

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

He that sits down a Philosopher, rises up an Atheist.
—QUARLES.

Our New Prime Minister's Religion.

MR BALFOUR having succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister, his religious views will probably be a subject of some interest. That he is a Christian goes without saying. No man but a Christian—at least, by profession—stands the slightest chance of attaining to the premiership. It would make no difference if the government were Tory or Liberal. During the late war a good many Nonconformists sang the praises of Mr. John Morley, but few of them would relish the prospect of his being at the head of a triumphant Liberal party. They might not object to his occupying a more or less subordinate post in the Ministry; there would certainly, however, be a general Christian opposition to his holding the highest position of actual power in the State.

The principal source we must go to for Mr. Balfour's religious views is his book, published some seven years ago, and entitled *The Foundations of Belief*, with the sub-title of "Notes Introductory to the Study of Theology." This is a well-written volume. Professor Huxley thought little of its arguments but a good deal of its style. What it chiefly lacks is a sense of earnestness. Mr. Balfour never swerves from the attitude of the superior person. Moreover, he selected a task that relieved him from the difficulty of apologetics. His work being "introductory," he had nothing to defend; but he was free all the while to attack, and he made use of his opportunities.

There is an acute observation in Mr. Balfour's preface. "The decisive battles of Theology," he says, "are fought beyond its frontiers. It is not over purely religious controversies that the cause of Religion is lost or won. The judgments we shall form upon its special problems are commonly settled for us by our general mode of looking at the Universe." This is quite true, but it might be differently expressed. Theology, it might be said, is utterly incapable of reforming itself from within. It can only move under outside pressure and stimulus. It has to share—and it is always the last thing to share—in the general progress of mankind. Mr. Balfour may have perceived this, but he does not mention it. As soon as possible he begins his attack on Naturalism, which he defines in the following manner:—

NATURALISM.

"Agnosticism, Positivism, Empiricism, have all been used more or less correctly to describe this scheme of thought; though in the following pages, for reasons with which it is not necessary to trouble the reader, the term which I shall commonly employ is Naturalism. But whatever the name selected, the thing itself is sufficiently easy to describe. For its leading doctrines are that we may know 'phenomena' and the laws by which they are connected, but nothing more. 'More' there may or may not be; but if it exists we can never apprehend it: and whatever the World may be "in its reality" (supposing such an expression to be otherwise than meaningless), the World for us, the World with which alone we are concerned, or of which alone we can have any cognisance, is that World which is revealed to us through perception,

and which is the subject-matter of the natural Sciences. Here, and here only, are we on firm ground. Here, and here only, can we discover anything which deserves to be described as Knowledge. Here, and here only, may we profitably exercise our reason or gather the fruits of Wisdom."

The definition is a good one, but the criticism is less masterly. Mr. Balfour argues that no code of morals can be very effective without appealing to "emotions of reverence," and where does reverence come in if our origin is purely material? On what ground does the Naturalist ascribe more dignity to one part of his nature than to another; why should he put morality above appetite, or reason above pleasure? Mr. Balfour has a right to ask such questions, but he has no right to pretend that they have never been answered. Mill dealt with them effectively enough in his *Utilitarianism*—a valuable essay (in spite of its defects) which has somehow been allowed to drop out of print. The truth is, though, that such questions often involve a great deal of perverseness and a good deal of insolence. It is easy enough to ask a Naturalist why he values his child's kiss above a chocolate cream, or his wife's love beyond a good dinner; but the best reply to such queries might well be a stare of astonishment, dashed with a strong tincture of contempt. And if an articulate answer is demanded, it might be observed that taste is hardly a matter of dispute, and that some things have always to be taken for granted by a direct appeal to consciousness. With regard to "reverence" the reply to Mr. Balfour is far from difficult. Did not one of the writers of the Christian Scriptures ask how a man could love God whom he had not seen if he did not love his brother whom he had seen? And how, we ask in the same spirit, can there be anything to reverence in God if there is nothing to reverence in Humanity? The worse you paint man, the worse you paint the deity. If the creature is so vile, what must be thought of the creator? Mr. Balfour overlooks this obvious retort in the following highly-wrought passage:—

MAN AND THE UNIVERSE.

"Man, so far as natural science by itself is able to teach us, is no longer the final cause of the universe, the Heaven-descended heir of all the ages. His very existence is an accident, his story a brief and transitory episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets. Of the combination of causes which first converted a dead organic compound into the living progenitors of humanity, science, indeed, as yet knows nothing. It is enough that from such beginnings famine, disease, and mutual slaughter, fit nurses of the future lords of creation, have gradually evolved, after infinite travail, a race with conscience enough to feel that it is vile, and intelligence enough to know that it is insignificant. We survey the past, and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigation, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish. The uneasy consciousness, which in this obscure corner has for a brief space broken the contented silence of the universe, will be at rest. Matter will know itself no longer. "Imperishable monuments" and "immortal deeds," death itself,

and love stronger than death, will be as though they had never been. Nor will anything that *is* be better or be worse for all that the labor, genius, devotion, and suffering of men have striven through countless generations to effect."

This is an elegant piece of composition, but it seems to lack the saving grace of sincerity. The language is certainly not that of intense belief. A preacher in earnest, like John Wesley, cries out, "You are a living man, but a dead Christian"—or, "You have gained riches and hell-fire." When a man talks like that you know he means it. Mr. Balfour strikes a very different note. Nor is the logic of this passage to be admired. It is a case of suicide. The second half destroys the first, or the first the second, or each the other. Man is represented as vile and insignificant in order to throw discredit on natural evolution; he is then represented as great and noble in order to show that the close of his career will be a shocking catastrophe. We have not time to point out the minor illogicalities of this passage. We believe it originally formed part of an address to a Church Congress, and it is well suited to the mental atmosphere of such an assembly.

Mr. Balfour goes on to attack Naturalism from an ethical standpoint. This is what he says:—

NATURALISM AND MORAL BEAUTY.

"If Naturalism be true, or, rather, if it be the whole truth, then is morality but a bare catalogue of utilitarian precepts; beauty but the chance occasion of a passing pleasure; reason but the dim passage from one set of unthinking habits to another. All that gives dignity to life, all that gives value to effort, shrinks and fades under the pitiless glare of a creed like this; and even curiosity, the hardest among the noble passions of the soul, must languish under the conviction that neither for this generation nor for any that shall come after it, neither in this life nor in another, will the tie be wholly loosed by which reason, not less than appetite, is held in hereditary bondage to the service of our material needs."

Obviously the appeal in this passage is to the orthodox. There is none to impartial reason. Mr. Balfour ignores the fact that there are Christians who are also Utilitarians. Paley's *Moral Philosophy* has even been a text-book in Christian universities. As for the "pitiless glare of a creed" like Naturalism, we say that it merely exists in Mr. Balfour's imagination. And considering that the vast majority of Christians believe in the resurrection of the body, there is something positively grotesque in the final reference to "appetites" and "material needs." The fact is that men have *talked* about a spiritual life in the world to come, but they have never been able to *realise* it except in connection with the body. Has there ever been a description of heaven without a place for the senses and the emotions that depend upon them? Has there ever been a description of hell except in terms of the crudest materialism?

Notwithstanding the elegance of Mr. Balfour's style, his arguments are too frequently on a level with those of the street-corner preachers. The common argument, for instance, that "infidels" would all rush to the Devil if they were not kept within a certain measure of decency by their Christian neighbors, is presented by Mr. Balfour in this fashion:—

PARASITES ON CHRISTIANITY.

"I desire neither to ignore the existence nor to minimise the merits of those shining examples of virtue unsupported by religion. But though the facts be true, the reasoning based on them will not bear close examination. Biologists tell us of parasites which live, and can only live, within the bodies of animals more highly organised than they.....So it is with those persons who claim to show by their example that Naturalism is practically consistent with the maintenance of ethical ideals with which Naturalism has no natural affinity. Their spiritual life is parasitic: it is sheltered by convictions which belong, not to them, but to the society of which they form a part; it is nourished by processes in which they take no share. And when these convictions decay, and these processes come to an end, the alien life which they have maintained can scarce be expected to outlast them."

What a display of arrogance! Mr. Balfour would never dare to talk like that face to face with Mr. John Morley or Mr. Herbert Spencer. Does he not see, too, how he lays himself open to the retort that Christianity is parasitic—nay, that *all* theology is parasitic? What has it ever done but trade upon the natural virtues of mankind, and also upon their natural weaknesses; founding on the former its pretensions, and on the latter its power?

Mr. Balfour naturally sings the praise of Authority over Reason:—

REASON AND AUTHORITY.

"We must not forget that it is Authority rather than reason to which, in the main, we owe, not religion only, but ethics and politics; that it is Authority which supplies us with essential elements in the premises of science; that it is Authority rather than Reason which lays deep the foundations of social life; that it is Authority rather than Reason which cements its superstructure. And though it may seem to savor of paradox, it is yet no exaggeration to say, that if we would find the quality in which we must notably excel the brute creation, we should look for it, not so much in our faculty of convincing and being convinced by the exercise of reasoning, as in our capacity for influencing and being influenced through the action of Authority."

The logical fallacy in this passage is easy of detection. The "Authority" which is so lauded is only "Reason" associated with elders in relation to children, or with society in relation to individuals. When this is realised Mr. Balfour's rhetoric raises nothing more than a smile.

Mr. Balfour will not win the approval of the majority of Christians by what he says on their special behalf. Take the following, for instance:—

INSPIRATION.

"It becomes evident that Inspiration is limited to no age, to no country, to no people. It is required by those who learn not less than by those who teach. Wherever an approach has been made to truth, wherever any individual soul has assimilated some old discovery, or has forced the secret of a new one, there is its co-operation to be discovered. Its workings are to be traced not merely in the later development of beliefs, but far back among their unhonored beginnings. Its aid has been granted not merely along the main line of religious progress, but in the side-alleys to which there seems no issue.....Whatever be the terms in which we choose to express our faith, let us not give color to the opinion that His [God's] assistance to mankind has been narrowed down to the sources, however unique, from which we immediately, and consciously, draw our own spiritual nourishment."

This theory of Inspiration is held by the so-called Higher Critics. It is not held by the multitude of believers. And in the long run, we believe, it will be found that to teach the inspiration of *all* religions is to show the inspiration of *none*. To share round a claim of this kind is to destroy it altogether.

Nor will the Christian thank Mr. Balfour for the following statement of the difficulties of his position in the light of modern science:—

THE DIFFICULTIES OF FAITH.

"The feeling of trusting dependence which was easy for the primitive tribes, who regarded themselves as their God's peculiar charge, and supposed Him in some special sense to dwell among them, is not easy for us; nor does it tend to become easier. We can no longer share their naïve anthropomorphism. We search out God with eyes grown old in studying Nature, with minds fatigued by centuries of metaphysic, and imaginations glutted with material infinities. It is in vain that we describe Him as immanent in creation, and refuse to reduce Him to abstraction, be it deistic or be it pantheistic. The overwhelming force and regularity of the great natural movements dull the sharp impression of an ever-present Personality deeply concerned in our spiritual well-being. He is hidden, not revealed, in the multitude of phenomena, and as our knowledge of phenomena increases, He retreats out of all realised connection with us farther and yet farther into the illimitable unknown."

How is the Christian to be extricated from these difficulties and relieved from this gloom? Mr. Balfour has his prescription. It is the old one—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt

be saved." That is how it was put when men were in earnest. Mr. Balfour puts it in this way:—

THE INCARNATION.

"What is needed is such a living faith in God's relation to Man as shall leave no place for that helpless resentment against the appointed Order so apt to rise within us at the sight of undeserved pain. And this faith is possessed by those who vividly realise the Christian form of Theism. For they worship One Who is no remote contriver of a universe to whose ills he is indifferent. If they suffer, did He not on their account suffer also? If suffering falls not always on the most guilty, was He not innocent? Shall they cry aloud that the world is ill-designed for their convenience, when He for their sakes submitted Himself to its conditions?"

All we need say on this argument is that Mr. Balfour can hardly imagine it will have any force with those who are not already Christians. He is arguing to the convinced, and preaching to the converted. In his moments of greatest self-deception he must surely find it difficult to suppose that any unbeliever in Christianity could see what there is in the suffering of the innocent to alleviate the suffering of the guilty, or why the suffering of two thousand years ago should console for the suffering of to-day. The degradation of God is not the elevation of Man. And it is the comfort of a poor nature to feel that misery falls upon both the small and the great.

G. W. FOOTE.

An Elizabethan "Moralist."

"THE poor are always with us"—so are the moralists. In every age and in every land there have been abundant crops of moralists—people who inveigh against what they profess to consider the faults of their neighbors—and the curious thing is, that they have always denounced the same evils in exactly the same language. Either the evils are the same in all ages, or the moralists are singularly deficient in invention. Occasionally they undertake to blacken some period of ancient history. The course is easy. They reproduce some of the diatribes of the "moralist" of the period, and then they weep over the depravity of that age, quite ignoring the fact that their own time has exactly the same features. Occasionally they affect to deplore the degeneracy of their own age, and trot out the usual catalogue of troubles without a moment's thought that precisely the same troubles have affected every previous generation of mankind. "Tears, idle tears," have been shed in abundance, Tartuffes have uttered their hypocritical thunders, epileptics have "prophesied," but the world has rolled on, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

These reflections are called up by a perusal of the somewhat famous sixteenth-century book, which had great popularity in its day, and passed through many editions—viz., *The Anatomy of Abuses, containing a description of such notable Vices and Enormities as reign in many Christian countries of the World, but especially in this Realm of Anglia*, by Phillip Stubbes, Gentleman. (The common herd did not write books in the sixteenth century.) Stubbes was a prolific Puritan author in the time of Elizabeth, greatly regarded by the "saints," but much laughed at by the worldlings, who charged the Puritans of "extending their invectives so far against abuse, that almost the thing remains not whereof they admit any lawful use. Speaking of pride as though they were afraid somebody should cut too large pennyworths out of their cloth, and of covetousness as if the proverb had been verified in them. Their ignorant zeal will presumptuously press into the Press, inquiring most curiously into the Commonwealth, correcting that Sin in others wherewith they are corrupted themselves. You may know these men's spirit by their speech, their minds by their meddling, their folly by their phrase. The cloak of zeal becometh a coat of mail unto a hypocrite, a pretence of purity a penthouse for iniquity, a gloss of godliness a covert for all naughtiness."

If one were not so used to the jeremiads of the moralists of all ages, one would be surprised at the

extreme modernity of Stubbes's complaints. One of his troubles is *the poverty of the clergy!* Readers of the *Guardian* and the *Church Times* suppose this is a very modern grievance. On the contrary, it is a perennial cry. Stubbes complains that the clergy of his time were often so poor that they could not buy books. In fact, they sometimes could not procure the common necessaries of life. Some had no vicarages, and were obliged to lodge in the village pothouse. Farmers were in the habit of avoiding the payment of tithes. If the tithes were payable upon the increase of live stock, and the farmer had land in two parishes, he would take care that his calves and lambs were dropped in the parish for which he was not rated, and the parson had no remedy against him. Patrons of livings only paid the incumbents a fraction of the income derived from the incumbency, and all sorts of similar practices reduced the incomes of the clergy. Stubbes, however, does not advise the clergy to write to the papers, or demand a remission of the income-tax. His counsel is that the parson should get on the best way he can, and "I doubt not that the Lord will open the hearts of his flock towards him, and both make them able and willing to support his necessities." Advice which should be taken to heart by the discontented clerics of to-day.

We often hear football denounced as a brutal game nowadays. They had the same opinion three hundred years ago. Stubbes protests that football is rather a kind of fight than a recreation: a bloody and murdering practice than a fellowly sport or pastime. The players sometimes get their necks broken, sometimes their backs, sometimes their limbs, and it is very rarely that they escape being maimed in some way or another. But his chief objection to the game is that it "withdraweth from godliness." He also denounces tennis and bowls on the same grounds. In the sixteenth century they were very much afraid of the lower orders wasting their time in games and enjoyments, instead of working all day for the benefit of their masters; and, in the thirty-third year of Henry VIII., an Act was passed prohibiting all manner of artificers, craftsmen, journeymen, etc., from playing tables, tennis, bowls, cards, or any other game, except at Christmastime, and then only in their masters' houses. But Stubbes objects to games, even at Christmas, because "we ought to be merry in the Lord, and not otherwise."

To the natural pruriency of the Puritan mind the relations of the sexes was an agreeable theme. It seems to have perpetually filled the mind of their preachers; and the results of so much dwelling on the subject are notorious in Scotland, Geneva, and other places where Puritan influence was greatest. Stubbes, of course, has a lot to say on the matter, and relates a "judgment" with great gusto. "Judgments" were great favorites with the Puritans, and some of them are still current, figuring in the religious journals as having recently happened to some nameless person for the edification of the faithful. The narrative given by Stubbes, however, is not a fictitious one, but is corroborated from other sources; and that is probably why it is more matter-of-fact than usual. It appears that in 1583 a haberdasher, named William Brustar, lodged over the south-west porch of St. Bride's, Fleet-street (not the present edifice, of course, but its predecessor, which was burnt in the great Fire of London). Brustar, who was more than sixty years old, made great pretence to piety, and always carried a Bible about with him. He had turned his wife out of doors, and was living with a handsome woman named Breame, whom he had bailed out of Bridewell; and one Sunday afternoon the two were found dead, and partially burnt, apparently having been overcome by the gases from a small charcoal brazier in the room. A modern jury would have returned a verdict of death from misadventure; but the pietists of the period professed that it was a judgment of heaven, and numerous tracts were written upon the subject. In the time of Stubbes the streets of London were infested by gay women. Before the Reformation

they were confined to Southwark, where several streets were under the Bishop of Winchester, who appointed officers to keep order and look after the health of the inmates. Upon the dissolution of the Church by Henry VIII., however, the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester ceased, with the natural result that the women were scattered all over the city, and were much more in evidence than before. Besides the general licentiousness of manners, Stubbes girds at the improvident marriages of young persons from ten to twenty years of age, who, he says, fill the land with a store of poor people. In the reign of Edward VI. there was a great outcry about the "housing of the poor"; but in the time of Elizabeth there was a reaction in the other direction, and laws were enacted against the multiplication of mean dwellings. Stubbes complains that boys and girls will marry, and run up hovels at every lane end, where they will live in squalor all their lives. As is usual with moralists, however, his doctrine was inconsistent with his practice; for he himself married a girl barely fourteen, who died in childbirth when she was eighteen years old. Her loving spouse celebrated her in a small book, entitled *The Godly Life and Christian Death of Mistress Katherine Stubbes*, which continued for a long time a favorite work for edification; and which (if the discourses in it be not the composition of the author) showed the poor young woman to have suffered from religious mania.

Stubbes is, of course, down on Sabbath-breaking and profane swearing; but the "judgments" he relates are not reproducible in the twentieth century, however much they may have been to the Puritan taste. Sabbatarianism was then in flood. The temporary victory of Puritanism in this country, and its after effects, caused the enactment of the statutes which still disfigure English jurisprudence, and are still occasionally enforced by pious busybodies.

Royal Commissions are still held upon the "betting evil." In the time of Elizabeth they did not bet upon horses, as horse-racing was practically non-existent; but large sums were wagered upon bear-baiting and cock-fighting. Raffles at church and chapel bazaars, however, seem to be a more modern form of gambling. Stubbes objects to the reading of bad books, and recommends that the populace be strictly confined to the Bible and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. The modern cry for "pure literature" is to exactly the same effect. But Stubbes's special denunciation is reserved for dancing and stage-plays; people derived pleasure from them, and to the Puritan mind all pleasure was sinful. It was complained that, while the conventicles were empty on Sunday, the theatres were full; and the magistrates professed great alarm about the effect of all this upon the poor (for "the poor" was as great a cant in the sixteenth century as in this). The "poor" were accused of taking their pennies to the theatres instead of expending them upon their own sustenance or contributing them to chapels; and the "uncol' guid" professed to find grave enormities in theatrical representations, just as they do to-day.

The refreshing part of Stubbes's work consists in what he does *not* say; for one is quite relieved to find that he, at least, is quite silent about "foreign competition" and "loss of British trade"—for the simple reason that there was no British trade in his time to create an alarm about. Otherwise it is extremely remarkable to note that the real and imaginary grievances of his time are precisely the same as those of this; and millenniums of moralists and alarmists have produced no alteration.

Of all the ills that human hearts endure
How few there are that "moralists" can cure!

CHILPERIC.

Most of those who have tried to dethrone Shakespeare by arguing that his plays were written by Bacon have been Americans. Now there is another American, a professor in Rockefeller's University, who prophesies that in the near future Shakespeare will be "unfit to read." Well, he is that now, for people unfit to read him.

The Discipline of the Past.

THE science of evolution teaches us that every phenomenon in nature is related to every other phenomenon, that there is no break in the continuity of natural causation, that no action is unrelated to, or uncaused by, any other action. Science, therefore, disposes of the theological paradox of "free-will," which is either a truism or a confusion of ideas, according to the way in which it is explained. Nothing is commoner, however, than to find that this rigid view of science is held up, on the theological or unscientific side generally, as being disheartening, as furnishing no incentive to the wrong-doer to reform. Science teaches that all transgression bears its penalty, whereas theology can easily, with a phrase, profess to remit the penalty, and let the transgressor begin afresh. So, says the theologian, ours is the more hopeful doctrine.

In the first place, it may be admitted that it would, in many cases, be very desirable if one could escape the consequences of wrong-doing at the moment one became sincerely repentant. But the stern fact has to be faced that one cannot so escape. A man, say, gets drunk; in the morning perhaps he is very repentant, but he cannot, by merely wishing, recover so rapidly his nerve, or his loss of substance and perhaps of reputation. The present writer, for instance, knows of a case in which a young man of generally temperate character, whilst under the influence of drink, fell and sustained injuries from which he will suffer, more or less, all his life. And though it may be said that such an occurrence is rather in the nature of an accident which might happen to anyone, yet the proximate cause of the accident was intemperate conduct. One of the commonest topics of discussion amongst reformers is the penalty which is constantly paid by women for what may be in its circumstances a small transgression against sex morals. And whatever might be done in such cases to lessen the artificial pains which society adds to the natural penalty, yet the natural penalty will always remain.

Howsoever desirable, therefore, it might be if one could escape the consequences of the act by merely being sorry for it, there is nothing whatever to be gained by shutting one's eyes to the facts—the stern facts—of life. It is idle and injurious to deceive ourselves with fancies that have no foundation. And, whatever the result, no progress is possible, no rectification of conduct, unless we look the facts straight in the face without blenching.

If, however, anyone surveying these facts should become so impressed with the irrevocable character of past action as to dwell only on one side of the case, and be thereby disheartened of the future, he would have fallen into a grave error. If the enormity of the idea of wrong, past repair, sapped one's energies, it would be a grievous hallucination. And in this respect a recent essay of Maeterlinck contains some necessary truths. There is, of course, nothing in the scientific study of morals to discourage or dishearten; on the contrary, there is much to hearten. The increased sense of responsibility which arises when we see that actions are bound together in a chain of causation should make us scrupulous, certainly; but it is only a weak character whom responsibility breaks down. The distinction which has to be borne in mind is that, whilst science is concerned with the past, and whilst we may draw lessons from it, yet morals are merely concerned with the present and the future. "Our chief concern with the past," says Maeterlinck, "that which truly remains and forms part of us, is not what we have done or the adventures we have met with, but the moral reactions bygone events are producing within us at this very moment, the inward being that they have helped to form; and these reactions, whence there arises our sovereign intimate being, are wholly governed by the manner in which we regard past events, and vary as the moral substance varies that they encounter within us. But with every step in advance that our feelings or intellect take will come a change in this moral substance....."

This is obviously true, and on a scientific view of morals we see that whilst our actions are the results of causes, anything that increases our knowledge or raises our moral standard introduces a fresh factor in the determination of our present and future conduct. We are reaping what we have sown yesterday and to-day, and sowing what to-morrow will reap. Omar Khayyam's well-known lines represent a half of truth:—

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

But these lines require to be supplemented by the other half of the moral truth, which I have been bold and rash enough to attempt to cast in a quatrain of the Omar-Fitzgerald pattern:—

But what the Finger writes to-day must be
The best the Mind to-day can know and see;
For grieving over past mistakes in script,
Were to waste future Time and Truth and Thee.

Whatsoever be the judgment of these lines as verse, the view which they embody requires to be taken together with Omar-Khayyam's as presenting one's whole of the moral lesson. To concentrate one's attention on the past to the exclusion of the present is disastrous, and we have quite recently seen the political effect of whole multitudes of people so hypnotising themselves with the idea that present action was of an "inevitable" character that they drifted in a state of moral and political paralysis. Men talked of this being "inevitable" and that being "inevitable" so that they complacently shared in preventible wrong or idly deplored a catastrophe they did nothing to avert. The past, in fact, is valuable to us ethically as an object-lesson, showing us what to do and what to avoid, showing us the results of certain past actions from which we may deduce the result of present ones—but it is all merely incidental to the duty of the hour. "Our interest," said Professor Clifford, "lies with so much of the past as may serve to guide our actions in the present, and to intensify our pious allegiance to the fathers who have gone before us and the brethren who are with us; and our interest lies with so much of the future as we may hope will be appreciably affected by our good actions now." And Maeterlick, in the essay from which I have quoted, puts the same truth in his own language:—

"Better the ordinary past, content with its befitting place in the shadow, than the sumptuous past which claims to govern what has travelled out of its reach. Better a mediocre, but living, present, which acts as though it were alone in the world, than a present which proudly expires in the chains of a marvellous long ago. A single step that we take at this hour towards an uncertain goal is far more important to us than the thousand leagues we covered in our march towards a dazzling triumph in the days that were."

FREDERICK RYAN.

Christian Charity.

You may well say, (but not in the ancient sense) "See how these Christians love one another!" These Christian kingdoms that are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword! These Christian armies, that are sending each other by thousands, yea, by ten thousands, quick into hell! These Christian nations, that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction! These Christian cities, where deceit and fraud, oppression and wrong, yea, robbery and murder go not out of their streets! These Christian families, torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end! Yea, what is most dreadful, most to be lamented of all, these Christian Churches!—Churches, ("Tell it not in Gath")—But, alas! how can we hide it from Jews, Turks, or Pagans?) that bear the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace, and wage continual war with each other! that convert sinners by burning them alive! that are "drunk with the blood of the saints!" Does this praise belong only to "Babylon the Great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth"? Nay, verily; but Reformed Churches (so called) have fairly learned to tread in her steps. Protestant Churches too know how to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood.

—John Wesley.

The Sorrows of God.

PITY the sorrows of a poor old God
Who dwells with a beastly awkward squad
"Up there" in his heavenly Land of Nod,
In a region so sequestered.

By many a whining Christian clod,
Who follows the "Stem of Jesse's Rod"
In a path the latter never trod,
He's worried and plagued and pestered
By the countless pray'rs so mixed and odd,
From the North, South, East, and West 'card.
'Tis worse "up there" than down in "quod,"
Where the "lost" are broiled and blistered.

Pity the sorrows of a Dad "upstairs";
The jewsharp strumming and trumpet blares
Are drowned by the sound of his children's pray'rs;
They're nearly always grumbling.
They forget that he has to count the hairs
On the thick and empty skulls of theirs,
And feed the sparrows in streets and squares,
And keep them all from tumbling.

Pity the sorrows of a God, unspliced,
Who caused his "one and only" Christ
To be condemned and sacrificed,
And die for sinners, vainly.
His precious Gospel, highly spiced,
By sinful men is lowly priced,
Except in the case of a few, enticed
By the loaves and fishes mainly.

Pity the sorrows of a God who's foiled,
With anger the color of a lobster boiled;
His work's upset, completely spoiled
By the tools that he created.
The great physicians drugged and moiled,
For many an hour, nor vainly toiled,
And a king will soon be crowned and oiled
That God Almighty "slated."

Pity the sorrows of a God cajoled,
Hoodwinked, bamboozled, gammoned, sold
By the lumps of animated "mould"
Of His Lordship's own creation.
The ravening, sheep-skinned wolves enrolled
In the meek and gentle shepherd's fold,
Profess for the "King of Kings" untold
Respect and admiration;
But the earth contains a king they hold
In higher estimation,
And he'd swop his heavenly crown of gold
For an earthly coronation!

ESS JAY BEE.

Acid Drops.

SUPERSTITION is still rampant in this country, and it takes a very gross form sometimes. Down at Glyncorrwg Colliery, near Port Talbot, a female ghost has been "seen" in the depths of the mine, and all the miners struck work rather than continue her acquaintance. Mr. John Williams, their agent, visited them, expostulated with them, argued with them, and pointed out to them the danger of flooding; but all his efforts were fruitless, the men unanimously declined to return to work.

How odd to see hundreds of strong men frightened at one woman! But the men prefer living women, and this is a dead one—dressed in a white sheet and carrying a candle. So they all cry, "Come in any other form but that!" and skedaddle.

It does not appear that most of the miners have seen that white-sheeted, candle-bearing dead woman in Glyncorrwg Colliery. A few have seen her, and the rest believe by faith. This is how all ghost stories have prospered, including that of the great Jerusalem ghost, whose adventures are the keystone of Christianity. A few excitable persons "see" something and "hear" something, they don't always know exactly what, but the thing naturally grows definite as they go on telling about it; a number of other persons are convinced, and they go on telling about; finally, all the world accepts the yarn, and everybody goes on telling about it. Then its fortune is made. It is told by mothers to their little children, and handed down from generation to generation.

There is a Ladies' League in this country. Its object is to support "the principles of the Church as based on the Bible and set forth in the Prayer Book and Articles." It is thus a sort of auxiliary of the Church of England. Its president

is Lady Wimborne, at whose house in Arlington-street a meeting of the League was held recently. One of the speakers was the Bishop of Manxland—"Sodor and Man" they call him. This right reverend Father-in-God saw in the postponement of the Coronation a clear mark of the Almighty's displeasure at the growth of the High Church party. What a pity it is that the Lord does not declare the real meaning of this event! One says it is this, another says it is that, and another says it is something else. Meanwhile the only being who really knows remains obstinately silent. It is quite exasperating.

Another speaker at this Ladies' League meeting was Lord Kelvin. This eminent scientist, who is so well acquainted with the vastness and resources of the universe, actually fancies that the God of it all cares about the difference between High Church and Low Church. Surely the deity of the universe, as Lord Kelvin knows it, must be too much occupied to worry over the distinction between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. But man was always a vain little maggot on this Dutch cheese of a world; getting up disputes with his fellow maggots, and swearing that God Almighty took sides in the quarrel—always, of course, on the side of the particular maggot who happened to be holding forth.

"General" Booth's daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Booth-Clibborn, who lately seceded from the Salvation Army, are now at Chicago, attending old Dowie's meetings. The male Booth-Clibborn has already been publicly enrolled as a member of "Zion." We don't suppose they will be personally of much use to the Prophet of Porkopolis, but it gives a certain *éclat* to the new "Zion" to snatch away members of the Booth family from the old "Salvation Army." Perhaps when they have thoroughly served his turn Old Dowie will tell them to "git."

A shining light amongst Nonconformists is the Rev. John Hunter, D.D. This gentleman, preaching recently in London, said that he had visited Hyde Park and heard sermons and bits of sermons there. It appeared to him that the God of some of those preachers was little better than Caliban's god, Setebos, in Browning's wonderful poem; and just the same sort of God was the one attacked by the infidels. Both sides "dared to call Christianity" what was nothing of the kind. So said the Rev. Dr. Hunter. But is he prepared to maintain this view in a public discussion? We fancy it would not be very difficult to show that the God of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is a good deal like Setebos.

The *Sunday Companion* publishes a rude sort of cartoon in which "Criticism" and "Atheism" are represented as poisonous toadstools. We say nothing about this inartistic effort, but we observe that the *Sunday Companion*, in an adjacent column, is down on its knees expressing regret for an inexcusable blunder—to use no stronger term—which it recently committed in regard to the Coronation. Like other quite too-previous publications, it burnt its own fingers and gave the journalistic show away in its indiscreet haste. It says, "In our issue of June 28, we regret that a number of pictures appeared illustrative of events expected to take place at the crowning of the King." Note the word "expected." As a matter of fact the pictures were given as illustrative of events which had then taken place. They were obviously intended to be accepted as such by the readers. If the Coronation had really taken place at the fixed date, the *Sunday Companion* would have taken credit for its sketches as historic views taken on the spot and to be preserved as accurate representations of the ceremonial of the century with all its accessories in the way of portraits, etc. But as the *Sunday Companion* says, with becoming piety, "Man proposes but God disposes," by which we suppose it means, "The Harmsworths prepare, and the Devil comes in and makes a mess of it." Now, we should like to know, honestly, whether there weren't some swear words used even in the sanctimonious offices of the *Sunday Companion* when it was found that the paper had so egregiously given itself away. Let the editorial sage who is responsible for the split-up column, "Light on Dark Places," reply—if he can.

The *Sunday Companion's* excuses are pitifully lame and weak. They might apply to *delay*, but they are absurd in regard to cocksure anticipation. The editor says that owing to the holidays he found it necessary to print and publish at an earlier date than usual. Under ordinary circumstances it is necessary to go to press at least fourteen days in advance in circulation. He boasts of his 345,000 readers, which only shows what a number of religious fools there are in existence. He says that "believing the Coronation would take place," he prepared pictures, but "all our arrangements, and the arrangements of hundreds of other papers, were overturned at the last moment." Yes, but the hundreds of other papers, with a few exceptions, notably the *Ladies' Realm*

withheld all that they had prepared and suffered the loss. The *Sunday Companion* comes out with what was, to put it mildly, a series of representations which were utterly misleading because they were offered as a record of something which had happened but which really did not take place.

The last excuse of the *Sunday Companion* is the worst of all. It says: "Other religious papers did the same." No doubt they did; they are equal to anything in the way of pious and profitable frauds. But is that any excuse for the *Sunday Companion*? No wonder that side by side with its "apology"—which is not only tardy, but meanly evasive—this paper pictorially represents "criticism" as a "poisonous toadstool." As for "Atheism," also represented as a "toadstool," it can be said on its behalf that it has never yet descended to roping in the shekels by such over-reaching "preparations." Anyhow, we know now the amount of importance to attach to the *Sunday Companion's* pictorial efforts. Its letterpress is below the level of the average Sunday-school teacher, and that is saying a great deal.

Asked to give his "experience" at an outdoor Gospel meeting, George Hills, of Bratton-street, N., fell forward dead. Religious excitement, in conjunction with a weak heart, is held to be the cause of the fatality.

The paupers of the Oulton Workhouse, Suffolk, are accused of the crime of shirking church. It is said that they are in the habit of lounging about instead of attending the Sunday services provided for them by the guardians. A member of the board inquired if the chaplain made the services attractive. Of course, the chaplain did; who ever knew a chaplain who did not? The clerk pointed out that under the order of the Local Government Board all but the sick, infirm, the young and those of unsound mind were required to attend morning and evening prayers and divine service. The Board resolved to enforce the order. But why are persons of "unsound mind" exempted from attendance? Are they not exactly the persons to appreciate the chaplain's efforts?

Some years ago one Albrecht Schtol founded a new sect in Lodz, and in order to substantiate his reputation as a prophet he prophesied the year, month and day of his death. The fatal day at length arrived, and expectation ran high among his dupes, for the prophet did not look like dying, but at the stroke of midnight he shot himself, thus fulfilling his prophecy. That was better than writing books of prophecy years after the events.

It is really very sad to have one's confidence shaken in religious prints, and especially in the dear clergy. Yet we read in the *Church Times*: "There are some clergy who thoroughly understand the ignoble art of self-advertisement. They are not as a rule men of any spirituality or intellect, but they never lose the opportunity of pushing themselves to the fore. They send notices of themselves to the press *ad nauseam*. The unfortunate part of it is that they are not always taken at their true worth, and sometimes find themselves in positions which they are little calculated to adorn." Why does not the *Church Times* supply a directory—not quite so large as Crockford's—of these clerical showmen and frauds? It would at least be a protection to unsuspecting laymen.

The parsonic business must be on the wane, or how are we to account for the desperate efforts which the sky-pilots are making to drag people into their churches? Formerly it would have been regarded as an insult to God to walk into church in any other apparel than that of respectable broad-cloth. Now it seems that, having regard to the summer weather, and winking at Sunday boating, the rector of Great Marlow has had a card displayed at local hotels and boat-houses, saying: "Come in your flannels and boating dresses." Not to be outdone, Nonconformists are adopting similar tactics. A Norfolk Dissenting tabernacle announces: "Yachters in sweaters, flannels, and other holiday attire will be welcome, and there is plenty of accommodation for cycles."

A good story is afloat concerning Lord Salisbury's resignation. He is said to have described his experiences of the House of Lords a few months ago by saying that whenever he woke up he seemed to hear Lord Balfour of Burleigh talking about midwives. The curious part of the sequel is that Lord Salisbury resigned as soon as the Midwives Bill came along for discussion.

The Athenæum Club is a good deal patronised by right reverend Fathers-in-God. One day Lord Salisbury was setting out for the Club; it was raining, and he had no umbrella. His secretary offered him one, but he declined it.

"No, no," he said. "I can't trust those bishops." So the story goes, and it is good enough to be true. Certainly no fondness for Bishops has ever been betrayed by Lord Salisbury. He has often rated them in the Gilded Chamber. Once he called the Archbishop of Canterbury something very much like an old fool.

The *Sligo Star*, though small and obscure, is not to be outdone by any of the large luminaries in the journalistic firmament. Like some of these, it professes to be in the confidence of heaven. It not only knows what God is doing in the world, but knows *why* he does it. Hence there has never been any doubt in its editorial mind why King Edward has been so grievously afflicted, and why he is now being graciously permitted to recover. The illness and the upsetting of all the Coronation plans were simply Heaven's vengeance on His Majesty for his "blackguardly insult" to Roman Catholicism by the accession declaration against Transubstantiation. At last the truth is out. The *Sligo Star* has proclaimed it.

The King—poor man—may or may not be distressed by learning of this *Sligo* condemnation. Perhaps he never will learn what the Roman Catholic luminary has said about him. Anyhow, we cannot believe that he meant any "blackguardly insult" by making the declaration required of him by law. Very likely he would have avoided it if he could, for the sake of the Earl Marshal and other Roman Catholics with whom he is acquainted. Heaven may take this into consideration in passing judgment, although the *Sligo Star* does not. So far as one can judge, the King is not at all the sort of person to give unnecessary offence to the members of any Church. No one suspects him of being a sectarian or zealot. He is not built that way. Controverted dogmas or doctrines, dear as they are to theological disputants, are not in his line. The surmise may be hazarded that he knows little about them, and cares less. Newmarket has probably engaged more of his attention than Newman. He may be some sort of an authority on "gee-gees," but it is certain that his personal opinion on Transubstantiation is of small account. The Roman Catholic Church, of all Churches, is remarkable for the unquestioning obedience it demands and receives. Does it not understand how powerless was the Sovereign in the hands of those who, true to traditional usage, imposed this formality upon him?

The *Sligo Star* seems to recognise some unwillingness on the part of the King to make the declaration, for it speaks of him in this connection as "this poor, shuddering creature." This organ must have seen or imagined more than presented itself to other eyes. No shudder was reported at the time. Not even a shudder by the Duke of Norfolk when he heard this terrible repudiation of Popery from the Royal lips. He is said to have simply stared stonily in front of him. Still, it is very striking, this picture of King Edward, monarch of the British Empire, cowering like some conscience-stricken wretch at the thought of the impiety he was about to commit. But perhaps the description was meant to apply to the Sovereign when he first realised that divine judgment was falling upon him. His complaint was sufficiently severe to turn even a strong man for the nonce into a "poor, shuddering creature." But it would be surprising to learn that the King ever once gave that Transubstantiation matter even a casual thought.

With ineffable scorn the *Sligo Star* goes on to denounce the King as "this man," "this pigmy King," "this Royal blasphemer," "this wretched monarch," etc. There is no mincing of terms here. No hesitation as to whether the language is treasonable or not. The *Sligo Star* means to go for the "Lord's anointed," and to give it him hot, and it does so without fear, favor or affection. But that paper seems to forget its own statement that the Almighty himself had undertaken to punish King Edward for his sin. It says: "This Royal Blasphemer with the lie fresh on his lips has received his answer." Isn't that enough? What is to become of a poor man—even a monarch—when he is assailed by both the Almighty and the *Sligo Star*? One would think the Lord was able to administer adequate chastisement without journalistic assistance. But apparently the editor thinks otherwise. He means to put in a few licks of his own. He would even break the bruised reed. Still there is hope for the King if he will but "take a thought and mend." The Lord has mercifully spared his life in answer to prayer, and he is now on a fair way to recovery. Surely this boon has been vouchsafed for a purpose. God has given the King one more chance. Let him repent and reform. He cannot abjure the declaration he has made, but he can atone for his misdeeds by extending special favors to the Church of Rome here and abroad. He might graciously advance the interests of its representatives. He might, for instance, see to it that some lucrative appointment is bestowed on the editor of the

Sligo Star who has rebuked him for his good, with all the fearlessness of a prophet of old.

The Church papers are very anxious that there shall be no further curtailment of the religious ceremony at the crowning of the King. Naturally they are opposed to any cutting down in that direction because that is just the part where the Church comes in. But seeing that this section comprises by far the lion's share of the Coronation, it is difficult to understand how the proceedings can be abbreviated without a general application of the pruning knife. It seems to the clerics of small importance that the whole thing, however short, will be very trying to the royal convalescent. But some of them apparently would rather run the risk of the King dropping down in a dead faint than abate one jot or tittle of their pious and nauseating nonsense.

Dr. Horton has got himself into trouble by speaking rather too freely about the failings of the King at an intercession service in the City Temple. Dr. Horton, as we know, is not overburdened with discretion, being a great deal too given to talking at random, making assertions, and then looking for the proofs. He might have selected some other occasion—most folks would who are not entirely devoid of human sympathy—and no doubt his comments, as a correspondent of the *British Weekly* says, "grated on the ears of hundreds of people who were present." Still, though the time chosen was unfortunate, and Dr. Horton does not possess the delicacy requisite for the task, there has been for months such an outpouring of fulsome gush by lickspittle scribes who have pretended to see in the King what is obviously non-existent, that there may be some excuse for presenting less pleasing aspects.

The *Christian* incidentally refers to the fact that it has gone out of fashion to add D.V. (*Deo Volente*) to our plans and projects. Yes, we have practically dispensed nowadays with that proviso. Why, even many of the "dear clergy" and ministers of various denominations forgot to insert it in their Coronation plans and programs.

The Universities are "honeycombed with heterodoxy and Agnosticism" laments a correspondent of the *Church Times*. Therefore, he thinks that, in these days, a university training and the whole tone of life connected with it, is far from being in any degree a preparation for the priestly life. Seeing, however, that so few university men (comparatively) are offering themselves for "holy orders," this depreciation of university training looks very much like proclaiming that the grapes are sour.

Anent the report of the Royal Commission on gambling and possible legislation thereon, the Churches are warned in a Nonconformist print that before they can make their influence felt they should set their own house in order. This, of course, is meant to apply to the lotteries and raffles at bazaars. But it has a wider application. The Christian Church engages in gambling on a much more extensive scale. It induces its devotees to part with their substance on the chance of its being returned a hundredfold hereafter. What is this but gambling, especially as the chance is very remote, and the return beyond that which even usurers are allowed to claim. The element of speculation is there, and the greed of gain is the same, whether disavowed or not, and what is the essential difference between laying down your stakes for a prize in kingdom come and backing your fancy for an immediate win.

"Providence" is said to look after the sparrows, but ornithologists know it is all nonsense. Birds die by millions of hunger and from the perils of migration. The same negligence is shown with respect to other living things. Millions of bees, for instance, are starving to death in Iowa and Illinois, because the heavy rains have washed all pollen and nectar from the blossoms. The bee-raisers, of course, will lose hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Colonel Ingersoll once said that Christians often prayed for things that were clearly impossible. "Only the other day," he added, "I heard a clergyman asking God to give Congress wisdom." This was a capital sarcasm. But it was nearly equalled last week at the rising of Congress for the summer adjournment. The occupants of the Press Gallery rose as one man and sang, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

Sixty years ago a Derbyshire cleric named Meyrick left a large sum of money to the parish of Holsworthy. The interest on the money invested had to be paid to the prettiest young woman who most regularly attended the church. Miss Jane Chapple has been selected this year as Holsworthy's queen of beauty. She should have no difficulty in finding a suitor—unless the standard of beauty there is lower than the

average elsewhere. The query that naturally suggests itself—and to which the meagre report affords no reply—is, By whom are the feminine charms judicially pronounced upon? Is the vicar the judge, with his wife or the curate as assessor? Or is it left to the impressionable churchwardens, or the sour and taciturn sexton? There should be no lack of lithe and active and eager young swains at Holsworthy Church. Perhaps the reverend benefactor himself was no mean judge of feminine beauty, and hence his bequest.

Father Lambert, the man who "replied" to Ingersoll, and was always complaining that Ingersoll would not "reply" to him, let out against King Edward after that operation. "As we write these words," he said, "King Edward is dying." King Edward was doing nothing of the kind, but that doesn't matter. "A State funeral," continued Father Lambert, "looms up in place of the pageant which, if it had taken place, would have been the grandest and most imposing London had ever witnessed. The lips that were to utter blasphemies against the blessed sacrament in taking the coronation oath will never utter those blasphemies." Poor Prophet Lambert! The wish was father to the thought. King Edward is rapidly improving and the coronation oath seems likely to go through after all. What will Prophet Lambert do then? Will he have any more tips from heaven?

Presbyterians are jubilant. The St. Louis Fair has to close its gates on Sunday or lose the grant made by the National Government. Whereat the *Presbyterian Banner* (Pittsburg) rejoices. But the *Chicago Chronicle* does not rejoice. It denounces "fanatical Sabbathites" and "hypocritical congressmen." A St. Louis paper announces that the summer beer gardens will be open all the time, and satirically congratulates the Sabbathites on their success in swelling the attendance and profits of the beer gardens by closing the Fair on Sundays.

Now that there is fresh talk about "those beastly Jews," and the degradation of the Anglo-Saxon race by the too free admission of "these people" to all the rights of citizenship, it is well to remember a *mot* of Beaconsfield's. "One half Europe," he said, "worships a Jew, and the other half a Jewess." He meant, of course, Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.

Sunday trading on Southsea Beach has been occupying the attention of the Portsmouth Town Council. Buns and fruit and sweets and lemonade are actually sold to young people—aye, and older people too, if they want any—on the blessed Sabbath. Not satisfied with their terrible sin, the traders in these things have actually applied to the Council for a *license* to commit it. But this is impossible. As the local *Evening News* says, not even the Portsmouth Town Council can alter the law of the land. Of course not. Still, the Portsmouth Town Council can quietly instruct the Chief Constable to wink the other eye when he sees a "kid" exchanging a halfpenny for a bun, or a bottle of lemonade disappearing down a thirsty throat for the usual consideration.

Protestant vandals are digging into the sacred Tarah Hill in Ireland. Indignant protests have been raised, and questions have been asked in Parliament, but the digging still goes on. Property rights have been secured, and these are more sacred than anything else on earth. But why, it may be asked, do the Protestants go on digging into the bowels of Tarah Hill? This is their object. They expect to find there the Ark of the Covenant—perhaps with old Jahveh (*alias* Jehovah) still inside it, together with the shewbread, the candlesticks, and the snuffers. Those who want to know more about this Ark of the Covenant should read the chapter entitled "God in a Box" in Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*. It is one of the richest stories in the whole repertoire of superstition. According to tradition the Ark of the Covenant was hidden by the prophet Jeremiah, to prevent its being transported to Babylon. These Protestant diggers at Tarah Hill evidently think that Jeremiah took it to Ireland—which was a pretty safe place of deposit in those days. Anyhow, they mean to go on digging for it. They are vowed to find it, or else to dig a hole right through to New Zealand.

Another Ark—Noah's Ark—is being sought for on the Yukon River. Some converted Indians swear they have seen it near the Arctic circle. It is an immense petrified ship, twelve hundred feet long, lying on a hill. So say the converted Indians, and they have satisfied the acute intelligence of the Secretary of the Skagway Young Men's Christian Association, who intends to penetrate into the interior of Alaska this summer with a party of Indians. Also, if possible, a number of soldiers—perhaps to protect the party against any dangerous members of Noah's menagerie who may have

settled down in the neighbourhood. We wish this enterprising gentleman all success. If he finds Noah's Ark, and the other fellows in Ireland find the Ark of the Covenant, we may look for the speedy conversion of the world to Bible Christianity.

A cricket match between Clergy and Laity was played last week in the Park of Farnham Castle—the fine seat of the Bishop of Winchester. Dr. Bishop, the Bishop of Melanesia, made the highest individual score of the match, obtaining forty-five runs. But the average will tell, in spite of exceptions. The total score of the Clergy was only 137, while the Laity scored 141 for seven wickets. Of course the Laity can beat the Clergy at anything—except canting and cagging.

We often meet in American papers, and even in American Freethought papers, with gratuitous and sometimes very odd references to the politics of Great Britain. Now we venture to suggest, at least to our Freethought contemporaries on the great American continent, that it just possible that some things want a little consideration in their own country. Take the following news paragraph, for instance:—"A negro has been burnt at the stake at Clayton, in Mississippi, for attempting to assault a young white lady." Now we do not ignore the fact that a negro problem on paper is a different thing from a negro problem at your doors; but, at the same time, we think we may hazard the observation that roasting human beings alive is generally considered a mark of barbarism. Lynch law in the United States, looks, at this distance, very much like a pretence of justice under which the whites gratify their race hatred against the blacks. We believe it is always blacks who are lynched, and always whites who do the lynching. And the thing is so horrible, and so common, that the American humanitarians would do well to give it their attention—even if they had to give less attention to some other evils in very distant parts of the world.

Dr. Clifford presided over the Conference on the Education Bill convened by the National Democratic League at the Memorial Hall. All the other speakers, apparently, were Nonconformists. The Conference was therefore a little gratuitous. We always thought the Nonconformists were able to look after their own interests. Why, in any case, should the Democratic League worry itself about the religious squabble between the Church and Dissent in the matter of education? The citizen's demand is "secular education." This, and this alone, will stop the war of the sects over the public schools. Surely there must be members of the Democratic League who have sense enough to see this. Why then do they not assert themselves?

Dr. Clifford's speech was characteristic. He lamented the small attendance, but he had been addressing big meetings elsewhere. What was wanted was unity amongst all who are Progressives. He hoped he might do something towards fusing all parties in an attack on the Government Bill. And so on, and so forth. All the time-honored fallacies—some call them hypocrisies—of the Nonconformist agitation—were trotted out. It would have been manlier on Dr. Clifford's part to explain what right the Nonconformists have to the title of Progressives. After ratting from their own principles in 1870, they have continued to swear that the Compromise then adopted is the last word of wisdom on the subject. And this is what they call progress!

Reviewing the Rev. Dr. Newman Smyth's *Through Science to Faith*, the *Daily News* is puzzled to see how the Fall of man is to be reconciled with Evolution. This is how our contemporary winds up: "After going through science to faith, the faith reached in this book cannot be truly called the Christian faith, except in the most shadowy sense. A Fall, a Redemption, and an Immortality which go no further than the ascertained facts of evolution are too unsubstantial and vapory for the foundations of any serious belief or for the inspiration of any vitalising hope." We quite agree with this. Those who want a vitalising hope must seek it in another direction. The personal, selfish hope of the old theology is gone for all educated and intelligent men; the only hope possible to them is an impersonal, unselfish hope bound up with the progress of humanity.

"Motherhood is the noblest ideal of woman." So says Cardinal Gibbons, of America. He had better take care that the Pope doesn't get on his track. The noblest ideal of woman, according to the Catholic Church and the New Testament, is sanctified virginity. But if Cardinal Gibbons thinks otherwise, he should show his sincerity by emptying the nunneries in his diocese. The spouses of Christ in those establishments would then have an opportunity of becoming actual wives and potential mothers.

There seems to be a regular campaign carried on against the **FREETHINKER**. We do not know exactly in what quarter to look for our enemies, though they are probably bigoted Christians. What we do know is that a movement of some kind is going on in "the trade." Several newsagents, some of them important wholesale agents, have lately refused to supply the **FREETHINKER** to their customers. During the past week we have received a dozen letters from persons in Edinburgh asking where they can obtain this journal there, now that Messrs. Menzies have struck it off their list. May we ask our friends to do all they can to counteract this insidious persecution? Small newsagents, whose wholesale agents will not supply them with this journal, are requested to communicate with the Manager at our publishing office, who will in every case make some arrangement whereby the **FREETHINKER** will reach them.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

August 17, Failsworth Sunday School Anniversary Services.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—July 27, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park. August 3, m. and a., Victoria Park. Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

CROWNED SWORDS.—(1) You suggest that all pamphlets issued by the Freethought Publishing Company should be of the same size, with a view to binding. The vast majority of its pamphlets are of the same size—what is known as crown octavo. Now and then the rule has to be broken for a special publication. (2) A third series of *Flowers of Freethought* may be issued by-and-bye. Mr. Foote has first on the stocks a new volume containing the best of his semi-Freethought and semi-literary articles and essays during the past ten or twelve years. (3) What are the pamphlets you refer to as being out of print?

A. E. RANDALL.—The Ten Commandments are not of a nature to necessitate the supposition that they were borrowed. The few moral commandments as to stealing, murder, false witness, etc., are such as would occur to the leaders even of savages; for the lowest tribes could not hold together without observing the elementary laws of society. The *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, to which you refer, is on a very different level from that of the so-called Law of Moses.

W. B.—Too late for this week's: in our next.

J. G. BARTRAM having resigned the secretaryship of the Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch, the post has been accepted by Mr. T. H. Eistob, 24 Woodbine-road, Gosforth. Branch secretaries and others concerned will please note. Mr. Bartram has for many years been secretary of the Newcastle Branch, and will carry the good wishes of all the members with him on retiring.

TOM PACEY (Liverpool).—Mr. Foote is writing you with respect to the proposed lectures.

W. P. BULL.—Thanks again for cuttings. "ARACADABRA" writes, with reference to a note in last week's *Freethinker*, that he looked up the subject of the "Persecution of the Christians" some time ago and found it full of difficulties; so much so that he could hardly arrive at a satisfactory result, though he fancied the opinion we expressed is a sound one. "When I have more time on my hands," he says, "I shall look the subject up again, and see if I can get to the bottom of it."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—Portsmouth Evening News—Public Opinion (New York)—Progressive Thinkers—The Philosopher—Truthseeker (New York)—Selby Express—Freethought Magazine—Shot and Shell—Leicester Pioneer—Crescent—Torch of Reason—Dartmouth Chronicle.

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.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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.

Sugar Plums.

THIS week's *Freethinker* is printed throughout in new type, and we expect to be congratulated on its appearance. Following out a double policy of concentration and extension, the Freethought Publishing Company has set up a good printing office on its own premises, where this journal and all other publications (including books and pamphlets) will henceforth be produced. The Company is also prepared to do a certain amount of outside printing. Freethinkers who want anything done in this line should remember "the old firm."

Mr. Foote did not intend to do any public speaking at all before September, but he has broken through this arrangement in order to attend the Anniversary Services of the Failsworth Secular Sunday School on August 17, and to deliver two addresses on that occasion. The Failsworth Secular Sunday School does not make a great noise in the world, but it does a most excellent work, and deserves to be encouraged and supported.

Mr. Cohen, who has been very unwell recently, is fortunately rather better now, and we hope he will soon be quite himself again. We advised him not to do any writing while he is pulling himself together, and the result is there is no article from his pen in this week's *Freethinker*. He will in all probability be well represented in our next issue.

Attention is called to John Morley's *Life of Richard Cobden* advertised by the Freethought Publishing Company on another page of this week's *Freethinker*. It is a work of great interest, being written by a distinguished literary man, and being an account of the career of one of the most clear-headed and effective reformers of the nineteenth century. The price of this "Free Trade Edition" is only sixpence, and the F. P. Co. are sending it out post free for that figure. There ought to be a thousand orders in from Freethinkers during the next week. Men and women who read this book should pass it on to their children. It may make a turning point in the lives of some of them.

Mr. Gladstone, in a letter to Miss Cobden, spoke of Mr. Morley's biography of her father as "admirable." "My estimate of your father's noble qualities and splendid services," he said, "hardly admits of being raised above the point at which it has long stood." He added, however, that "if anything had been lacking, such a work as Mr. Morley's would certainly have supplied the deficiency."

We beg to commend the *Humane Review* to our readers' attention. This is a quarterly publication, carried on, we believe, by certain friends of the Humanitarian League, and published at the price of one shilling by Ernest Bell, 6, York-street, Covent Garden. It is excellently printed and always pleasant to the eye. The contents, unfortunately, do not appeal to a very wide public, but should interest reformers of all denominations. The July number opens with an article by a lady, Alice Leighton Cleather, on "Wagner as a Pioneer." Extracts from Wagner's writings are given, showing that he was fully abreast of the best thought of our own age. A contributor, who writes as "Appellant," deals with "Imprisonment for Debt." It is not generally known that thousands of people are imprisoned every year, ostensibly for contempt of court, but really for not being able to satisfy their creditors. The whole system is a perfect scandal, and "Appellant" writes with great moderation considering the wrongs and evils he exposes. Mr. C. H. Hoppood, K.C., who has experience to guide him, pens "A Plea for Mercy to Offenders." His maxims are two: (1) Never to send a man to goal if you can help it; (2) to give the lightest sentence you can. It is *detection* rather than *severe sentences* that is likely to deter from crime. Mr. Edward Carpenter contributes a commonplace but heart-rending social sketch, entitled "Eliza Anne." There are other articles well worth reading in this number of the *Humane Review*. We wish the publication all success.

We are glad to see that the Dartmouth magistrates have not assisted the police in prosecuting a local tobacconist, Mr.

Joseph Scammell, for the crime of selling "the divine herb" on a Sunday. They inflicted the paltry fine of sixpence—without costs; which is anything but an invitation to the police to continue persecuting Mr. Scammell. We believe he was marked out as a victim because he happened to be a Freethinker. Other tradesmen sell tobacco on Sunday and were not molested.

Mr. Charles Kegan Paul, whose death is announced, promised at one time to become *the* Rationalist publisher. He issued several "advanced" books, and was responsible himself for a Life of William Godwin and an edition of the Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft. The biography of Godwin was reviewed at considerable length by James Thomson ("B.V.") in Mr. Foote's weekly paper, *The Secularist*. This was in 1876. Thomson subsequently met Mr. Kegan Paul, and did not receive a very favorable impression. The subject of conversation during the interview was a projected volume of "B.V.'s" poems. Thomson told the present writer immediately afterwards that he thought there was a good deal of Kegan in the gentleman, and very little Paul. Mr. Kegan Paul was then a Positivist, having first been a curate and subsequently a Unitarian. He ended by travelling backwards, and going even farther than the point he started from. His final goal was Roman Catholicism.

Mr. J. W. de Caux's strong letter on "Witchcraft and Christianity" in the *Yarmouth Mercury* was replied to by Mr. T. R. Greenacre. This gentleman wrote like a Christian, and gave himself away so completely that Mr. de Caux was able to make mince-meat of him in a brilliant rejoinder. Correspondence of this kind in the local press is calculated to do much good to the cause of Freethought. Those of the "saints" who can wield a pen with any effect should not neglect this means of letting light into dark places. A great many Christians, who would not look at a paper like ours, may have their attention arrested in spite of themselves by a Freethought utterance in an ordinary newspaper.

The continuation of Mr. Foote's article on Mr. Hall Caine's *The Eternal City* stands over till next week in consequence of so much space being occupied by the account of Mr. Balfour's religious views.

Early Christian Frauds.

VII.

HAVING examined the most notable and flagrant of the early Christian frauds, there remain to be noticed but the interpolations in Josephus. And here I may say at the outset that the paragraph in the *Antiquities* relating to John the Baptist has every appearance of being genuine. Some of the early Gospel-makers, it is true, have made him one of the *dramatis persone* in their collections of fabricated narratives, and have fraudulently represented him as a forerunner and witness of Christ; but this does not affect the account given of him by Josephus. Tiberius, Herod the Great, Antipas, Caiaphas, Pilate, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa are also mentioned by Josephus; but no one would think of questioning the historicity of these personages merely because some unprincipled Christian forgers have introduced them as actors in their mendacious histories. Moreover, every one of the Gospel statements respecting the Baptist—save that he baptised in the Jordan—can be proved to be unhistorical; there can therefore be no valid reason for attempting to show the paragraph in Josephus to be spurious—more especially since that paragraph does not contain a single word connecting the Jewish baptiser with Christ.

As an illustration of the fictitious character of the Gospel narrative, it may be stated that the Baptist did *not* reprove Herod Antipas for taking Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and that, consequently, he was *not* cast into prison for so doing. Antipas did not take his brother Philip's wife; Philip's wife was Salome, the daughter of Herodias. During the whole period of Christ's supposed ministry (A.D. 28-30) Herodias was living with her husband, Herod, the half brother of Antipas. When she left the latter to become the wife of Antipas, the Baptist had been dead several years.

After the publication of the *Antiquities* (A.D. 93)

that work came to be much used by the Christians, probably because it contained a synopsis of the Old Testament history. Some of these believers in Christ were, no doubt, astonished to find no mention made in that book of the miracle-working Jesus or of any of the events narrated in the Gospels. The omission of these matters in that work was, of course, put down to "Jewish prejudices," as was also the complete silence of another Jewish historian, Justus of Tiberias, who wrote a chronicle giving a history of the Jews from the time of Moses to the end of the war with the Romans (A.D. 70). The latter work is lost, but we have evidence that it contained no mention of Jesus or his alleged miracles.

After the *Antiquities* had been in the hands of the Christians a little over a century, two passages were found in book xx. relating to "James, the brother of Jesus"; and after the lapse of another century, a paragraph was discovered in book xviii. respecting "Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man." These passages are undoubtedly Christian interpolations. We will first take the two relating to James, who is said to have been the head of the Christian Church at Jerusalem.

The following passage has been quoted from the *Antiquities* of Josephus by various Christian writers, from the time of Origen downwards:—

"These miseries [*i.e.*, those attending the siege of Jerusalem] befell the Jews by way of revenge for James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus that was called Christ, because they had slain him who was a most righteous person."

This James was called "the Just" in some of the Christian narratives in circulation in the second century among Jewish Christians; but, apparently, nowhere else. It is very unlikely indeed that Josephus ever heard of such a person. But the fact that the above passage has been quoted from the *Antiquities* during the period stated has an important bearing upon the question. It therefore becomes necessary to place this fact beyond all cavil. For this purpose it will suffice to quote the comments of some of the ecclesiastical writers who found the passage in their copies of Josephus.

We will commence with Origen, who wrote about A.D. 250. That writer says (*Against Celsus*):—

"The same Josephus, also, although he did not believe in Jesus as Christ, when he was inquiring after the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the demolition of the temple, says: 'These miseries befell the Jews by way of revenge for James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus that was called Christ, because they had slain him who was a most righteous person.'"

Eusebius, who wrote about A.D. 330, says (*Ecc. Hist.*, ii., 23):—

"Josephus also has not hesitated to superadd this testimony in his works. 'These things,' says he, 'befell the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was the brother of him that was called Christ,' etc.

Jerome, about A.D. 400, says (*Illustrious Men*):—

"Josephus, in the eighteenth book of *Antiquities*, most expressly acknowledges that Christ was slain by the Pharisees on account of the greatness of his miraclesand that Jerusalem was demolished on account of the slaughter of James the Apostle."

Georgius Syncellus, about A.D. 790, quotes the passage (in his *Chronicle*) in identically the same words as Origen:—

"These miseries befell the Jews by way of revenge for James the Just," etc.

Whiston, the translator of Josephus, who died 1752, says, in commenting on that historian's testimony to James:—

"Thus, when Josephus, with other Jews, ascribed the miseries of that nation under Vespasian and Titus, including the destruction of Jerusalem, to the barbarous murder of James the Just, we must remember, etc..... and when Josephus declares that he himself was one of those who thought the terrible miseries of that nation effects of the vengeance of God for their murder of this James, we may easily see those opinions could only be the opinions of converted Jews or Ebionites."

Thus is Josephus proved to have been a Christian.

Now, this passage respecting "James the Just," though unquestionably in the *Antiquities* in the time of Whiston, has since been removed, and is not found in our present copies. It was, no doubt, seen to be impossible to retain it without excising many paragraphs from the works of Josephus, which proved it to be an interpolation. The following are short extracts from two such paragraphs:—

"Certain of these robbers went up to the city, as if they were going to worship God, and.....even in the temple itself.....they had the boldness to murder men there, without thinking of the impiety of which they were guilty. And this seems to me to have been the reason why God, out of his hatred to these men's wickedness, rejected our city; and as for his temple, he no longer esteemed it sufficiently pure for him to inhabit therein; but brought the Romans upon us, and threw a fire upon the city to purge it; and brought upon us, our wives, and children, slavery—as desirous to make us wiser by our calamities" (*Antiq.*, xx., viii., 5).

Again, after relating how "the seditious" within the walls of Jerusalem had slain Jesus and Ananus, the high priests, for endeavoring to restrain their excesses, Josephus says:—

"And now the outer temple was all of it overflowed with blood.....And, standing upon the dead bodies of the high priests, in way of jest they upbraided Ananus with his kindness to the people, and Jesus with his speech made to them from the wall.....and I cannot but think that it was because God had doomed this city to destruction as a polluted city, and was resolved to purge his sanctuary by fire, that he cut off these, its great defenders and well-wishers," etc. (*Wars*, iv., v., 2).

There can thus be not the smallest shadow of a doubt that the passage commencing "These miseries befell the Jews" had been interpolated in the *Antiquities* of Josephus by some unscrupulous Christian scribes soon after that book had come into general use among them, and that it was allowed to remain there until comparatively recent times. The Jewish historian, as we know, attributed all the "miseries" that came upon his people in the war with the Romans to God's displeasure at the frightful wickedness of the fanatical tyrants called zealots, who slaughtered the law-abiding citizens, pillaged the city, polluted the temple, and, in every conceivable way, acted like maniacs.

The second passage, relating to the death of this James, which still remains in the *Antiquities* (xx., ix., 1), reads as follows:—

"So he [*i.e.*, the high priest, Ananus] assembled the Sanhedrim of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some of his companions; and, when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned," etc.

Supposing such an event as that here described to have really occurred, the Jews most certainly would not have complained of the act to King Agrippa and to the new procurator, Albinus, as they are stated in the interpolated paragraph to have done. Such a small matter as the punishment of a few Christians could have no interest for either of the authorities mentioned, while the orthodox Jews would, on the contrary, have considered such an action meritorious. If we believe the statements in the Acts of the Apostles, the Christians, shortly before that time, were continually being arrested and cast into prison in Palestine, and not only so, but they are said to have been brought bound from Damascus to Jerusalem to be dealt with there; nor is it stated in that book that any complaint was made of the persecution of the Christians generally, or even of the stoning of Stephen or the execution of the other James.

There can be little doubt that this second interpolated passage was inserted in the *Antiquities* at the same time, and by the same hand, as the first. Moreover, Syncellus quotes the two passages as continuous, whence it would appear that they were in the same chapter, and were connected. In any case, they must stand or fall together; if one is a fraudulent addition, so, undoubtedly, is the other. Furthermore, the earliest tradition respecting the death of

this James was contained in a work by Hegesippus (about A.D. 170), which is preserved by Eusebius. According to this tradition, James who "on account of his exceeding great piety" received the name of "Just," was asked by the Scribes and Pharisees to "persuade the people not to be led astray by Jesus," and was placed "upon a wing of the temple" to address them. Instead however, of denouncing Jesus, he bore testimony to that teacher's divinity; whereupon some of the Jews who were near cast him down from the temple, and, being still alive, "one of them, a fuller, beat out his brains with the club he used to beat out clothes."

Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 200) gives substantially the same account. This appears to be the earliest narrative of the death of "James the Just"; the one in the *Antiquities* is evidently a later version, which could not possibly have been known to Josephus. But, as already stated, the fact that the first passage relating to James is proved to be a Christian interpolation, stamps the other passage as an interpolation also. ABRACADABRA.

(To be concluded.)

A Chapter in the History of Freethought.

RECENTLY I came across two odd volumes of the *Republican*, edited and printed by Richard Carlile at 135 Fleet-street in 1826. The name of this sixpenny weekly periodical, of which at that time twelve half-yearly volumes had been published, looks rather aggressive just now, when the nation seems to be seized with a fever of ultra-loyalty to the throne. But the *Republican* was not entirely, or even mainly, devoted to effecting constitutional changes, or to the discussion of matters of political moment. Very little, indeed, of its contents came under either of those heads. The first and foremost object it had in view was the assailing of the Christian superstition and the establishment of the freedom of the Press. And for this it went, tooth and nail, with a vigor and success from which we reap inestimable benefits to-day.

The first of these two volumes opens auspiciously within a month or two of Richard Carlile's liberation from one of his terms of imprisonment—six years in Dorechester Gaol. Imagine the long-drawn-out misery of confinement in prison for *six years*, simply for the free expression of opinions which, in a large measure, are echoed in the present day by dignitaries of the Christian Church. It is true that modern criticism of the Bible has brought new weapons to bear in the shape of ripened scholarship, extended research, and what is called "reverent" treatment, but the conclusions are the same. Carlile was a martyr to religious bigotry, whatever the specific charges brought against him, and he triumphed in the end, though, as the editor of the *Freethinker* knows to his personal cost, the endeavor to suppress unbelief by imprisonment did not cease with Carlile's final liberation.

A steel-engraved portrait of Carlile is prefixed to the volume for January to July, 1826. It represents the pioneer as he appeared on his release. There is mental capacity in the broad, high forehead, and clear, penetrating eyes. In the lower part of the clean-shaven face, especially the closely-compressed lips, there is evidence of the stern, unflinching determination which was the characteristic of Carlile's life. He wears a high-standing collar of the old type, the points of which rise to either corner of his mouth, and a thin black band for a tie, fastened in the centre with a brooch. This portrait was reproduced on a large scale some twenty years ago by a London artist-Freethinker.

The first number of vol. xiii. contains an address to Carlile from Edinburgh friends, who called themselves Zetetics. It overflows with terms of sympathy and congratulation. Here is an extract:—

"When we reflect on the former shackled state of the press during the long reign of tyranny; when we recollect the hazard of engaging in political or theological discus-

sion at the time of your outset, and the danger of printing or publishing any work which exposed political misrule or religious errors; and then remember how boldly you began to publish those writings which exposed these deep-rooted evils with which we were oppressed; we may have some idea of your undaunted spirit in undertaking a task so difficult and appalling. We are deeply sensible of the benefits we derive from your exertions, and thoroughly convinced that you have done more for true freedom than any other Reformer who ever preceded you. We rejoice at your release from bondage, and congratulate you on your unconditional liberation."

Carlyle's first undertaking after his release was the founding of a Joint Stock Book Company. By its agency some thousands of copies of *Bon Sens*, *Queen Mab*, *Volney's Ruins*, and other works were printed and circulated. At that time the Christian Evidence Society was in full swing—not the C. E. S. as we now know it, but a Society of that name established for quite a different purpose by the Rev. Robert Taylor, author of *The Devil's Pulpit*, *The Diegesis*, etc. Discussions were opened on books of apologetics by the "Rev." Taylor, who had long emancipated himself from the Christian superstition. Christian opponents were invited to speak, but, judging by the reports, met with pretty much the same fate they encounter in the present day.

About the same time Carlyle exhibited in his window what was described by those who objected to it as a caricature of the Deity. The solicitor and secretary to the Society for the Suppression of Vice wrote to him a threatening letter, which concluded with the words: "The Society would at all times be much more willing to induce you to discontinue your present measures by friendly admonition than by any resort to compulsory measures." Though Carlyle had just undergone six years' imprisonment, he was not to be intimidated by these threats. He replied that the picture was not a caricature, but a fair sketch of certain descriptions in the Bible. The menaced prosecution by the Society had been the cause of its continued exhibition in the shop window. Nothing had been said by him about discontinuing the sale, and nothing would ever be said until he could be persuaded that it was improper or unlawful, which was not at present the case. The print, he argued, was an exhibition of the ignorance of mankind about the qualities of those powers or that power which they concentrate under the name of God or Deity. Then he added: "I wish it to be understood that no compulsory means will have the power to enforce the discontinuation of my present measures, and that, so long as I am convinced of their rectitude, they will be with me a matter of maintenance or death." To make his intention perfectly clear, Carlyle further wrote: "If a prosecution be instituted against the picture, *that* and a hundred of the kind will continue to be exhibited there or elsewhere."

In the same issue in which these defiant replies appear Carlyle observes: "I am just beginning to feel myself out of gaol." Though in immediate danger of going back, he declined to budge an inch. He relates that one day a mild-mannered man came into the shop and offered to buy up the impressions of the print, if that would remove the exhibition from the window. But Carlyle assured him that "money would not do it," and that its continued and more attractive exhibition was caused by the menaces of the Vice Society to prosecute it. If he could have obtained from the Society the admission that no further prosecutions were contemplated he would have evinced a conciliating disposition. The right of free discussion on all subjects being once allowed, he would add nothing to the provocatives which had been in some measure kept up since the persecution began.

The motive which actuated Carlyle in making this proposition did infinite credit to his heart. He said: "I wish to see Hassell, Perry, Clarke, and Campion liberated from Newgate. It is monstrous to keep these men confined if I am to be at large. To this end I am about to write a civil letter to Mr. Peel." Some months afterwards he published in the *Republican* a petition from these unfortunate men,

who describe themselves as "prisoners in Newgate," and the "only remaining victims for the publication of books which investigate the merits of the Christian religion."

A spirited "Retrospect" from the pen of Carlyle appears in another issue. He reviews events since he began his "infidel" publications in 1819. He says:—

"I have been six years in a gaol, others have had their years of imprisonment, but what has all this done in the way of checking the sale of such publications? Nothing; but it has increased the sale of them.....If the Ministers or the Vice Society pursue me to prison again, I shall think them some of the greatest fools, as well as the greatest knaves, in existence. Let all such men come on and do their worst: I neither fear new prosecutions, new gaols, nor new gaolers."

He admits that his "shilling print of God" was offensive to many irritable minds, but then, he says, it instructs many and amuses more. His desire is to offend none but those who "stand in the way of my right and useful doings." Carlyle gave his enemies the chance of prosecuting him for the picture within a certain time, to terminate at the end of Hilary term. An application was made at the Mansion House for the removal of "a blasphemous picture in the window of Carlyle's shop in Fleet-street," on the ground that public decency was insulted. But the Lord Mayor thought that all the owner of that shop sought was the public attention. In this hope that person should be disappointed; as, unless a breach of the peace or obstruction should take place near the shop, the exhibition should pass without notice from him. Thus Carlyle triumphed. In the following week—the allotted time for prosecution having expired—he removed the print, but, at the same time, announces in the *Republican*: "I would have Christians remember that I have a new and very large God painted ready for a new exhibition, if they grow any way insolent about its removal from the window." Later, he published for sale what he called "the little God or Godling," which, he thought, would make an appropriate frontispiece for every work that treated of the Jewish or Christian religion. "This Godling, which is on a copper plate, has more of the furious characteristics of the Jewish God than that very modest-looking God which we had lithographed. By the God itself, I swear that useful instruction is the only intent, or *quo animo*, as the lawyers say in case of libel."

In each number of Carlyle's paper subscriptions are acknowledged, the senders occasionally availing themselves of the opportunity to append some entertaining opinion to their names—*e.g.*, "Mary Miller, East Cowes, thinks that Paine fitted stays rather too tight on the naughty priests, 1s. 6d." This, of course, is an allusion to Paines's early occupation of a stay-maker. By the way, there is a letter from Thomas Paine to Elihu Palmer, the author of *The Principles of Nature*. Paine dates his letter in this characteristic fashion: "Paris, February 21, 1802, since the Fable of Christ." I am not aware that the letter has been reproduced; anyway, it is worth while giving the following passage:—

"I see you have thought deeply on the subject, and expressed your thoughts in a strong and clear style. The hinting and intimating manner of writing that was formerly used on subjects of this kind produced scepticism, but not conviction. It is necessary to be bold. Some people can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it. Say a bold thing that will stagger them, and they will begin to think."

Paine, in this expression of opinion, has been, and is now, supported by the views of more than a few experienced publicists.

One letter in the *Republican* from a correspondent signing himself "Fidelitas" was probably agreeable reading to Carlyle after all his trials and imprisonment. The writer says: "I have left your son Richard £500 in my will."

There are many other interesting passages in these volumes, as also in the *Lion* and the *Deist*, two other

papers published by Carlile; but these—for the present, at any rate, may suffice. To readers of the modern organs of Freethought, these old, almost forgotten, productions present many quaint features in style and topic and tone.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Francois Rabelais.

"Le rire c'est le propre de l'homme."—RABELAIS.

"Rabelais laughing in his easy chair."—POPE.

"I class Rabelais with the great creative minds of the world—Shakespeare, Dante, Cervantes."—COLERIDGE.

RABELAIS may be said to be the apostle of modern humor, the humor which means deep insight into the incongruities of life, and a compassionate knowledge of human foibles. He who has it has found the key to "le profond cabinet de nos cœurs," to borrow the words of Pantagruel.

This kind of fun cannot belong to primitive times. It is impossible till society has become complicated. The laughter of Heroes, even the Homeric, would not move a muscle of our sympathies. The jokes of the first comedies would not to-day arouse the laughter of the smallest schoolboy.

Rabelais was the humorist of the Renaissance. He was a Titan whose mirth shook the old world and gave birth to the new. He was an Olympian, huge always, chaotic often, but sinewy and purposeful. His laugh has a nobleness, for laughter partakes of the nature of what is laughed at. "Le rire c'est le propre de l'homme," he said. It was his great discovery. At this mighty trumpet sound the cloister walls trembled and fell, the fresh air of heaven blew in. Monk and nun, hidden vice and religious terror, fled before the daylight.

François Rabelais was of middle-class parentage. He was born in 1483, near the lovely little city of Chinon, on the Vienne, where Henry II. cursed his sons and died. He always regarded Chinon with affectionate admiration. "Ville noble, ville antique, voire première du monde," so he called it in the fulness of his heart. He saw the broad river Vienne as we see it. He saw the castle as we no longer see it, one of the feudal palaces of France. Now pink valerian fills every crumbling crevice and ivy throws a green mantle over the fragments of the once huge building. The fact of his father having been an innkeeper was used as a weapon against him in literary controversy by gentlemen who had excellent reasons for doubting their own paternity. His father, unfortunately, wished to make François a priest. Accordingly he was sent, at nine years of age, to the Benedictine monks of Scully. He was so young that the white shirt was put over the child's frock. Later Rabelais was removed to the Franciscan Monastery of Fontenoy le Comte. The Franciscan vows seem to have included ignorance as well as celibacy and poverty. He remained there for fifteen years, taking priest's orders in 1511, at the age of twenty-eight. In most congenial surroundings he proved himself a most enthusiastic scholar. He amassed that encyclopædic knowledge which he put to so good a use in his immortal book, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.

It is to this long period spent among the ignorant, bigoted, narrow sons of the Great Lying Catholic Church that we owe Rabelais's undying hatred of priestcraft. It breaks out in every page of his writings—now passionately, now sorrowfully, with a cry of rage, a sob of pain, or the bitter laugh of scorn. He hated the "monk birds" more bitterly than even Erasmus, for his nature was stronger.

At the age of forty he came into the world a free man—free, that is, to follow his studies. He was burning with a pathetic enthusiasm for the new learning. He threw aside the hated monastic garb, and became secretary to the Bishop of Maillezais. About 1530 he went to the University of Montpellier, with the intention of getting a medical degree. Remark that at this time, when Rabelais is following the lectures, he is already within sight of his fiftieth year. Two years later (in 1532) he went to Lyons, where he held an appointment as physician to the

hospital. His friend, Etienne Dolet, was already established as a printer in the place. In that favored freethinking city he made his home in the Grand Hôpital, and lectured to the students. He did not let the grass grow under his feet. He surprised and delighted his pupils by the dissection of a man's body, for the first time in France. By the pious this action was supposed to interfere with the resurrection of the body at the Last Day, and, before venturing upon it, the Pope's permission was suggested. Rabelais did without the Papal passport, and Lyons, the freethinking, only applauded his courage.

Rabelais's connection with the first reformers of France is certain—the extent difficult to determine. Rabelais had no desire for the martyr's crown. He never contemplated following Calvin into exile or Berquin to the stake. As he humorously explained, he was too thirsty by nature to like fire.

His sympathies were antagonistic to all dogmas. He held Calvin and Luther in almost as much abhorrence as the priests. The society of Des Perriers, Etienne Dolet, and the Lyonnais Freethinkers were more congenial to his rationalistic habits of thought. Moreover, he had excellent reasons for knowing the power of the Great Lying Church, and the pious malignity of her hired assassins. Heretics were then handed over to the secular arm, to be burnt for the good of their souls and the greater glory of an imaginary god. Rabelais did not intend, if he could help it, to be butchered to make a Roman holiday. When he was denounced as a heretic he smilingly challenged his enemies to produce a heretical proposition from his writings. They were unequal to the task; but, none the less, the heresy was there. Rabelais's caution was necessary if he wished to live. Some of his contemporaries suffered for scepticism. Dolet was burnt, Des Perriers was hunted to suicide, Marot was a half-starved wanderer in Piedmont. Giordano Bruno, whom he had probably met in Rome, was also murdered, to the eternal disgrace of the Catholic Church.

When Rabelais wrote his immortal book, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, the times were, indeed, "out of joint." Active freethinkers carried their lives in their hands. This was the reason why he chose as the vehicle of his ideas the grotesque and enigmatical form of a satire. All the episodes set forth in this work are nothing more than a feeble skeleton used by the author as a peg to hang his vehement, satirical diatribe on education, administration, war—in fact, on all the abuses of his time. Like Figaro, he laughs at everything around him, to save him from tears. A deep seriousness underlies his most rollicking humor. The discerning reader can, however, perceive the pearls beneath the veritable dunghill. Under the guise of a mere jester Rabelais concealed a spirit of lofty and audacious inquiry. Few men's lives have been so persistently misunderstood. Only a minority of those who unbend, like Browning, over a jolly chapter of Rabelais are acquainted with his personality. His few familiar letters extant are addressed almost exclusively to his friend and employer, the Bishop and Baron of Maillezais. In these Rabelais shows himself a dainty and kindly Epicurean. Living as he did through years of momentous import to mankind, we learn less of historic events than of his personal likes and dislikes. In his letters he dilates on such interesting, but not historically important, subjects as vegetables for salads, and the expenses of living. He introduces a topical book to his friend (*De Eversione Europe*), a work of prognostications, and expresses his doubts about the value of the divinations.

It has been said that Rabelais despised women. He did not write till an age when the passion of youth had consumed itself to ashes. Passion was killed in Rabelais by that hateful system of monkery which has filled Christendom with unspeakable horrors. Poor Rabelais! A whole half of humanity absent from his mind. Love, the source of all human joys and sympathies, appears in the accursed monastic system in which he was trained as corruption and depravity. The damnable discipline surrounded

Rabelais from the time he wore a child's frock till he was a man of forty. The best side of his nature was strangled. He never loved, never even thought of loving. He had no more respect for women than a eunuch in an eastern seraglio. The unlovely years ate away his manhood, imprisoned with its blind instincts and objectless passions. Priestcraft spoiled his life. The robe he wore was to him a bodily deformity, corrupting his mind, narrowing his views. Originally his nature must have been lofty and beautiful—witness those exquisite chapters in which he describes the monks of Thelema, whose motto was "Liberty." Rabelais's death in 1553 was unexpected. Tradition has it that he died saying, "*Je vais chercher le grand peut-être.*" We may picture the rage of the Christians when their old enemy, now almost within their pious clutches, slipped quietly out of their eager hands. It was well for the old man that his life was not prolonged. Rabelais went further than contempt for the trappings of Christianity. He rejected it altogether. There can be no doubt that Rabelais was a Freethinker. He hoped to cure the evil of religion by spreading knowledge, and by bringing priestcraft into contempt. He *knew* as much as any man of his time. His life was spent in the pursuit of knowledge. But he carried his weight of learning lightly. He was acquainted with the book of the world, and not merely with the world of books. His writings show surprising fertility of mind, and Coleridge says: "Beyond a doubt he was among the deepest, as well as the boldest, thinkers of his age." Without a large charity intellect seems to Rabelais worthless. He tell us "wisdom cannot enter an unkind spirit, and knowledge without conscience is ruin." No better words could be found, words like himself—strong, generous, and serene.

MIMNERMUS.

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.): Closed during July and August.

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

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch N. S. S.): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY (West London Branch N. S. S.): 7.30, Mr. F. Schaller.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7 p.m., E. Pack.

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

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7.30 p.m., half-yearly meeting.

HULL BRANCH N. S. S.: Annual trip to Aldboro. Leave Story-street at 9 a.m.

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