

# Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*I will have no man addict himself to me; but if I have anything right, defend it as Truth's, not mine, save as it conduceth to a common good. It profits not me to have any man fence or fight for me, to flourish, or take my side. Stand for Truth, and 'tis enough.*—BEN JONSON.

## The King's Dinner.

KING EDWARD is being made use of at the present time by the London doctors. These gentlemen want to stave off public control from the hospitals, just as the clergy want to stave off public control from the "Voluntary" schools. Consequently it is to their interest to gather in a large financial harvest as quickly as possible. By so doing they postpone the necessity for direct public support from the rates or taxes. King Edward is therefore called upon to rake in the shekels in the name of philanthropy, and it must be admitted that he is eclipsing the fondest anticipations. The Royal Fund, as an aid to the annual begging, is likely to give another ten years' lease of life to doctorcraft in our Palaces of Pain.

Let no one say that we wish to run down the medical profession. We honor it as far as it honors itself. We like it to be straightforward and honest. When it schemes and plays the hypocrite, we see little difference between doctors and priests. It must be allowed that doctors press the claims of Vaccination (for instance) in much the same way that priests press the claims of Baptism. In both cases there is money in it—to say nothing of a professional introduction. A few days ago the Marylebone Board of Guardians had to face the fact that the Public Vaccinator's Bill for the quarter ending March 25 amounted to £2,249. It should also be borne in mind that the small-pox scare was worked for all it was worth until the Coronation loomed within measurable distance. Then it was quietly dropped. Nobody hears anything of it now. But we dare say it will be revived in July.

Just in the same way as King Edward is playing the game of the doctors, so he is going to play the game of the crowd of philanthropists who darken the problem of poverty in London. We do not wish to depreciate the King's generous intention in providing a Coronation dinner for half a million poor people. It is something that he thinks of the destitute in the midst of his plenty. But it is very certain that the money—some £30,000—could be more profitably invested. A dinner is eaten, digested, and assimilated; and when the force it gives is expended it disappears for ever. What advantage has been gained if there is no dinner on the morrow? If a man has to die of hunger he may as well die one day as the next. Evidently, then, the King's Dinner—however well meant—is like a dab of ointment on a running ulcer, springing from a chronic corruption of the blood. What is wanted is the prevention of poverty—in the sense of destitution of the necessaries and decencies of life. Giving dinners will

not promote that object. On the contrary, the very fact that one person is able to pay for *thirty thousand* dinners, while another person is unable to pay for *one*, is in itself a sufficient proof that our civilisation rests upon an absurd and precarious basis. Luxury at one extreme balances poverty at the other. The too-much involves the too-little. The pride of the prince is the other side of the wretchedness of the pauper.

Fancy half a million people in the richest city in the world, the capital of the greatest empire on earth, to whom a dinner is an event! Something to be looked forward to, schemed for, and almost fought for. What a satire on our boasted civilisation! What a scandal to Christianity! Was it to this end that Christ brought salvation? After nearly two thousand years of the gospel of redemption the world is still so unredeemed! Myriads who have the "bread of life" offered to them by rich soul-saving societies look around in despair for a crust to appease their bodily hunger; and little children cry for food, though "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

But if a dinner is an event to half a million people in one city, how many more are there to whom a dinner is an uncertainty? And what kind of civilisation is it when the cravings of animal appetite bar the road to intellectual and moral progress?

For all the homilies of social science, however, the King's Dinner will be eaten by ravenous thousands. Well-fed people are interesting themselves in the matter. Some of them have the ethical and religious interests of the King's Dinner-eaters so much at heart that they insist on the meal being a dry one. No drinks, not even a mug of small beer. And this in the name of Jesus Christ, who turned seventy-five gallons of water into wine to keep a spree going! Was there ever greater hypocrisy? Surely, in the case of these poor wretches, the square meal of a lifetime might be washed down with something palatable. Surely, in their case, the Bible text might be quoted, "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."

It is a pity, for their own sake, that the clergy did not squash the proposal of a Coronation Dinner. It was a grave mistake, from their own point of view, to emphasise the contrasting luxury and poverty of London. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the poor will feel grateful. They will feel nothing of the kind. They know very well that there is "something rotten in the state of Denmark," though they don't exactly know how to set it right, and dread jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire.

Christianity has no message for the poor except that of kingdom-come. It contemplates the perpetual existence of poverty. "The poor ye have always with you." Its gospel is not justice but charity. Yet the only true *public* charity is justice. *Private* charity there may well be over and beyond justice. But the one is no substitute for the other.

It is the boast of the New Testament that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them." This is all they can ever expect from Christianity. "Blessed be ye poor," said Jesus Christ, "for yours is the kingdom of heaven." A poor kingdom! like Sancho Panza's governorship of that imaginary island. It is the kingdom of earth that really matters. The wealthy and privileged classes keep it to themselves, and they pay a lot of tragi-comic fellows in black to preach the kingdom of heaven to the disinherited masses. This is the moral of the King's Dinner.

G. W. FOOTE.

## A Fearful Example.

THE dying unbeliever, groaning in agony, shrieking out curses on his past career, and calling aloud on God to have mercy on his sinful soul, is a familiar figure in religious literature. Generations of young people have been told the old familiar story as a means of inducing them to grow up ardent believers, and thousands of old ladies—of either sex—have had their ears tickled with the tale. No one ever knew any of the infidels who died in this manner, but that mattered little. "A certain infidel," in a "certain town," who had, of course, led a wicked life, was visited, while on his death-bed, by a "certain Rev. Mr. —," etc., etc. Such is the customary formula, and pious credulity, asking for no more, readily fills in the gaps.

Fiction or fact, the death-bed story has played a varied and, I presume, valuable part in the history of religion. It has been told of most well-known Free-thinkers, and of not a few of the rank and file. Voltaire and Paine both died, according to the old religious story, calling upon God to forgive them their attacks on Christianity, and not all the circumstantial disproof of these stories by doctors and nurses and friends seems able to frustrate their acceptance as veritable facts. Nor could the extreme care taken by his daughter hinder the passing into currency of the same story concerning Charles Bradlaugh. A religious lie comes as near possessing the attribute of immortality as one can reasonably expect.

While I write there lies (in more senses than one) before me a fairly antique specimen of this death-bed legend. It is dated 1693, and is printed as "A fearful example of an Atheist.....who died in despair at Westminster, December 8, 1692, with an account of his sickness, convictions, and of his dreadful expressions and blasphemies when he left the world." This "fearful example" is by "J. S., a minister of the Church of England," and is printed "for an example to others, and recommended to all young persons to settle them in their religion.....and a warning to keep them from the dreadful sin of apostatising." It is not surprising to learn that "J. S." is "obliged, out of tenderness and reputation, to conceal the name and family of this gentleman who is the subject of the following discourse." Exactly! Has anyone ever heard of a case—apart from the fictitious legends clustering around the death-beds of celebrated infidels—where it was *not* found necessary to conceal the name of the dying penitent? This is one of the features that constantly repeats itself from the date of this pamphlet, or earlier, right down to the Atheist shoemaker. They all say the same things, they all die in the same manner, and their names and addresses are always shrouded in a merciful oblivion. Verily, history repeats itself here if anywhere.

The pious parents, presumably heart-broken at their son's unbelief, appear on the scene early. They had given him "a religious and virtuous education," and it was observed that he made very rapid progress in his religious studies, "being very warm and active in all religious exercises," and at the age of twenty came to London to study law. Here "J. S." expresses a fervent wish that he could break off his narrative and conclude by saying "Here he dyed," which would certainly give to his story the quality of being the shortest biography on record, besides robbing this veracious chronicler of the chance of holding this "fearful example" before young people in order to "settle them in their religion." But "here we bring another person on the stage." Enter the villain of the piece—also unnamed—who "laughed and ridiculed out of his innocence and virtue" the poor piously-brought-up young man.

It was not all ridicule, however, because we are informed that some of those who were deepest in the mire would suggest as arguments against Christianity "That Mohammed has more votaries than Christ; that that religion has its martyrs and confessors; that the wild Indians dare die bravely for their religion; that there's no nation, be it ever so barbarous, that gives us not some fine examples of doing and suffering; that, therefore, it's not the excellency of any one religion, but the prejudices of all, that produces these effects.....with a deal more to the same purpose." It is not quite clear

why it needed an old stager in vice to suggest these arguments, or why they should have led this "poor gentleman into debauchery and injustice, as far as he could act without the cognisance of the law." But, probably as the result of his early religious education, they had this effect, and so "he lived several years being as secretly wicked as all temptations and the advantages of a good estate would suffer him."

But the wicked do not live out half their days, and this poor fellow who had been led into vice and debauchery, through realising that other religions offered the same kind of credentials as did Christianity, fell desperately ill. In ordinary life, when a man is dangerously ill, he troubles little about the truth or falsity of speculative opinions; but in tracts things act more differently, and this individual "discoursed with himself" after the manner customary to such occasions. He was tormented with the fear of a future life, and longed for someone to restore him to his "ancient guard of piety and innocence." At this stage enters once more the villain of the piece. "How now, brother?" says he; "why this melancholy look and posture? Pray tell me what's the matter." "The matter?" replied the other; "'tis you and the rest of my companions that have instilled those principles into me, which now.....leave me in the agonies of despair and confusion. Are you certain that my soul is material and mortal? And that it will dissolve with the body?"

Here was a poser for the arch seducer! and, as though Providence intended to completely demoralise him, "J. S." at that moment entered the room and fell upon the villain with quotations from Descartes and Locke, concluding with the hope that there would be "no need of a lecture of this nature, for you look like creatures that have a share of inhuman nature, which has the doctrine of the immortality of the soul innate with it." At this the Atheist, as a matter of course, bolted out of the room—a proceeding characteristic of Atheists in all ages; and the sick person gave a dismal groan. "J. S." declares he was surprised at his arguments producing such an effect, and we are also surprised—two centuries later.

In all accounts of death-beds of this description it is usual for the dying man to enter into long, semi-philosophical disquisitions, consisting of a mixture of self-accusation and laudation of religion, and this dying sinner shows himself well aware of the necessities of the situation. These cover a good many pages, and would have made a decent-sized speech for a man in robust health. And, moreover, "all that he spoke was with such an air of horror and eagerness as can scarce be imagined.....and I remember I wished within myself that one or two of the loosest Atheists in the age had been there, verily believing it would have put a stop to their impiety." After witnessing the poor devil groaning through about six pages of Sunday-school philosophy of the old style, "J. S." went home. When he returned the next day, there were four other clergymen present, and the sufferer's groans had increased in proportion, although between groans he seems to have let fly one or two smart shots at Deity, as, for example, the following: "What is my value or worth that thou shouldst pour out full vials of wrath upon me?.....As my righteousness could have profited thee nothing, so my impieties have done thee no harm (rather a neat turning of the argument); therefore, annihilate me, and let me perish to nothing.....or if I must still be, and be immortal, and thou wilt punish me because I have despised thee, let it suffice to be a privation of thyself, and let me pass my eternity in a dream, without ever being awakened by the pangs of torment." "J. S." with the four other divines thrown in, might have spent their time in a worse manner than dealing with this plea. It reminds one somewhat of the famous—

Have mercy on me, oh, my God—  
On poor Martin Elginbrod—  
As I would on thee, if I were God,  
And you were Martin Elginbrod.

As a further proof of the villainy of this repentant sinner's former associates, "J. S." here introduces a letter received while he was in the sick-room. "J. S." prints the letter, and it is probable that he failed to realise its force, or we should have simply learned that it was a "prophane epistle." Here are some of the

more important passages (doubtless pieced together by "J. S." from heretical literature):—

DEAREST SIR,—Understanding you are fallen dangerously ill, I could not (considering our stricter friendship) but endeavor, at least, the removal of those evils your mind may lie under.....Sickness and death are the common lot of mankind, and to repine and grieve at the bearing of this lot is to combat the laws of nature and fight against impossibilities. What wise man repines at the heat in summer, or the cold in winter, or troubles himself that the sun ever goes out of our hemisphere at the night-time? A common evil that everyone bears ceases to be an evil, because there's no one has a better fortune to compare with it.....Thus, if we will examine death and its supposed consequences by the prejudices of a melancholy and distracted brain, we may be miserable proportionable to the height of our folly; but if by our reason we take a view of these formidable monsters, they grow tame and familiar to us. I would demand of him that asks me, What estate I shall be in after death? What estate he was in before life?.....I came out of a state of nothingness, and shall return unto the same again.....Death itself is nothing, and after death there's nothing; and why should I be afraid of nothing? Take courage, man, and either die like yourself, master of your fate and happiness so long as it is to be kept, or recover, and live worthy the character of a person that knows how either to live or die.

On the reading of this letter we are, of course, treated to more "dismal groans" and curses on "the unhappy time when first I imbibed these Atheistical principles, and exchanged the Christian faith for the creed of Spinoza and the Leviathan." Too weak to write, the dying man dictated a letter—of seven pages in length—replying to the Atheist's reasoning. It is useless writing to him, he says, for "despair and hell is the common lot of Atheists." Religion is no fictitious imposture, heaven and hell are real, and the immortality of the soul is as certain as the existence of the body. "That there's a God I know, because I continually feel the effects of his wrath; that there's a hell I am as certain, having received the earnest of my inheritance there.....What a vile ingratitude it is, scurrilously to reflect upon the Christian religion, when the author of it died to reconcile such reflectors to himself.....Don't mistake yourself; it's not a light matter to question and contend with the God of nature, to abuse religion and deny the author of it.....Let me intreat you, by my example, to leave off your sins by repentance; who knoweth but God may yet receive you, and by me preach such a sermon as may stop you in your course of wickedness."

This letter—which would seem to prove that it was the death-bed of a Christian, and not of an Atheist—punctuated by the requisite number of "dismal" and "horrible" and "heartrending" groans, nearly finished the penitent. He was in a consumption, it must be remembered, and was reduced to "almost nothing but skin and bones"; had, indeed, "become a skeleton in three or four days," so wonderful are the effects of consumption when it afflicts an Atheist. He was, however, able to give another sermonette, stretching over about seven pages, and which would have taken some twenty minutes in the delivery, after which we are not surprised to learn "he fainted away, and lay in a sort of swoon for a considerable time." Once more he recovered to give another short sermon of a metaphysical character, and this really was his last address. He now began "to talk idly and beside himself, every now and then groaning (the groan will come in) and gnashing his teeth," and exclaimed: "Ah, the forlorn hope and destitute state of an Atheist that has no God to go to, nothing to fly to for peace and comfort." At last, with, of course, "a groan so dreadful and loud as if it had not been humane, he cried out: 'Oh the insufferable pang of hell and damnation!' and so he died (one really begins to feel that he had been an insufferable time about it), death settling the visage of his face in such a form, as of the body, though dead, was sensible of the extremity of torments."

So ends this veracious history, published for an example to others and recommended to young persons to settle them in their religion. Of the value of such an example there can be no two opinions. And whatever doubts one may have of its truthfulness should be dispelled by the reflection that for two hundred years after the large majority of infidels have all died in the same way, their names and addresses have usually been concealed, obliging clergymen have been there to take down their depositions, and God has miraculously

enabled people dying of consumption and other wasting diseases to deliver long discourses that would have taken them, in a normal state of health, some hours to prepare. The evidence is conclusive. If only one, or even two, infidels had died in this manner, legitimate doubt might exist. But for all, or nearly all, to pass away in the same fashion, to imagine that for over two hundred years men of God have fashioned and handed on the same lies about unbelievers, it is almost impossible to believe. Even the absence of what one might, in ordinary cases, call evidence is a further recommendation in favor of belief. An attempt at fraud would have hedged itself round with suspicious defences; but these clergymen, strong in the truthfulness of their story, have been content to let their tale go forth in all its unvarnished simplicity, and, although sceptics may pick holes, such narratives will command the support of godly minds.

Clearly the story should act as a warning—to someone. Men may doubt the truth of religion in the plenitude of their health and strength, but God is not mocked, and if religion cannot command assent when the mind is clear and strong, then it may when one is on one's death-bed, and the mind and body are weakened by disease and suffering. And should not strong men be ashamed to doubt the existence of God when even the idiots and the insane believe firmly in his existence? There is not a lunatic in the world who does not believe in a Deity, and yet sane men can walk abroad without any such faith! Let all men reflect upon the story I have outlined above; let them bear in mind the end of the unknown gentleman who "died in despair at Westminster on December 8, 1692"; let them also reflect that he was only the forerunner of numerous other death-beds of a similar character, and they will arrive at a just estimation of the value of such stories, of the Christian clergy, and of the Christian faith.

C. COHEN.

## God or Man: Which?

TAKING a retrospective view of man and his surrounding influences, nothing strikes the careful and impartial observer more forcibly than the fact that hitherto the world has been governed too much by the teachings of theology, and too little by the power of intellectual discrimination. Uncontrolled emotion has reigned instead of cultivated reason, and the requirements of man have been subordinated to the alleged demands of God. The result is that we have some conditions of society which are a reproach to true civilisation. The Church has proved itself impotent to originate practical reforms, the State has failed to prevent the most palpable inequalities of our industrial system, poverty still makes sad havoc amongst the toiling millions, the wealth of the nation is far from being wisely used, and morality is at a very low ebb in nearly all our national public departments. True, during the last few decades many noble efforts have been made to improve this regrettable condition of affairs, but without that success which real reformers desire. Yet, as James Cotter Morison observes in his work, *The Service of Man*:—

"It would be rash to expect that a transition, unprecedented for its width and difficulty, from theology to positivism, from the service of God to the service of Man, could be accomplished without jeopardy. Signs are not wanting that the prevalent anarchy in thought is leading to anarchy in morals. Numbers who have put off belief in God have not put on belief in Humanity. A common and lofty standard of duty is being trampled down in the fierce battle of incompatible principles. The present indecision is becoming not only wearisome, but injurious, to the best interests of man."

This is a pertinent statement of the consequences of seeking to render service to that which is unknown, rather than to that which is known. In other words, it is the result of wasting time in trying to please a God, of whom we have no knowledge, instead of employing our energies in the endeavor to improve man, with whose nature and needs we are more or less acquainted. Hence, as Mr. Morison tersely puts it:—

"The modern man, in search of well-being, has two ends to bear in mind. First, his own self-cultivation, especially of his heart, as incomparably most important

both to his own happiness and that of others. Secondly, it behoves him to help his fellows to the extent of his power, by such improvements in the practice and theory of life as he can make good by sound reasons."

Personally, I have no concern about any service to God, supposing he exist, for the obvious reason that I have no information as to what he requires of me; and, further, because all the supposed service rendered to him has not been followed by useful results to the human family. On the other hand, we should all be interested as to what we can do for man, inasmuch as experience teaches us that, in proportion as we work for his advancement, we enhance our own happiness and also that of society in general.

These thoughts have arisen in my mind through reading a sermon on *The Service of Man*, preached by a Unitarian minister, the Rev. J. Estlin Carpenter, M.A., of Manchester College, Oxford. Such a discourse could be understood if it came from an orthodox expounder, but, coming from a representative of a sect which professes to eschew the principal absurdities of orthodoxy, it appears to be the very essence of inconsistency. The position taken by the rev. gentleman is, that the best service of man is "to give practical shape to the great hope of the Kingdom of God." But this preaching of the "Kingdom of God" has done little or nothing towards the world's regeneration. What is required in this practical age is the better arrangement of the kingdom of man, more real work for the true elevation of the race, a broader system of justice for all, a more equitable distribution of wealth, a fostering of a higher moral standard, a proper attention to the cultivation of the intellectual faculties, a manifestation of real determination to assist the masses in securing a superior social status, a purification of our political atmosphere, and a juster relationship between capital and labor. The working classes should remember that they have the power to reach a higher position than many of them now occupy in the intellectual, social, and political world, and that it is their duty to practise self-reliance, and to wisely use the means which they now have at their disposal. These improvements are to be had, and these advantages to be won, by attending more to the requirements of man and less to the demands of theology.

The rev. gentleman very properly asks, How far does Christianity tend to meet the needs of man? He adds:—

"If we may believe some of its modern critics, it [Christianity] has wholly failed. It set out, it has been alleged, to steel men for the service and trials of life by plunging the whole scene of our existence under the wrath of God, and lighting the fires of eternal hell. It has, in truth, created more pain than it has soothed. So it has concentrated attention upon salvation in the next life instead of upon virtue in this. It has called for belief in incomprehensible doctrines, when it ought to have insisted on the requisites of righteousness; it has laid the stress upon the wrong place, and hence has proved itself a misleading guide."

This is undoubtedly the fact. All the alleged supernatural religions have hitherto failed to provide a remedy for the evils, the shams, and the inequalities which mar the happiness of mankind. The rev. gentleman, however, contends that the religion of Jesus alone furnishes the key to the true service of man. He says:—

"For among the discoveries which will make this age memorable in the future, the most noteworthy, surely, is the discovery of the religion of Jesus. For it makes clear in the first place, on its theoretical side, that it is not a doctrine about Christ, but a teaching first promulgated by Him—a religion in which Jesus is not the object, but the way; not the end, but the guide; not the goal, but the path."

Here we have the usual random orthodox statements. It is contended by Christians that it is the practical, not the theoretical, part of their faith which is of real value as a reforming agency. Even Mr. Carpenter himself admits that "a theory is useless without the force to translate it into practice." Just so; and this is where Christianity has so signally failed. It has never possessed the force to convert its theory into practice. Moreover, he says:—

"We all know how wide is the difference between a curt, vague statement of general principles and the actual realisation of them in the scene of affairs, and we often

feel more indebted to a man who shows us how to work out a truth in invention or practice than to the man who first states it simply in theory, for our intellectual or moral apprehension."

True, he adds: "Jesus seems to have done both." I know not how it may "seem" to Mr. Carpenter, but the fact is, Jesus did neither. Let the reader take the four Gospels, and, after a careful and unbiassed examination, point out, if he can, what philosophic truth Jesus expounded; what scientific fact he explained; what social problem he solved; what educational program he set forth, and what political scheme he unfolded. While other men, with less pretensions than himself, were active in giving the world their thoughts upon these great questions, Jesus remained silent.

It has often been my duty to point out that the mere statement of general principles is not sufficient; what is really required is the knowledge how to apply such principles for the general welfare of man. Now, so far as Jesus enunciated any principles at all, he did so in a "curt and vague" manner without any clear and definite method as to their application to human needs. His so-called "general principles" had more to do with himself and his God than with the necessities of man. Thus he states, "My kingdom is not of this world." "He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." "I am not of this world." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," and other things, such as food, drink, and clothing, "shall be added unto you." It was no doubt his absorbing interest in some other world that prevented him from taking a prominent part in the endeavor to rid the present one of the evils of his time. He was surrounded by poverty, slavery, oppression, and mental degradation, but he employed no practical means to remove these drawbacks and organise a fair condition of society. He did not even try to rescue the land from the control of the Romans, who held it from the people very much in the same way as landowners do now; he did not attempt to render any aid to the laborers of Rome, who in his day were resisting the injustice of the capitalists; he did not deliver his brethren of "the royal house" from their foreign rulers; he did not redeem the Jews from their social evils, or restore justice to their nation. In a word, he entirely failed to do the reforming work that was expected of him.

The rev. gentleman urges, on behalf of Jesus, that he broke down the limitations which had so long fettered the Jewish nation, and that he proclaimed the brotherhood and equality of man, and love for all the "children of God." This claim does not accord with New Testament teachings, for therein we are told that the mission of Jesus was only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; that he issued the command, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine"; that he would have no fellowship with unbelievers; that he threatened to have revenge upon those who denied him; and that he instructed his disciples to "go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." These injunctions may accord with God's idea of brotherhood, but they are not in harmony with the humanity of man. As to the teachings of Jesus in reference to love, they are exceedingly partial and limited. It is true that, according to the record, he said, "Love one another" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." But the first command Jesus failed to follow himself, and the second is incapable of general application. Besides, it is evident that the first referred only to his followers, for he said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples"; and the second applied only to the Jewish community, not to strangers who lived outside. It does not appear that these injunctions meant that those who heard them were to love all mankind. Jesus himself divided those who were for him from those who were against him. To the first he said, "Come, ye blessed of my father"; to the other, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

CHARLES WATTS.

"Willie, where do bad little boys go if they die?" "I dunno; but Uncle Will says they go to the same place as good little boys when they grow up."

## Early Christian Frauds.—II.

THE question of chief importance in connection with the writing and publishing of lying histories of Christ by the early Christians is the alleged priority of the four canonical Gospels. It is this question, therefore, that I shall endeavor chiefly to elucidate.

Irenæus, it will be remembered, is the earliest writer who names the Gospels; though it may be conceded that when he wrote (about A.D. 180) they had all been in existence some twenty or thirty years—some of them much longer. This bishop, speaking of the Marcossians, says (*Heresies*, i. 20):—

"Amongst other things, they bring forward that false and wicked story which relates that our Lord, when he was a boy learning his letters, on the teacher saying to him, as is usual, Pronounce 'Alpha,' replied 'Alpha.' But when, again, the teacher bade him say 'Beta,' the Lord replied: Do thou first tell me what 'Alpha' is, and then I will tell thee what 'Beta' is. This they expound as meaning that he alone knew the unknown, which he revealed under its type 'Alpha.'"

This story may be false, and even wicked; it is certainly very silly: with these matters we are not concerned. It is, however, perfectly clear that the anecdote was in existence in very early times. It is also evident that the heretical Marcossians were not the inventors of the story; they merely selected it from a Gospel in circulation in their days, and, assuming it to be true, gave it a mystic or symbolical interpretation.

The story is found in the extant Gospel of Thomas, in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, and in the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, and is slightly different in each, as well as in each of the forms of those Gospels. In some accounts the Greek letters are given, in others the Hebrew, though it is admitted that all were derived from the same document. The story in the Gospel of the Infancy (par. 49) reads:—

"Therefore they took him to another and a more learned master, who, when he saw him, said: Say 'Aleph.' And when he had said 'Aleph,' the master ordered him to pronounce 'Beth.' And the Lord Jesus answered him, and said: First tell me the meaning of the letter 'Aleph,' and then I will pronounce 'Beth.'"

In the Gospel of Thomas (par. 14) the boy Jesus says to his schoolmaster:—

"If thou art really a teacher, and art well acquainted with the letters, tell me the power of the 'Alpha,' and I will tell thee the power of the 'Beta.'"

Irenæus is thus a witness to the existence both of the canonical and uncanonical Gospels. But all the writings in which the foregoing story is found contain accounts of the working of a number of senseless miracles by the boy Jesus between his infancy and his twelfth year. In considering the authorship of these stories, it must be borne in mind that the Ebionites, as well as most of the Gnostic sects, held Jesus to have been a mere man, the son of Joseph, with no power to work miracles until the spirit of God descended upon him at his baptism, when about thirty years of age. We may safely say, then, that the authors of this class of writings did not belong to the sects named. The writers, beyond all doubt, were orthodox Christians who believed Jesus to be the son of God and possessed of supernatural powers from his birth.

We go back now to the time of Justin, who wrote about A.D. 150. In the writings of this ancient apologist we find a considerable number of references to matters now contained in the three Synoptical Gospels, besides many quotations, chiefly sayings attributed to Christ, similar to those in the Sermon on the Mount. Modern apologists tell us that these were all made from the canonical Gospels, though most of the quotations are shorter than, and vary more or less from, the parallel passages in our present text. This circumstance they endeavor to account for by asserting that the writer quoted "freely from memory." The following is a short example:—

JUSTIN.  
"This is what he says: 'Unto him striking thy cheek offer the other also; and him who carried off thy cloak or thy coat do not thou prevent' (1 Apol. 15)."

MATT. V. 39-40.  
"But whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

From the foregoing example it will be seen that the words italicised in Matthew's version represent Justin's text, which is undoubtedly a more primitive one. Justin's introductory sentence, "*This is what he says,*" leaves no doubt as to his having copied the words from a Gospel in use in his time. All his quotations and extracts, he says, were taken from the "*Memorabilia of the Apostles*"—that is to say, from Memoirs or histories supposed to have been written by apostles. Justin refers to these Memoirs no less than ten times, but he never once names a Gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John—the latter Gospels being apparently unknown to him. We know, also, from the Preface to the Third Gospel, that "many" histories of Christ were in circulation before that Gospel was written, and the mere fact that Luke sat down to compile another (and a more reliable) history presupposes that all the then existing Gospels were, in his estimation, incorrect or incomplete. There can be little doubt that it was a primitive version of some of the Apocryphal Gospels which Justin used, and this supposition is confirmed by the fact that several matters mentioned by that apologist are not found in the canonical Gospels. We will now look at some of this credulous Father's references and quotations.

1. Justin quotes the angel Gabriel as saying to Mary:—

"Behold, thou shalt conceive of the Holy Ghost, and shalt bear a son, and he shall be called the son of the Highest, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (1 Apol. 33).

To this Justin adds by way of explanation: "*But the power of God coming down upon the virgin overshadowed her, and made her conceive in the pure state of virginity.*" Christian apologists tell us that Justin's quotation was taken from the Gospel of Luke (i. 30-32, 35). This, however, could not have been the case, for the passage in that Gospel does not contain the words, "for he shall save his people from their sins." The sentence, it is true, is found in Matthew's Gospel—"for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." But here the angel's message is to Joseph, not to Mary, and it does not contain the words quoted by Justin: "He shall be called the son of the Highest"; neither does it say anything about the virgin being "overshadowed."

How, then, do Christian Evidencers explain Justin's quotation? Of course, in the usual way. That second-century apologist is said to have quoted "freely from memory," and, in so doing, combined the angel's communication to Joseph in the canonical Matthew with the message to Mary in Luke. It is assumed that the words cited could be found only in the canonical Gospels. As a matter of fact, they are given in the Protevangelium. In that veracious history (par. 11) the angel says to Mary: "And thou shalt conceive according to his word. *The power of the Lord shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of the Highest. And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.*" Here we find the three sentences quoted by Justin—the one omitted by Luke, and the two not recorded by Matthew—and all three addressed to Mary.

2. Speaking of the birth of Christ, Justin says (Dial. 78):—

"For Joseph, not being able to find a lodging in the village, lodged in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ," etc.

If Justin's Memoirs were identical with our present Gospels, as modern apologists contend, how is it that there is no mention of this circumstance in any of them? Mark and John say nothing about the birth; Luke states that Joseph and Mary took up their lodging in the stable of the inn at Bethlehem (ii. 6-7); according to Matthew, Christ's parents lodged in a "house" (ii. 11). It is quite certain that Justin did not take his account from the canonical Gospels, and, this being the case, we have to look for the circumstance named in one of those called uncanonical.

In the Protevangelium it is related that when the parents of Jesus were within three miles of Bethlehem, Mary was taken in labor, whereupon Joseph lifted her down from the ass upon which she was riding, "and he found a cave there, and led her into it," etc. In this

cave Jesus is stated to have been born. Justin's statement respecting this matter proves conclusively that writings of the character of the Protevangelium were in circulation in his day.

3. Justin, in giving a symbolical interpretation to various matters recorded in the Old Testament, says (Dial. 42):—

"Moreover, the prescription that twelve bells be attached to the robe of the high priest, which hung down to the feet, was a symbol of the twelve Apostles, who depend on the power of Christ."

With Justin's system of misrepresentation we are not now concerned. The only point to be noticed is that he mentions "twelve" as the number of bells worn on the high priest's robe. Now, no particular number is anywhere prescribed in the Old Testament, the only place where a command about bells is given being Exodus xxviii. 33-34. Justin must, therefore, have drawn his information from some other source. The most probable is the Protevangelium, in which it is stated (par. 8): "And the high priest went in, taking the robe with the twelve bells into the Holy of Holies," etc. There can be little doubt, then, that some such history as the Protevangelium formed part of Justin's "Memorabilia of the Apostles."

4. Speaking of Jesus when a child, Justin says (Dial. 88):—

"For even at his birth he was in possession of his power."

This statement is a proof of the existence of another class of apocryphal writings in Justin's time. The Gospel of Thomas contains accounts of a number of miracles alleged to have been performed by the boy Jesus from his fifth to his twelfth year. The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy goes even farther, and relates several miraculous performances by the child Jesus shortly after his birth. The latter work, as we now have it, is a translation from the Syriac, and states itself to be a compilation from older sources. Justin's statement leaves no room for doubt that a primitive version of this Gospel was also included in the Memoirs.

5. Referring to the employment followed by Jesus, Justin says (Dial. 88):—

"For when he was among men he was in the habit of working as a carpenter, making ploughs and yokes; by which he taught the symbols of righteousness and an active life."

There is no record in any of the canonical Gospels of work actually done by Jesus before his appearance as a preacher, and, though he is supposed to have followed his father's trade, no particular kind of carpentry has been suggested. In the Gospel of Thomas, however, it is stated (par. 13): "And his father was a carpenter, and at that time made ploughs and yokes." This was probably the source of the foregoing statement of Justin, who naturally assumed that Jesus assisted his father. In the earliest of the canonical Gospels it is said of Jesus: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" etc. (Mark vi. 3). In any case we have proof that Justin's Memoirs, besides containing shorter and more primitive precepts than our present Gospels, contained also many matters that are found now only in the Apocryphal Gospels.

ABRACADABRA.

## Judas Iscariot.

No man who has left the marks of his shoes upon the sands of history has been maligned more than Judas Iscariot. If any dead man whose historical acquaintance we have made deserves our pity it is this Judas. We can say, Poor Iscariot! and say it feelingly.

As we read the gospel-story, Judas was one of the so-called twelve apostles of Jesus. There is nothing to show that he did not enjoy the confidence of his master as fully as any of the others. There was no act of the man to warrant the suspicion that he intended to play Jesus false. His faith was perfect. He did his part. He followed Jesus like a dog. He never deserted his post, never shirked the responsibility of his discipleship. He was not a coward, a sneak, or a liar. He faced his destiny like a man, and obeyed the orders of his commander.

If the narrative, as history, is worth a two-cent piece, Iscariot kept step to the Messianic music, and looked into the face of his master with absolute faith. It is true that we have but meagre words about this man; true that we have to assume faithfulness from the absence of any charge against him to the contrary. But silence is the cradle of good reputations, as well as the tomb of bad ones.

When the enemies of Jesus desired to entrap him, and were willing to pay for his betrayal, Judas Iscariot eagerly met their desire. He was not only willing to lead the enemies of Jesus to him, he was anxious.

Why did Iscariot betray Jesus? For a few pieces of silver? Incredible, impossible. Judas had more faith in Jesus than all of the other apostles. He believed enough in him to put his faith to the test. He looked upon his master as the expected Messiah, as one having divine power; and, when he heard Jesus boast that he could call the angels of God to his aid, he felt that man could do him no harm. He accepted the words of Jesus as true, and he had confidence that all would come to pass which Jesus said. Had he not the miracles of Jesus to sustain his faith? Was not the entire career of Jesus a confirmation of his Messiahship? Nature obeyed him. The sea crawled at his feet. Disease shrunk away at sight of him. Water turned to wine at his earnest request. The grave obeyed him and death came back to life under his words. Hunger was appeased when he spoke. Devils were afraid of him. Why should Judas Iscariot fear to trust his Master in the hands of enemies? Could not Jesus slay them all with a glance? Was not heaven at his call, and did not legions wait for his command? Would not God come to his rescue? Judas would give to Jesus the opportunity to prove his claim to the Messianic sceptre, and would enjoy the triumph of seeing the discomfiture of the Scribes and Pharisees when they should behold the power of his Master. A glorious dream filled Iscariot's soul! He saw in a vision the conquered foes and saw the victorious Messiah mount the throne of Israel—? ruler by divine authority.

No sordid motive prompted the act of Judas Iscariot when he left the kiss of betrayal upon the cheek of his Master. The signal given, Judas watched to see his Master assert his power, glanced above him to see the army of angels come from heaven. He pictured the fallen soldiers as they were ready to seize the body of Jesus. But, instead, he saw Jesus arrested, bound and carried away like a common criminal. His heart sank within him. His faith died. His dream was ashes. Night came over his senses. The sun of faith set in his mind. Despair like a darkness overwhelmed his whole being.

In agony, he cried: Is Jesus false? Is he not the Messiah? Can he not do miracles? Will not the angels obey him? Has God deserted him? Was his faith in Jesus betrayed, and was the person he had followed and believed in only a man after all? Out of the fearful questionings of his heart what was he learning? Had Jesus deceived them all? Was he an impostor? Were his hands but human? When the light of truth broke upon the mental sight of poor Iscariot, not remorse for his deed, but the dull, dead despair of disappointment, settled upon his spirits. The dream of Messianic glory faded from his mind. The sunshine of hope changed to the darkness of gloom. All the stars of future brightness dropped from the sky, and only blackness above and grief within were left to him.

He had betrayed Jesus only to see his Master confront his enemies and prove his divine power. When he beheld Jesus bound with cords, helpless and deserted, his faith forsook him utterly. He stood dumb. What he had done was of no avail. Why? Because the promises of Jesus were broken. His idol was of clay, and crumbled at his feet. Instead of facing his foes, and coming off victor, he surrendered to human authority, and was led to the cross like a guilty thing.

What wonder that Judas Iscariot went and hanged himself! His faith in Jesus was dead. His hope in the Messianic promise was dead. The future was dark, the present more than he could bear. The world held nothing dear to him now that Jesus was only a frail human being like himself—no less than himself, for he was honest. And in his eyes his Master was a fraud, an impostor. Why did not Jesus strike dead at his feet

every man who raised an arm against him? Why did he not assert his divine power. The answer to these questions killed Judas Iscariot. Jesus could not kill his enemies; he had no divine power. His whole career had been deception. His Heavenly Father, whose protection he boasted of, did nothing for him.

Jesus was led to the cross, according to the narrative in the New Testament, and was nailed to its arms the same as any malefactor. No miraculous hand interposed to rescue him.

When Jesus was carried away by the Roman soldiers Judas, in despair, threw the pieces of silver on the floor of the temple, and "went and hanged himself." Life had nothing for him without his Master, whose every word had been hope, inspiration, life to him. Without Jesus life was not worth living to Iscariot. No such poverty of power was ever possessed by a leader. Jesus could not even command his few disciples. They all deserted him when he was arrested. The supreme failure of all the centuries was that of Jesus. All his boasting ended in ignominious death, all his claim of divine power and divine protection was silenced by his crucifixion.

Poor Iscariot! He believed every word uttered by his Master, and died when he found that Jesus was but a frail mortal, crazed by ambition.

—*Boston Investigator.*

### Acid Drops.

Those who believe in the God of Battles should, of course, accept his arbitrament. Generally, however, the defeated side finds some other reason for its discomfiture. It would have won if so-and-so had not happened; in other words, God has not decided in its disfavor. Such appears to be the attitude of Mr. Kruger. He appealed to "the Almighty" at the outbreak of hostilities, and all along he has declared that God was helping the Boers; indeed, he said as much only a few weeks ago, when the first intimations came that peace was being negotiated between Lord Kitchener and the Boer leaders in South Africa. There was always going to be a surprise on the Lord's part that would "stagger humanity" far more than anything in the natural course of the war. But the surprise never came. What did come was peace—which is a great deal better, in spite of Mr. Kruger.

General De Wet, who has done his share of the hard fighting, accepts the decision of the God of Battles; at least, he did so openly in his address to the Boers at Winburg. "God has decided thus," he told them. "As a Christian people," he added, "God now demands us to be faithful to our new Government. Let us submit to God's decision." This is logical. It is also honest. If you believe in God, and appeal to God, and on the face of it God decides against you, all you have to do is to submit as cheerfully as possible.

Of course, the real pity is that people who believe in God cannot find a better way of appealing to his judgment. War is very cruel and very costly. God's decision should be given as easily without any fighting at all. Why not toss up for it? That is what General Gordon used to do when in doubt and hesitation. He threw up a coin and left the rest to the Lord. If it was "heads," the Lord directed him one way; if it was "tails," the Lord directed him another way. This is equivalent to the Bible method of "casting lots," and should therefore be supported by all true Christians. What a cheap way of settling earthly disputes! And how nice it would have been to see Joseph Chamberlain and Paul Kruger—the former with a glass in his right eye, and the latter with Dutch simplicity in both eyes—tossing up a "yellow boy," a "bob," or a "brown," and letting God decide the Transvaal franchise question by "heads or tails." Perhaps the Czar will call another Hague Conference, and submit this idea to the other Powers. It would be preferable to canting talk about disarmament, which nobody, except the sublimely fatuous Mr. Stead, ever thought of taking seriously.

The Rev. John Spurgeon, father of the famous Mr. Spurgeon, died at Norwood on Saturday, June 14, at the great age of ninety-two. We recollect meeting him quite accidentally a good many years ago. It was in a Great Northern train near Sheffield. He did not know us, and we only exchanged a casual word with him. But he was talking freely to another gentleman, and he struck us as a very jolly old boy. He did not believe a bit in his famous son's teetotalism. He said that he was once preaching in a certain chapel, and the regular minister offered him hospitality for

the night. When they arrived at the house, and the guest was loosening his comforter in the lobby, the host said: "You must be very thirsty; what will you have to drink?" "Yes," said old Mr. Spurgeon, "I am thirsty, and I'd like a bottle of Bass before all things." "Oh," replied the host, "we are all teetotalers here." "Well," said old Mr. Spurgeon, "I didn't ask you to drink it. If you mean that I must drink what you drink, you should have told me so when you invited me here. I'm much obliged to you, but I'd rather go where I can get what I want. Good night!" With that he tightened his comforter and buttoned up his overcoat again, and made tracks for an hotel.

The jolly old boy told the story with a splendid chuckle. He must have been worth listening to in public when the comic spirit was upon him—especially if he knew his bottle of Bass was safe afterwards. It is not astonishing that he lived till ninety-two. We fancy he was one of the good old sort. No doubt he preached hell-fire as a matter of duty, and then declined to take life too seriously; unlike the anti-everything Nonconformist minister of to-day, who looks as though he had swallowed tons of "righteousness" and was suffering in consequence from moral and spiritual indigestion. Peace to the old man's ashes!

Considering that the King's Coronation Oath will include a declaration that Protestantism is the only true Christianity, and that Roman Catholicism is of the opposite description, it was rather amusing to see him sitting on horseback in front of Father Cyril Foster, the Roman Catholic chaplain of the Irish Guards, while the reverend gentleman went through the performance of consecrating the colors of that regiment. There was a picture of this pious comedy in the *Daily Graphic*. The man of God, attended by an acolyte, was doing his hocus-pocus over a standard and some drums. God himself was supposed to be present somewhere, but we could not trace him in the drawing. Perhaps he was in a drum—all hollowness and noise.

Henry Peretti, a stylishly dressed Italian, of the interesting age of twenty-nine, was brought before Mr. Plowden, at Marylebone Police-court, and charged with attempting to commit suicide. A witness on his behalf was Miss Alice Buxton, who said she belonged to a mission meeting in Hyde Park. She had converted him there from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism. After that he seems to have got sick of life. Having "found Christ" he was doubly miserable. Hence the interior application of that corrosive sublimate. It was not a very handsome compliment to his new religion, as Mr. Plowden satirically pointed out to the lady missionary. "As long as he was a Catholic," Mr. Plowden said, "he bore up with life, but when he became one of you he attempted to take his life. This is an unfortunate coincidence, is it not?" *Very unfortunate!*

The interesting Italian would-be suicide had left a letter addressed to "Dearest Eva," and the magistrate asked the lady missionary if she was that personage. "No, thank you; I'm not," she said. The letter to "Dearest Eva" was addressed to the care of Earl Derby. This turned out to be a public-house in Kilburn. "Dearest Eva," we suppose, called there for letters. Altogether the case threw a curious light on religious conversion.

"Men of Millions give their Views on Religion." Such is the heading of a special page of the *Minneapolis Tribune* for Sunday, May 25. "Busy as the Great Giants of the Commercial World Are, They Still Find Time to Devote to the Furtherance of the Cause of the Master." Such is the sub-heading on the left side. On the right side another sub-heading informs the world, or the section of it that reads the *Minneapolis Tribune*, how encouraging it is that three American millionaires, whose "total wealth will in time amount to a billion of dollars," still find time to teach their fellow-men that "the true happiness in life can only be won through faith in Christ." Whether these three American millionaires are aggregating a billion of dollars by faith in Christ is not stated. We fancy they are not. We rather think they grow rich through the faith in Christ of a large number of foolish people, who honestly puzzle their brains over kingdom-come while the other fellows are making the most they can in this world. Anyhow, it is difficult to see how millions can be made by faith in such teachings of Christ as "Take no thought for the morrow," "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," "Blessed be ye poor," and "Woe unto you rich."

"Church Ties Necessary" is the heading of the first short article by John D. Rockefeller, junior, of the Standard Oil Company. It ought to have been headed "Low-Flash Oils Necessary." The Rockefellers sell oil in this country which is directly responsible for the death of scores of people every year. Their money is used to stand in the way of the legal protection of the public; and, having made piles of dollars

by a business conducted on a murderous basis, they give money to churches, chapels, and Sunday-schools, and work the "faith in Christ" game in other ways for all it is worth.

Woe unto you hypocrites!" cries Jesus Christ. "Nonsense, my friend," says Rockefeller, "it's a fine paying business. You are my Savior, it is true, but you had the misfortune to be born too soon. You would have known better if you had come nineteen hundred years later, and to America instead of Palestine. You should really get born again and up-to-date."

John D. Rockefeller, junior, ends his brief article with these words: "We should be willing to give up everything to obtain the great treasure of Christ's love. If we have the spirit of Christ in us we have everything." When this gentleman unloads for the love of Christ we shall believe in his honesty. Meanwhile we have to say that the American millionaire doesn't seem to be very "brainless" when he is exhorting. John D. Rockefeller, junior, is bald and dull enough to serve as a cure for insomnia.

John D. Havemeyer and Anson Phelps Stokes, junior, representing two other millionaire families, continue the drive about Christ. But we need not criticise what they say. Had it been written by poor men, the editor of the *Minneapolis Tribune* would have dropped it into the wastebasket. Probably he would also have used some unprintable language.

Representing the Nonconformist Conscience, which is nothing if not puritanic, the *Daily News* gave special reports of last Sunday's pulpit references in Dissenting churches and chapels to the King's intended visit to Ascot. "Everyone agrees," our contemporary said on its own account, "that the King, as a private individual—if, indeed, a king can ever be a private individual—is free to choose his own amusements and recreations; but a great deal of regret and disappointment has been expressed by many of not the least loyal among his Majesty's subjects, that, in view of the fact that the racecourse is a vast gambling-machine, the King, as King, should lend his presence and patronage to this particular form of sport." This sounds discriminating; objection is raised to the King's patronage of horse-racing; but if he dropped it he would probably be censured for countenancing some other recreation. Even a tabby-cat game like Ping-Pong would be hailed at by the Puritans if there were nothing else to bear the brunt of their hatred of all "frivolous enjoyments."

The Rev. F. B. Meyer said that the King's attention to the funds of hospitals would not atone for his patronage of the racecourse. The Rev. J. Gregory Mantle, speaking for the West London Mission at St. James's Hall, said that this year, for the first time, evangelists had been refused permission to preach on Epsom racecourse, and that in the most peremptory manner. The evangelists' tent was allowed, but they had to take down the text hung up outside, "Christ died for the ungodly." The tide had turned against the ambassadors for Christ, and apparently it was all the King's fault. Many other preachers, in London and in the provinces, poured forth the same monotonous tale. But a spice of variety was introduced by the great Rev. Hugh Rose, of that world-famous town, Ryton-on-Tyne. "A Premier," this man of God said, "led his winning horse on the turf, and thought it a proud day; but full soon was he hurled from power by the judgment of God, and only now is he struggling out of the lone furrow." Poor Lord Rosebery! He kept racehorses for a long time without much comment, but when he won the Derby with "Ladas" he stood before the eyes of all men as a flagrant sinner. God himself took note of his lordship then, and he was soon cast into the outer darkness, though apparently without much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. How strange it was! Who would have thought it? A Liberal government upset by a horse! Such is the theory of public affairs presented from the Nonconformist pulpit. It is enough to raise a satirical smile on the face of a 'bus horse.

We have no love of horse-racing, and we know nothing of racecourses. Very likely a lot of blackguards assemble there. Where do they *not* assemble if they have the chance? Still, we pity the poor King, whose fondness for a bit of "sport" makes him the object of such vehement denunciations. What with the Church parsons dragging him to their gospel-shops, and the Dissenting ministers waxy because he does not attend theirs, he is having rather a bad time. No wonder he is troubled with lumbago! It must take effect somewhere.

King's College, London, has hitherto been a Church of England preserve, but the announcement is now made that religious tests are to be abolished there in the future. Still, it is to be kept in special touch with the Church of England somehow; which means, we take it, that religious tests

are to be abolished ostensibly, but retained practically; an arrangement that is quite in keeping with the policy of an alarmed priestcraft.

The worthy Bishop who made this announcement on behalf of King's College declared that the Nonconformists ought to have a chance. They and Churchmen ought to understand each other. Were they not natural allies in the great battle against unbelief? Aye, there's the rub. If it is impossible for Christian sects to love each other—and all history attests that it is so—they should at least co-operate in warding off a common destruction.

The worthy Bishop aforesaid has often declared that "infidelity" is played out in this country, but he knows a great deal better, and he lets the truth out when it serves his purpose. What he says to the general public, and what he says to the brethren, are two very different things.

The Bishop of London deserves credit for one thing; he tries to earn his salary by preaching down to the level of the Christian mob: and as they are his ultimate supporters, it is only fair that they should have value for their money. This, to do him justice, the Bishop endeavors to give them. He pours out pious nonsense like a flood. Only the other day we had occasion to notice his absurd explanation of the destruction of St. Pierre in the light of God's benevolence. Quite recently he has been holding forth on Hospitals at St. Saviour's Church. His sermon was in connection with the Royal Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb. Many of these afflicted persons were present, and had the sermon interpreted to them in their own gesture language. As for the text, it was certainly relevant, if not appropriate. It was taken from Mark vii. 37: "They were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well. He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." Upon this text he based the two-fold argument: first, that hospitals were the fruits of Christianity; secondly, that the very fact of their existence proved the truth of the story of Jesus Christ's miracles of healing.

Now, in the first place, hospitals are not the fruits of Christianity. They are the fruits of science and humanity. Christianity only steps in, as usual, to appropriate what it does not produce. Hospitals existed long before Christianity was born, and they will continue to exist when Christianity is dead. As far as history is concerned, the Bishop of London has only to read the article on Hospitals in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to see how egregiously he is mistaken. In the second place, it is an extraordinary piece of audacity to say that the existence of hospitals proves that Jesus Christ worked miracles; or, as the Bishop of London puts it, that "these marvellous stories in which he is described as making the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the dead to rise, were actual and real facts." What connection is there between the one thing and the other? There would be something in the Bishop's argument if the deaf and dumb were cured miraculously in our hospitals. That would afford a presumption that the miracles of the Gospels were true. But the deaf and dumb are not cured in that way now. Yet they ought to be, for Jesus Christ distinctly promised that those who believed in him should do greater miracles than he had done himself. What the Bishop of London has to do, therefore, in order to show that he is a true Christian, is not to talk falsehood and nonsense about hospitals, but to work a miracle of healing. If he cannot do that he is no true Christian, or else Jesus Christ was a liar. A dread alternative, no doubt; but that is not *our* concern. We leave the Bishop to face it as he can.

When a sensible man gets hold of a Tract headed *The Dying Sceptic* he knows what to expect. What he gets, anyhow, is lies and humbug dressed up in the name of God. Such a perpetration bears the name of the Rev. David Pirret, of Glasgow. The dying sceptic raves, repents, is converted, dies, and goes to glory, all in two small pages. It was the quickest case on record since the story of the penitent thief. There is no name given, no address, no single reference that could lead to identification. Which shows that the Rev. David Pirret knows how to play the game—if it were only a little more honest.

Thomas Pierce and Jane Thompson, aged respectively fifteen and sixteen, were fellow-servants in a farmhouse at Dunston-on-Tyne. The farmer and his wife started for chapel, leaving Thompson washing up the cups and Pierce reading the Bible. When they returned home they found that Pierce had made a murderous attack on Thompson with a hammer, and afterwards hung himself in an outbuilding. We don't know that there is any moral in the story. But there would have been if Pierce had been reading Thomas Paine.

The one time in a man's life when he is satisfied to take a back seat is when he goes to church.—*Philadelphia Record*.



The business of the Freethought Publishing Company, including the publication of the FREE-THINKER, is now carried on at No. 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

**Mr. G. W. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, June 22, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.: 7.30, "Holy-Oiling the King in the House of God."

**To Correspondents.**

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

J. PARTRIDGE.—See "Sugar Plums," also the Protest on another page. We hope the latter will make the impression it deserves on the minds of the ratepayers, and enable your Branch to break down the injustice set up by the casting-vote of the Blackguard Bishop.

"COLONIAL BORN" sends us from Malmesbury, Cape Colony, a letter which was broken and sealed up again "under martial law" before reaching us. It is in reply to Mr. F. Ryan's strictures on the late Cecil Rhodes. It is well written, and it praises the dead "Colossus" with a certain discriminating fervor. But the whole subject is now so far behind date that we can hardly find room for "Colonial Born's" communication; especially as peace has come in South Africa since he wrote it—an event over which he doubtless rejoices as much as we do.

D. CURRIE.—Pleased to hear that you enjoy reading "Acid Drops" and think them "lovely." Your conversion from Salvationism to Freethought ought to be chronicled in the *War Cry*. But they don't make a fuss over such conversions; rather they hide them as much as possible.

R. A. MARTIN.—We have not received Mr. Symes's *Liberator* for several weeks. We hope nothing has happened to him or the paper. Perhaps it will come along presently in a batch of half-dozen copies, as it has sometimes done before. We are sorry the *Secularist* dropped. A great weight of talent crowded upon it, and it succumbed. Mr. Ward is still young enough, however, to have plenty of time before him (in the ordinary course of things) for more successful ventures.

A. E. RANDALL.—Surely you are mistaken. God *does* create in the Genesis story. The very word *created* is used, though not at the outset in relation to light. What you say is ingenious, but it overlooks the express language of the narrative. For the rest, Huxley simply wanted to avoid odium—and possibly friction—when he spoke of the Miltonic, instead of the Mosaic, theory of creation. Milton only borrowed from Moses, or whoever wrote the Creation story. Afterwards the dreadful word "Moses" was employed by Huxley. It was when he was in a perfectly safe position. See the Prefaces in the collected edition of his writings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Freidenker—Crescent—Truthseeker (New York)—Sydney Bulletin—Boston Investigator—Lucifer—Blue Grass Blade—Searchlight—Reed's Isonomy—Public Opinion—Two Worlds—Torch of Reason—Minneapolis Tribune—Free Society—Progressive Thinker—Secular Thought.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, 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 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, 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.

**With an Eye to their Redemption.**

Salvamy Convert (*testifying*)—"Dear brothers, thank heaven I'm a sinner no longer. I've been in gaol for burglary, but now, praise the Lord, I've left my evil ways and my tools, and —"  
Voice from the Crowd (*anxiously*)—"Where 'ave you left the tools, ole man?"—*Sydney Bulletin*.

**Sugar Plums.**

MR. FOOTE will deliver two special Coronation Lectures at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evenings, June 22 and 29. His subject the first evening will be "Holy-Oiling the King in the House of God." That of the second evening will be "Making King Edward Swear." Handbills announcing these lectures can be obtained for distribution by applying at our publishing office. Friends can help the advertisement effectively in this way, and we hope they will do so. While so many people are getting intoxicated with religion and loyalty, under the manipulation of clever charlatans and impostors, it is well that somebody should speak out in the name of truth and common sense. That is what Mr. Foote proposes to do on both these occasions.

A largely-attended meeting was held in the Bull Ring, Birmingham, on Sunday morning, to protest against the action of the School Board in reference to the local Branch of the National Secular Society. Mr. R. G. Fathers, president of the Branch, took the chair, and speeches were delivered by Messrs. J. H. Ridgway, F. Hanks, F. E. Willis, F. Barras, E. Andrews, and H. Percy Ward. The following resolution was carried unanimously: "That this meeting protests against the action of the School Board, in disallowing the use of the Schools to the Secularists, as an infringement of the rights of Ratepayers, and an unwarrantable attack on the right of Free Speech." In the evening Mr. Ward lectured to a large audience in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms on "The Curse of Priestcraft." Altogether it was a very successful day.

We reproduce on another page the Protest which the Birmingham Branch has had printed for circulation in the city. We understand that it was drawn up by Mr. Francis Neale. Anyone who would like to help the circulation of this Protest should send a donation to Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street, Birmingham.

Mr. Francis Neale is, unfortunately, not well enough to contribute anything to this week's *Freethinker*. He has good hope, however, of being well represented next week.

Owing to the Coronation festivities, which will upset ordinary business arrangements, next week's *Freethinker* will be published on Tuesday instead of Thursday. Lecture notices, etc., must therefore reach us by the first post on Monday at the latest.

**Mr. Watts Again—Final.**

MR. WATTS'S letter is too long for insertion in the midst of this article. It is therefore printed by itself under the heading of "Correspondence." My readers should go through it before they read any further *here*.

Mr. Watts has got himself into a terrible tangle. Perhaps this is due to collaboration; for any judge of style can see that these letters are not exclusively his own.

I made no "original charge" against Mr. Watts. I merely asked him to answer a question put to him publicly in an American Freethought journal. Again, if he will turn to the *Freethinker* of May 4, he will see that the "far other considerations" did not refer to this matter at all, but to other matters introduced by Mr. Watts himself in his letter which appeared in the previous week's issue. It was *he* who began the "accusations." In answering Mr. Ellis's question, he took the opportunity of complaining of "studied slights" and "supersession" and "mischievous influences directed against him." I begged him week after week to explain and justify these accusations against *somebody*, but he declined to do so, and I was obliged to speak out on my own account.

These samples of his confusion must suffice. It would be too tedious to go through the whole of his letter in the same way.

Mr. Watts still talks of his rejected letters. Letter number two was simply a notice that he was "preparing" a statement for the *Freethinker*. The substance of that notice was inserted. Letter number one is mainly reproduced, almost word for word, in the *present* (inserted) letter. Yet the writer still represents himself as gagged.

A good deal of Mr. Watts's communication is a mere waste of words. Some of it is sheer insolence.

None of the persons mentioned in his fifth paragraph would, I fancy, thank *him* for posing as their champion. They differed from me, but they never betrayed me. It is even ridiculous to refer to Mr. Holyoake as ever "working with" me. Mr. Watts sided "with me" in regard to the objections raised by the other persons he mentions. Less than two months ago, even, he hoped I should have "health and strength" to continue my "valuable work," in which he would be "pleased" to render "what co-operation" he could. Since then he has found the "one-man movement" unbearable. Why? Because he found I had resolved to shake myself free from an incubus.

The "Court of Honor" proposal has a plausible appearance. Mr. Watts, knows, however, as well as I do, that such a "Court" has no means of securing direct evidence from persons who do not wish, and do not intend, to be mixed up publicly in this matter. I proposed a far more practical "Court of Honor" to Mr. Watts's friend, Mr. George Anderson. The evidence in that case was all extant and accessible. But my proposal was treated with contemptuous indifference.

Let it be noted that Mr. Watts does not venture to contradict one of the specific statements I made, in the *Freethinker* of June 1, as to his relations with Mr. Anderson and the projected Freethought Institute. He protests his innocence in general terms. But a plea of "Not Guilty" is no answer to the evidence. Mr. Watts knows very well that I could put in *documentary* evidence if the seal of privacy were taken off certain correspondence.

It is beating the air for Mr. Watts to keep repeating that he did not go to the Athenæum Hall with the proprietor. Suppose he did not—just for the sake of argument. He had been there often lecturing. The material point is that he *visited the proprietor*. He admits having done so, with the idea of purchasing the Albert Hall. But I have stated, and I have the proprietor's word for it, that the Albert Hall never was to be sold apart from the Athenæum Hall. They are parts of the same premises.

Mr. Watts is quite aware that I have been as reticent as possible about many things. But as he pointedly asks me to adduce one of the alleged "slights" of which he was not "above talking" I will oblige him. He complained to several persons of having been grossly slighted by me at Mr. Forder's funeral; indeed, I had to stop his talking by dealing with the matter before the N.S.S. Executive, without mentioning his name. Mr. Forder's family asked me to speak at his grave, and I did so. When I had finished—and it was a delicate duty—I turned round and was surprised to find Mr. Watts at my elbow. He asked if he should "say a few words." I replied that I did not see the necessity; in any case, my function was at an end; I had done what the family had asked me to do, and if he wanted to speak he would have to ask *them*. Of course he did nothing of the kind. Mr. Watts had visited Mr. Forder on a debt-collecting mission for Mr. George Anderson, and the family knew it. Details of this matter were given in my reply to Mr. Anderson's pamphlet (*Freethinker*, January 12). They did not reflect much credit on Mr. Watts. At least, I thought so, and I kept his name out of the story. But I fill it in now—at his own request.

A word as to Mr. Watts's testimonial, about which he shows a natural concern. I imagine that I did something in inserting Mr. Holyoake's long appeal. What other Freethought periodical in England inserted it? Mr. Holyoake himself said that he looked to its insertion in the *Freethinker* as the principal means of apprising Mr. Watts's friends of what was being done. Mr. Watts complains that I did not do more. At the same time, he admits that he "said nothing" when my "ruin and disgrace" were being sought by Mr. George Anderson. Whatever were his "reasons" for keeping silent, the man who could *then* "say nothing" should have cut his hand off before penning a complaint of *my* having inefficiently promoted *his* testimonial.

I did say something, but I am told it was too late. The "amount" had already been raised. Well, I am glad to hear it. I really do not wish Mr. Watts any harm. I told him so when I had to break off our personal intimacy twelve months ago, and I have told him so ever since. He may find presently that the

"time" has "arrived" for further "public" statements. He may publish his long-contemplated "pamphlet." But I do not mind, and I repeat that I do not wish him any harm. All I claim is the right to choose my friends, and my more immediate business colleagues; and, when necessary, to relieve myself from close contact with any man who would be more dangerous as a professed friend than as an open enemy. My own peace of mind is of some importance. It is unjust to ask me to bear everything for the sake of the movement. I am not as young as I was, and burdens should not be too heavy for my strength. It is not work that kills. It is the worries that do the mischief.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Bigotry on the Birmingham School Board.

AN APPEAL TO THE RATEPAYERS.

*Are Citizens to be refused the use of their own Schools? Why should Secularists be denied the rights accorded to other people?*

RATEPAYERS.—An atrocious instance of religious bigotry and intolerance has recently occurred in connection with the granting of the use of the Board schools for Sunday lectures.

The Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society for some time was allowed to hire the Bristol Street Board school for lectures on Sundays, and thereby a right enjoyed by others was admitted to be theirs. But a little time ago that right was refused, except on the intolerable conditions imposed on no other society or individuals hiring the schools.

It was said that the local Secularists should not be allowed to sell literature at their meetings. Why? Because, forsooth, some of this literature did not commend itself to the Bishop of Coventry, the chairman of the Board. Who ever thought it would? No doubt, it is not to his ecclesiastical taste, any more than Nonconformist literature would be. To give some semblance of weight to his objection, he has endeavored to make it appear that this literature, or a part of it, is immoral. As Secularism is a system or philosophy of life, established to inculcate morality of the highest and strictest order, it is hardly likely that a Secular Society would circulate immoral literature, however actively it might disperse literature dealing with the prevalent theological creeds.

The Bishop of Coventry has been challenged, and has absolutely failed to show that the literature is immoral, or that it has been, as he asserts, distributed amongst boys and girls. Yet it is, by his casting vote as chairman of the Board, that the use of the schools has been refused to the Secular Society. Half the Board—the Liberal half, to their credit—refused to accept his representations, and the other half, as representing the Church party—always the foes of free opinion—were, apparently, content to take his statements on trust. Eventually he decided the matter in his own favor with his own casting vote. And upon his *ipse dixit* the local Secularists are excluded from schools which, in common with other ratepayers, they have paid to build, and now pay to support.

Is he an impartial judge, as a bishop, of a Secular Society's literature? Obviously not. And should the matter end here? The Secular Society think not. It is a peril to free speech and the expression of independent opinion if a bishop is thus allowed to decide what may or may not be said or sold by those who are necessarily his theological opponents.

The Secular Society, therefore, appeal to you, the ratepayers, the real owners of the schools, to take measures to rectify this wrong. If such an injustice is permitted to pass without remonstrance or redress, it is impossible to say where this intolerant spirit of dealing with dissentient opinion may end. The Secular Society, therefore, consider that they are fulfilling a public duty in making this protest against what is really the suppression of free speech.

—Issued by the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society.

## Kindness to Animals.

I WONDER if lovers of animals have given thought to the printed announcements and illustrations regarding the training of the King's horses for the coronation procession—the pain endured by the poor brutes when forced round and round in a building to the maddening din of the maniacal noises of children, hired for the occasion, with trumpets, drums, etc., while flags are dashed before the horses' eyes at every step.

Where are the society advocates of kindness to animals? A working man would not escape for ill-treating his horse, which had not suffered half as much as these royal creatures.

It is marvellously ridiculous what some people will do, and I doubt whether such employment for children is beneficial.

W. A. VAUGHAN.

## Poetry and Ethics.

"Verse is an absurdity except as an expression of some higher movement of the mind, or as an expedient to lift other minds to the same ideal level."—LOWELL.

"Philosophy will clip an angel's wings."—KEATS.

THOUGH it is essential that great poetry should contain great thought, it does not inevitably follow that good ethics make good poetry. For his didactic reflections no one would crown the gentle Cowper among the immortals. Like the demented Faust in Marlowe's drama, he could see little else but Christ's blood streaming in the firmament. Indeed, in the case of a greater than Cowper, the too insistent moral frequently reduces to flat prose whole pages of verse, intended for poetry. When Wordsworth instructs, he is often insufferably dull. For example:—

O for the coming of that glorious time  
When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth  
And best protection, this Imperial Realm,  
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
An obligation on her part to teach  
Them who are born to serve her and obey;  
Binding herself by stature to secure,  
For all the children whom her soil maintains,  
The rudiments of letters, and inform  
The mind with moral and religious truths.

After quoting these lines, Matthew Arnold remarks:—

"One can hear them being quoted at a Social Science Congress; one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial towns; dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight; benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in hither, an unutterable sense of lamentation and mourning and woe."

If the poet is to be a teacher, this is not the proper method of his instruction. He must not lay aside his singing robes for the academic gown. He must not forget that he is a poet, and that his mission is to move the emotions, to lift us up to the ideal, and to enchant us with the magic of words. For reasons springing from the very nature of poetry, didactic verse is universally reckoned among the lower forms of the art, hardly an appropriate vehicle for the greatest masters.

Moral teaching is too much a matter of time and place. The morality of one generation differs from that of another. The ethic of the Occident is not that of the Orient. Nor should poetry of the higher kind seek to satisfy the cravings of sentimentalism for a divine or poetic arrangement of the universe which would reward virtue and punish vice. Rather should the poet make us feel that virtue is its own reward, that—

She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,  
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky.  
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

Here is the essential point. The poet appeals to our feelings. His thought is not only addressed to the intellect, but also to the emotions.

In this sense, one of the greatest teachers was Wordsworth, not the didactic versifier just quoted, but the inspired singer. He does not exhort us to love nature. He lays bare, with resistless majesty, the growth of his own mind. This combination of thought and emotion, so wonderfully wrought by Wordsworth, is characteristic of the greatest poets. Dante embodying the Middle Ages in his divine vision, Spenser moralising the Renaissance in pictures of Fairyland, Milton transforming even Puritanism to beauty, Goethe idealising European culture, all make this appeal. In the highest perfection of poetry, beauty and utility are identical.

In presenting great thoughts vitalised by emotion, and in presenting the ideal, poetry becomes, to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, "a criticism of life."

The great poets have never been enamored of "poetic" justice. To them the act has always carried in itself its results. In Shakespeare's plays the facts are presented, as we never have an opportunity of seeing them in real life. The unessential is removed; attention is concentrated upon the significant elements. In the tragedies the moral wreck is almost invariably complete before the physical agency of death is called

upon to end the agony. Lear's madness, Macbeth's ambition, Othello's jealousy, Timon's misanthropy, each passion and defect of character is revealed in its germination and traced in its fatal growth to that overwhelming mastery in which the catastrophe becomes inevitable. Even in the Comedies the growth and decay of character are so remorselessly presented that a tragic impression prevails. We cannot be altogether light-hearted.

Falstaff has been called the greatest comic creation in all literature. In spite of the scene in which Henry casts him off, no one could accuse Shakespeare of preaching over him. Yet the presentation of Falstaff is moral.

Contemplating the perfection of the ideal in contrast with the abomination of the reality, Byron and Leopardi lost courage. Therein lies their weakness. Their strength reposes upon the persistence with which the ideal besieged their minds. It inspires all their loftiest passages. Without it they would have had no message we should have cared to listen to.

As an asserter of the ideal, Shelley is very effectual. He left behind him such images of beauty, such inspiration towards the highest possibilities of humanity, that we cannot read his poems with indifference. We are uplifted by his life and force, and we love him and learn from him. Like his own skylark, he is one—

Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought

To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

From the poet we ask for insight, imagination, emotional power, imperial command of language. But inevitably amongst our demands will be that he be an artist.

A poet is never less of a poet than when he is engaged in preaching. Even Shelley sinned in this respect. The one qualification inexorably demanded is, that the poet shall know his craft. So long as a painter's pictures are beautiful in form and color, so long as a poet's verses are clear in meaning and exquisite in verbal expression, the æsthetic sense will be satisfied.

"*La correction de la forme, c'est la vertu,*" said Théophile Gautier, and, in matters artistic, with certain reservations, that ruling must be accepted. The nameless, mystic charm which permeates Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*, Shelley's *Witch of Atlas*, Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, and Tennyson's *Lotos Eaters*, is entirely unconnected with any ethical significance. Age cannot wither, nor custom stale, Catullus's praise of his beloved "olive-silvery Sirmio."

Even the delicate Epicureans, though mostly unaware of their mission, are occasionally didactic. Villon, with his plaintive query, "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" Herrick singing "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," Omar Khayyam lamenting that "spring should vanish with the rose"—these poets cannot altogether evade the lessons they have not the slightest desire to convey. Even art, for art's sake, is unconsciously ethical. Noble writing means noble thinking.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Gospels Tested by History.

"It is the unavoidable fate of a spurious historical work of any length to be involved in contradictions."—HENSTENBERG, *Dissert. on Pentateuch*.

THERE are many who, having given up the miracles of the New Testament, still believe that, apart from the miraculous, they still possess an authentic and historical biography in the Four Gospels. Nothing can be further from the actual facts of the case. To begin with, the Four Gospels, while pretending to be written by Jews—personal followers of Jesus and natives of Palestine—were evidently written by men of another country many years after the time of the events they describe, and display gross ignorance of the manners and customs of the Jews and of their rulers, Jewish and Roman. As Matthew Arnold, "the Apostle of Culture," who cannot be accused of being a metaphysical German, pointed out:—

"He (John) speaks as if they and their usages belonged to another race from himself—to another world. The

waterpots at Cana are set 'after the manner of the *purifying of the Jews*'; 'there arose a question between John's disciples and a Jew about *purifying*'; 'now the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand'; 'they wound the body of Jesus in linen clothes with spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury'; 'there they laid Jesus, because of the *preparation of the Jews*'.....A Jew talking of the Jews' Passover, and of a dispute of some of John's disciples *with a Jew about purifying*. It is like an Englishman writing of the Derby as the English people's Derby, or talking of a dispute between some of Mr. Cobden's disciples and an Englishman about free trade. An Englishman would never speak so.....Again, twice the Fourth Gospel speaks of Caiaphas as 'high-priest of that year,' as if the Jewish high-priesthood had been at that time a yearly office, which it was not. It is a mistake a foreigner might perfectly well have made, but hardly a Jew. It is like talking of an American 'president of that year,' as if the American presidency were a yearly office. An American could never adopt, one thinks, such a way of speaking. Again, the disciple who, at the high-priest's palace, brings Peter in, is called by the writer of the Fourth Gospel 'an acquaintance of the high-priest.' One of the poor men who followed Jesus *an acquaintance of a grandee like Caiaphas!*..... which is like the exaggeration of calling a London working-man, who is in the throng round a police-court during an exciting inquiry, and has interest enough to get a friend in, 'an acquaintance of the Secretary of State.' As the social distinctions of Palestine are confounded, so are its geographical distinctions. 'Bethany beyond Jordan' is like 'Willesden beyond Trent.' A native could never have said it. This is so manifest, indeed, that in the later manuscripts Bethany was changed into Bethabara, and so it stands in our version. But the three earlier and authoritative manuscripts all agree in *Bethany*, which we may pronounce certainly, therefore, the original reading. Nevertheless, the writer knew of the Bethany near Jerusalem; he makes it the scene of the raising of Lazarus. But his Palestinian geography is so vague, it has for him so little of the reality and necessity which it would have for a native, that when he wants a name for a locality he takes the first village that comes into his remembrance, without troubling himself to think whether it suits or no" (*God and the Bible*, pp. 142-145; ed. 1889).

Nor are these discrepancies confined to John, as Matthew Arnold stated, for Matthew speaks of "Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof" (Matthew ii. 13), being evidently under the impression that Bethlehem is on the sea. It would be as accurate to speak of the coasts of Birmingham as the coasts of Bethlehem. Mark, not to be outdone, speaks of Jesus "departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis" (Mark vii. 31)—a statement containing two geographical and one historical error. Leaving the historical error for the moment, we may notice that the Sea of Galilee lies between Tyre and Sidon and the Decapolis, so that Jesus could not pass through the Decapolis to reach the Sea of Galilee. The same ignorance is betrayed by Luke. Dr. Estlin Carpenter notices: "The geographical confusion into which the writer (Luke) is betrayed in his account of the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem through Samaria and Galilee implies that he was not himself familiar with Palestine" (*The First Three Gospels*, p. 334). And he adds: "The vague phrase, 'a city of the Jews,' suggests that the writer was himself not a Jew. He was a Gentile writing for Gentiles, whose claims he takes every opportunity of establishing."

So far, the evidence is amply sufficient to prove that the writers of the Four Gospels were not natives of Palestine; but further examination, in the light of our historical knowledge of that time, makes it plain that they were not written until long after the time that Jesus and his disciples are said to have lived. Their ignorance of contemporary history is phenomenal. On every point where their evidence can be tested by the inscriptions and histories of that time, they are found to be in irreconcilable contradiction. Many books have been written with the object of elucidating the year in which Christ was born, but the only point upon which scholars are agreed is, that it could not have been in the year one—which the vast majority of Christians believe to have been the year of his birth. Matthew tells us that he was born "in the days of Herod the King." Luke says that, "in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria." But Herod died in

the year 4 B.C., and Cyrenius was not made Governor until the year 6 A.D., an interval of ten years! To quote Dr. Estlin Carpenter again, who, as an earnest Christian, would not exaggerate the point, "The enrolment which gives occasion to the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem—cannot be fitted into imperial usage, or into secular history. Such enrolment was for purposes of taxation, and it is said to have embraced 'all the world.' Three times did Augustus impose a general taxation; not, indeed, upon all the provinces of the empire, but upon all Roman citizens in the years 26 and 6 B.C. and 14 A.D. The first of these occasions is too early, and the last too late. On the second, while Herod was still alive, Judea and Galilee were not under Roman jurisdiction for such purposes at all; and, even after Herod's death, Judea still remained for some years outside the circle of imperial administration until the deposition of his son Archelaus in A.D. 6. Moreover, the Roman census was always taken at the citizen's own residence. It has been pleaded that the arrangement which sent Joseph to Bethlehem was a concession to Jewish ideas. But how was it possible for every householder to betake himself to the birthplace of an ancestor a thousand years before? 'Everyone,' we are told, 'went to his own city.' The whole population is set in motion, in order to get Mary to Bethlehem. And the device does not, even then, secure its end, for the law did not require the registration of the citizen's wife, still less of his betrothed. If we accept the judgment of the profoundest of modern students of Imperial Rome—the historian Mommsen—the enrolment, as Luke describes it, was an impossibility." Mommsen affirms "that no one cognisant of the facts can believe that any census was carried out by the Romans at that time, 'whatever theologians, or those who, like theologians, talk in bonds, may have persuaded themselves or others'" (*The First Three Gospels*, pp. 148-150). To sum the matter up: 1. There was no Roman census at that time. 2. There could have been no census taken by the Romans during the reign of Herod, as the country was not under Roman jurisdiction. 3. The Romans took the census at the citizen's own house, the census being taken for the purpose of taxation; to allow the people to register themselves at a distant city would defeat the object they had in view. 4. If it was a concession to Jewish ideas, then Joseph had no occasion to take Mary with him, as the Jews only registered the males of the population. 5. If the census took place under Cyrenius, then Herod had been dead ten years, and the story of his massacre of the children is false.

WALTER MANN.

(To be concluded.)

## Death of Jesus in the Light of Contemporary Science.

THOSE who have doubted that Jesus died on the cross have given the following reasons for their belief: (1) The crucifixion was not sufficiently long to produce death; further, it was not aggravated by breaking the bones of the legs, as Jesus was spared this. (2) The wounds of Jesus were not sufficiently serious to produce death. (3) Jesus rested on the cross in a state of apparent death, and he was living when taken down.

Was the crucifixion sufficient to produce death, and at the end of how many hours does death generally occur? The duration of the crucifixion was evidently variable, and depended a great deal on the state of resistance of the subject. Because of the nerves which are abundant in the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet, it is not to be doubted that the impaling was very painful. It is also certain that the "emotions, appearances before the judges, ill treatments," the flagellations, and all that followed, sorely tried Jesus; and it is known that he was incapable of carrying his cross. However, we also know that this is not sufficient to cause death after a short space of time, as there are cases in which persons have remained many hours on the cross without death intervening. By these examples it appears that crucifixion alone could not have produced the death of Jesus; and, in reference to the wounds produced by the nails, these wounds being the result of

crushing, the hemorrhage was small. A burning fever might possibly occur, which would be manifested by an intense thirst; but the flow of blood could not be sufficient to cause death. Death, in this case, is preceded by a comatose condition, which would be inconsistent with the cry uttered in a loud voice by Jesus shortly before his last breath. All the commentators of the Gospels further agree that Jesus did not remain more than from three to six hours on the cross, and death cannot be produced by an exposure of this duration to this mode of torture.

The generally-accepted version of the lance wound received by Jesus is that the blow was struck on the left side, and that there flowed from the wound water mingled with blood. It has been correctly remarked that blood does not flow from a corpse, and, therefore, if blood followed the lance stroke, Jesus must have been alive; further, in order that the blow might have killed the dying man, it must have injured a vital organ. It must be observed that a lance directed upward and from right to left could not reach the right-hand cavities of the heart without first opening the peritoneal cavity, traversing the liver, the pericardium, and perhaps the pleura. We must, therefore, ask how the few hundred grammes of blood which a right ventricle could contain, could penetrate to the exterior of the body after such a great wound? Also with those who die slowly there is found a distended heart in which the blood has very rapidly coagulated, and it must follow that, if a flood of the liquid appeared on the side of Jesus, it could not have come from the heart. With regard to the vena cava, its situation is too far back to have allowed it to be touched by the lance. If the wound had been in the stomach, a lesion of the digestive tube would have been disclosed by an ejection of blood mingled with alimentary matter, either from the mouth or the opening of the wound, or at least by a discharge of blood into the abdominal cavity. Had the liver been touched the symptoms of an internal hemorrhage would have been observed, as in the case of President Carnot, in whose case the blow of the poignard directed downward, perforated the liver and the portal vein, inducing a state of coma, whereas Jesus, we have been told, cried out with a loud voice. We thus see that death was not due to the lance wound or to the torture of crucifixion, as so often stated.

Now, with regard to syncope, which occurs in cases of crucifixion, and which can make an apparent state of death seem a true state of death, this is easily explained, the stupid and ignorant soldiers taking for death that which was only a loss of consciousness. Further, the legs and arms were bound so tightly with thick and rigid ropes that the physiological consequence of such compression would be a violent rushing of blood to the heart and head, which would be quite capable of producing apoplectic conditions as well as swooning.

The singular faculty of certain subjects to remain inhumed for several days, even for several weeks, without death ensuing is well known, occurring chiefly among the Indian fakirs. The case of Jesus is in no way similar, however, to that of the fakir, the state of this latter requiring very complex conditions, which conditions did not exist for Jesus, and therefore we must conclude that, if there was apparent death in the case of Jesus, this was produced by syncope. This condition easily arises when the subject is standing, and Jesus rested on the cross in this attitude, it being also a well-known fact that syncope is produced after strong moral emotions, great sorrow, wounds, or a serious traumatic lesion of the limbs. The reader may observe that, "if there was syncope, this might have been mortal." True, but it might not have been prolonged, and, under the care which was lavished upon Jesus by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the one crucified could easily have been resuscitated.

—Dr. Cabanes, in "La Revue," Paris. Translated and condensed for "Public Opinion" (New York).

Are you persuaded that you see more clearly than I?..... Point me out a better way than I have yet known. And if I linger in the path I have been accustomed to tread, and therefore am unwilling to leave it, labor with me a little, take me by the hand, and lead me as I am able to bear.—John Wesley.

## Correspondence.

### MR. WATTS'S LETTER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You were the *first* to make public accusations against me, and, so far as these accusations were intended to reflect upon my conduct, you have failed to produce a particle of evidence to substantiate them. Your allegations have been based upon *suspicious*, nothing more. Your original charge was that I sent a certain pamphlet to Toronto—which I did not deny—and you added that in connection therewith it "will be found that far other considerations are involved"; but you have not yet stated what those "far other considerations" are.

You have refused to insert my two last letters, which contained much that would have explained my position. It is, therefore, difficult to make known my side of the question when you claim the right (and exercise it) of deciding what shall or shall not appear in the record of our controversy. The reasons you give for not inserting my letter dated May 24 are what the Americans would characterize as "too thin." You say that since I wrote my previous letter you "had written nothing that called for a reply." This is not accurate, for in the *Freethinker* of May 25, under the heading "Mr. Watts's Apologia," you ask what I mean by "studied slights," "supersession," and "mischievous campaign." In the first letter which you rejected I said that I had not once used the phrase "mischievous campaign" in this controversy, although you quote it as if I had. I intimated that you should know the difference between a "campaign," which involves personal action, and "influence," which may result from circumstances which cannot be traced to any particular person or persons.

Regarding the "slights" and "supersessions," which appear to exercise your mind, it may be well to reproduce what I really did say in the *Freethinker* dated April 27. Therein I stated: "I expected other considerations than the studied slights and supersession which have been regrettably to the fore during the past year." It should be noted that I here make no charge against "colleagues." That is a convenient inference of yours. But, to use your own words (*Freethinker*, May 11): "I decline to be held responsible for any man's inferences." Moreover, you have no right to bring in my colleagues, to whom I have not referred. I repeat, I am willing to submit my case to a Court of Honor, provided you will submit yours. Then all the facts on both sides could be known and made public.

It is correct that I *did* keep silent for a time, because I waited for an answer to the question as to what "other considerations" were "involved" in my sending Mr. Ellis the pamphlet. I further asked you to mention one act of mine which could be shown to be disloyal to Secular principles. Upon this point you have "kept silence." But, above all, you have ignored my request for evidence of the cause of your suspicions—namely, that I was in league with Mr. Anderson against you; that I aspired to the pastorate of an Anderson Institute; that I went with the proprietor of the Athenæum Hall to inspect that building; and that I was at a meeting where the project of a Freethought Hall was "talked over." The fact is, you have no other grounds for making these accusations except those founded upon suspicion and jealousy. I assert your accusations are utterly untrue; and, unless you can furnish evidence to prove your statements, you stand convicted of an attempt to do me a serious injustice.

Your eulogy of the late Mr. Wheeler had nothing to do with the issue between us; but it reminds me that Mr. Wheeler was about the only colleague with whom you maintained for any lengthy period amicable personal relationship. Such sturdy workers as Mr. G. J. Holyoake, Mr. J. M. Robertson, Mr. Touzeau Parris, Mr. George Standing, Mr. W. H. Reynolds, and Mr. J. P. Gilmour were compelled to discontinue working with you. These gentlemen did not believe in "a one-man movement," hence they separated from you.

It is true I was hopeful that, through a "rich friend," I should give you a "surprise." The "surprise" may come yet, but will possibly now take another form than the one originally intended.

I have nothing to do with the manner in which the proposed Institute "project was launched"; you must settle that point with those immediately concerned. I was not consulted in the matter; neither did I give any opinion with reference thereto. If you are still suspicious upon that point, please state upon what *evidence* you base your suspicion. At the same time, perhaps you will mention what are the alleged "slights" that, in your own words, I have "not been above talking about." I know nothing about a letter that you say Mr. Anderson has recently written you. Neither is it my business to inquire why Mr. Holyoake has not been "anxious about any trouble" of yours. I do not wish you to forget that I said nothing when what you term "the President's ruin and disgrace were being sought." I had good reasons for remaining silent; but the time has not yet arrived for me to make those reasons public.

Your last reference is to my Testimonial. When you first

introduced the subject in the *Freethinker* dated April 20, you acknowledged a letter from Mr. G. J. Holyoake with reference to the said Testimonial, and stated that you could do no more than insert it until you had heard from me as to the sending of the before-mentioned pamphlet. You *did* hear from me, but nothing appeared from your pen regarding the Testimonial until your attack upon me in the *Freethinker* of June 1. It was not until then that you expressed a "hope" that the desired subscription would be raised. But by that time the amount was raised, and without your aid.

CHARLES WATTS.

## 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, "Holy-Oiling the King in the House of God."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture.

STATION ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, W. J. Ramsey; 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, A lecture.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, Mr. White, "God is Love: Is it True?"

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch N. S. S.): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY (West London Branch N.S.S.): 7.30, F. A. Davies.

HYDE PARK, near Marble Arch (West London Branch N. S. S.). Freethought literature on sale at all meetings. 11.30, F. A. Davies.

HYDE PARK FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY (near Marble Arch): 2.45, Addresses by Messrs. Ivan Paperno, J. Rowney, and F. Howard, "The Religious Aspect of the Coronation Ceremony"; 7, Edward White, "Science and the Bible." Thursday (Coronation Day), at 7.30, E. White, "The Coronation Bible." Saturday, June 28, at 6.45, Addresses by Messrs. J. Rowney, I. Paperno, and F. Howard, "Some Defenders of the Faith."

VICTORIA PARK (Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.): 3.15, W. Heaford, "The Dream of Immortality"; 6.15, W. Heaford, "Holy Mysteries."

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A. B. Moss.

### COUNTRY.

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

BRADFORD (Open-space, Merley-street, opposite Bradlaugh Institute): H. P. Ward—3, "Secularism: Defined and Defended"; 7, "The Failure of Christianity." June 23, at 8, "Jehovah's Jokes."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): No lectures during June, July, and August.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members and friends meet in front of Victoria Station at 9.15 prompt to go by 9.25 train to Worksop, and thence by conveyances to Tuxford.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "The History of Christianity."

### Lecturer's Engagements.

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