird reckoned that English agriculture requires the immediate investment of at least four hundred millions of capital. Is it not a soothing reflection that double that sum has been wasted in propping up oriental despotisms and rotten South American republics?

Economists have long been agreed as to the material disadvantages of our land system, but its moral evil has not excited so much attention. Yet it is precisely this that should now be brought into light. While a little over two thousand individuals hold more than half the soil of the United Kingdom, and enjoy feudal rights without bearing feudal responsibilities; while vast tracts of land can be forcibly depopulated to make room for deer; while great nobles, like the Marquis of Salisbury, can stand for years in the way of city improvements, required by decency as well as by traffic; while, as in the cases of Cardiff and Huddersfield, wide-owning landlords can absolutely prevent every form of opinion they dislike from obtaining premises for its organisation; while our landless tillers of the land work for a bare pittance, without security of employment, and without any hope in life, save that charity or fortune may rescue them from death in the workhouse and a pauper's grave; it is idle to boast of our glorious liberty, or to talk as though we had already won the last battle of national freedom. The very claim of landlordism to step between the people and their means of life, to demand a first lien on the produce of the soil, and to be enriched by the industry of others, is entirely incompatible with liberty, and cannot be conceded without despotism on the one side and slavery on the other.

Although our land tyranny is far worse than that of any European State, there is little difference with respect to the tyranny of capital. We do not mean to echo the foolish rant of some Continental Socialists, who are always denouncing the capitalists as such, nor do we desire to enter into an examination of the moral duties which Mr. Ruskin charges them with neglecting. We simply mean to say that there *is* a tyranny of capital and a slavery of labor. In the first place, capital has had the lion's share of law-making, and has usually guarded its own selfish interests without reference to any principle of honor or justice; and it is only recently that labor has obtained a semblance of fair play. In the next place, capital has a singular knack of fomenting wars of conquest. The independence of weak States is treated as nothing but a fond sentiment when it threatens insecurity to old investments, or stands in the way of new ones, or in any way hinders trade. Capital has control over nearly all the chief journals in Europe. Even in America, where there is so much freedom and enlightenment, great capitalists are able to make the press sing almost any tune they please.

The mischief is greatly increased by the practice of anonymous journalism. The commercial management of a paper decides its policy, and if one journalist is unwilling to play the puppet there is always another ready for the work. It would be far more difficult for capital to "rig" the press if journalists signed their articles and addressed themselves directly to the public instead of merging their identity in the multifold utterances of an irresponsible oracle.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

THE PUZZLE OF THE INFINITE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In my last letter the compositor spoiled one of my statements by inserting the wrong kind of cross between the fractions. He thus put signs for multiplication where I had placed signs for addition. In another case the dot over a 9 was omitted. I suppose, however, that the intelligent reader would perceive that these were merely printer's blunders.

In reply to last week's letter from "Head Master," I may say that I am glad to hear that most arithmetical text-books are on my side. I cannot agree that the proofs they give are "arrant nonsense." I do not think that Colenso, for instance, is guilty of "arrant nonsense" when he shows that $\frac{1}{9} = .1111$ etc., that $\frac{2}{9} = .2222$ etc., and that similarly $\frac{9}{9} = .9999$ etc.

Colenso says, "Of course $.9 = \frac{9}{10} = 1$." I see no reason why ten times $.9999$ etc., should be an impossibility as an arithmetical result obtained by an arithmetical operation. Removing the decimal point one place to the right is a legitimate and recognised method of multiplying by ten. This follows from the very principle on which our whole system of notation and numeration is founded. Neither can I see why a circulating decimal cannot be subtracted from itself with the result that nothing remains. I affirm that the results of such operations are far from being "worthless," since they prove absolutely accurate and absolutely trustworthy when tested by other mathematical operations or by practical methods.

That in mathematics our symbols must represent real existences or possibilities in the world of number is a doctrine that requires consideration, especially when one thinks of surds and the ideal character of various mathematical conceptions. In any case the objection of unreality does not apply to the instance I gave last week. The diminishing distances between Achilles and the tortoise, and their actual summing-up at the catching-point, are neither mythical impossibilities nor operations requiring "all eternity" for their completion. Zeno's conception, I may note, was not of "infinite space" between Achilles and the tortoise, as "Head Master" puts it, but of *infinitely divisible* space, which is a different conception.

W. P. BALL.

THE PUZZLE OF THE INFINITE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondents have not yet made quite clear where the fallacy of the Achilles and tortoise race comes in. May I point it out?

Say that Achilles is a Sheffield handicap sprinter, who can do his 100 yards in ten seconds. Say the tortoise can go one yard per second and has 100 yards start.

Then in 10 seconds A has covered the start and the tortoise has gone 10 yards.

In 1 second A covers this 10 yards and the tortoise goes 1 yard.

In $\frac{1}{2}$ second A covers this 1 yard and the tortoise goes $\frac{1}{2}$ yard.

In $\frac{1}{4}$ second A covers this $\frac{1}{2}$ yard and the tortoise goes $\frac{1}{4}$ yard.

And so on.

Now 10 seconds, 1 second, $\frac{1}{2}$ second, $\frac{1}{4}$ second + etc. form a series of steadily diminishing quantities, which can never become 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ seconds. That is, A can never overtake the tortoise—at any time under 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ seconds.

It is the suppression of the condition—"at any time under the point of time at which A does overtake the tortoise," that allows the fallacy to creep in. Put in this condition, and the statement becomes true.

Both of your correspondents, Mr. Ball and "Head Master," have left the real source of the fallacy untouched to enter into a disquisition on whether $.9$ can equal *one*. Perhaps here again another head may help to clear up the difficulty.

$.9$, as "Head Master" says, can never equal *one*. Well, what of that? It can be made to approach to *one* so closely that the difference in practical arithmetic is negligible.

Mr. Ball's proof depends on the fact that the difference is

so small as to be negligible, and he could avoid criticism by simply saying that $.9$ approximates to *one*, or that *one* is the limit to which for ever $.9$ approaches.

An illustration will help to clear the matter further. A man, being troubled by his son for pocket-money, says that, on condition of not being bothered for 2s. 6d. to-day, 1s. the next day, and so on, he will arrange with his banker to give the son £1 now, and whenever the son likes to go he will always get half of what he got the time before. The son gladly assents, and draws £1, 10s., 5s., 2s. 6d., etc. But let him live to the age of Methusaleh, he will never get £2; for the very law by which he approaches £2 makes his reaching it impossible, since he always gets just half as much as he is short of £2.

This series is $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} + \dots$ *ad inf.*, whose limit is 2. "If a man," said my tutor, when I once worried him over this very point, "owed me a bill for £1,000,000 os. 0 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and he came to pay the bill, and tendered a cheque for £1,000,000, and offered the halfpenny, I should say, 'Damn the halfpenny.'" Well, that is what happens to the difference between $.9$ and unity.

MATHEMATICUS.

William Blake.

"Alas, my poor mother-tongue!"—"SIRIUS."

It is not my sole object in life to prove that William Blake was insane. My original reference to Blake's madness, entirely a casual one, was contained in less than half a sentence. This was met by a flat contradiction by "Sirius," and I thereupon briefly set forth the evidence for Blake's insanity, not omitting to mention and quote the authorities who favored his sanity.

"Sirius" returns again and again to the discussion, but I can hardly be expected for ever to reply to his reiterated arguments. But there is one point I should like to make clear in this my final contribution to the subject. "Sirius" speaks of Blake being "wounded in the house of his friends," and says that he cannot resist a feeling of repugnance whenever he hears this charge (of madness) brought against those who escaped it in life. What does "Sirius" suppose is the use of posthumous criticism if nothing is to be investigated beyond what was generally accepted during the subject's lifetime? Blake, as a young man, wrote some of the finest poetry in the English language. As an old man, he composed some of the most drivelling nonsense ever put on paper. Unless we resort to the hypothesis of insanity, we must do Blake's memory the insult of supposing that the Titanic mind which produced that glorious poetry could find in old age nothing better to pen than those incoherent ravings, painful to read, and impossible to understand.

"Sirius" genially supposes that madness is a crime. It is as much a crime as is the possession of a sluggish liver. And, just as the knowledge that a writer became insane is a key to the understanding of work otherwise inexplicable, so the knowledge that Carlyle was a dyspeptic helps us to understand the omnipresent pessimism which disfigured the life-work of the Chelsea sage, and transformed his domestic hearth into an Inferno. "Sirius" has one other misapprehension, which may as well be dissipated. I did not quote Blake's mad song as a proof of his insanity, although it is not an unknown thing in literature for madmen to give a literary expression of their own madness. This may be well illustrated by the following poem, written by John Clare whilst in a lunatic asylum:—

I am! yet what I am who cares, or knows?
My friends forsake me like a memory lost.
I am the self-consumer of my woes;
They rise and vanish, an oblivious host,
Shadows of life, whose very soul is lost,
And yet I am—I live—though I am tossed
Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dream,
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
But the huge shipwreck of my own esteem
And all that's dear. Even those I love the best
Are strange—nay, they are stranger than the rest.

When "Sirius" has rehabilitated Blake, it would be a fitting pastime for him to prove the sanity of the mad writer of the above beautiful lyric.

MIMNERMUS.

Thieves entered a Chinese laundry in New York, and left no loot, going so far as to take the copper bottoms from the wash boilers. The missionaries in China could not have done a slicker job.—*Troy Press*.

Cassidy: "Why don't ye ate yer dinner?" Casey: "Shure this is Froiday, an' Oi'm wonderin'." Cassidy: "What are ye wonderin'?" Casey: "Is turtle soup fish whin it's made out o' veal?"—*Philadelphia Press*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

LONDON.

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Mr. Thomas Hardy and the Poetry of Free-thought."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7, C. Watts, "Is Immortality a Fact?"

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney): 7, Debate between W. J. Chivers and E. White, "Would Atheism, if Practised, Demoralise the Masses?"

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road): 7 Stanton Coit, "John Wesley and the Ethical Movement."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Aymer Maude, "Tolstoi."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Harrold Johnson, B.A., "Ethics in Art."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, West Ham-lane, Stratford, E.): February 12, at 8, F. A. Davies, "The Myth of Jesus."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (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.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, A lecture.

CHAPELHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Mr. McCabe, "Roman Catholicism as a Religion and a Polity."

HULL (No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, A lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): C. Cohen—11, "Freethought: Past, Present, and Future"; 3, "The Passing of the Gods"; 7, "The Necessity of Atheism." Tea on the premises.

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, Mr. Harry Simpson, "Cremation." Illustrated by lantern views.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): G. Berrisford, "Materialism versus Theology."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Business meeting, lecture, etc.

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