

# THE Freethinker

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*Do not read, as the children read, to amuse yourself, nor as ambitious people read, to get instruction. No! READ TO LIVE! Make an intellectual atmosphere for your soul, which shall be composed of the emanation of all the great minds.—FLAUBERT.*

## Zola's Atheism.

M. HYACINTHE LOYSON, well known formerly as Père Hyacinthe, was unable to attend Zola's funeral. He therefore sent a letter from Geneva to M. Yves Guyot, deeply regretting his absence. "I should be there," he said, "not only because I am a Frenchman, but because I am a Christian and a priest. Zola did not believe in God, I know, but he believed in Justice, even so far as to sacrifice himself for it." This is the testimony of a personal friend, and that friend a Christian, though no longer a Roman Catholic. We do not cite it as strikingly novel. Zola did not, perhaps, call himself an Atheist; on that point we have no information; but he certainly was an Atheist, as anyone might have inferred from his writings. This indeed was apparent to the writer of an editorial article, entitled "Zolaism v. Evangelicalism," in the *Christian* of October 9, from which we take the following extract:—

"His trilogy, entitled *Lourdes*, *Rome*, and *Paris*, showed that he had absolutely no conception of what the Christian religion is, in its pure Evangelical essence. He saw the Christianity of Rome, recognised its hopeless corruption, and came to the conclusion that the only alternative was a fetish, which he called 'Science'—by which he meant a kind of enlightened Secularism. There are thousands, if not millions, of educated men on the Continent (many in this country) who have fallen into the same mistake.

The *Christian* afterwards refers to the "Science" and "enlightened Secularism" as "this bastard Agnosticism." It is a curious expression, for even bastards have parents, and there does not seem to be any doubt as to the origin of Zola's unbelief. But we let that pass. Our point is that Zola's Atheism—for such it was to all practical intents and purposes—is clear enough even to the editor of an orthodox journal, who would naturally rather not find it (if possible) in the case of a man so distinguished.

Zola makes the hero of that trilogy, the Abbé Froment, see through all the superstition and all the futility of Catholicism. And by Catholicism he means Christianity. In a Catholic country the terms are interchangeable; just as they are to the student of history and sociology. It is perfectly clear that this was Zola's conception, for the denunciations and abandonments of the Abbé Froment apply to the very fundamentals of the Christian faith. Again and again, in language of passionate eloquence, the idea is expressed that Christian beliefs are as false as Christian methods are harmful. Every kind of supernaturalism is a dream, gods are phantoms, and the absolute is a chimera. Heaven and hell are fancies that divert attention from the realities of this world. Man must fall back upon nature. Science is the only emancipator. On this point Zola was always firm. What was the use of blowing up buildings, assassinating

rulers, and multiplying the miseries and sufferings of the world? "I am the true revolutionist," says the great scientific professor in *Paris*. Everything but science was superficial. Politics and social reform touch nothing deeply. Man progresses, like every other organism, by adjustment to changes in his environment. And these changes are almost exclusively caused by science. What the world is really governed by is the discovery and propagation of truth.

Being an Atheist, and relying upon science to redeem the world, Zola was bound to recognise what he called "the derisive futility of Charity." What the world wanted was Justice. It is not too much to say that he had a passionate love for this greatest, rarest, and most difficult of all virtues. This passionate love it was that threw him into the Dreyfus case. He showed with what sublime unflinchingness an Atheist could risk all—reputation, fortune, liberty, and life itself—in championing one of the highest interests of humanity. There was nothing for him to gain; no smile of God, no crown of glory. His act was purely disinterested. Rather that word itself had no real application. He had become the organ of a lofty ideal. He was seized, possessed—as the old superstitionists phrased it—by the spirit of a mighty cause. And thus he became at a critical moment the voice of the conscience of France, and through it the voice of the conscience of humanity.

What a wonderful position for an Atheist, when a belief in God is held to be necessary even to the commonest forms of morality. And what a mistake Tennyson made when he talked about "the troughs of Zolaism" in denouncing vivisection. He was usually very careful, but this time he blundered badly. He spoke with prejudice and bigotry. He did injustice to a man who was generally condemned because he was striking out a new and vigorous line for himself. Zola loved vivisection as little as Tennyson did. He was extremely fond of animals, and deeply attached to his pet dogs. It filled him with indignation to watch the dumb sufferings of the "brute creation." Just in the same way he had a profound sympathy for the working classes, who bear the worst weight of the burdens of civilisation. His later writings were really devoted to pressing the social problem upon the attention of all who could think and feel. Perhaps he paid the penalty as an artist, but he probably felt compensated by his success as a reformer.

Zola's "realism" is denounced by the *Christian*—which must denounce him for something. It describes "realism" as "another word for obscenity." But is not this a strange objection from such a quarter? Our contemporary says that "the only true antidote" to such Atheism as Zola's is "a study of the Bible, and a recognition of the simple truths of the Evangelical faith." A study of the Bible, forsooth! Why there is nothing in Zola's most unreticent passages to equal the outspokenness of some parts of the Bible. The editor of the *Christian* should really attend to his own sacred Scriptures. When he has disinfected the Bible it will be time enough for him to detect "an ancient and fish-like smell" elsewhere. Besides, no one clamors to have Zola's books placed in the hands of school-children.

G. W. FOOTE.

## The Snake without a Head.

ANYBODY who has read a moderate amount of geology will know something of Kent's Hole, the cavern near Torquay, in which were discovered the remains of human handiwork along with the remains of long-extinct animals, thus attesting the vast antiquity of man. The most energetic digger in this famous Hole was the late William Pengelly (born 1812, died 1894). Mr. Pengelly's biography, edited by his daughter Hester in 1897, contains many interesting pages in regard to both the scientific and personal aspects of his career. Naturally his acquaintance with many remarkable facts tending to prove the remoteness of human origins shook him out of orthodox views of Genesis. Pious people nervously asked him if geology endangered the belief in "revelation," and Pengelly replied to one of these correspondents, "I am satisfied that science can do nothing for the salvation of the soul, and that the Bible is able, through God's blessing, to make us wise unto salvation." But his biographer places this piece of correspondence under the date 1858-9, and I suspect that long before his death Pengelly had considerably shifted towards a very broad theology. A man could not freely mix with such thinkers as Lyell, Tyndall, Huxley, Owen, and the rest without dropping many a dogma by the way. His biographer thus hints at some such process in Pengelly's spiritual history:—

His position might be justly described by the following striking words of Erasmus:—"The sum of religion is peace, which can only be when definitions are as few as possible, and opinion is left free on many subjects..... Wait till the veil is removed, and we see God face to face."

In reading Miss Pengelly's book, I paused for special reflection at two stories. The first tells how Pengelly (then a lad of thirteen or fourteen) watched a quarryman breaking blue lias stone at Lyme Regis. One of the laborer's blows split a piece of rock and disclosed a fossil ammonite with its beautiful coil of shell tubing. Pengelly was eager to know the meaning of the ammonite.

"If," said the laborer, "you had read the Bible, you'd know what 'tis."

Pengelly asked for details, and the wiseacre replied:—

"In the Bible we're told there was once a flood that covered all the world. At that time all the rocks were mud, and the different things that were drowned were buried in it; that there's a snake that was buried in that way. There are lots of 'em, and other things besides, in the rocks and stones hereabouts."

"A snake! but where's his head?"

"You must read the Bible, I tell 'ee, and then you'll find out why 'tis that some of these snakes in the rocks ain't got no heads. We're told there that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. That's how 'tis."

The anecdote vividly shows how gross is the ignorance of a working-class which has been "educated" (if one may so misuse the term) under the popular system of "religious instruction." This feeble and restricted system damps down the mental energies, keeps the reasoning faculty from unfolding, and robs the human soul of its birthright of intellectual pleasure. It is as helpless to guide a man through the world of experience and knowledge as a map rudely sketched by a mediæval monk to direct Columbus or Magellan on their historic voyages.

The second story is of a more cheering character, and indicates the road of escape from the prison of Biblical orthodoxy. On one occasion Pengelly was making his way towards a particularly interesting spot on the Devonshire shore, and he enlisted the aid of a young farmer, John, as a guide to the somewhat out-of-the-way locality. Pengelly and the farmer tramped two miles over the moorland, talking of the weather, the crops, and the scenery; and the geologist happened to mention fossils. The word "fossils" was a mystery to John; but the mystery was destined, ere long, to be cleared up. When Pengelly found the cliff of which he was in search, he examined

it closely until he descried a dark patch in the midst of the bluish-grey slate. He knelt, not in the act of worship, but in order, by means of hammer and chisel, to cut out a specimen of *Steganodictyum*—a fossil fish. John exclaimed:—

"Why, what be about?"

"Do you see this black patch?" asked the geologist.

"'Ees, I see it plain enough."

"Well, that's a fossil, and I'm trying to get it out," replied Pengelly.

Then ensued a conversation which John probably did not forget all the rest of his life. Pengelly led his companion's mind through a series of simple facts—the dead shells and fish bones lying on the sea bottom; the passage of mud down swollen rivers to the sea; the wearing of the substance of cliffs into mud, which was carried off by the fretting of the waves and deposited on the bed of the sea; the burial of the shells and bones under a mass of mud; the hardening of this mass into rock; the uplifting of the rock above the water-level into dry land, in the bowels of which the miner or the pioneer of science would discover the relics of living things in the shape of "fossils,"

To all this John listened in wonder. When he had grasped the purport of the lesson, he inspected the cliffs on his own account, and kept crying in delight, as he spied out fresh fossils.

"Here's one! here's another!"

When they returned to the inn at which Mr. Pengelly was staying, the geologist betook himself to a writing-desk in a quiet parlor, while John sat in the adjoining kitchen, chatting to the village folk who dropped in from time to time. To all who would lend an ear, the young farmer related the history of the fossils, his voice ringing with a new enthusiasm and pleasure. Each time he recounted his experiences with Pengelly, he wound up by saying:—

"I'll tell 'ee what 'tis—I've lived longer this morning than ever I lived all the years of my life before."

John had caught a glimpse of a new life. He had seen the Promised Land of nature's infinite treasury. He had felt the stirring of that wonder in which Plato declared philosophy itself to begin. He was taking the first step from the cave of intellectual dusk into the wholesome light of positive knowledge and inductive reasoning. Clericalism would have left him with the stupid belief that the ammonite was a snake without a head. Pengelly's friendly and rational chat had revealed, almost in a flash, a scene of far-reaching science waiting to be explored by intelligence and patience.

Note John's words:—"I've lived longer this morning than ever I lived all the years of my life before." The simple Devonshire farmer had come upon a profound truth of human psychology, namely, that the value of life is measured by the richness of its content rather than the duration as reckoned by the calendar. To enlarge knowledge is to enlarge life. Give a man entrance to a new sphere of wisdom, and you have added to his life. If he owes the physician gratitude for relieving him from a deadly peril of disease, no less does he owe thanks to you who have given him a capacity to enjoy a perennial spring.

Much is said nowadays (and rightly said) of the claims of labor to its full share of the wealth it has created. In its essence the Labor Movement is a noble revolt against unjust rags and starvation. But this revolt must be accompanied by a second revolt—I mean the revolt against intellectual sweating and poverty. Take bread from me; you are a brute. Take knowledge from me; you are a devil. Let me eat, and at least I shall be an animal. Let me learn, and I shall be a man. Give me, for mercy's sake, a bite and sup. In the name of Reason and Life, give me also the means to teach myself from the eternal pages of the earth, the sky, and the sea. I believe this hunger after knowledge will grow until its expression becomes as earnest and even angry as

the demand of the masses for a decent wage. When this hunger does so express itself the Labor Movement will be invested with irresistible dignity. And when the people have secured this grand and ultimate right to knowledge, they will pass into glorious inheritances prepared for them since the foundations of human culture were laid by the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Hindus. The fine and rare things of art, literature, music, and science will be opened to Demos and his children, and the people will know the purest of joys. The highest joy of knowledge has never yet been experienced by mortal; but it will be known to those who come after us. That joy will consist in the sense that knowledge is the possession of the whole human commonwealth, and not merely of a group of intellectual aristocrats. To-day our pleasure in knowledge is always mingled with the bitter recollection that multitudes of our fellow men and women have no access to the wealth of the Muses. When the spirit of true civilisation triumphs we shall all con the everlasting book together and be glad.

F. J. GOULD.

### Professor Lodge on Science and Faith.

THE other day the pious *Daily News* referred in a very lofty manner to the period when people believed that there existed a conflict between science and religion. The obvious inference was that the mere belief that such a conflict could exist was a sign of mental weakness, quite surprising in a generation priding itself upon being educated. I am afraid, however, that competent judges are hardly likely to take the verdict of the *Daily News* on the real meaning of either science or religion very seriously. At all events I for one venture to assert not only that there has been a conflict between religion and science, but that the conflict still exists, that religion and science are necessarily opposed in spirit and method, and that the only way in which a permanent peace can be brought is by the method hitherto found efficacious in inducing the lion and the lamb to lie down together. Which will have to play the part of the lion remains to be seen.

There is always a certain comfort in finding that one is not alone in an opinion, and there is in the new *Hibbert Journal* an article from one of our leading scientists, Sir Oliver Lodge, which fully endorses all I have said above. The new *Journal*, making all due allowance for the general flabbiness of English magazine literature, commences its career fairly well, and provided it only lives up to its program, it bids fair to prove anything but a welcome visitor to the ordinary religious mind.

Professor Lodge's article is on "The Outstanding Controversy between Science and Faith." From the standpoint of Freethought the article leaves little to be desired; indeed, had it appeared in the *Freethinker* it could scarcely have been more outspoken. At the outset Professor Lodge protests against the assumption made by so many religionists that science has its sects as well as theology, and therefore the contradictions of the one are no more than the contradictions of the other. The controversies in science, he rightly points out, rage "round matters of detail, and on all important issues its professors are agreed," while "professors of theology differ among themselves in a somewhat conspicuous manner; and even in the branch of it with which alone most Englishmen are familiar—viz., Christian theology, there are differences of opinion on apparently important issues, as is evidenced by the existence of sects, ranging from Unitarians on the one side, to Greek and Roman Catholics on the other." And to this one may add that one benefit of a discussion on a scientific subject is that there is usually more agreement at the end of the dispute than at its beginning; while a discussion on theology usually fails to settle anything except to settle each disputant more firmly in his opinion.

With the man of science who accepts both the

creed of the Churches and the implications of modern science, and the religious apologist who professes to believe in a real reconciliation between religion and science, we are all more or less acquainted, and it is against these two classes of people that Professor Lodge's article is directed. This reconciliation the Professor does not believe is possible in the present state of scientific knowledge, and it is evidently his opinion that such a reconciliation never will be possible. Here is the issue clearly stated by one of our foremost scientists, in answer to the question, "Wherein lies the incompatibility of the two?"—

"My reply briefly is.....that orthodox science shows us a self-contained and self-sufficient universe, not in touch with anything above or beyond itself—the general trend and outline of it known—nothing supernatural or miraculous, no intervention of beings other than ourselves being conceived possible. While religion on the other hand requires us constantly and consciously to be in touch with a power, a mind, a being or beings, entirely out of our sphere, entirely beyond our scientific ken; the universe contemplated by religion is by no means self-contained or self-sufficient, it is dependent for its origin and maintenance.....upon the power and goodwill of being or beings of which science has no knowledge. Science does not indeed always or consistently deny the existence of such transcendent beings, nor does it make any attempt to limit their potential powers, but it definitely disbelieves in their exerting any actual influence on the progress of events, or in their producing or modifying the simplest physical phenomenon."

This is a perfectly clear statement of the two points of view, and when we state it in this manner, clear of religious verbiage and hyper-metaphysical conundrums, the chance of a reconciliation seems remote indeed. The whole dispute between religion and science is that of a conflict between the vitalistic and the mechanical conception of nature. Science certainly has no room for the former, and religion, while it may submit to the latter, is always protesting against it. Science cannot tolerate the vitalistic conception for the simple reason that its presence would render all its calculations nugatory or doubtful. Once we admit the possibility or probability of a "divine mind" interfering with cosmic phenomena, and all scientific generalisations would need to be accompanied by the "D.V." of a prayer-meeting. And religion protests against the mechanical view because there is always the uneasy feeling of not knowing where it will stop. The whole development of thought has been steadily away from vitalism, and just as steadily towards the conception outlined by Professor Lodge. As he says, the mechanical terminology is being found quite applicable to the most complex biologic phenomenon.

"The death of an archbishop can be stated scientifically in terms not very different from those appropriate to the stoppage of a clock or the extinction of a fire; but the religious formula for the same event is that it has pleased God in His infinite wisdom to take to Himself the soul of our dear brother, etc. The very words of such a statement are to modern science unmeaning."

The stock defence of the theologian is that there are many gaps in our knowledge of nature, as, for example, the origin of life. To which the reply is that between our want of knowledge concerning the way in which life originated, and the acceptance of the theologians' bare statement concerning how it originated, the difference is infinite. If science does not know, neither does religion; and there ought surely to be something better than somebody else's ignorance to base one's own belief on. That the organic *does* pass into the inorganic and the inorganic into the organic are *facts* of every-day experience; that we do not know the exact stages of the latter process only proves—that we do not know. Once again let us hear Sir Oliver:—

"Will the theologian triumph in the admission? [*i.e.*, that we do not know the origin of protoplasmic matter] will he base an argument for the direct action of the Deity in mundane affairs on that failure, and entrench himself behind the present incompetence of laboring men? If so, he takes his stand on what may prove a yielding foundation.....In an early stage of civilisation

it may have been supposed that flame only proceeded from antecedent flame; but the tinder-box and lucifer match were invented nevertheless.....Any year, or any century, the physical aspect of the nature of life may become more intelligible, and may perhaps resolve itself into the action of already known forces acting on the very complex molecule of protoplasm.....Life, in its ultimate element and on its material side, is such a simple thing—it is but a slight extension of known chemical and physical forces; the cell must be able to respond to stimuli, to assimilate outside materials, and to subdivide. I apprehend that there is not a biologist but believes (perhaps quite erroneously) that sooner or later the discovery will be made, and that a cell having all the essential functions of life will be constructed out of inorganic material. Seventy years ago organic chemistry was the chemistry of vital products or compounds that could not be made artificially by man. Now there is no such chemistry; the name persists, but its meaning is changed."

But, as I have said over and over again in these columns, it is the scientific *atmosphere* that is so fatal to religious beliefs. The ordinary man loses his religion for the simple reason that he no longer finds in his social and intellectual environment the wherewithal to sustain it. As Professor Lodge points out (and now that I have so good a witness, I may be excused making the most of his evidence):—

"Take a scientific man.....and place him in the atmosphere habitual to the Churches—and he must starve. He requires solid food, and he finds himself in air. He requires something to touch and define and know; but there everything is ethereal, indefinable, illimitable, incomprehensible, beautiful, and vague. He dies of inanition.....It must, I think, be admitted that the modern scientific atmosphere.....exercises some sort of blighting influence upon religious ardor, and that the great saints or seers have, as a rule, not been eminent for their exact scientific knowledge."

Professor Lodge rightly points out that this scientific atmosphere has had the inevitable effect of killing religious conviction not among the leaders only, but also among the rank and file. The religious world nowadays, if we except the more ignorant portion, has surrendered practically the whole of its beliefs in connection with the Bible, with the doctrine of a special providence, or with the efficacy of prayer. Very little in the Bible is now taken seriously. It is all poetry, fiction, legend, or religious aspiration, with a background of vague, undefined and undefinable inspiration. And where is the process to stop? Having given up so much, does anyone doubt but that they will one day give up more? The development of science is continuous, and the surrendering of pseudo-scientific or anti-scientific doctrines must be equally so. If, as Professor Lodge asks, people surrender the miracles of the Old Testament, what do they propose to do with those of the New? Is the turning of water into wine, the cursing of the fig-tree, the raising of Lazarus, the scene at the Baptism of Jesus, the transfiguration, the ascension, at all more credible than the surrendered miracles of the old Bible? Or are the Biblical miracles any more credible than those recorded by the Roman Catholic Church? Why strain at Lourdes and swallow Judæa? Why accept a particular providence in the year 30 and reject it in the year 1902? Of course, for a time these irreconcilable mental attitudes may be maintained; but, sooner or later, the logic of facts is bound to assert itself.

The history of religion in the future will be on all fours with the history of religion in the past—a process of attacks, retreats, apologies, and withdrawals. When the Copernican system was established piety still consoled itself with the reflection that God at all events kept the planets in their places, although there had been a readjustment of the earth's relation to the rest of the system. But the Newtonian law of gravitation removed this consolation. Still God had "moulded the earth in the hollow of his hands," and *that* was something. The development of geological knowledge, however, destroyed this comfort. There remained only the world of living beings, and piety once more entrenched itself behind the prevailing ignorance of the nature of biologic pro-

cesses, and fought with right good will against the introduction of knowledge. But evolution—which, as Professor Lodge says, is "a word not readily applicable to the works of a God"—became an established fact, and there is thus left absolutely nothing for a god to do in the whole realm of known or knowable nature. The world develops without his help, and human nature without his superintendance. The post of deity has become a sinecure; and in a reforming and democratic age, sinecures are fated to disappear.

C. COHEN.

### Cobbett.

WITH all his bumptiousness and bull-dog egotism, his defence of Paine constrains us to think kindly of this son of Surrey, even although that defence proved abortive. Born at Farnham, on the borders of Hampshire, near the scenes forming the subject of the *Natural History of Selborne*, he was of poor parentage, and, at a tender age, arrayed in smock-frock, became perforce attached to the pursuits of the soil, his humbler beginnings consisting of "scare-crowding" birds from the turnips, peas, and cherry gardens.

Farnham is remarkable for a bishop's palace, for soldiers, and for the number of its public-houses, one of which, "The Jolly Farmer," situated by the meandering Wey, boasts the honor of being the birthplace of Cobbett. Hard by, Waverly Abbey inspired Scott with the nomenclature for his immortal series; and in the neighborhood Swift spent some time, Stella's cottage being still in evidence. Here, also, Darwin conducted interesting observations, when applying the doctrines of Malthus to the vegetable kingdom, as recorded in the third chapter of the *Origin of Species*, and close to Frensham Ponds, bordered by sandy shores, give the notion of a miniature inland sea. Environed by the Hog's-back and Hindhead ranges, the district of Selborne, the hop gardens of Surrey, Farnham forms a centre of rural charms not easily matched; but, in Cobbettarian phrase, Aldershot, the great military "Wen," so near, is out of harmony.

At eleven years of age the gardens of the Bishop of Winchester at Farnham Castle afforded Cobbett employment; and here being told of the beauties of Kew one day, he instantly set off for Richmond, where, lighting upon *The Tale of a Tub* in a book-seller's, he invested his last threepence. The *Tale*, it is said, shaped his ultimate destiny. Returning to the parental roof, the succeeding nine years appear to have been devoted to farming and the acquisition of agricultural knowledge, which, supplemented by observation and reflection in after life, made him an easy first authority on all matters appertaining to the soil. Quitting rural life, and disappointed at his rejection for the navy, young Cobbett came to London, and settled down for a time at the work of copyist in a lawyer's office. This being quite uncongenial, an advertisement induced him to enlist in the Royal Marines; but having joined, he found himself entered in quite a different regiment—a trick which Bradlaugh had to endure sixty years later. The army life, spent chiefly in Nova Scotia, illustrates the potential rapid rise of the soldier; and in this case advancement appears to have been richly deserved, because in every respect Cobbet proved himself to be a model service-man. Possessing himself of a copy of Lowth's Grammar, he wrote it out three times, and learnt it by heart, from back to back, on sentry duty. Obtaining an honorable discharge from the army, his first stroke of liberty took the form of a formal accusation of malfesance against three officers of the regiment; a court martial being ordered, the accuser, finding the country too hot for him, fled to revolutionary France, where he studied the language. France, presently to be shaken by the throes of the Revolution, became dangerous for undesirables, and Cobbett set sail for the United States, settling down in Pennsylvania, 1792:

Singularly enough this firebrand of after years upheld Burke as against Paine on matters affecting the French Revolution. Eking out a living near Philadelphia by teaching English to the French *émigrés*, Cobbett declined, absolutely, to receive Tallyrand as a pupil, explaining: "I refused to go to the *ci-devant* Bishop's house, but the lame fiend hopped over the difficulty at once by offering to come to my house, which offer also I refused." In an essay condemning revolutionary principles, the public first became aware of Cobbett's literary power; and with the success of this *brochure* he launched himself on American journalism. A libel action embarrassed further operations after rather a successful career in the States, and the English Government received him with open arms after an absence of eight years. Setting up in Fleet-street, *Cobbett's Political Register*, a weekly newspaper, afforded the editor scope for exposing all sorts of abuses. Attacking the Government upon the question of flogging in the Army, a form of torture he had often witnessed, Ellenborough and three judges, with a jury, found him guilty of an "infamous and seditious libel," and two years' imprisonment, with a fine of £1,000, followed. The severity of the sentence aroused a feeling of general indignation, which had much to do with paving the way for freedom of the press. However, the *Register* continued to prosper, and only died twenty-six years later, with the author. Circumstances of the hour accounted for, if they do not excuse, the harsh penal measures enforced, for Napoleon had reached the zenith of his glory; the great camp of Boulogne had been dispersed, as it were, for the moment, only to overwhelm the combined Russian and Austrian armies, subsidised by England; and at Austerlitz their defeat, at once so horrible, so splendid, and so complete, raised Bonaparte a niche higher than Alexander, Hannibal, or Cæsar. The celebrated "Continental system" of blockade on English commerce paralysed our industries; Jena and Wagram had intervened, and the Peninsular War, together with huge subsidies, threatened to absorb our resources. Austerlitz, it has been said, broke Pitt's heart, and pretty well broke us. A violent reaction, unfavorable to revolutionary "levelling" principles, had set in, the Government lost its head in more senses than one, and, of course, the Cobbetts, the Carilles, and the advanced guard generally paid the penalty.

Some time after his release, fearing another dose of gaol, Cobbett, with characteristic resource, transferred the *Register's* editorial chair, with himself, from London to Long Island, State of New York, whence he forwarded the "copy," to be printed in England, as usual, for the next two years. At length, returning home, he unsuccessfully contested several seats for a place in Parliament, but the Reform Act had to be accomplished before his legislative ambition became satisfied. His opening speech at Westminster exhibits his general style very happily. Said he, on rising: "It appears to me that since I have been sitting here, I have heard a great deal of vain and unprofitable conversation." He had, unhappily, already entered into the sere and yellow leaf; and the churchyard at Farnham was all too soon destined to take unto its bosom Farnham's most famous son. The grave, which is raised and railed in, bears the following inscription:—

Beneath this stone lie the remains of  
WILLIAM COBBETT,

Son of George and Anne Cobbett, born in the Parish of  
Farnham,

9 March, 1762. Enlisted in the 54th Regiment of  
Foot in 1784,

of which Regiment he became Sergeant-Major in 1785  
and obtained his discharge in 1791.

In 1794 he became a Political Writer; in 1832 was returned to  
Parliament for the Borough of Oldham, and  
represented it till

His death, which took place at Normandy Farm in the  
adjoining

Parish of Ash, on the 18th June, 1835.

As the crow flies, but a league separates Normandy  
from the tomb of Charles Bradlaugh, at Brookwood

Less than that distance from Cobbett's last resting place Stella's cottage nestles at the foot of Crooksbury Hill, on the banks of the Wey, in what is, perhaps, the loveliest nook in Surrey.

Undoubtedly, in his time, Cobbett wielded much influence by his writings, extravagant, wild, and inaccurate as they often were. The *English Grammar*, penned during his stay at Long Island, is an amusing, not to say instructive, work on the subject; and the *History of the Reformation* appeals more to the political than the religious side of the question. His *Rural Rides* constitute a contribution to literature of permanent value, breathing, as they do, a spirit of intense sympathy for everything connected with English agriculture and agriculturists. Over the highways and byways of a great part of the country he rode on horseback, noting down everything which his experienced eye detected; and his observations on Surrey, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire, though sometimes strikingly unjust from the standpoint of the amateur, afford quite a study in typography, apart from their value as indicating the potentialities of the various soils. Interspersed throughout the work there is constant reference to the politics and politicians of the day; the House is always satirically spoken of as the "Collective," London as the "Wen," the inactive army as the "Dead-weight," and so on. Amusing, certainly, are some of his allusions to men and things. Thus, from his Wiltshire itinerary:—

"I passed through that villainous hole, Cricklade, about two hours ago; and, certainly, a more rascally-looking place I never set my eyes on."

Thus, on the great lexicographer:—

"If her ladyship had been a reader of old dread-death and dread-devil Johnson, that teacher of moping and melancholy, she never would have planted an oak-tree. If the writings of this time-serving, mean, dastardly old pensioner had got a firm hold of the minds of the people at large, the people would have been bereft of their very souls. These writings, aided by the charm of pompous sound, were fast making their way, till light, reason, and the French Revolution came to drive them into oblivion."

To his dying day Cobbett could not be induced to admit that the population of England increased; and hence we have allusions to "the monster Malthus," "the infamous and really diabolical assertion of Malthus." These excerpts illustrate but mildly the venom of the style which was launched on all and sundry from whom he differed.

His pet aversions were large towns—"wens," as he termed them—political economy, and paper currency. It was Paine's *Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance* that excited Cobbett's enthusiasm for his great contemporary. Before leaving Long Island Cobbett had Paine's bones exhumed, with a view to obtaining for them a public funeral in England. Landing with them at Liverpool in 1819, the project failed to catch on; and once more a private grave enclosed all that was mortal of him whose country was the world. But there is some reason to think that Cobbett was imposed upon respecting the exhumation, and that, in reality the bones of our hero remained undisturbed. Of that, however, more anon. W. B.

#### Bits from "Dod Grile."

I ONCE knew a man who made me a map of the opposite hemisphere of the moon. He was crazy. I knew another man who taught me what country lay upon the other side of the grave. He was a most acute thinker, as he had need to be.

Those who are horrified at Mr. Darwin's theory, may comfort themselves with the assurance that, if we are descended from the ape, we have not descended so far as to preclude all hope of return.

Faith is the best evidence in the world; it reconciles contradictions and proves impossibilities. It is wonderfully developed in the blind.

To Dogmatism the Spirit of Inquiry is the same as the Spirit of Evil; and to pictures of the latter it has appended a tail, to represent the note of interrogation

### Acid Drops.

THE death of Mr. John Kensit is rather a serious matter, taken in connection with other events at Liverpool. We have naturally no wish to prejudice the case of the young man who is under arrest on the charge of throwing that file or chisel, but it is safe enough to say that if it had not been for that blow—by whomsoever delivered—Mr. Kensit would in all probability be still alive. Formally the cause of his death was pneumonia, but morally it was the assault which sent him to the Infirmary, and laid him open to the fatal attack of the malady. On the whole, it is clear enough that the spirit of religious bigotry is rampant in Liverpool. Catholics and Protestants are ready to shed each other's blood. And it is only the much-abused policeman that prevents them from doing it.

Mr. Kensit junior, being released from prison as an act of grace, declares his intention of carrying on his father's work. It is said that subscriptions are pouring in more copiously than ever. But it remains to be seen whether this special movement will long survive its leading spirit. John Kensit was not a man of much intellectual power. His printed effusions were decidedly mediocre. But he was dogged. He does not seem to have feared danger. He must have known the risk he ran; and, in the absence of subtler qualities, we must allow him to have had courage.

It is not generally known, but it is a fact, that John Kensit used at first to oppose the "infidels" in London. He soon found a more profitable work in opposing the High Church movement. We do not believe, however, that he retarded its progress by a single hour. He had not the mental or spiritual weight to do that.

Young Mr. Kensit is reported to have lost five pounds in weight during his fortnight's imprisonment. Very sad, no doubt. But no great fuss was made by the Kensits of England when Mr. Foote lost twenty-eight pounds during his imprisonment in Holloway Gaol. Mr. Kensit complained loudly of his son's being "clothed in the garb of a felon." Mr. Foote had to wear the very same dress. Mr. Kensit also complained of having to see and converse with his son across a pathway dividing two visiting cages, with a prison warder standing between them. Mr. Foote saw his visitors in the very same way. He was also acquainted with the "dismal cell" and the want of "proper food." Such things were thought quite right for the Freethinker. But what outrages they become in the case of a Christian!

The late John Kensit's funeral took place at Hampstead Cemetery on Saturday afternoon (October 11). There was naturally a considerable crowd of mourners. The invitation cards referred to the deceased as "God's faithful servant." Probably the very same would be said of the High Churchmen he spent his time in denouncing. The coffin-plate stated that he "fell asleep in Jesus"—which is an odd way of describing the fatal consequences of that blow on the head. One of the wreaths bore the following inscription: "In loving memory of our dear friend, who has gone to Heaven to wear a martyr's crown." How cocksure these people are! Most Catholics, and perhaps a fair number of High Churchmen, will be just as confident that John Kensit has gone (or is going) to the other place.

John Kensit's funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. F. S. Webster. This gentleman alluded to the man who dealt that blow to the deceased as a "disgrace to civilisation." In the very next breath he said, "It was, however, God's will, and they ought not to complain." What consistency!

Miss Marie Corelli stuffed her last romance with sneers and sarcasms at the expense of royalty. We suppose she thinks that line of writing is at least profitable. But she seems to have a good supply of the flunkey spirit in private. She has just reprimanded the editor of the *Gentlewoman* for omitting her name from the list of persons invited to the "Royal Enclosure" at the Braemar Highland Gathering. What a miserable complaint for such a mighty mind!

The *Academy* is not very flattering in its notice of Mr. Hall Caine's play, *The Eternal City*, produced at His Majesty's Theatre by Mr. Beerbolm Tree. The first heading is the regular one of the "Drama," and the second (special) heading is simply "Noise."

Sir Frederick Treves, in his recent address at Liverpool, propounded the curious theory that "the so-called symptoms of tuberculosis were the expressions of a beneficent process which had for its end the cure and not the destruction of the patient." But is not the disease, which generally manages

to kill the patient, as much a part of the "beneficent process" as the symptoms that call attention to it? This argument in favor of a beneficent something or other behind nature is always based upon an arbitrary selection of phenomena, and one need not be a medical expert to see the fallacy of Sir Frederick Treves's reasoning. When he sang the praises of antiseptic surgery he was on safer ground. He was celebrating a triumph of pure science, in which supernaturalism had demonstrably no share.

Baptism is not done properly in this country. So says the Rev. W. S. Jones, the pastor of Peniel Baptist Church, Carmarthen. He declares that a person must be immersed three times—once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son, and once in the name of the Holy Ghost. Why not a fourth time—in the name of Jones? It would be just as sensible.

The Crown Theatre, Balham, is being used for Sunday evening meetings by the Rev. E. Thorne. There is a band and hymn-singing, and an address; and lots of people go to the theatre for that when they can't have anything better. A crowded audience assembled last Sunday evening, when Mr. Thorne was to speak on "What a man likes in a woman." We don't suppose he did full justice to the subject. The discourse could hardly have been as lively as the title. There are so many police about nowadays.

A reverend book-canvasser, named J. F. Guthrie, pushed a certain "Modern Encyclopædia" amongst men of the London Fire Brigade. They were impressed by his statements as he was in the garb of a clergyman, but the book did not correspond with his representations. He said he had Commander Wells's authority to introduce the work, but that gentleman declares that he gave no such permission and had no knowledge of Mr. Guthrie. Judge Edge, before whom the Fire Brigade subscribers were brought by the reverend book-canvasser, said that "these cases were beginning to assume a national importance," and "in view of other evidence which was said to be forthcoming in another case against Mr. Guthrie he would hold over his decision."

Robert John Terry, an hotel-keeper in the Blackfriars-road, London, has been fined £10 and £3 3s. costs for keeping a disorderly house. The prisoner, who protested his innocence, and said he was an ex-ensign of the Salvation Army, was called by the magistrate a "splendid humbug."

Ten men have been fined by the Hove magistrates for playing cards on the foreshore on Sunday morning. The police had a lot of trouble in catching these desperate criminals. But the safety of Hove is now assured.

"Mr. Thicknesse," says an evening paper, "takes a very roscate view of Church prospects in the town so closely associated with the memories of the late Mr. Bradlaugh." Mr. Thicknesse is the vicar of All Saints, Northampton. We are not concerned with his roscate views. What we wish to observe is that Charles Bradlaugh's name ought not to be used in this connection. It is well known that he never introduced Freethought propaganda at Northampton, either during the thirteen years he fought for the seat, or during the eleven years he held it.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes is not a philosopher. Some people say he is not even decently accurate. Speaking at Petersfield the other day, he said that Methodism had saved England from the fate that befel France. France was what Voltaire made it, and England was what Wesley made it. What nonsense is this! Fancy any one man making a nation what it is! The idea is absurd to an evolutionist, or even to any person who possesses a common acquaintance with history. But supposing it were true, instead of being ridiculously false, the question would then remain—Is the fate of France so much worse than the fate of England? The answer of a patriotic Pecksniff is ready enough. He cries "Yes" in a great hurry. But a much longer time is wanted for a reply by men of honesty and information. England is before France in some things, and France is before England in others. A very nice balance is required to weigh their respective merits. Perhaps the best thing is to admit that a comparison is really impossible. England is England, and France is France; and each contributes its specialities to the world's civilisation.

Mr. Hughes means, we suppose, that John Wesley exercised a good influence on England, while Voltaire exercised an evil influence on France. Let us look into this.

John Wesley was certainly a remarkable man. He was also an honest man. There is not much of his spirit in the

Methodist Church of to-day. He believed in heaven and hell, and thought most people were going to the latter place as fast as they could. He therefore went about trying to save them from hell and damnation. Nothing, he said, was worth knowing except the way to heaven; and, of course, the way to heaven involved the way from the other place. That was what he preached throughout the length and breadth of the land. And this preaching was the sole object of his life.

Now it is clear enough that if salvation doesn't simply mean going to heaven, and damnation doesn't simply mean going to hell, Wesley's gospel is dead and done for. And who will say that any real belief in heaven and hell—particularly hell—remains amongst Wesleyans? There is nothing about hell, or the Devil either, in the new Free Churches Catechism which the Wesleyans helped to draw up in concert with the other Dissenting bodies.

Wesley's gospel is dead and done for; and what the Methodist Church lives upon is not Wesley's teaching, but Wesley's great name. That is a large asset, but as the years roll by it becomes less and less valuable.

Incidentally, of course, Wesley preached a fairly wholesome morality. When he drew aside a little from dogmatic religion, he showed that he possessed a considerable fund of good feeling and common sense. But there was nothing new in all that. The real novelty about Wesley was that he declared the stern reality of everlasting punishment. At times, indeed, he said that love was all in all; but in this he was only echoing the language of the older mystics. We repeat that *his* speciality was the sincere presentation of hell, not as a merely unpleasant place, but as a place where sinners (including unbelievers) were actually burnt for ever and ever.

Voltaire preached a morality quite as sound as Wesley's, and in some aspects sounder, for it was always rational. For the rest, he assailed all that Wesley held sacred. And in doing so he exhausted far greater intellectual resources than Wesley's. Voltaire was a much finer and broader scholar; he was infinitely more well-informed; he had all Wesley's seriousness, as far as his purpose went, but he served that purpose with poetry, wit, sarcasm, irony, and argument; in short, with every instrument of mental agitation and persuasion. The result was that he left a strong and durable impression on the *mind* of France. But who will say that Wesley left any impression on the *mind* of England? Wesley had all the gifts of a great evangelist. Voltaire had all the gifts of a great intellectual reformer. In addition, he was a lifelong friend of justice; whereas Wesley, except in the case of the slave trade, went wrong again and again—notably in the case of the American rebellion.

Let us now come to the final point. Which cause is really winning in the world—the cause of Wesley or the cause of Voltaire? The student of science, the student of philosophy, the student of literature, can have but one answer to this question. Voltaire represented a universal cause, and he has a cosmopolitan body of disciples. They do not bind themselves to a slavery in his name; like the Wesleyans, who solemnly swear to stand by all the truth, and all the error, in Wesley's fifty-three sermons. The disciples of Voltaire are only pledged to apply his free spirit to the problems of humanity. They are more numerous in France than elsewhere; but that is only because of the penetration, logic, and sincerity of the French intellect. Mr. Hughes may not know it; he may deny it, and even laugh at it; but the fact remains that France has been a lightbearer to Europe. She is so still. And she will remain so when the Methodist Church is dead and forgotten.

The *Cheltenham Chronicle* allows some recklessly pious member of the staff to edit "The Sunday Corner." Under that heading we see it stated that Voltaire died in a panic, and "offered half his fortune for six weeks more of life." There is not a word of truth in this story. It is unadulterated invention. The real facts of Voltaire's death are on record. Perhaps the pious editor of "The Sunday Corner" cannot read French, but he ought to be able to read English; and, without referring to Parton's great *Life of Voltaire*, or the monographs of Mr. Espinasse and General Hamley, he might turn to such a well-known and accessible writer as Carlyle, who laughs to scorn the "pious tales of dying horrors" told of Voltaire—as they have been told of nearly every fighting Freethinker.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been doing a really honest thing for once. He has been denouncing the Opium Trade in China. This trade is forced upon China by the British government, in spite of the repeated protests of Chinese statesmen. According to Dr Temple, such a policy

"seems to contradict the first principles of Christian action." That is a point, of course, which we are not concerned to argue. It is enough for us that such a policy contradicts the first principles of *honest* action. This would be recognised in England soon enough if we were the victim and China were the aggressor.

How little sincerity there is partisan politics! The daily organ of political Nonconformity in London has published miles of fervent articles and letters in favor of the Boers. But when it starts a subscription—and that not too enthusiastically—towards the Boer Generals' Fund, it realises the paltry sum of about a hundred and twenty pounds.

Mr. George Wise, the Protestant (Orange) champion of Liverpool, seems to mix a good deal of discretion with his valor. Some time ago he was brought before the magistrate on account of street meetings, and bound over to be of good behavior. Being asked why he did not defy the enemy and go to prison, he replied that his committee would not let him. Not a very heroic answer! Strong men don't consult committees on such occasions. They inquire of their own hearts. But that is not Mr. Wise's method. We see he has once more been brought before the magistrate, and once more he has elected to be bound over. This time it is for six months. During that period, at least, he will hardly be able to pose as a martyr. The Kensits took that *role* entirely out of his hands.

The *Daily News* couldn't find room for a letter from the President of the National Secular Society, taking Dr. Clifford to task for printing a false quotation from David Hume, in the interest of Nonconformity; but it finds plenty of room for a lot of trashy letters on "big gooseberry" subjects. It even gave space recently to a long letter from Mr. Charles Hill, secretary of the Working Men's Lord's Day's Rest Association, advocating stronger penal laws against all sorts of Sunday trading. There is little reason to doubt that if the Chapel party got the upper hand in this country we should see a great revival of Sabbatarianism. Church parsons have their livings, for the most part, whether people attend divine service or not; but Dissenting ministers, who chiefly depend upon their congregations, naturally want the least possible competition on "the Lord's Day." The less business there is, and the less amusement, the more (they think) people will be compelled to fly to the gospel-shops. The motive of their Sabbatarianism is strictly professional.

If we had a Lord Chancellor who was worth sixpence a week, the magistrates who are making asses of themselves over the Vaccination Act would soon be called to order; but while Lord Halsbury sits on the woosack they can all play the fool with impunity. Here is Mr. Fordham, the North London stipendiary, who ought to know better, actually holding a long and very stupid wrangle with an applicant for an exemption certificate, and winding up with the words "You have not satisfied me." Satisfied him of *what*? Why, that the applicant had a *reasonable* objection against vaccination. But what the Act says is that the applicant must have a *conscientious* objection. There is often a great difference between these two words. Mr. Fordham himself may think he is conscientious, but in view of the Act he is certainly not reasonable.

This applicant, being put through a gratuitous catechism, said that he knew of two healthy children who had died after vaccination; whereupon Mr. Fordham retorted with the shocking ineptitude that "everybody dies after vaccination." Then he asked the monstrously foolish question, "Can you get me a certificate showing that either of these children died as a result of vaccination?" When vaccination kills it kills through blood-poisoning, or erysipelas, or gangrene, or pneumonia, or some other secondary disorder; and the doctors invariably put down *that* as the cause of death. Coroners, too, will not recognise vaccination as the cause of death. They argue that vaccination is ordered for all good citizens by the law; it must therefore be a perfectly good thing, and how on earth could it kill anybody? Juries and coroners have often quarreled over this very point, and Mr. Fordham ought to know it. Perhaps he does. In that case he was simply indulging in one of those feeble efforts that so frequently pass for wit in courts of justice.

Canon George Rawlinson, of Canterbury, just deceased, had his own views of "blessed be ye poor." The following censure is from the last number of the *Outlook*: "Canon Rawlinson was a survival of a system which cannot be too strongly condemned. By his professorship at Oxford and his canony at Canterbury he was amply rewarded for his services to scholarship and literature. His books in themselves were not unremunerative. It is true that under pressure he resigned his academic appointment many years after

Gladstone had given him cathedral preferment. But before this resignation a fat City living had fallen into the gift of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury; and to this, following a bad old custom, the Canon was allowed to present himself. A couple of thousand a year, with no work to do except what could be done by deputy, was thus pocketed by a man already well provided for, and this income he clung to long after he was physically incapable of any effort. That such things are still possible is a scandal to the Church of England."

Lord Rosebery, in unveiling the Gladstone statue at Glasgow, doubted whether his dead leader's "natural bent was towards politics at all." Had his course taken him that way, as it very nearly did," Lord Rosebery added, "he would have been a great Churchman; greater, perhaps, than any this island has known." We dare say there is a good deal of truth in this, but Gladstone would never have made a great Churchman like Newman. He had not the gifts of intellect and style. He might have made a remarkable Bishop or Archbishop, and his sonorous eloquence would have filled great churches. Beyond that he could hardly have gone. What he wrote, and what he said when it was reduced to writing, had no durable vitality. His chief quality, after all, seems to have been his amazing energy.

The *Morning Post* for October 7, in a leading article described the Church Congress as "a picnic genteel and pious, whose existence is a matter of little consequence." We have said the same thing ourselves for years past, but we do not number dukes and duchesses among our readers.

Mr. Athelstan Riley pleaded at the Church Congress for the restoration of images in churches. He said that God was immanent in matter, and therefore there could be no religious objection to anyone worshipping God in matter. Mr. Riley's faith is simply sublime in this Rationalistic age if he can see Deity in a fourpenny-halfpenny doll.

Dr. Maclure, the Dean of Manchester, preached at Heywood the other Sunday, and his sermon was reported in the *Rochdale Times*. The reverend gentleman had something to say about Atheists. He did not believe there was such a thing as an Atheist in the world. No man was such a fool as to think there was no God. Of course there were wicked men who tried not to believe in God. But they never succeeded. "The most a man would say, 'the report runs, 'was 'I don't know anything about it, so I will leave it alone; I am an Agnostic,' and that was they did not know and did not mean to inquire." Well now, we should be very happy to introduce Dr. Maclure to a live Atheist, on a public platform, and before an audience assembled to hear a set debate. Perhaps if the Dean of Manchester crossed swords with an Atheist he would find that the "fool" trick would hardly win him the victory.

Christian Evidence windbags are never tired of asserting that Christianity abolished the gladiatorial contests. These hypocrites never mention that the same "religion of mercy" substituted the more fiendish *auto-da-fé*, and made "witchcraft" a capital offence.

Count Eugen Esterhazy, who belongs to a famous Hungarian family, joined the Jesuits in 1885, and renounced his private fortune in favor of the Order. When he decided to leave them, he demanded the return of his fortune. But he found that religious bodies are like the grave—always receiving and never returning. It is stated that he intends to bring the matter before a legal tribunal.

One of the most comical things we ever saw is a report in the *Paignton Observer* of a lecture by the Rev. John Tuckwell, in the Badminton Hall, under the auspices of the Bible League. This gentleman's title was "Chaos to Beauty: the Genesis of Astronomy." His talk, however, was chiefly about the Higher Critics. We shall deal with what he had to say presently. But we must first devote a little attention to his chairman. This was the Rev. T. C. Wilson. "The Bible," he observed, "had been attacked for eighteen hundred years and more, and had always outlived them." The grammar is a bit loose—owing to the speaker or the reporter—but the meaning is clear enough; so clear, indeed, that one would like to ask the reverend gentleman where he obtained the information that the Bible existed at all more than eighteen hundred years ago. The rest of Mr. Wilson's remarks are hardly worth attention. We have given a fair sample from bulk.

Mr. Tuckwell, the lecturer, pooch-pooched the view of the Higher Critics that the Creation Story was a comparatively late production. The Jews had the first chapter of Genesis before them through the whole of their history. Mr. Tuckwell says so, and that settles it; and the Higher Critics can just

go and hang themselves. Moreover, the first chapter of Genesis is quite "in accordance with science." Never mind Huxley and Haeckel, and such rushlights; that great luminary, the Rev. John Tuckwell, after "five years' hard study" of the question, pronounces the right answer. So the scientific reputation of "Moses" is re-established, and Canon Driver, and Dean Farrar, and the rest of the Higher Critics who have sprung up within the bosom of Holy Mother Church herself, may hide their diminished heads. Tuckwell has spoken—and the rest is silence.

As the inspired Tuckwell advanced the fun grew fast and furious. "In the beginning" meant the beginnings of things in general. "The earth was without form and void" meant the first gaseous condition. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep" meant that the gas had become a fiery liquid. "The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" referred to the beginning of the "heated aqueous ocean." And so on, and so on. It was as good as a play. The only thing lacking was a lantern slide of a primitive man, with the lecturer's introduction, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is Adam." We make Mr. Tuckwell a present of this hint. We think it would add a touch of perfection to his beautiful lecture.

### At Sea on Land.

A clergyman who had neglected all knowledge of nautical affairs, was asked to deliver an address before an audience of sailors.

He was discoursing on the stormy passages of life. Thinking he could make his remarks more pertinent to his hearers by metaphorically using sea expressions, he said:

"Now, friends, you know that when you are at sea in a storm the thing you do is anchor."

A half-concealed snicker spread over the room, and the clergyman knew that he had made a mistake.

After the services one of his listeners came to him and said: "Mr. —, have you ever been at sea?"

The minister replied:

"No, unless it was while I was delivering that address."

### Those Chimes.

Scene — Caledonia Canal, Fort Augustus. Glasgow schooner and Irish smack moored immediately below the Abbey, whose bells are ringing at their loudest, when the following dialogue passes between the respective skippers: —Irish Captain: "Say, Captain Jones, isn't that hivinly music?" Captain Jones, applying hand to mouth to serve as a speaking trumpet, shouts: "What d'ye say, Captain Quinn?" Irish Captain, again with stentorian voice, again shouts: "Isn't that hivinly music?" Captain Jones yells out: "Speak louder, as I can't hear a word with them damned bells."

### Not So Well Drained.

While Mr. Balfour was going through a village not long ago an old man asked for alms. On being given a shilling he whispered to Mr. Balfour: "Man, dae ye ken what I'm gaun tae tell ye?" "No," says Mr. Balfour. "Weel," he said, "it's gaun tae rain seventy-twa days." Mr. Balfour, thinking to have fun with him, replied: "That can't be, for the world was flooded in forty days." "But," returned the old fellow, "the world wisna sae weel drained then as it is noo."

### No Credit.

A country clergyman sent his young servant lad just before service to his neighbor David for some tripe on credit. The clergyman went to conduct the service. As he stood in the pulpit he called out in the middle of the sermon: "And on this subject, brethren, what does David say?" At that moment his little valet stepped into the church, and, in the belief that his master was addressing him, he replied: "Please, sir, he says, 'No money, no tripe'!"

It was a New England parson who announced to his congregation on a recent Sunday: "You will be sorry to hear that the little church at Jonesville is once more tossed upon the waves, a sheep without a shepherd."—*Christian Register*.



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, October 19, Athenæum Hall, 73, Tottenham Court-road, London: "Church, Chapel, and Children: a Challenge to Dr. Clifford."

October 26, Manchester. November 9, Camberwell; 30, South Shields. December 14, Leicester.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 19, a., Brockwell Park; e., Camberwell; 26, Athenæum. November 2, Athenæum; 9, Birmingham; 16, Leicester; 23, Liverpool.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always very welcome.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH FUND.—H. M. Ridgway, £1; W. C. Middleton, 6s. 4d.; J. Capon, 5s.; T. E. Green, 5s.

JAMES NEATE.—We note that the Freethought meetings have been discontinued in Victoria Park till next summer. The station is now dropped out of Lecture Notices. Its retention was an oversight.

F. B. CLEGG.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

JAMES KNOX.—Pleased to hear you send the *Freethinker* to friends in Ireland and America. We hope they appreciate it. The verses you enclose are pointed and vigorous. Thanks for the cutting, but we cannot comment on the case while it is *sub judice*. The defendant seems to have been pious enough.

F. J. VOISEY.—Much obliged for the cutting.

GEORGE JACOB.—We fail to follow you. Perhaps we are not subtle enough. We are not aware that we shun criticism or burke discussion. If you want to see a discussion on the topic you refer to you should start it with a suitable letter. Merely saying it should be discussed is no assistance.

F. ARNOLD.—We have handed your order over to the Freethought Publishing Company. Please send direct in future. Glad to hear from you, and hope the cause will spread in South Wales.

THOMAS EVANS.—It is pleasant to know you wish Mr. Foote could visit Birmingham oftener, but you must remember that many other towns require his services, and he has also to be a good deal in London. Thanks for the cutting. See "Acid Drops."

THE correspondent who sent us the *Ayrshire Post*, referred to in our leading article last week, and who has reason for wishing not to have his name published, says: "I did not look for so prominent, skilful, and effective a criticism. I cannot refrain from thanking you." This correspondent is thanked for his interesting letter. We quite understand that the Freethinkers in Ayr cannot afford to speak too loudly.

PIGOTT.—No; the fancy is peculiar to Judaism and Christianity.

G. LEWIS.—Thanks for your good wishes.

T. ROBERTSON.—No, Mr. Foote was not a bit the worse for his journey to Scotland. He keeps in good condition, and the slight hoarseness is rapidly disappearing. You need not thank us for the "Sugar Plum." Those who work honestly for Freethought have always found us friendly, and when possible helpful; and the abler and more successful they are the better we are pleased.

W. W. WARDLE.—Please send orders direct to the Freethought Publishing Company in future.

E. M. CHAPMAN.—The first issue of the *Freethinker* at twopence was dated August 6, 1893. Prior to that it had been published weekly at one penny. Send any orders for pamphlets direct to the Freethought Publishing Company. Pleased to hear you so enjoyed our lecture on Zola.

T. F. P.—We know nothing of Mr. George Lansbury as a Freethought advocate. We are therefore not concerned at his speaking as a Christian Socialist at Oxford House. Thanks all the same for your letter.

"ABRACADABRA" writes: "My son, who was at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday night, tells me that the place was crowded, and many had to go away, and that you were in grand form. This is all as it should be."

JACOBUS.—Will try to find room in our next.

W. A. H. (Rochdale).—The matter shall have attention. Pleased to hear from you.

E. R. WOODWARD.—Sorry your pressure of private affairs obliges you to relinquish secretarial duties in connection with the Camberwell Branch, but glad you will still remain a member and take an active interest in the work. It is pleasant to hear you say "There is not much doubt now as to our ability to keep going," after receiving a substantial remittance on account of the Fund. We hope to say our last word on the matter, at least for the present, in our next issue. We are too busy this week. Meanwhile there is still room for subscriptions if friends will send them along.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought—Liberator—Herald of the Golden Age—Postal Record (Washington)—Manchester Evening Chronicle—Railway Times—Chiswick Express—Public Opinion (New York)—Free Society—Morning Advertiser—Crescent—Progressive Thinker—Newtownards Chronicle—Ayrshire Post—Searchlight—Two Worlds.

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.

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### Sugar Plums.

THE Athenæum Hall was crowded on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Zola the Atheist." It was a long address, lasting quite an hour and a half, but it was followed with the keenest attention to the end, and very warmly applauded. Mr. Foote occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening. His subject will be "Church, Chapel, and Children: a Challenge to Dr. Clifford." Mr. Foote proposes to deal fully with the Education question in the light of the present Bill and the agitation against it. The subject is one of the greatest importance. Our London friends are therefore invited to advertise this lecture amongst their less heterodox friends and acquaintances. The real truth is obscured by the contending religionists, and Mr. Foote's object is to bring it into light. The Athenæum Hall should be crowded again.

Mr. C. Cohen lectured at Glasgow on Sunday and was greeted by the largest meeting he ever had there. The morning and afternoon lectures were well attended, and the hall was crowded in the evening. Mr. Robertson, the Glasgow Branch corresponding secretary, hopes that "the two last Sundays' meetings are indicative of the meetings to come during the rest of the session." We hope so too.

Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P., having happily recovered from his severe illness, has been entertained at a complimentary dinner by the Parliamentary Council of the Morpeth Division. He made an excellent speech on this occasion, and one passage of it will be of special interest to our readers. It dealt with the Nonconformist attitude towards the Education Bill in particular, and towards Elementary Education in general. Mr. Burt spoke as follows:—"If I am to be frank I would blame the Nonconformists for their want of logical consistency thirty years ago, and say I am not sure that they are taking the logical and consistent attitude to-day in their resistance to this Bill. What is the logical and consistent position? The State, as a State, has no religion. (Applause.) It is composed of men of many creeds, and of none. The only true doctrine is, in my opinion, that religious teaching should be given in home and in the churches—(hear, hear)—that the schools should deal only with questions upon which there is general, universal agreement, with questions upon which there cannot possibly be any doubts. (Applause.) I don't want to push my views upon other people, but I think the Nonconformists will see, before the battle goes much further—and it will go on unless the Government have the wisdom (which is a very doubtful proposition) to withdraw the measure—that that is the attitude they will have to take."

We are delighted to see Mr. Burt standing so firmly on the old Radical principle of "secular education." Not that we expected him to do otherwise, for he is a thinker and an honest man. But steady consistency is so rare in these days—and consequently so refreshing.

We are also delighted to see that Mr. Chamberlain still professes a firm belief in the wisdom and justice of "secular education." He made no concealment of his unaltered views in his important address to the Birmingham Liberal Unionists. After a justifiable retort on Sir William Harcourt, who was "the most strenuous advocate of Church establishment and Church endowment" thirty years ago, Mr. Chamberlain proceeded to say: "In those days, when the circumstances certainly were different, I believed, and I endeavored to persuade my countrymen, that the only logical and just solution of the great education difficulty was that the national schools—we were not then referring to the denominational schools—should confine themselves entirely to secular instruction, and should have nothing whatever to do with religious teaching." "I should be delighted," he said later on, "if I thought that that were acceptable to the majority of the people."

Mr. Chamberlain says this policy is not acceptable, and therefore he feels at liberty, as a practical politician, to do the best he can in the existing circumstances. But he does not hide the fact that its non-acceptability is chiefly owing to the wrong-headedness of the Nonconformists, who have for thirty years been deliberately selling their own principles. "I found myself," Mr. Chamberlain said, "in opposition to a deep-seated feeling on the part of the vast majority of my countrymen—not especially amongst those who at that time were opposed to me in politics, but principally among the religious Nonconformists, to whom, rightly or wrongly, it was a matter of offence that State-education should be entirely divorced from religion." The Nonconformists will not like this; still we are glad that Mr. Chamberlain has the courage to say it. Their betrayal of their own principles, thirty years ago, is responsible for all the present trouble.

Even the *Daily News*, the organ of political Nonconformity, while sneering at Mr. Chamberlain's speech, seems to feel the force of his "secular education" pronouncement. After dubbing him "the old Secularist stalwart," it is obliged to say: "For our own part, we are quite prepared to admit that the time has come for the State to confine itself to secular education, and let the Churches do what supplementary religious work, outside school hours, they please." This admission is welcome. But principles require to be something more than *admitted*. If the *Daily News* would only take up the principle of "secular education" in real earnest, it would force the hands of the Nonconformist party, and compel them to say Aye or No on a clear and decisive issue.

Dr. Clifford himself appears to appreciate the fact that Mr. Chamberlain's reference to "secular education" is of great importance. Being interviewed, according to the *Daily News*, the Free Church champion had to admit that "the majority of the people of this country were in favor of a system of secular education." Dr. Clifford proceeded to explain this way as far as possible, and we should be sorry to pin him down to a meaning which he qualifies. At the same time, we are bound to note that he has never said anything like this before. So far, then, it is a memorable utterance.

Dr. Clifford's qualification of the common meaning of "secular education" is somewhat peculiar. In order that our readers may follow it, we give his words in extenso: "The majority of the people of this country were in favor of a system of secular education, not as the word 'secular' had been interpreted, as in some of the Colonies, to mean 'non credo,' 'non-theological,' 'non-ecclesiastic,' but deeply ethical and in the true sense religious. The conscience clause could be introduced if any people objected to the ethical element, but men like Mr. John Morley, Professor Huxley, and Mr. Frederic Harrison had expressed their approval of certain portions of the Bible, belonging as the Bible did to the best literature of the world, being used in the State schools."

Subtleties of this kind will hardly save religious instruction in the public schools. People in general will attach only one meaning to "secular education." They know that it honestly means education without religion, and in that sense they will accept or reject it. Dr. Clifford is not using the names of John Morley, Professor Huxley, and Frederic Harrison quite fairly. But let that pass. The point we wish to make is that it is idle to talk of the Bible as literature in this connection; indeed, it is almost indecent for a Christian, who professes to regard it as a work of divine inspiration, to call it literature at all. When the Bible is merely regarded as literature it will have no importance whatever to the educational controversy. Precisely because the Bible is *not* regarded as literature, but as a sacred book, a book of religion, its retention in the schools is fought for on one side and opposed on the other. To sneak it into the schools as literature, and then to use it for teaching religion, is a very unworthy proceeding. We thought Dr. Clifford would be ashamed of it. But he is not. It looks like a case in which a man's professional instincts override his better nature.

The *Daily Graphic* takes Dr. Clifford's party to task. It says that Mr. Chamberlain, "with his customary clearness, laid his finger on the weak point of the Nonconformist case. Their demand, in effect, is that the doctrines which they approve shall be taught at the public expense, but that the doctrines of Churchmen and Roman Catholics must be taught at private expense. This is not religious equality—it is religious inequality. Let the Nonconformists have the courage of the principle which they profess to lay down. If they will agree that secular subjects alone shall be taught at the public expense, the way for a settlement is opened at once."

Mr. J. R. Webley, a veteran Freethinker, scored a point very neatly in his letter to the *Daily News* on the question of

young Mr. Kensit's imprisonment. One writer, signing himself "Veritas," urged that "Nobody has any right to use in the public streets language or any remark which is likely to lead to the disgust or discontent of other people." Mr. Webley started by noting this statement, and then proceeded as follows: "For years I have been disgusted with the language, drum-beating, trumpet-braying, and harmonium groaning in the street on Sundays by the Salvation Army and others, depriving me of quiet thought, reading, or study on those days. If, as 'Veritas' quotes, nobody has any right to do these things, may I ask how it is that Salvationists, Methodists, Church people, and others are allowed to make their hideous noises in the street on Sundays, with little cessation, between 11 o'clock a.m. and 10 o'clock p.m.? Why this difference in the administration of the law between those named above and the Kensits?"

The *Yarmouth Mercury* prints some excellent letters under the heading of "Witchcraft and Christianity" by Mr. J. W. de Caux, Mr. A. H. Smith, and "A Natural Religionist." Following them is a prolix, pompous, tiresome letter on the orthodox side by W. H. Howard Nash. We are glad to see the Freethought correspondents so lucid and forcible. Such letters as theirs must do great good in local newspapers, which are read by thousands who would never touch the wicked *Freethinker*.

"Scotia" and "A. S." have letters in the *Ayrshire Post* in reply to the nonsense about Burns and Ingorsoll which we criticised last week. "Scotia" quotes a number of tributes to Ingorsoll that will act as eye-openers to our contemporary's readers.

According to American papers, Mr. E. Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*, is to receive \$7,500 (£1,500) as a legate of a Freethinker recently deceased. If this is true, as we hope it is, we congratulate him. He can hardly have made a fortune out of his paper.

Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, has been presented with a Linotype machine that will facilitate (and, we suppose, cheapen) the printing of his paper.

The Freethought Publishing Company has still a few sets left of the Dresden Edition of the late Colonel Ingorsoll's works. Freethinkers who want to secure a set should make an early application, or they may find themselves disappointed.

The Appeal of the Leicester Secular Society, which will be found in our advertisement columns, should find a generous response. The Secular Hall, in which its work is carried on, is the only institute of the kind in the Midlands. Much energy and self-denial have gone to its maintenance in the past, and now that a special effort is necessary we hope outside support will be forthcoming from Secularists who have no such call upon their liberality in their own neighborhoods. We might say ten times as much without meaning any more. Further words will not be needed to show that we very earnestly press this Leicester appeal upon our readers' attention.

### The Last Lap.

THE clergy are in their last lap, and they begin to realise it, because many efforts are made and dodges resorted to, in order to draw people and money, and so make a stand of some sort. Dr. Moule (Bishop of Durham) sees that the public will have none of the pulpit clap-trap, and urges "revival of the pulpit," which is fast dying for want of suitable material; but, thanks to common sense, men use their brains in other honest spheres of labor, and won't "take orders."

Another man, in Newcastle, Rev. R. A. Armstrong, is anxious not only about adults attending Church, but urges the parents to bring their children, and the children to bring dolls, "church dolls."

The doll is to interest and keep the child quiet. Mr. Armstrong rather shows his weakness. He lacks power to gain and hold the child's attention and good order, so he seeks a substitute for his deficiency in a rag doll. Really, there are dolls enough already among the clerics.

Yet another instance. It is proposed that ladies shall go round with money bags and take the collections at Fleetwood Church, because the sidesmen did not obtain enough; what the parson lacks, in order to induce the congregation "to part," will be made up by the winning ways of the ladies.

W. A. VAUGHAN.

## Two Great Men.—III.

This little book was Paine's free gift of love to the American people. It was one of the leading characteristics of this man, of whom it has often been said that he had no poetry in his composition, that he never would consent to write (on great national questions) for money. It was impossible for such a man to take wage for such writings; they were born of his great love for his fellow men, of his profound and almost stern regard for truth. It is thus that W. J. Fox, in his *Lectures Addressed to Working Men*, speaks of Paine's conduct during the American crisis: "Paine threw his whole soul into the cause, with all the abandonment of an unknown writer, fearless of anything, heedless of all consequences, looking straight forward to the great object which had begun to possess his soul.....Paine went into it [the struggle] as a life and death conflict—a struggle which if decided one way would entail a most horrible slavery on the colonists, and if terminated the other way would raise them into that great and independent people which, he contended it was their natural right to become, and thereby to take their position amongst the nations of the world."

*Common Sense*, striking as it did the key-note of popular feeling, was enthusiastically received, not only in America, but also in France and England. It was followed by *The Crisis*, a pamphlet written in much the same strain, and at Washington's express desire. One night, during that long dreary winter of inaction, when cold, scanty clothing, and insufficient food had sorely taxed the endurance and crushed the spirits of the republican army, Paine, then serving as a soldier under Washington, entered the tent of his almost despairing General. "The men," he said, "are weary, despairing, demoralised. I have written something that may animate them." Many a night, sitting by the camp fire, with a drum-head for writing-table, Paine had been busy preparing this cordial for his exhausted comrades; the next day his noble words were read aloud to them. "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country. But he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." Such are the opening words of "The Crisis." The soldiers listened, fresh courage stealing back into their chilled hearts, and at the battle of Trenton they shouted, as they fought for liberty's sake, "These are the times that try men's souls." When the long struggle for Independence was at an end, \$3,000 were voted Paine by Congress, the University of Pennsylvania conferred on him the degree of Master of Arts, and he was appointed Secretary for Foreign Affairs. These might have been but the forerunners of a long list of rewards and honors, but Paine, in whom were blended the truth and honesty of his Quaker ancestry with a patriotism almost Roman in its stern integrity—more than Roman, since it was inspired by love for a country other than the one that had given him birth—added the State of Virginia to the growing list of his enemies.

Just as Virginia was about to vote him a large sum of money, he wrote a pamphlet proving that very State to be making an unjust claim upon the Government for land. Such was the man who, when America no longer needed his services, left her in the dawn of her rising fortunes, that he might bear help and sympathy in suffering, struggling France in her hour of agony. Never swerving from the great principles by which his life was ruled throughout, he voted, as member of the French Assembly, for the trial of Louis XVI., believing that monarch to have acted treacherously towards the French nation. In the same spirit he voted against the execution of the king, although he knew that such a vote might possibly prove to be his death-warrant. As a reward for this noble fidelity to principle, he was doomed by Robespierre and the terrorist party of France to

live for many months in prison, with the horror of a sudden and unmerited death menacing him by night and day. "Chambers of the great are gaols," says Emerson, and the words might have well applied to the Paris prison wherein Paine languished for twelve months. Deprived of liberty, for whose sake he of all men then living had perhaps most nobly toiled and striven, and suffering physically and mentally from the hardships of prison life, he nevertheless continued in heroic fashion to labor with his pen, in order that mankind might enjoy a wider intellectual freedom. In prison he wrote the greater portion of *The Age of Reason*.

Of this book, and of *The Rights of Man*, it may be said that they are two of the noblest protests against superstitions, political and religious, that have ever been penned. The last named of these works is such a forcible and convincing exposure of many of the evils and absurdities of monarchical government, more especially that of Great Britain, that there is little wonder to be felt at the English Government having done their best to crush the daring spirit who had sufficient wit and courage to write and publish it. "It is," says Ingersoll, "a magazine of political wisdom, an arsenal of ideas, and an honor, not only to Thomas Paine, but to human nature itself."

In *The Age of Reason* Paine hurled against religious superstitions and fallacies, more especially against those of the Hebrew Bible, a thunderbolt from whose shock they can never recover. He criticised the Bible myths and traditions in much the same fashion as in his political writings he had examined the pretensions of monarchs and hereditary governments. His method of analysis is simple enough. All things are tested by the unerring touchstones of reason and justice. There is in each of his works the same keen intelligence, forcible logic, sound judgment, and sublime contempt of whatever militates against truth; and underlying all his writings, running through them like the proverbial "silver thread," and lifting them far above the region of the commonplace, there is a profound, soul-stirring reverence for many things which to him are immeasurably lovelier and more glorious than the creeds and traditions he attacks. Shelley was an inspired poet, and Paine a writer of common-sense prose; but both the prose of Paine and the glorious poetry of Shelley were inspired by a similar noble scorn of whatever was on a lower level than their own great, pure, heroic natures. Enshrined in both men's hearts were ideals so far transcending in beauty and in truth the idols of superstition and tyranny they labored to destroy, that they would gladly have made all mankind sharers therein.

The complaint is often made against Paine, as well as against Franklin, his friend and for some time his fellow-worker, that he was deficient in imaginative feeling, and had a nature devoid of poetry. If this were so, though it is well to remember that poetry may be lived as well as written, it is the fault, not so much of the men themselves, as of the age into which they were born.

"Know thou this, that men are as the time is," wrote one who had deeply studied human nature. The eighteenth century, though in many respects a glorious, can scarcely be called a poetic, age. The life-tasks of its heroes were of too stern and toilsome a nature to leave them leisure for poetical dreaming, although these very labors supplied material wherefrom has been woven much of the shining fabric of nineteenth-century poetry. The chief characteristic of the eighteenth century is its tremendous earnestness. Men, no matter whether they called themselves Atheists, Methodists, scientists, mechanics, statesmen, or what not, toiled terribly in their search after truth; they strove for, and obtained the mastery of, two of nature's mightiest forces—steam and electricity—compelling these captured spirits to labor for the pleasure and profit of humanity; they discovered many a secret of nature that had long lain hidden from human ken; they abolished slavery, overthrew one of the proudest monarchies in the

world, and established in either hemisphere a mighty Republic. Such was the century that numbered among its children Franklin, the "doer of good," of whom Turgot said: "*Eripuit coelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis*"; and Thomas Paine, to whom we can accord no higher praise than by declaring that he spoke truth when he said, "The world is my country, and to do good my religion." J. F. T.

### The Bible in English Literature.

By ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

RECENT writers in our metropolitan press have asked some questions in regard to the Christian religion and the Bible which are worthy of the serious consideration of all thinking people. One writer laments the fact that the Bible no longer holds the honored place in English literature it once did, and asks what can be done for its restoration.

I would suggest that we place all its grand declarations, moral lessons, poetry, science and philosophy in one volume. In another put all its mythologies, contradictions, wars, absurdities and abominations, all that degrades the mothers of the race and makes the Creator of the universe responsible for the wanderings and brutalities of the children of Israel.

Thus, the first volume we might safely place in the schools and in the hands of our children, and the second volume might be preserved for those who would value it as a specimen of ancient literature.

The great block to-day in the way of woman's complete emancipation is the canon law, church discipline, and the so-called "sacred literature." The time has come for her to demand the same equality in the Church as she has achieved in the State during the last half century.

Women may consider their battle for political equality now fairly fought; with full suffrage in four Western States—Utah, Idaho, Colorado, and Wyoming—municipal suffrage in Kansas, school suffrage in twenty-five States, full suffrage in Australia, New Zealand, and the Isle of Man, the municipal suffrage in England and all her Colonies, they must now begin the same battle with the Church, and demand the same changes in the canon laws as they have obtained in the civil laws.

It is often said that woman is indebted to Christianity for the freedom she now enjoys, but this is a grave mistake, as the facts of history and the assertions of many distinguished men fully prove.

The "Grand Old Man" of England said, not many years ago, in addressing a class of young lady graduates:—

"Enormous changes have taken place in your positions as members of society. It is almost terrible (I should call it wholly terrible) to look back upon the state of women sixty years ago, upon the manner in which they were viewed by the law, the scanty provision made for their welfare, and the gross injustice—the flagrant injustice—to which they were subjected."

This was from Gladstone, a devout Christian, the teachings of which doctrine placed women in a position he deplored. And yet we are taught the paradox that Christianity elevates woman.

Sir Charles Kingsley, a canon of the English Church, declared that "from the third to the fifteenth century Christianity had been swamped by hysteria in the practice of all those nameless orgies which made a byword of Corinth during the first century, and every evil was traced to woman."

This distinguished canon also says: "This will never be a good world for woman until the last remnant of the canon law is civilised from the face of the earth."

Lord Brougham, equally distinguished in the State, said long ago: "Our civil laws for women are a disgrace to the Christianity and civilisation of the nineteenth century."

John Stuart Mill, a member of Parliament at the time England emancipated her slaves in the Island of Jamaica, said: "Marriage for women is now the only form of slavery sanctioned by law."

Bebel says: "Woman is held in greater contempt by Church law and dogma than in any of the older systems."

As many distinguished Liberal men and women will come from the Old World to attend the St. Louis Exposition, it would be a good time to hold a grand convocation to get out an expurgated edition of the Bible.

It is one of the mysteries that woman, who has suffered so intensely from the rule of the Church, still worships her destroyer, and "licks the hand that's raised to shed her blood."

—*The Torch of Reason.*

### The Merchant of Venice.

SHYLOCK THE JEW THE ONE NOBLE CHARACTER  
DEPICTED IN THE PLAY.

By DR. J. E. ROBERTS.

(*Minister of the Church of This World, Kansas City, Mo.*)

SHAKESPEARE saw things; he was the universal observer; he did not preach nor moralise, he did not attempt to correct or reform, he was merely a spectator. The world was a stage, he watched the play. He was not responsible for the actors nor for the parts they performed. He did not create, he reported; he was the infinite tattler of the human world. If the world of man were like the sky, his genius was a lake that mirrored star and cloud; if the race were like a voice, he was an echo repeating what it said. He was the great revealer, showing the world to itself. Unlike the prophet dreaming of what shall be, unlike the moralist proclaiming what ought to be, unlike the enthusiast clamoring for what may be, Shakespeare told what was.

The *Merchant of Venice* is a picture of Christian hatred of the Jew, a hatred so bitter, implacable, and blind that it revels in cruelty, conspires for injustice, turns law and processes of courts from ends of equity to ends of crime, and murders pity in the breast of a gentle woman. It scarce needs to outline a story known so well. One Antonio, a merchant of Venice, borrows for his friend Bassanio three thousand ducats of Shylock, the Jew. He binds himself to repay the loan in three months under penalty of having a pound of flesh cut off from nearest his heart. Antonio is an importer. He has vessels in many seas. He expects them soon to return laden with profits. Bassanio is an indigent lover. With his borrowed money he makes a show of wealth, and wooing, wins the hand of Portia, a beautiful princess of Belmont. On the eve of his betrothal came tidings of the wreck of Antonio's ships on "merchant marring rocks." He is not able to pay back the loan and is held by Shylock for the pound of flesh, in accordance with the bond.

Bassanio leaves his bride and hurries to Venice. Portia, disguised as a doctor of the law, appears at the trial, and by order of the duke sits as judge in the cause. She juggles the law of Venice, and, not satisfied with rescuing Antonio from the terms of his bond, succeeds in robbing Shylock of his money and estates and having him condemned to death. It is the old story of injustice to the Jew. It is a picture of cruelty and crime begotten of religious hatred. It is a paragraph in a long legacy of hatred bequeathed to the world by the Christian religion.

The Jews were the inheritors of the hatred of the world. Dispersed to every land, permitted to acquire citizenship in none, hated and despised by all, what happened in one country might be paralleled by what happened in every other.

King John of England, being in want of money, imprisoned all the Jews of his country, and one of them, having had seven teeth drawn one after the other to extort money from him, gave upon losing

the eighth tooth a thousand marks of silver to the king.

Henry the Third extorted from Aaron, a Jew of York, fourteen thousand marks of silver for himself and ten thousand for his queen. He then sold all the Jews in England to his brother Richard for a term of one year, in order, as one historian says, "that the count might disembowel those whom the king had flayed." In France the Jews were burned, sold, imprisoned, accused of sacrificing children, practising magic, and poisoning fountains. They were exiled and their property and estates confiscated. After the decree of exile was passed under penalty of death, they were required to pay for the privilege of leaving. Whenever they were tolerated they were distinguished by marks of infamy. Their manner of dress, their behavior upon the streets, were definitely prescribed by law, in order that each one, by the garments he wore or by his conduct, might draw upon himself the contempt of passers by, by dumbly declaring, "I am a Jew."

They were persecuted, hunted, denied rights of citizenship and protection of the law in every one of the so-called civilised countries of the world. Wanderers in every land, with homes in none, and yet bearing the burden of the age-long malevolence and religious hatred of their fellows, continuing in every land peaceful, law-abiding, industrious, frugal, silent, and uncomplaining, and winning prosperity wherever they were afforded even a semblance of opportunity.

Of this race was Shylock, the race of the hated, the persecuted, and the despised. In his heart were the memories of the sufferings of his people; he had heard the echo of their piteous cry, the vain pleadings of age and childhood, the sobs of despair—he had heard them all; and now one of the persecutors comes to him seeking aid, suing for the favor of a loan. What should Shylock say? What should be the bearing of this proud son of an unconquered and indomitable race?

"Signor Antonio, many a time and oft in the Rialto you have rated me about my moneys and my usances; still have I borne it with a patient shrug, for sufferance is the badge of all our tribe. You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, and spit upon my Jewish gaberdine, and all for use of that which is mine own. Well, then, it now appears you need my help; go to, then. You come to me and you say: Shylock, we would have moneys; you say so—you that did void your rheum upon my beard and foot me as you spurn a stranger cur over your threshold; moneys is your suit. What should I say to you? Should I not say: Hath a dog money? Is it possible a cur can lend three thousand ducats? Or shall I bend low and, in a bondsman's key, with bated breath and whispering humbleness, say this: Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last, you spurned me such a day; another time you called me dog; and for these courtesies I'll lend you thus much moneys?"

Yet once more before the bond is signed Shylock offers friendship, which is spurned. Antonio prefers to borrow as an enemy. He has his way; he executes the bond which his own madness had inspired. The time of payment comes; the ships do not.

—*Truthseeker* (New York.)

(To be concluded.)

### Emulating Jonah,

Mother is of the "fair, fat, and forty" type; her guest, too, is somewhat massive. Both have ideas, however, and aspire to forget the material in the spiritual.

Ned hasn't many ideas, but he has one. That is to get all the fun he can out of life. Mother is often his victim, as he is her idol.

This day, at the little informal luncheon, talk turned to the miracle question as the New Thought in general.

The hostess interrupted her own weighty argument. Holding up a tiny fish on a fork, she said, persuasively, to her friend, "Won't you join me in a sardine?"

This situation was too much for Ned. Looking from large woman to large woman, and then to little fish, he exploded:

"Going to do the Jonah act, mother? You'd better go it alone."—*Exchange*,

## Correspondence.

### "THE GOSPEL HISTORY."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to "An Old Subscriber's" question as to the identity of *The Gospel History* and *The Gospel History Critically Examined*, they are the same work, the full title being *The Gospel History and Gospel Teaching Critically Examined*, by the author of *Mankind: Their Origin and Destiny*, published by Longmans Green, 1873 (10s. 6d.). It was sold as a remainder for many years by the late Mr. Forder. It is a valuable work; the author (who is unknown to me) seems to have read and digested every writer, religious and profane, during the era of the evolution of Christianity, and with great acuteness points out many irreconcilable contradictions between the secular historians and the inspired narratives.

In reply to a further request as to a few of the best books on the subject, I would recommend *The Sources and Development of Christianity*, by T. L. Strange (Trübner; 1875; 5s.). Strange was a Judge of the High Court of Madras, and brought a clear and powerful mind to bear on the subject. Also *A Sketch of the Rise and Progress of Christianity*, by R. W. Mackay (Williams & Norgate).

In *Antiqua Mater*, by Professor Edwin Johnson, but published anonymously (Trübner; 1887; 7s. 6d.), the subject is treated in relation to the religion of the Greeks and Romans; it is a work for scholars, and presupposes, on the part of the reader, a thorough knowledge of all the literature of the first and second centuries.

Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology* (Watts and Co.; 8s. 6d.), and the same author's valuable article on "Mithraism" in *Religious Systems of the World* (Sonnenschein); *Jesus and Israel*, by Jules Soury (Bonner; 2s. 6d.). I would add to these three valuable little booklets—*Christianity in its Cradle*, by Professor Francis Newman (Kegan Paul; 5s. 6d.); *The Jewish Life of Christ*, by Messrs. Foote and Wheeler; and *Chrestos—a Religious Epithet: Its Import and Influence*, by J. B. Mitchell (Williams & Norgate; out of print). This little work is well worth reprinting.

In *Egyptian Mythology and Egyptian Christianity*, by Samuel Sharpe (out of print); *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, by James Bonwick (Kegan Paul; 10s. 6d.); and *The Natural Genesis*, by Gerald Massey (Williams & Norgate), the origin of Christianity is traced to Egyptian mythology. Without wishing to dogmatise on the subject, the present writer is of opinion that the Egyptians borrowed much of their mythology from the same sources from which, later on, Christianity evolved—viz., the Babylonian mythology, and the worship of Tamnuz and similar cults, which we know abounded all over Palestine; the same criticism applies to *The Influence of Buddhism on Primitive Christianity* (Sonnenschein; 1873; 2s. 6d.).

The best criticisms of the Gospels are *The Life of Jesus*, by D. F. Strauss, George Eliot's translation (Sonnenschein); *The English Life of Jesus*, by Thomas Scott, but really written by Sir George Cox, who is also the author of the anonymous work, *The Four Gospels as Historical Records; The Prophet of Nazareth*, by Evan Powell Meredith.

For literary criticism, the date of the Gospels, and the fixture of the Canon: *Supernatural Religion* (out of print), a cheap edition to be published shortly by Watts & Co.; *Hebrew and Christian Records*, by the Rev. Dr. Giles (Trübner); *The First Three Gospels*, by Dr. Estlin Carpenter (Essex Hall, Essex-street, Strand; 3s. 6d.); *The Four Gospels as Historical Records*, Anonymous (1895; Williams and Norgate; 15s.)—written, as we have said, by Sir George Cox, who was in Holy Orders in the Church of England; this work is really a résumé of *Supernatural Religion*, Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, and his own *English Life of Jesus*.

For the attack on the morality of the Gospels, *Phases of Faith*, by Professor Francis Newman (Kegan Paul; 3s. 6d.); *The Service of Man*, by Cotter Morison (Kegan Paul 5s.); and *Lectures and Essays*, by Professor Clifford (Macmillan 8s.).

For the opposition of Christianity and Science, Strauss *The Old Faith and the New* (can be obtained of Forder Brothers as a remainder); *Essence of Christianity*, by Feuerbach (Trübner; 7s. 6d.); *The Conflict Between Religion and Science*, by Professor Draper (Kegan Paul; 5s.); and *The Warfare of Science with Theology*, by Professor Andrew White (Macmillan; 21s.). I trust that "An Old Subscriber," will find what he wishes among these. I have long thought that what we want is a really good Freethought Manual, or Handbook on this subject, but it is questionable if anyone could be found to publish it when written. W. MANN.

"Why did you not mention hell in your sermon this morning, Brother Dickey?" "Ever'ting to his season, sah. Whilst I wuz a-preachin' dat sermon, de thermometah wuz in de nineties, en hell spoke fer itse'f!"

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

## LONDON.

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Church, Chapel, and Children: a Challenge to Dr. Clifford."

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Atheism: What it is, and what it is not."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, W. Sanders, "The Spirit of Nationalism."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, E. Pack.

SUNDAY SHAKSPEARE SOCIETY (34 Red Lion-square) 6.30, Play to be read, second part of *King Henry IV.*, with a paper by E. Calvert.

STATION ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7 p.m., J. W. Ramsey, "There was Joy in Heaven."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell) 7, F. J. Gould, "Towards Democracy."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, William Sanders, "The New Element in Politics."

## COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY: 7, Miss Zona Vallance, "The Economic Dependence of Men upon Women."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 19, Discussion Class. Mr. Howat, "The Influence of Astronomical Discovery on the Human Mind"; 6.30, Social Meeting. Tickets, 6d. each.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, F. Bower Alcock, M.A., "The Priest and the Schools."

LEICESTER (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "The Record Reign of Peace."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, A lecture.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Important Business Meeting.

## LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, 51 Longside-lane, Bradford.—November 13 and 14, Liverpool. Debate with Mr. G. H. Bibbings; 16, Liverpool. December 7, Failsworth; 21, Glasgow.

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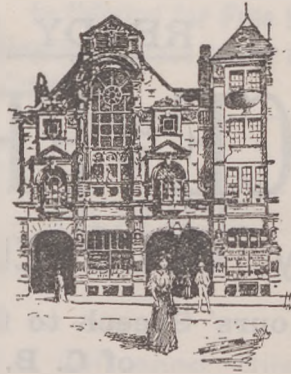
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