

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

I am to set forth the law of my own mind ; which let the man, who shall have approved it, abide by, and let him to whom it shall appear not reasonable, reject it.

—PETRARCH.

The Farce of Faith.

JESUS CHRIST was lifted up—on the cross. Dr. Randall Davidson has been lifted up—on the throne of the Archbishop of Canterbury. What a difference between Christianity in the beginning and Christianity now! And what a difference between dying on the cross and living on it!

But the most wonderful thing of all is that Christians, or at least the majority of them, see no cause for astonishment in the contrast of these two spectacles. The founder of the religion of poverty and renunciation lives the life of a beggar and dies the death of a malefactor. Nearly two thousand years roll by, and his chief representative in Europe sits like a god at Rome, while crowds of devotees kiss his feet, at which they leave piles of Peter's Pence; and his second representative, in England, sits like a minor god in the chair of St. Augustine, while a nation which vaunts itself as the most civilised in the world provides him with a palace to live in and a lordly revenue of fifteen thousand pounds a year. And it all happens as the most regular and natural thing imaginable.

Dr. Randall Davidson has a sweet Christian surname. Jesus Christ was the Son of David too. Dr. Randall Davidson is also a fortunate man. He is fortunate, that is to say, in the common sense of the word. Just as he that is born to be six feet high is born to be a great man, so he that is born to be wealthy, distinguished and envied, is born to be what the world calls lucky. And if there were no such things as principle and sincerity the new Archbishop of Canterbury would be lucky indeed. But there are some men, uncorrupted by the gospel of success, even in England, who would not have his lot if they could at the price of its dishonor.

When I speak of *dishonor* I mean what I say. Dr. Davidson is as honorable in his way as any of the gentlemen referred to in Mark Anthony's oration over the dead body of Cæsar. In the ordinary sense of the words, he is neither criminal nor vicious. No doubt he is a perfectly "respectable" gentleman. But he may be all that and yet dishonorable, in a stricter meaning of the word, if there is a great gulf between his preaching and his practice—between the teaching of the Master whom he is vowed to serve and the conduct of his own life. It needs no subtlety of ethical criticism to prove to honest-minded people that the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor" is inconsistent with residence in a palace, and that the gospel of "Woe unto you rich" is inconsistent with the enjoyment of an income of two hundred and eighty-eight pounds a week.

The case becomes worse, if possible, when one thinks of the multitude of poor destitute wretches who are to be found in London and the other populous centres of this most Christian country. Men who have sought work and could not find it

return to what are facetiously called their "homes," where their wives and children are pining for bread, and gaze with despair on the scene of desolation. Some of the stories of want and misery that have got into the papers lately are enough to melt a heart of stone. But they do not melt the hearts of Bishops and Archbishops. These men stick to their palaces, clutch their money-bags, and go on spouting the contemptible hypocrisies of their sinister profession.

It may be said that other wealthy men are heedless of the sufferings of their fellow-mortals. That is bad enough, no doubt; but it is only common selfishness. It is straightforward, it makes no pretences, there is no humbug about it. "We look after ourselves," such men say practically, "and other people may do the same—or hang themselves." But it is a tremendously worse thing when hypocrisy is added to selfishness. When a man turns up the whites of his eyes, and looks almost too good for this world, and talks as though his one object in life were to help and comfort others, we judge him by a different standard; in fact, by the standard he invites. And judged by this standard every Bishop and Archbishop in England is a monstrous and disgusting impostor. If they had an atom of sincerity they would live on a hundred a year or less, and give away all the surplus of their incomes to the poor. It might be very foolish political economy, perhaps; but what have they to do with that? The command of their master is clear and plain: "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor." Such was his counsel of perfection. And if ordinary Christians cannot follow it, Bishops and Archbishops ought at least to try to. How they *do* try to is shown by the Probate Court returns. Many right reverend fathers in God have left scores of thousands of pounds behind them. How could *they* have believed even a percentage of what they preached? Would they have piled up wealth if they had thought every pound meant a ton of fuel for their future combustion?

Some time ago I was staying for a couple of days with a friend near Farnham. Dr. Randall Davidson was then Bishop of Winchester, and my friend took me over to see the Palace. It was a large and beautiful old structure, standing on a lofty natural terrace, and commanding a noble prospect. "A haunt of ancient peace"—though Cromwell's cannon once sounded in its vicinity. The Bishop was not then in residence. Having no master, he went away when he liked; and he was somewhere abroad at that time, seeking health, and striving to keep out of heaven—as any man *would* with a place like that to live in. So we could not go inside the Palace, but we were able to admire the hothouses, and the vineries, and the sward softer than three-piled velvet, and the piquant mixture of mediæval comfort and modern luxury, and the glorious avenue of trees in the park, stretching from the palace windows of one wing as it were into infinity. And when we were fairly outside, and a little free from the spell of the grand old place, I looked in my friend's eyes and said solemnly, "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven." And then we both laughed till we nearly cried. It was such a delicious scene from the eternal farce of faith!

G. W. FOOTE.

The Religion of Sensible Men.

"MY RELIGION," said the great Lord Chesterfield, "is that of all sensible men." "And what is that?" was the query. "Sensible men never tell," came the not very illuminative reply. Six or seven generations have come and gone since the famous nobleman made this religious confession, but his intellectual progeny are far from extinct. They flourish now as well as ever they did, although they are not always quite so discreet as their prototype in declining to say what their religious opinions are. In its stead one often gets a vague declaration of religious belief, in something or somewhat, or an emotional declaration that leaves one with the feeling that if only the speaker could be induced to form definite ideas and *express* them, his religion would soon become a minus quantity.

With no other subject is there so much concealment and intellectual insincerity as with religion. In respectable society it is far from good taste to introduce religious questions into general conversation. It is counted bad taste, and is almost sure to lead to quarrelling. Art, science, literature, politics, anything else may be discussed and is discussed without any serious danger to the proprieties. Religion is taboo; it is the most important question of all according to many, but it is one that must not be spoken of, hardly even thought about in a controversial spirit. A man must have a religion of some sort, it is one of the canons of "respectable" society, that he must not talk about it is another, and one is inclined to think that it is neglect of the first that brings about the observance of the second.

For this disinclination to talk about one's personal religion points to two things. First, that there is little genuine religious belief to talk about, and second, that the expression of one's real opinions is liable to lay oneself open to persecution or annoyance. If men, in the mass, really believed, conversation on religion would assume the form of an exchange of confidences; and were the expression of opinion unattended by danger, there would be small hesitation in doing so. As it is we are content to sacrifice conviction to comfort, and by a boundless dissimulation cultivate hypocrisy until it becomes a second nature. How many of the non-church-going population of this country would be found to have discarded the current creed, if only their inmost convictions were known? The question would hold good, with considerable force, even of church-going people, but certainly with much more force of those who do not. In all probability if the two conditions of clear-thinking and plain-speaking were fulfilled, Freethought would be found to have one of the largest followings in the country.

In Lord Chesterfield's day the prison was still open for such as carried on any open agitation against the Christian faith. To-day imprisonment for such an offence is a practical impossibility. Yet, are we plainer of speech as regards Christianity than we were a century and a half ago? In one sense, yes. The written and spoken attacks on Christianity are more outspoken, more deliberate, and more weighty now than they were then. But this is due to causes other than a much greater independence of character and frankness of speech. The unconscious development of civilisation will almost serve to bring this about, independent of other and more personal causes. Other things equal, people no more speak out their real opinions on religion now than they did in the early part of the eighteenth century, and people are as afraid now of finding that they have heretical opinions as they were then. If the prison no longer rewards one, there are social pains and penalties still operative, and these often suffice where the others might fail—always helped by that mental crookedness which Christian civilisation has converted into a natural endowment of the majority.

Chesterfield's rule was a bad one when it was laid down; it is a still worse one now. "No one," said

he, "should communicate ideas which would trouble the peace of society." Exactly the apology that one meets with nowadays, under various forms, for a reticence that throws a heavy burden upon the shoulders of those who regard plain, sincere speech as one of the conditions of human development. And what a satire upon human nature such an apology is! What a condemnation of Christianity! To throw out ideas that would discredit Christianity is to disturb the peace of society. Why? Only because bigotry and self-interest say so. It is the peace of these that will be disturbed; and so they are permitted, by those who ought to speak, to rule the roost. The bigot and the knave lay down the rules, and others are content to passively play the game. And thus Christian influences have culminated in summing up the whole duty of man in the single word—Hypocrisy.

"Leave people tranquilly to enjoy their errors of taste as of religion" is another piece of Chesterfieldian advice that has a number of observers, except that it is transformed into "errors of religion as of taste." Outspoken Freethought is deprecated on the grounds that no one should interfere between a man's religion and himself. Admitted—in a sense. No one has the right to *force* oneself into a person's confidence, to compel him to speak, or to force views upon him that he declines voluntarily to listen to. But everyone has a plain social duty to perform in seeing that truth, as he knows it, is made accessible to all who are willing to avail themselves of the opportunity. Truth—knowledge—is no more a strictly personal possession than is the atmosphere we breathe. It becomes our own only in the sense that we are here, and are able to utilise it. But no man made the knowledge he possesses. It has been fashioned for him by all the centuries of human effort that preceded, and by the civilisation that surrounds him. It is ours to use—a property in entail, and it is only rightly used when it is put to its proper social use of *general* service.

The same excuse for suppression meets one in the advice that we ought to respect each other's opinions, and desist from an anti-religious propaganda. An apt reply would be that the propaganda is compelled by the action of the religious world in touting for converts and by the use made of religion as an instrument of social oppression. But a more complete answer is that we ought *not* to respect any opinion of the truth of which we are not convinced. No one respects the conscientious conviction of a bigoted Roman Catholic that all heretics and unbelievers should be forcibly exterminated. We simply pity the man who has such a conviction. We ought not to respect any one's *opinion*, but we ought to respect the right of everyone to hold whatever opinion he or she pleases, always reserving to ourselves the right to seek to change that opinion by every legitimate means. Besides, the very people who accuse the Freethinker of paying no respect to other people's opinions by his attacking religion, are they who are most plentiful in their sneers and jibes, and senseless denunciations of heretical beliefs, which have at least cost their owners the price of thinking about them.

And look at the absurdity of the position, even from the religious point of view. Religion, they say, is the most important thing on earth. Man's conception of his relation to God will determine his actions and influence his whole life. Yet it is this subject on which discussion is more or less barred, and for discussing which man is apt to pay heaviest. Surely if religious belief is all that it is said to be, if it is indeed the secret spring of morality, there is then an absolute necessity for its discussion, a full warranty for each to impress upon his neighbor its value and veracity, and a duty cast upon all to make the examination as strict as is possible. Yet religion is that which man takes most upon trust. All his other beliefs may, and often are, subjected to scrutiny before they become his; religion he is content to accept without examination in the first place, and to carefully shield from criticism afterwards.

So much for the Chesterfieldian advice to "sensible" men. The term is inapt. Those who follow it may be cautious or timid; but, except under special circumstances, they can hardly be called sensible in the higher meaning of the term. If they escape persecution and advance socially by following such a rule there must be always a galling sense of restriction, a want of freedom, about such an existence that needs long persistence to make it endurable. Very few, I imagine, play the hypocrite willingly. The majority would sooner speak out their real opinions than cloak them; and when they are hidden the reaction on character must be disastrous. Honesty is a tender plant at best, and I do not believe that any man can go on for years masking his real opinions, and by implication professing beliefs he does not hold, without finding himself worse mentally and morally for the practice.

And there is not only the effect on oneself; there is the influence of such conduct on society at large to be considered. The man who practises intellectual reticence himself is inviting similar conduct on the part of others. Why should A be more outspoken than B? If it is the wiser policy for one, why not for the other? More; it is a conscious acknowledgment that the bigot is master of the situation; it is a tacit admission that his rule is the right rule; and people are made to realise, in an underhand, insidious manner that heresy is something that people ought to be ashamed of indulging in, but that, if they do find their minds full of heretical ideas, their best policy is to hide it, as though one were afflicted with some loathsome disease.

Why should this be? Why should we continue to pay such universal homage at the shrine of ignorance, bigotry, and superstition? Why this general assumption that the man with antiquated ideas and obsolete beliefs shall be carefully guarded from criticism? This is not only an assumption made by the bigots themselves, who seem to regard it as a settled point that *their* beliefs are to be expressed with the utmost freedom, while others are to go about muzzled, but the same claim is often enough endorsed by others of a different type. The defence would probably be that the bigots are numerous and strong. Quite so; but how much of their strength is due to the inactivity of their natural opponents? It is strictly true that a very large part of the strength of the bigots of this country is made up of the weakness and hesitancy of Freethinkers. Bigotry is cowardly by nature; but there is small wonder that it puts on a mask of boldness when it finds others either ashamed of their convictions or lacking courage to express them. One surely need not become either a fanatic or a bully in order to master the art of expressing opinions with firmness and without disguise whenever circumstances permit or call for it being done.

It is all very well to talk glibly about teaching people to think. There is plenty of thinking in society, and plenty of Freethinking too; what is most needed is more thinking with courage at the back of it. In all probability thought in Great Britain is as "slabby" at the present juncture as at any period during the last hundred years. In religion and politics alike the atmosphere is saturated with timidity and insincerity. Few seem to work on the method of saying all they really believe, and accordingly no one seems certain that anyone means what they say. The rule that "sensible men" never tell their real opinions in religion or politics is being applied upon a general scale, with the result that people, from suppressing their opinion, bid fair to end with having no opinions worth troubling about.

Meanwhile the few who do not believe in Lord Chesterfield's rule are paying, thanks largely to those who do, heavily for their disobedience. The burden of propaganda, which would be comparatively light if shared by all who ought to share it, becomes intolerable because only one here and there has the courage to speak out. The rest are overawed by pasteboard fortresses and dummy guns. And there

is one thing certain. If Freethinkers are ever to possess the respect of the religious world, they must show themselves strong enough to command it. And the best way to get other people to respect one's opinions is to commence by respecting them oneself. So long as Freethought opinions are hidden, so long will it be easy to treat them with contempt. Intellectual sincerity is the only thing that will ever make Freethought a real force; and there was never greater need for it than now.

C. COHEN.

Lord Bacon on Atheism.

THE pedants will be down upon us for speaking of Lord Bacon. It is true there never was such a personage. Francis Bacon was Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Alban, and Lord High Chancellor of England. But this is a case in which it is impossible to resist the popular usage. After all, we write to be understood. The pedants, the heralds, and all the rest of the tribe of technical fanatics, rejoice to mouth "Lord Verulam." But the ordinary man of letters, like the common run of readers, will continue to speak of Lord Bacon, for Bacon was his name, and the "Lord" was but a pretty feather in his hat. And when his lordship took that splendid pen of his, to jot down some of his profoundest thoughts for posterity, did he not say in his grand style, "I, Francis Bacon, thought on this wise"? You cannot get the "Bacon" out of it, and as the "Lord" will slip in, we must let it stand as Lord Bacon.

Lord Bacon was a very great man. Who does not remember Pope's lines?—

If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shined,
The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.

But his bardship was fond of wielding the satiric lash, and that spirit leads to exaggeration. Bacon was not the meanest of mankind. Pope himself did things that Bacon would never have stooped to. Nor was Bacon the wisest and brightest of mankind. A wiser and brighter spirit was contemporary with him in the person of "a poor player." The dullards who fancy that Lord Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare have no discrimination. His lordship's mind might have been cut out of the poet's without leaving an incurable wound. Some will dissent from this, but be it as it may, the *styles* of the two men are vastly different, like their ways of thinking. Bacon's essay on Love is cynical. The man of the world, the well-bred statesman, looked on Love as "the child of folly," a necessary nuisance, a tragi-comical perturbation. Shakespeare saw in Love the mainspring of life. Love speaks "in a perpetual hyperbole," said Bacon. Shakespeare also said that the lover "sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt." The poet knew all the philosopher knew, and more. What Bacon laughed or sneered at, Shakespeare recognised as the magic of the great enchanter, who touches our imaginations and kindles in us the power of the ideal. Exaggeration there must be in passion and imagination; it is the defect of their quality; but what are we without them? Dead driftwood on the tide; dismantled hulls rotting in harbor; anything that awaits destruction, to give its imprisoned forces a chance of asserting themselves in new forms of being.

Bacon was not a Shakespeare; still, he was a very great man. His writings are a text-book of worldly wisdom. His philosophical force is almost proverbial. Nor was he wanting in a certain "dry" poetry. No philosophical writer, not even Plato, equals him in the command of illuminative metaphors; and the fine dignity of his style is beyond all praise. The words drop from his pen with exquisite ease and felicity. He is never in a hurry, never ruffled. He writes like a Lord Chancellor, though with something in him above the office; and if he is now and then familiar, it is only a slight condescension, like the joke of a judge, which does not bring him down to the level of the litigants.

The opinions of such a man are worth studying;

and as Lord Bacon is often quoted in condemnation of Atheism, we propose to see what he actually says about it, what his judgment on this particular theme is really worth, and what allowance, if any, should be made for the conditions in which he expressed himself. This last point, indeed, is one of considerable importance. Lord Bacon lived at a time when downright heresy, such as Raleigh and other great men of that age were accused of, could only be ventilated in private conversation. In writing it could only be hinted or suggested; and, in this respect, a writer's *silence* is to be taken into account; that is, we must judge by what he does *not* say, as well as by what he *does* say.

Some writers, like Letourneau, the French ethnologist, have gone to the length of arguing that Lord Bacon was a Materialist, and that his Theistic utterances were all perfunctory: as it were, the pinch of incense which the philosopher was obliged to burn on the altars of the gods. This much at least is certain—Lord Bacon rarely speaks of religion except as a philosopher or a statesman. He is apt to sneer at the "high speculations" of "theologues." There is no piety, no unction, in his allusions to theology. He looks upon religion as a social bond, an agency of good government. It is impossible to say that he took a Christian view of things when he wrote, "I have often thought upon Death, and I find it the least of all evils"; or when he wrote, "Men fear death as children fear to go into the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other."

Lord Bacon has an essay on Atheism, which is significantly followed by another on Superstition. The latter is seldom referred to by religious apologists, but we shall deal with it first.

"In all superstition," he says, "wise men follow fools." This is a bold, significant utterance. Fools are always in the majority, wise men are few, and they are obliged to bow to the power of the multitude. Kings respect, and priests organise, the popular folly; and the wise men have to sit aloft and nod to each other across the centuries. There is a freemasonry amongst them, and they have their shibboleths and dark sayings, to protect them against priests and mobs.

Perhaps the story of Balaam is a subtle anticipation of Lord Bacon's dictum. It was the ass that first saw the angel. Balaam only saw it afterwards, when his wits were disordered by the wonder of a talking donkey. Thus the prophet followed the ass, as wise men follow fools.

Superstition is worse than Atheism, in Lord Bacon's judgment; the one is unbelief, he says, but the other is contumely; and "it were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him." He approves the saying of Plutarch, that he "had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man as Plutarch, than that they should say there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born"—which, on the part of Lord Bacon, looks like a thrust at the doctrine of original sin and infant damnation.

With his keen eye for "the good of man's estate," Lord Bacon remarks of superstition, that "as the contumely is greater towards God, so the danger is greater towards men."

"Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men; therefore Atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no farther, and we see the times inclined to Atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were civil times; but superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new *primum mobile*, that ravisheth all the spheres of government."

By "civil times" Lord Bacon means settled, quiet, orderly, progressive times—times of civilisation. And it is rather singular that he should pick out the age immediately preceding the advent of Christianity.

Whatever fault is in Atheism, it is no danger to human society. This is Lord Bacon's judgment, and we commend it to the attention of the fanatics of faith, who point to Atheism as a horrid monster, fraught with cruelty, bloodshed, and social disruption.

Coming now to Lord Bacon's essay on Atheism itself, we find him opening it with a very pointed utterance of Theism. "I had rather," he says, "believe all the fables in the legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind." The expression is admirable, but the philosophy is doubtful. When a man says he would *rather* believe one thing than another, he is merely exhibiting a personal preference. Real belief is not a matter of taste; it is determined by evidence—if not absolutely, at least as far as our power of judgment carries us.

"A little philosophy," his lordship says, "inclineth man's mind to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." The reason he assigns is, that when we no longer rest in second causes, but behold "the chain of them confederate, and linked together," we must needs "fly to Providence and Deity." The necessity, however, is far from obvious. All the laws, as we call them, of all the sciences together, do not contain any new principle in their addition. Universal order is as consistent with Materialism as with Theism. It is easy to say that "God never wrought miracles to convince Atheism, because his ordinary works convince it"; but, as a matter of fact, it is the God of Miracles in whom the multitude have always believed. A special providence, rather than a study of the universe, has been the secret of their devotion to "the unseen."

Lord Bacon drops below the proper level of his genius in affirming that "none deny there is a God, but those for whom it maketh that there were no God." This is but a milder expression of the incivility of the Psalmist. It is finely rebuked by the atheist Monk in the play of *Sir William Crichton*, the work of a man of great, though little recognised, genius—William Smith:—

For ye who deem that one who lacks of faith
Is therefore conscience-free, ye little know
How doubt and sad denial may enthrall him
To the most timid sanctity of life.

Lord Bacon, indeed, rather doubts the existence of the positive Atheist.

"It appeareth in nothing more, that Atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man, than by this, that Atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion, as if they fainted in it within themselves, and would be glad to be strengthened by the opinion of others: nay more, you shall have Atheists strive to get disciples, as it fareth with other sects; and, which is most of all, you shall have of them that will suffer for Atheism, and not recant; whereas, if they truly think that there is no such thing as God, why should they trouble themselves?"

(To be concluded.)

F.

Too Hasty with His Quotation.

THE man who was soliciting for a church institution argued long and earnestly. He wanted a contribution of \$100. Finally, the merchant reached for his cheque-book.

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," quoted the solicitor with cheerful satisfaction.

"Does he?" asked the merchant, hesitating.

"You'll find it in the Bible," asserted the solicitor.

The merchant put back his cheque-book.

"I was about to give you \$100," he explained, "but I couldn't possibly do that cheerfully. Doubtless it would be more pleasing in the eyes of the Lord if I kept down to a point where I can be cheerful."

Thereupon he handed a \$5 bill to the solicitor, and smiled pleasantly.

—Chicago Evening Post.

Parson—"Tut! tut! my little boy; you mustn't cry over spilt milk." Boy—"Aw, go on, mister; this ain't milk—it's beer."

The Island of Darkness.

AN ALLEGORY.

THE summer lightning was playing fitfully over Lake Ontario, and—lulled by the monotonous assertion of the katydid—I slept.

And I dreamt that I stood on an island called the Island of Continual Darkness; and over it neither the sun, moon, nor stars ever shone, and the inhabitants saw no light of any kind, except when a faint glimmering appeared low down on the horizon, like summer lightning; and this came very seldom, and after irregular intervals.

And I dreamt that each person carried in his hand a book, which he could never read, but always kept, in the hope that some day light would come, that he might read and understand.

And I saw a man named Gilibis, who one day sat lonely and in darkness, and pondered, with his book unopened in his hand, wondering what mysteries were contained therein. And as he mused the lightning came, and, by its quick-fleeting flash he read the title printed upon the cover. The title of the book was *The Secret of Making Light*.

And immediately Gilibis arose and sought out his neighbors, and said to them: "Brethren, I have found out the name of the book of which we each carry a copy in our hands. It is called *The Secret of Making Light*."

And the people forthwith began to regard Gilibis as a god, and built temples to his honor, and called him "The Great Scientist."

But I noticed that one man named Kiredas joined not with the others in the worship of Gilibis.

And Gilibis reasoned with him, saying: "Dost thou not believe that I have truly discovered the title of our books?"

And Kiredas answered: "Brother, thou hast discovered the name of thy book; but how knowest thou what is written on the cover of the book which I hold?" And Gilibis answered: "All these books are alike." But this Kiredas would not believe.

And the people continued to worship Gilibis, but Kiredas they treated with much contempt, calling him "The Heretic."

And again I saw Gilibis seated in darkness and alone; but now he held his book open and waited for the lightning to come, that he might read what was written inside.

And for nearly a year the people brought Gilibis food and water, and placed them beside him in order that he might be at all times ready, and need never turn his attention from the book.

And again the lightning came, though less distinct than before, and the people came running to Gilibis, crying: "What fresh thing hast thou discovered?"

And Gilibis answered: "Brethren, the printing on the inside of the book is smaller than that on the outside, and the lightning was faint; but I am convinced that the first letter is 'I.'"

And the people marvelled still more at the great wisdom of Gilibis.

But after a time doubt began to arise in the minds of the people. And one said: "He saw not clearly. Might not the first letter be 'J'?"

And another cried: "That is quite impossible; but it might be 'I.'"

And in my dream I saw the people divide themselves into different sects; and each sect took possession of a temple that had formerly been devoted to Gilibis.

And they called themselves by the name of the letter which they professed to believe to be the first one in the book. Thus there were the "B-ists" and the "J-ists" and the "M-ists," etc., though they all called themselves "Gilibistians," inasmuch as they all (except Kiredas) believed the title of the book to be *The Secret of Making Light*.

And each sect was numerous according to the probability with which its letter might be mistaken in a poor light for "I." Thus the "J-ists" were numerous, whereas the "S-ists" were few.

And others, perceiving so much difference of opinion, became, after a time, doubtful of the whole, and became heretics like Kiredas (though I noticed that Kiredas forced his opinions upon no one).

And others threw away their books, expressing in gross terms their opinions of the maker of the books, in that he had not caused them to be printed in raised or illuminated letters.

And as years passed by several flashes of lightning appeared, but nothing further was learned about the contents of the book, because the time of the people was entirely occupied in disputing as to what the initial letter might be.

But presently Gilibis addressed the people, saying: "Brethren, opportunities are being missed. One of us alone could not hope to read his book in a lifetime. Let us, therefore, sit in order upon the ground; and let the first man fix his entire attention on the second letter, and the second man

on the the third letter, and so on; and thus, when a flash comes, a whole sentence can be read. The first letter we know to be an 'I.'"

But some cried, "No; J," and others "No; M," and so on; and they began arguing afresh, so that no arrangement could be made.

And, in despair, Gilibis sought Kiredas, and said to him: "O Heretic! wilt thou assist me in reading the book?" And Kiredas agreed.

Gilibis then told his companion to fix his attention on the third letter, while he himself would endeavor to read the second.

And, after a long interval, a flash of lightning came. Then Kiredas said: "What hast thou seen, O Gilibis?" And Gilibis answered: "O Heretic! I regret that my shadow fell across the book, and I could read nothing. But what was the third letter?"

And Kiredas answered: "Brother, I did not look at the third letter, because I did not yet know the title of the book."

Then Gilibis answered, angrily: "We knew years ago that it is called *The Secret of Making Light*."

But Kiredas replied: "Nay, brother; my book is called *The Secret of Enduring Darkness*."

And I awoke, and the lightning had ceased; but the katydids continued to assert their meaningless opinions.

CHARLES H. KELSON.

A Catching Complaint.

OF a Sunday in the morning, when the west wind blows,

And every honest citizen is dreaming,
In my old drab clothes—knickers, clogs, and hose,

And my phiz-agog mildly beaming;
Right jauntily I ramble down each deserted street,

With my rods and creel and live bait can a-dangling;
For not a soul I meet, save some p'liceman on his beat,

Or a milkcart over dusty roads a-jangling.

Now my neighbor next door is a genuine fraud.

He dresses like any undertaker,
Goes to church Sunday morning, and flatters the Lord

With the voice of a Wiltshire moon-raker,
Says his prayers, and goes home to a lusty good dinner,

And then starts for a walk like a penitent sinner.
If he meets with the godly he slackens his pace,

And solemnly stares at his violin case.

But within it—Good luck to him! Here's my best wishes!—

He has horse-hair and catgut to fiddle the fishes.

With a neat little rod, and many a god

In the form of phantom minnows in quod;

Where he ought to be, if he were caught,

For having no visible means of s'port.

As I fished one Sunday from Sunbury bank,

He floated close by in a flat-bottomed boat,

And he sang—with the tideway swinging;

While I heard—as I gathered my line in a hank,

And found that his boathook had kicked off my float—

This refrain of the song he was singing:—

"I believed in my youth—Ah! how time sails—

Fishermen's tales were gospel truth;

But now I know—times alter so—

Gospel truths are fisherman's tales."

Then I met him that night in the train coming home.

The compartment was blessed with a nondescript parson—

He might have been Baptist or Padre of Rome—

So we joked about gentles and post-mortem arson,

And laughed till we wheezed o'er miraculous takes

From sewers and graveyards and uncanny lakes.

Oh! that clergyman giggled, then fairly shook

In his choker and broad brim—the cunning old rook—

Though his mourning for morals and Mrs. Grundy

Was deep and as false as the Bay of Funday;

For he knew in his heart that each fisherman's tale

Was not half so far-fetched, nor a quarter as stale,

As the lies he discounts of a Sunday.

Now, clerics all call themselves fishers of men,

But they use such unsportsmanlike tackle,

That most of their catches are women, I ken,

The soft-roed ones have learned too much Haecckel.

Yes, I think of Old Isaac Walton's good sense;

And the artful old fisherman wasn't quite dense

When he peered through his tortoise-rimmed glasses,

And these sentiments slid from his old quill pen:

"This world is divided in two classes—

Anglers, and very honest men."

G. GUARDIA BOSCO.

Acid Drops.

The new Act dealing with drunkenness is now in full operation. Concerning its influence in checking inebriety it is too soon to speak, and it is foolish to venture on prophecy needlessly. We have a strong feeling, however, that something much more drastic than this will be needed to reach the end desired. It is not often enough remembered that drunkenness is as frequently an effect as a cause, and that unhealthy conditions of labor, bad homes, even defective cooking, have as powerful an influence in creating a craving for stimulants as does their excessive use in creating bad homes. Drinking, gambling, and kindred evils are from a sanely social and physiological point of view expressions of a bad environment acting on a more or less unhealthy organism, and even though it were possible to prevent an outbreak in one direction, it would be tolerably certain to breakout in another.

But what we set out to call attention to was this. Confirmed drunkards are now liable to be sent away to "Homes" where they will be medically treated as people suffering from a specific disease. The old method was to inflict a term of imprisonment, and then turn the drunkard out with as overmastering a craving for stimulants as when he was first confined. They were then locked up again, with the same result. The new plan is a partial recognition of the accuracy of the secular view of social phenomena, and one that Secularists have for many years been denounced for advocating.

Now that we have got so far we may hope one day to see an improvement all round, and for the whole treatment of crime to be placed on a more scientific basis. The habitual criminal is as much a pathological subject as the dipsomaniac, and there is no greater reason for turning the former loose upon society than the latter. The fault in the treatment of habitual drunkards at present is that they are to be liberated at the end of a stated period, whether they are cured or not. The fault of our treatment of the criminal is that we liberate him at the end of a stated period, cure or no cure, and make the "no cure" tolerably certain by failing to treat him properly during the time he is in prison.

Someone has said there is no such thing as a dull or uninteresting autobiography. No matter how it is written, it is still the record of a man. We are inclined to say, in the same spirit, that no religious paper or book is without its lesson in psychology. We get the calibre of writer or reader, or both. Here, for example, are four items picked out in half the number of minutes from a widely-circulated religious periodical. Number one is the story of some children who wanted a turkey for dinner, and asked their father for it. The father said he had not money enough; "they would have to ask Jesus for it." So the boys prayed, the mother prayed, the grandmother prayed—not for a turkey each, but for the same turkey. Late in the evening the grocer called with an unexpected and unusual donation of a turkey. He had been specially inspired by God to bring it. And the boy took a pair of scissors, and said: "I will cut a lock of the turkey's hair off, and will put it in my Bible"; and the little fellow's faith was greatly strengthened." What a fortune in store for that family as poulterers' assistants!

The remaining three of the four relate to "infidels." A young woman loved her Bible, and a young man who used to come to the house laughed at her, "for he was an infidel." He said that he could open the Bible anywhere, and prove that it was not true. One day she brought the Bible, and opened it haphazard. It opened at the text, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." The young man was silenced, and never mentioned the subject again.

The second is of an "infidel lecturer, name unknown, who visited a town—unnamed—for the purpose of delivering a lecture against Christianity. There were many indications that he would have a large audience, but "a few of God's people met together during the week and prayed that in some way the speaker might be prevented delivering the lecture." The result was that only two people—one a Theosophist, the other an Atheist—came to the meeting, and the lecturer, who had travelled fifty miles, returned home with the lecture undelivered. A plain, unvarnished tale, the very moderation of which carries conviction.

The last story *may* be true. It declares that an agreement has been drawn up between Mr. T. E. Peck and the Rev. Mr. Raymond, of the First Methodist Church, Stratford, U.S.A., by the terms of which Mr. Raymond and his congregation are to listen to ten hours' addresses delivered by

Mr. Peck, the latter paying the Church at the rate of £9 per hour. The paper from which I quote fears that this is not the right method to obtain money for God's work. Perhaps it is afraid Mr. Peck will convert some of the congregation. If so, we would suggest that it exports to America the Bible-opening nursemaid and the turkey-praying youngster, and so make sure of Mr. Peck's discomfiture.

The last story, as we say, *may* be true. We do not know. The other three are as fine a lesson concerning the mental character of the average Christian as could be had. They tell more than volumes of description would do. We have only got to consider this type of mind as common to the population to understand why religious fictions obtained their hold on the people, and why it is so difficult to shake them off. Of course, the people who believe these stories are fools; those who write them would make Ananias simply turn green with envy, if he were alive to read their productions.

The Bishop of London has been ventilating his opinions on marriage with a deceased wife's sister. We do not know that the world is very anxious to hear it, and we are certain that none will be much the wiser for doing so. This reverend ten-thousand-pounds-a-year follower of the humble Jesus is convinced that if this is permitted we shall have taken the first step towards abolishing marriage altogether, an expression of opinion which shows either an amazing insolence or ignorance. Presumably the Bishop knows that this species of marriage is legal in some of our colonies, to say nothing of other places, and that there are many hundreds of men who have married their deceased wife's sister, and are living happily and decently in this country. We repeat it is downright insolence of a man like Bishop Ingram, a representative of a creed that has done more to demoralise woman than any other institution in existence, and which substantially brands marriage as a regrettable, but unavoidable adultery, to brand with immorality those who see no more reason why a man should refrain from marrying one sister than the other. The Bishop has probably forgotten that such marriages are permitted among Jews, and we do not think he will admit that Biblical influences have helped to demoralise marriage. If he is anxious to effect any improvement in the matter, we would suggest that he tries to get the filthy portions of the marriage service of his own church expunged as soon as possible.

Last week in these columns we gave some striking revelations concerning practices carried on in some of the religious houses in France. One would have thought that those revelations afforded adequate grounds for the steps taken by the French Government against the religious orders, not for their suppression, be it remembered, but for their regulation. Yet the Bishop of Argyle and the Isles, in his address to the annual Synod, referred to the revival in France "of the persecuting spirit of a revolutionary and anti-Christian age has, of late, manifested itself against some of the religious orders, in deeds of intolerance and cruel injustice, animated, it would seem, by that inveterate dislike which the ungodly world always had, and always will have, against those who seek to follow their Lord in unworldly ways, neglecting (and some would say neglecting unduly) things temporal, for the sake of things eternal."

Bearing in mind the political agitation carried on by the religious orders in general, and the way in which helpless girls were sweated and half starved by the "Good Shepherd" order in particular, the concluding part of this sentence is, as they say down east, "a trifle thick."

The same speaker also said, in reference to the liberalising effects of the Higher Critics, "We may be quite sure that the new Christ, and the new Gospel, cannot stand," with which we agree. Only as the new Christ can't stand, and the old one is toppling over, the outlook, for Christians, is decidedly pleasant.

Mr. H. E. Hart is so zealous a Protestant that, according to his wife's evidence, he tried to force meat down her throat on a Friday, and would not allow her to go to Mass and say her prayers. The wife, who is a zealous Roman Catholic, wished her husband to change his religion, but he would not even fulfil his promise to marry her at a Roman Catholic church, although she had carried out her part of the mutual agreement and had been married to him in a Protestant church. The Protestant husband has, moreover, threatened to shoot his Catholic wife and to throw her over Westminster Bridge. Mrs. Hart now sues for divorce, and charges her husband with adultery, which is not denied, but is met with countercharges of adultery against the lady. Religion has evidently been far more potent in causing quarrels than in preventing immorality.

The Rev. M. O. Fitzmaurice, vicar of St. James's, Bolton, was charged the other day at Southport with obtaining money under false pretences. He had collected money in various parts of England under the pretence of its being for charitable purposes. His defence was that he had spent half his stipend on charitable purposes, and was trying to recoup himself for the money he had spent. Subsequently, another clergyman was arrested in court for being concerned with him in swindling the public. Both were remanded, on bail. We would suggest, as a better defence than the one offered, that of pleading that, in obtaining money under false pretences, they were only following their legitimate calling as clergymen.

In the Court of Session, Edinburgh, the other day, an action for slander by the Rev. Robert Barclay, minister of the Church of Scotland, Perth, against the Rev. David Manuel, minister of the same Church, was commenced. The plaintiff was assistant minister to the defendant, and the action was founded on a letter in which Manuel said he had terrible revelations to make. Mr. Barclay, in the box, said he conducted the services of the children, and his success in preaching roused an apparent jealousy with the senior minister. Mr. Manuel objected to the way he dressed, and one Sunday, after service, objected to his hymns, and said: "You are far too eloquent for this church; it will never do." So it would appear that eloquence in a preacher is by no means a desirable quality in the eyes of the Rev. David Manuel. Or is it a case of the fox and the grapes?

A curious case has come before the Courts in Springfield, Mass. The Ministers' Association raised an objection to the production of Mr. A. W. Pinero's play, *Iris*, on the grounds that it interfered with their business, which was the promotion of public morality. We are not surprised that people prefer a Pinero play to the parson's sermons, but for clear-cut, downright chock, we imagine this takes the cake. The only refreshing thing about it is the frank confession that the parson's trade is a business, and that they would, if they could, forcibly suppress anything that injures them. The court, of course, dismissed the case.

The *Edinburgh Evening News* has but a poor opinion of the American evangelist, Torrey, who was welcomed to London a little while ago with a loud flourish of trumpets by a number of leading Nonconformists. Our contemporary says that Dr. Torrey may be, in "the region of pulpit evangelism, a giant; in the region of intellect he is a babe and suckling." It further says that, by the evangelist's methods, "Piety becomes an excuse for intellectual sloth, and ignorance becomes, verily, the mother of devotion." Quite so; but all religion is this, more or less.

A Glasgow paper, the *Weekly Leader*, has received from some "eminent Edinburgh ministers" letters urging the necessity of a great "revival," and lamenting the state into which the Churches have fallen. The Rev. Dr. J. B. Hastings, Palmerstone-place Church, Edinburgh, states that religious indifference and lethargy extensively prevail. Many forces are at work diverting attention from religious truth. "Our worship in many cases has become a mere form. There is little apparent hungering for the bread of life; and only in rarest instances a crying out of the heart and flesh for the living God.....I believe that the root of the whole matter lies in a widespread practical disbelief in the supernatural." That at least is an honest admission, and is undoubtedly the real explanation of the falling off in attendance at church and chapel, and we cannot but applaud a parson who has the courage to look the facts squarely in the face, instead of adopting the usual ostrich-like policy of either ignoring the facts altogether or else pretending that they mean something totally different from their manifest significance.

Amongst several others who contributes to the discussion of the question is the Rev. Robert D. Shaw, B.D., Hope Park Church, who says: "A wave of dulness, not to say of depression, is passing over the community, and thousands are 'willing to believe,' and would gladly be convinced that there is a real power and blessing in religion. The Church is confronted with a growing secularism among all classes, and this is not merely a subtle and insidious spirit, such as is always present, but takes the form of a pronounced and active propaganda, antagonistic to evangelical religion, and unhappily receiving influential support." As regards the thousands who "are willing to believe" we can but ask, why do they not then, except that they are convinced of the falsity of the doctrines taught in the Churches?

The Rev. W. M. Falconer, M.A., United Free St. Paul's Church, says: "The necessity for such a revival is evident also in the alienation of great masses of the population, at

both ends of the social scale, and indeed in all classes, from the Church, and from the sacred observance of religion; in the degradation of the Lord's Day, and the popular approval of persistent efforts to secularise its hours of rest; in the fearful moral ravages wrought by intemperance, gambling, and impurity; in the loss of faith in the reality of things unseen and eternal which produces a solid and unthinking, if passive, resistance to the appeal of the Gospel."

Finally, we have the Rev. Dinsdale T. Young, of Nicholson Square Wesleyan Church, writing: "Get the Church right, and soon the transgressors will be won. Less philosophising and more believing; less Biblical criticism and more contrite submission to the Bible. These are greatly to be desired. Nothing will arrest the secularisation of the Church and the apathy of the world but an old-fashioned revival." Well, if "an old-fashioned revival" is the sole hope of the Church for regaining its old position and influence, it surely might just as well put up the shutters at once and retire from business.

The Church census taken at Southwark on the first of February showed the customary results. Out of a population of 203,373, 17,071 were at church and chapel in the morning, and 21,772 in the evening. This includes casual visitors and children. Many would go twice in the one day, and would be counted double; so that if we say Southwark has 25,000 church-going people out of its huge population, we shall be near the mark. Yet the clergy talk of the necessity for more churches and more ministers!

In the course of a sermon preached by the Rev. R. J. Campbell at the City Temple last week on "Christianity and the Social Order," he said: "The statistics which have been published by the *Daily News* have caused much searching of heart on the part of a good many of us, and the fault is not entirely with the ministry, whatever may be the real cause of the apparent shrinkage in attendance at public worship. I do not believe that the evil is without a remedy, nor do I believe that the abstention of the masses from the service of the house of God is caused by indifference to the great themes of religion." But, unfortunately, Mr. Campbell did not enlighten his hearers as to the real cause of such abstention, but merely proceeded to say: "The day will yet come—I long to see it, and hope to live to see it—when the whole nation shall be brought back to the loving service of the public worship of Almighty God." Such faith as that—assuming that the preacher believed what he said—must surely be of the mountain-moving order.

The new Archbishop of Canterbury, after he had been "lifted" into his seat—although we imagine he went with a tolerable degree of readiness—delivered an address, in the course of which he told the following story: "A friend of mine was talking the other day to a lay critic. The critic said: 'I cannot understand how it is you have got such an extraordinary lot of duffers,' and his answer was: 'I am afraid it is quite true, but we have this disadvantage—we have only got the laity to draw from.'"

As a story it is not bad; as a statement of fact it is a sample of religious truth, which usually suggests a falsehood. It is true that the Church has to select from the laity; but it is also true that the "duffers" among the clergy are accounted for by the simple fact that the more intelligent of the laity seek other professions. The fool of the family drifts to the Church; the other specimens take up with politics, science, the law—anything but a profession which, to a man of first-rate intelligence, involves either stultification or dishonesty. And we venture to say Dr. Randall Davidson is hardly a convincing disproof of the critics' complaint.

At the annual meeting of the Great Northern Railway Company a memorial was presented by the Rev. Webb-Peploe asking the Directors to abolish Sunday traffic. The chief complaint seemed to be against the National Sunday League and theatrical companies. Special Sunday excursions were also to be abolished. As usual, the cant excuse was made that it was "morally and spiritually right" that the employees should have their day of rest. We say the "cant excuse" because no one doubts or denies that everyone should have a fair amount of leisure time at his disposal, and no one wishes to see this an accomplished fact more than the Freethinker. But a day of rest does not of necessity involve the abolition of Sunday labor. Far from this being so, we venture to say that Sunday labor is absolutely necessary if people are to utilise their leisure time in the wisest and healthiest manner.

Let us take the case of the Sunday League. Thousands of people are taken during the year, through the agency of

this organisation, into the country, or to the seaside, on the only day in the week that they are able to go. For a few hours, at least, they see fresh sights, breathe a purer air, and exchange the sight of crowded city streets for the broad expanse of field and ocean. And we have no hesitation in saying that the good done, mentally, morally, and physically, to those who go, far outweighs any possible benefit they might gain by attending church or chapel. As a moralising force, the Sunday League is infinitely superior to the Church. Yet the Church asks for its practical abolition. Why? The honest reason is, Because it takes people away from church, only the clergy are not straightforward enough to say so. Why do they not agitate for Parliament to pass an Act which will prevent a railway company employing any of its servants more than a stated number of days per week? This would meet the plea of the employees' right to a day of rest. Once more the reason is, Because that is not what the clergy are anxious for. They really want to close every inducement that will keep people from their place of business, only they are not honest enough to say so. Nothing is quite so nauseating as the religious bigot posing as a social reformer.

A hurricane in the Pacific has devastated many of the Society Islands. The low-lying portion of the islands was swept by huge waves, and thousands of natives were drowned, while others who had taken refuge in cocoa-nut trees died of fright. The survivors are left without food or drink or shelter, everything having been carried away by the violence of the storm and the fury of the waves. This dreadful catastrophe is a typical "act of God." The Deity who rides the whirlwind and directs the storm evidently cares little or nothing for the misery and destruction he causes.

The morals of the Society Islanders, never very strict, are said to have still further deteriorated by contact with Christian rulers. The *Daily Telegraph* says that "although a good deal of missionary effort has been expended by the French religious bodies, both Protestant and Catholic, little success has been achieved."

A cyclone has caused many wrecks on the coast of Madagascar. Many deaths resulted both on land and sea. Providence, with especial cruelty, had prepared an additional horror in the sharks which seized sailors attempting to swim ashore.

Mr. W. E. Lister died suddenly while at prayers in the Baptist Chapel at Morcombe. That veracious paper, the *Christian Herald*, also reports that a woman, while playing cards on Sunday, suddenly rose from her seat and fell down dead. The honors in this case are divided.

The vicar of Roberttown takes some exception to the inscription on Dr. Parker's tombstone, stating that the City Temple preacher "ascended." The rev. gentleman writes in the *Parish Magazine*: "The ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ will now have a rival in that of Dr. Parker. Indeed, Dr. Parker's ascension will, in a way, put Christ's quite into the shade, because, while Christ both died and was buried, Dr. Parker apparently escaped these degradations and went straight to heaven. What was put on the coffin, or what use there was for a coffin at all in this case, or why even a formal funeral service was gone through, we are at a loss to know."

Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, has been preaching against divorce as allowed in the United States. He says that "The nation is sick, and the malady is all the more dangerous because the patient is unconscious of the disease. There is a social scourge more blighting and more destructive of family life than Mormonism." The remarks would apply to the celibacy of the priesthood and its frightful evils far more than to divorce laws. But Churches almost necessarily blind themselves to their own grave faults and crimes. They prefer to regard rational liberty in others as a crime. The idea that a few divorces constitute a social scourge more blighting than universal polygamy is possible only to minds perverted by the wretched teachings of the Romish Church.

"Jewels from Heaven" is the title of an article by Sir Edwin Arnold in the *Daily Telegraph*. A diamond in the midst of a forty-pound meteorite has fallen in Arizona, and this is the only gem known to have dropped from the sky, except two or three specimens of peridot, a greenish-yellow gem, which has lately been in vogue with Parisian jewellers. Ignoring the Biblical description of "all manner of precious stones" that garnish the walls of the New Jerusalem, Sir Edwin remarks that it is startling to learn that there are diamonds in heaven, and he proceeds to ask, "Where there are diamonds, do the angels condescend to wear them, and is there not a danger that vanity and ostentation may invade

the spheres in company with the dangerous loveliness of the gems?" The article is appropriately placed in the woman's page.

Sir Edwin's suggestion that "Heavenly Diamond Trusts" may soon be springing up in the States to outrival Kimberley, reminds us of the British missionary, whose description of the golden walls and glittering jewels of heaven caused his hearer to ask how it was that the English had not annexed the place.

The *Daily Telegraph* says that the novel *We Two*, which "Edna Lyall" founded on the life and personality of Mr. Bradlaugh, "turned the tide in her favor, and from that time forward Miss Bayly's literary position was assured." That an honest and appreciative presentment of a typical Atheist leader should prove the turning-point in a career which previously had been but slightly successful, is a pleasing and promising sign of the times.

Bishop Thornton, of Blackburn, speaking at Liverpool on Monday, Feb. 9, strongly condemned the system of Church patronage, which resulted in a congestion of clergy in some country places where they were not wanted. In the populous city parishes clergy were sparse and few. The system of patronage was preposterous, and worst of all was the traffic in livings—the buying and selling of the cure of souls. He would never rest until he had that blot erased from the splendid escutcheon of the Church of England. We are afraid that if Bishop Thornton adheres to that resolution his rest for the future will be very limited.

Bishop Tugwell, of Western Equatorial Africa, is often asked when in England: "What is the size of your diocese?" and in an article in the February number of *Awake*, one of the C.M.S. monthly publications, he writes: "I generally answer this question by saying: 'You could put England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland, Holland and Belgium, France and Germany, into my diocese, and still have room to spare.' The area is estimated at 700,000 square miles, and it includes the following Colonies: (a) the Gold Coast Colony, including the Ashanti country; (b) the Lagos Colony; (c) Southern Nigeria, including the city of Benin and the Delta country; and (d) Northern Nigeria, including the great Hausa and Bornu States." The population is estimated at 35,000,000, and it does not appear to occur to Bishop Tugwell what an absurdity it is to suppose that one man could possibly supervise such an enormous tract of territory. But, then, we don't suppose the 35,000,000 of inhabitants are any the worse for that.

Mr. Beerbohm Tree produced Tolstoy's *Resurrection* at His Majesty's Theatre on February 17. Under the impression, apparently, that Mr. Tree meant to anticipate the Judgment Day, some religious persons wrote letters of protest before the play appeared.

A Unitarian minister in New York, the Rev. Minot J. Savage, declares that there are not four hundred men in New York who do any genuine religious thinking. The great thing the people are after is money. Well, isn't that a religion? The worship of mammon?—*Labor Leader*.

According to the *Daily News*, Gipsy Smith has just concluded the most successful mission ever held in Brighton in connection with the Free Church Council. For ten days, evening after evening, the Dome has been crowded to its utmost capacity, while hundreds of persons have been turned away from the doors. Perhaps the most memorable meeting in connection with the mission was the midnight service. Two-thirds of the vast audience were men, hard-headed, practical artisans, whose "I will" of decision for Christ rang out clear and firm in response to the evangelist's appeal. "Hard-headed, practical artisans." Of course, they are always that when workers happen to endorse the fashionable superstitions—religious, political, or social!

The famous Chartreuse liqueur is, as all the world knows, manufactured by monks. According to a recent estimate, the "Holy Order," which has the monopoly of its manufacture, sells every year about 1,800,000 bottles, on which there is a clear profit of £360,000. They also manufacture steel files, and—whisper it!—ladies' corsets. They style themselves the "Seraphim of the Church Militant."

But we, the great, the brave, the learned and the wise,
Soon as the hand of death has closed our eyes,
In tombs forgotten lie; no suns restore;
We sleep, for ever sleep, to rise no more.
—From *Moschus*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, February 22, Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow: At 12, "Freethought in English Literature, from Shakespeare to George Meredith"; at 6.30, "Religion: How it is Born, How it Lives, and How it Dies."

March 1 and 8, Athenæum Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—February 22, Athenæum Hall. March 1, Birmingham Labor Church, Bristol-road Board Schools; 8, Glasgow; 15, Liverpool.

J. H. COURTIE.—The reference is probably to the conclusion of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. If you want full and accurate information as to Darwin's religious ideas, you should read Mr. Foote's pamphlet, *Darwin on God*. The price is sixpence.

A. CORLEY.—Your suggestion is undoubtedly a good one and shall be borne in mind. A good many have "overlooked Shilling Month" still. We wish some of them better eyesight and more earnestness; though allowance must be made, of course, for the pinch being felt all round after the enormous financial drain of the South African war.

G. COOKSON.—Sorry to hear things are so bad in your district. England wants a shake-up, though not by the parties who have shaken so much money out of her pocket during the last few years.

M. J. RAMSDEN.—Pleased to read your sympathetic letter.

LIBBE PENSEE.—The business manager is seeing to the matter of your letter. We are surprised at a firm like John Heywood's saying they "don't take" the *Pioneer*. Of course they will be written to on the subject. We fancy there must be a mistake somewhere.

W. J. RUSSELL (Birmingham).—Pleased to receive your cuttings. Send more whenever the spirit moves you.

J. BULLOCK.—Yes, better late than never. But some people are both.

C. WATKINSON says that for some years he has taken three copies of the *Freethinker* weekly from three different newsagents, and asks whether he should do this in future or only take one copy and send us one shilling a month "for the cause." We thank him for his efforts, but his question is not easily answered. If he gives away the two extra copies of the *Freethinker*, and has any sort of reason to believe that this helps our circulation, he had better continue what he has been doing. So much depends upon the special circumstances of the case.

R. LINTORN begs the favor of being informed what edition of Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* it was that Mr. Mann quoted from in his last article. The passage is not, he says, on p. 62 of the sixth edition published in 1883.

W. S. CURRIE.—We presume the Edmund Yates you refer to is the one who was editor of the *World*, a society newspaper. Some of his writings to that journal were republished under the title of *At Home with Celebrities*, in three vols., and consisted of visits paid by him to famous men and women.

LIVERPOOL BOOKSELLERS' Co.—The publishers of Dr. Kerr's pamphlet are Bryscoe and Murray, Glasgow.

T. CAHEY.—Previous to the period you mention affirmation was allowed in courts, but only on the ground of it being contrary to one's religious belief. The Oaths Amendment Act made it possible for anyone to affirm on the grounds of not having any religious belief whatever.

J. C. POINTON, R.N.—Pamphlets have now been sent and subscriptions booked. We appreciate your efforts to help along the cause and Shilling Fund, and recognise, so far as the latter is concerned, that the amount of one's assistance is not by any means an accurate indication of one's wishes.

J. BURROWS AND OTHERS.—We are asked to say that your order for Voltaire's works cannot be executed; only a few copies of *Chinese Catechism*, *Man of Forty Crowns*, and *Sage and the Atheist* remain.

A. FIRTH.—Thanks for paper. Too late for this issue, but will try and use it for next.

A. HAMPTON.—We regret the news contained in your letter, but are not surprised. You will now be able to realise the truth of what we have said concerning the results following a certain lecturer's visits to the branches. Similar attempts have been made at other places, but the members have been strong enough to pay little attention to whispered slanders and cowardly innuendos. We have no doubt that one day you will realise the wisdom of their action.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send halfpenny stamps, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE is billed to lecture twice in Glasgow to-day (Feb. 22). We announced that a fine West-end hall was to be engaged for him on this occasion, but unfortunately there was a hitch in the negotiations at the last moment, and the hall could not be secured. This was not because the proprietor himself was troubled with bigotry, but because he was afraid of the bigotry of his fellow citizens. Anyhow, the result is that Mr. Foote will lecture this time in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street. His subjects are fresh, and will doubtless attract good audiences.

There was a good audience at the Athenæum on Sunday last, in spite of the unfavorable weather, to hear Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Rome or Reason?" To-day (Feb. 22) Mr. Cohen again lectures from the same platform. His subject will be, "Roger Bacon and the Awakening of Europe." This lecture, although complete in itself, will be, in some sense, complementary to last Sunday's address. We hope, again, to see a good audience assembled.

Mr. Foote, writing on Monday evening (Feb. 16), desires to inform his friends in particular, and the readers of this journal generally, that he has profited by his stay at the seaside, though the cloudy and moist weather which has prevailed is not the kind he required. But where are sunshine and dry air to be found in England in February? However, the freshness of the air, and the tonic influence of the sea, have told in spite of all drawbacks; and, although he is not quite his old self yet, he is on the way to being so, and hopes to be able to fulfil his Glasgow engagement without injury or distress.

Shilling Month subscriptions are once more acknowledged in this week's *Freethinker*; and, judging by past experience, some still later subscriptions will yet come to hand. Mr. Foote only returns to London from the seaside in time to run down on his lecturing visit to Glasgow. He will try to deal with Shilling Month finally in our next issue. Meanwhile those who have been negligent or lazy still have an opportunity of grace.

All who are interested in the great question of the far East—the question of China and the Christian powers—should read and pass round the new pamphlet by the late Colonel Ingersoll, which is just being issued by the Freethought Publishing Company at the price of one penny. It is entitled *A Wooden God*. This, by the way, is not our invention, but Ingersoll's own original "profanity." The contents of the pamphlet were first printed in the *Chicago Times* as a letter from the great "Infidel." The Joss of the Chinese and the God of the Bible Christians are compared, by no means to the advantage of the latter. Altogether, it is a vigorous, racy, and characteristic utterance. And it has never before been published in England. For which reasons there ought to be a run upon it.

We hope our friends throughout the country will do their best for the second (February) number of the *Pioneer*. We have not the means to advertise it effectively on commercial lines, but our friends could advertise it in another way at very little cost to themselves. They could purchase copies for distribution amongst their own friends and acquaintances, or in other ways that may be practicable. For this purpose we offer to supply six copies (post free) for threepence, twelve copies (post free) for fivepence, or twenty-four copies (post free) for ninepence. Such a liberal offer ought to tempt a considerable number of Freethinkers to invest a trifle in this fashion.

If any reader has a copy of *Two Secular Burial Services*, published by R. Forder, they will render a service to us by posting same to Miss Vance at the office of this journal, and we will return, intact, in a few days.

Recent numbers of the *Liberator* just to hand contain reprints of articles by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Chilcric, and Mimnermus, that have appeared in this journal.

From the same batch of exchanges we are sorry to learn that Mr. Symes's financial troubles still continue. He has recently suffered the discomfiture of having the gas disconnected at his lecture-hall, owing to inability to meet the bill due. The incident reflects no discredit upon Mr. Symes, but it hardly adds to the credit of Melbourne Freethinkers who allow so earnest a worker to be brought to these straits. Mr. Symes has been carrying on a brave fight for many years, and his position shows that it is neither ambition nor money that has kept him to his task. He fully deserves the support of all Freethinkers, and we sincerely hope that he will get it.

The Executive has in hand the arrangement of a day excursion, to take place some time before the end of August. Preferably, the place visited will be on the coast. Perhaps some of our readers may know a suitable seaside resort—one where arrangements could be made for a general dinner or tea—or they may have some serviceable suggestions to offer. If so, will they please communicate at once with Miss Vance. This notice should have appeared in our last issue; but, owing to the paragraph being written just as we were going to press, a sad hash was made of it, and, in the hurry, it escaped correction. For which we apologise.

There is so much danger nowadays of our running to cant in the opposite direction to that of the Church, and, having given up all hopes of reforming people by moral platitudes emanating from the pulpit, to try what the same thing will lead to when coming from the teacher's desk, that Mr. H. G. Wells's advice, in the current *Cosmopolitan*, comes with a certain timeliness. Mr. Wells's counsel is: "Surround your growing boy or girl with a generous supply of good books, and leave writer and growing soul to do their business together, without any scholastic pawing of their intercourse. Make your state healthy, your economic life healthy and honest, be honest and truthful in the pulpit, behind the counter, in the office, and your children will need no specific ethical teaching; they will inhale right. And without these things all the ethical teaching in the world will only sour to cant at the first wind of the breath of the world."

Shilling Month.

GENERAL

(For division between the National Secular Society and the maintenance of the Sunday Freethought Platform at the Athenæum Hall).

The figure after subscribers' names represents the number of shillings they have forwarded to the fund.

Edward Brooks, 10; C. Watkinson, 1; J. Bullock, 1; George Jacob, 2; Arthur Brooke, 3; Alfred Corley, 2; G. Crookson, 5; T. Wombwell, 2.

Per Miss Vance: G. Grizzell, 1; D. Powell, 5; T. Jones, 4; W. H. Deakin, 11; T. H. Elstob, 2; John H. Hallow, 2; G. Ferguson, 2; D. Ferguson, 1; J. Thompson, 1; Mrs. J. Thompson, 1; John Ferguson, 5; An Old Miner, 2; W. Metcalf, 2; Polly Fenton, 2; A. K. (Glasgow), 1; M. B., 2; M. Cohen, 20; C. W. Tekell, 1; T. Wigham, 2; J. Fothergill, 1; A. C. Brown, 1; J. M., 2; J. O. Restall, 2; J. Morton, 2; J. Brownlee, 1.—Total to date, £50 19s. 6d.

SPECIAL

(For Maintaining the Sunday Freethought Lectures at the Athenæum Hall).

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsden, 4.

Per Miss Vance: W. Bailey, 10; W. Steele, 2; J. Turnbull, 1.—Total to date, £22 19s. 6d.

SPECIAL

(For N. S. S. General Fund).

Per Miss Vance: G. Brady, 20; W. Bailey, 10.—Total to date, £13 17s.

A Strange Witchcraft Story.

SALEM itself in the old days held no firmer creed of witchcraft than obtains at the present time in the mountainous districts of this State, says a correspondent of the *New York Sun*, writing from Charleston, West Virginia. At certain times whole valleys are witch-ridden, and the scattered inhabitants cower in their huts after dark praying fervently against the visitations of the evil women.

Clay county, thirty miles up Elk river from Charleston, and one of the poorest and most ignorant counties in all the mountain regions, is sorely beset by the supernatural. It has long been a favorite resort for the powers of darkness, and there now lies in the Clay Court House gaol one Old Man Cottrell, in whose pending trial for murder witchcraft will play a curious and important part.

Old Man Cottrell—he probably has, or had at some time, a given name, but nobody regards it—is the head of a clan of Cottrells, Lyonses, and Maccombers, who live up Big Otter creek, several miles back from Elk. Sand-diggers they are mostly by trade, if collecting herbs and grubbing for roots may be called a trade.

In the winter they live as they can, miserably enough. A little hunting, a little charity, and an occasional odd job, keep them alive during the cold months.

Generation after generation they have intermarried until the type has become incapable of mental or moral effort. They make no effort to improve their circumstances; reading and writing are lost arts to them.

When a schoolhouse was put up on the property of Squire Boggs, about a mile distant, they declined to take any interest in the opportunity. The school passed out of existence, dying of inanition.

About a year ago there came to Squire Boggs, who is one of the few intelligent and well-to-do men of that locality, a seventy-year-old woman with her eighteen-year-old granddaughter. They had come from back in the country somewhere and they had no home.

They asked permission to occupy the deserted schoolhouse, which request was readily granted. Although the old woman was rather feeble, she contrived to break ground for a little garden, in which she grew corn and tobacco and a few other necessaries for home use.

The squire helped her through the winter, and she announced her intention of staying as long as he would let her. Known at first as "the old woman at Bogg's," she soon got the name of Mother Boggs.

In the spring the rumor spread that Mother Boggs was a witch. It was said that some kin of the Cottrells had sent the message from Roane county that she had been run out of there for the practice of witchcraft.

Her appearance and manners bore out the accusation, for she was very bent, very wrinkled, very sharp of feature, and very silent—four standard characteristics of a witch.

All the Cottrell-Lyons-Macomber clan began to make their enmity felt. By day they flouted the old woman as they passed and saw her at work. By night they shunned the vicinity of the old schoolhouse. Some threats were made, but Squire Boggs soon let them know that he would not have any persecution of the harmless pair of women.

So they were left very much to themselves, except that it was said that one of the Cottrell boys was sometimes seen talking to the granddaughter. Every untoward circumstance which happened in the neighbourhood, however, was laid to the ill-will of Mother Boggs.

One night there came two visitors to the schoolhouse. One of them drew aside the blanket that served as a cover to the front window. The other fired a rifle. A dozen leaden slugs went into the old woman's body. She died without a word in the arms of her granddaughter.

It happened that Deputy United States Marshal Dan Cunningham, who is probably the best detective in West Virginia, was in the locality at the time, and he was sent for. The nature of the slugs told him they had been fired from a rifle specially bored out for that purpose.

He made inquiries and found that Old Man Cottrell had borrowed such a rifle a few days before from a neighbour. The old man and the nephew, who had been paying attention to Mother Boggs's granddaughter, were forthwith arrested and taken to Clay Court House, where they had a preliminary hearing before Squire Shannon.

The prisoners denied knowing anything of the old woman's death, and both stoutly averred that she was a witch. The examination of Old Man Cottrell brought forth the most interesting testimony as to witchcraft.

The court room was filled with the members of the clan, who had left their rifles and shotguns outside, under guard of two of their number—by request.

The Court: You say you had no part in the killing of this old woman?

The Witness: I wa n't nowheres about when it was done.

The Court: You knew her well?

Witness: I knowed he as well as I wanted to. She wa n't no company to me.

A Voice: She were a witch, she were. Right peart job somebody done, a-shootin' of her.

Witness: Anybody knows she were a witch.

The Court: How do you know she was a witch?

Witness: Geordie, didn't she do witchery on me?

The Court: What witchery?

Witness: She ridden me many a night.

The Nephew: And me the same way.

A Niece of Witness: So as their hands was full of briars and brambles when they come back.

Witness (holding up his hands, which were seamed with scratches): There's the witch marks, squire.

The Court: Give me an instance of the manner in which she rode you,

Witness: The night the thundercloud broke an' the high water come down the Big Otter she were out a-ridin'.

A Voice: That were a witch night! I heard her a-goin' screechin' past.

Witness: She come a-callin' for me an' the boy. It were a ha'sh night, an' she wanted a team. I expect she were in a great hurry.

The Court: And you went?

Witness (in great surprise): She called me, I tol' you, squire. She called me with a witch-call.

The Nephew: No matter how hard you try to hol' yourself, you got to go to a witch-call.

The Court: Then you got up out of bed and went out into the night?

Witness (after a pause for consideration): No; it ain't just that way. You don't go. You just lies a-bed a-shivering an' sweatin' an' asleep all the time. It wa'n't exactly me that went that night or any other night. It war my seconds, another of me. So I flew out through the window. That boy there, Linn, he was standin' a-shiverin' outside, all hitched up with a rope of poison oak.

The Nephew: The streaks of it are on my back yet.

Witness: She hitched me to him an' he went up in the air nigh to the moon. When we went too slow a buzz of snake doctors [dragon-flies] stung us up.

A Voice: Them wa'n't no real snake doctors. Them was witch-flies. Snake doctors that's real don't fly nights.

Witness: Whats'ever they was they stung right hard. She drove us to Blue Knob an' hitched us to a pawpaw bush an' left us there.

A man in the audience: I'm from Blue Knob. I heard her that night screechin' like a big owl between the thunder-claps. I knowed it were a witch, but I thought it were the witch from over Strange Creek—the one that strangled Neel Russell's litter of pigs.

Witness: That were her you heard screechin'. She always screeches when she's witch-ridin'.

The Court: What did she go to Blue Knob for?

Witness: Maybe for a ride, or maybe to meet another witch. I expect she did a little pilverin' [pilfering] thereabouts—eggs an' milk, or maybe a strip of meat.

The Court: What happened next?

Witness: We was left there fast to the pawpaw bush, moanin' an' cryin' with the wind an' rain an' cold, an' not knowin' what minute the lightnin' would hit us.

A woman in the audience: You can never get stricken by lightnin' when you're bein' witch-riden. Lightnin' don't hit witch horses.

Witness: We was hitched an' she was away. It might have stricken us.

The Court: Well, what next?

Woman's voice: I wouldn't tell any thing about it. It's mighty onpearten [unwholesome] to be talkin' so much abouten witch folk, even if she is dead.

Another woman's voice: They say it took twelve leads to kill her. It must have been thirteen. That's the number against witches.

Witness: She'll never witch naryun [any one] no more. I ain't afraid of her at all now. She's done her very worst on me. I'll tell everything I know. When the storm begun to die down she come back for us an' rode us home again. Next mornin' our hands an' feet were full of burrs an' briers. They always are after she's ridden of us.

Another Cottrell: Squire, I can swear to having set by Old Man while he was in bed sweatin' an' groanin', an' him asleep all the time, an' I knowed she was a-ridin' of him, an' seen him next mornin' with his hands an' feet like as if he'd been tromplin' aroun' a brier bush.

The Court: Have you been ridden often?

Witness: Twenty, maybe thirty, times. Every ha'sh night she'd be out. If it was moonlight she'd take the boy sometimes an' leave me. We been to Yankee Dam an' Strange Creek an' Birch an' Buffalo, an' once to a place 'way off that I never saw before. That was the time daylight was streakin' the clouds before we got back. She like to have killed me that night. If daylight had caught us I'd a had her. She run me so hard I couldn't walk for nigh a week.

The Court: Then you firmly believe there are such things as witches?

Witness: Why, squire, it's in the Bible. Preacher read it out in meetin' last church-day, not a month back. We are all believers.

The Court: Have you ever attempted to revenge yourself on this witch?

Witness: Don't you know that she'd a-killed me if I had? Don't you know that she'd a tied me to the top of a lightnin'-stricken tree an' left me hangin' there till I peaked away an' died. They say there is a way to kill witches, but I don't know just what it is.

A woman's voice: Thirteen lead slugs in the full of the moon 'll do it.

Another voice (complainingly): It's mighty onpearten to be talkin' so much abouten witches. I wouldn't wonder that we was all ridden after this.

A man's voice: Not by Mother Boggs. That was a right good killin'.

Witness: I expect there's plenty would be glad to kill that old witch if they could. But I nor aryun of we alls hadn't no doin' of it.

The nephew was called to the stand, and confirmed Old Man Cottrell's testimony. He added that he himself had once been ridden to the moon, but that the light had been so severe that the witch blindfolded his eyes to save him, so he saw nothing of the place. He was of the opinion, however, that he had attended a witch convention.

Other witnesses swore that the hands and feet of both the Cottrells were badly scratched and pierced after their night rides, and that they were so spent and lame as to be unable to get about for hours after waking.

It was evident to the Court and to the few intelligent spectators that the clan was perfectly sincere in its belief in witchcraft, and that the death of Mother Boggs was heartily welcomed. Old Man Cottrell was indicted, and will shortly be brought to trial for murder.

—*The Liberator*.

Book Chat.

THE fourteenth century in England is hardly the age to which anyone turns in search of literature. England was behind many parts of the Continent in developing humanistic tendencies, and, generally speaking, the intellectual life of the nation was low. But there is one character, and one piece of writing, produced during this century, which the lover of books will always treat with a certain affectionate regard. It was written, too, by a priest—a bishop—and one can only be sorry that his example had apparently so little influence upon others of the "Black Army." I refer to Richard de Bury's *Philobiblon*, a dainty and cheap edition—two important qualifications, particularly to needy book-lovers—of which lies before me as I write. Messrs. Moring and Co., of Regent-street, are the publishers, and I, for one, beg to thank them for issuing this literary classic at the price of a modest half-crown.

First as to the author. Richard of Bury, so-called from being born near Bury St. Edmunds, first saw the light in 1281, A.D. The son of a knight of "high degree," he attended the University of Oxford, became tutor to Prince Edward, afterwards Edward III., then promoted to various ecclesiastical offices, becoming, finally, Bishop of Durham at the age of fifty-two. He was also High Chancellor and Treasurer of England, and was engaged in many diplomatic missions at home and abroad. He died in 1345, shortly after putting the finishing touches to his *Philobiblon*, and was buried in Durham Cathedral.

If only as being the first of that race of modern bibliomaniacs, who will buy, beg, borrow, and even, if occasion demands, steal books, Richard of Bury is a noteworthy character. At each of his residences he had a separate library. Books lay about his bed-chamber in all directions. He is candid enough to say that his good word could be gained much easier by a gift of books than a present of money, and when in office there flowed in upon him a steady stream of "soiled tracts and battered codices, glad-some alike to our eye and heart." His favors and kindnesses to the mendicant friars seem to have also been bestowed with an eye to their repaying him by acting in the capacity of book-hunters. These friars went everywhere, and it was hard but they brought to the book-hunting bishop some literary treasure now and again. They were sure of reward for anything they might bring, and the bishop asks, with something like pride at his own business shrewdness, "What leverett could escape amidst so many keen-sighted hunters? What little fish could evade in turn their hooks and nets and snares? From the body of the Sacred Law, down to the booklet containing the fallacies of yesterday, nothing could escape these searchers." Money was not to be valued when against books. "No dearness of price ought to prevent a man from the buying of books," he says, except—with the instinct of the true literary bargain-hunter—"unless it be to withstand the malice of the seller, or to await a more favorable opportunity of buying."

But although, as he confesses, "this ecstatic love has carried us away so powerfully that we have.....given ourselves up to a passion for acquiring books," his was not the book-collecting mania of one who secures treasures and keeps them for no eye but his own. He wished to indoo-

trinate others with the same passion as himself; his books—or at least those in duplicate—were available to others; and he had a real desire, and one quite out of keeping with the life around him, to see public libraries established wherever possible. It is for these reasons that he wrote his *Philobiblon* (Love of Books), and the title is as descriptive of the man as it is of the work.

There are twenty chapters in his book, some of which contain rules for the collecting, storing, and lending of books, but for the most part filled with the praise of books. No words are too powerful to express his "ecstatic" love for books.

"In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come.....All things are corrupted, and decay in time; Saturn ceases not to devour the children that he generates; all the glory of the world would be buried in oblivion unless God had provided mortals with the remedy of books.....Truth that triumphs over all things, which overcomes the king, wine, and women, which it is reckoned holy to honor before friendship, which is the way without turning and the life without end.....seems to remain more usefully and to fructify to greater profit in books. For the meaning of the voice perishes with the sound; truth latent in the mind is wisdom that is hid and treasure that is not seen; but truth which shines forth in books desires to manifest itself to every impressionable sense. It commends itself to the sight when it is read, to the hearing when it is heard, and moreover in a manner to the touch, when it suffers itself to be transcribed, bound, corrected, and preserved."

Four out of the twenty chapters are made up of complaints uttered by the books themselves against various people who neglect them and conditions that injure them. There is a fierce invective against the clergy for neglecting books, which "are, as it were, the creators of your distinction."

"We are expelled [it is the books themselves complaining] by force from the homes of the clergy, suffering poverty without the gates. For our places are seized now by dogs, now by hawks, now by that biped beast [woman] whose cohabitation with the clergy was forbidden of old.....Wherefore she, jealous of the love of us, and never to be appeased, at length, seeing us in some corner, protected only by the web of some dead spider.....and complaining that we are useless for any household purpose, advises that we should speedily be converted into rich caps, sendal, and silk.....Our native whiteness that was clear with light has turned to dun and yellow. Some of us are twisted with gout, as our extremities plainly show. The smoke and dust by which we are continuously plagued have dulled the keenness of our visual rays, and are now infecting our bleared eyes with ophthalmia. Within we are devoured by the fierce gripings of our entrails, which hungry worms cease not to gnaw, and we undergo the corruption of two Lazaruses; nor is there anyone to anoint us with balm of cedar, nor to cry to us who have been four days dead and already stink, Lazarus, come forth!"

Poor books!

His rules as to how not to do it when we have charge of books contains a long account of various kinds of people who injure books in the handling. There is the man with a cold in the head, who should have a cobbler's apron in front of him instead of a book; the one whose fingers are black enough to make ink marks on the pages; the one who uses straws for bookmarkers, and leaves them between the pages to rot; the one who turns down a page to mark the place he left off; the one with perspiring fingers; the scribblers on margins; and all who have mourned over an old classic "cut down" by the binder will sympathise with our fourteenth-century bishop in the following:—

"There is a class of thieves shamefully mutilating books, who cut away the margins from the side to use as material for letters, leaving only the text, or employ the leaves from the ends, inserted for the protection of the book, for various uses and abuses—a kind of sacrilege which should be prohibited by the threat of anathema."

To which we say, with all sincerity, Amen!

In his zeal for the care of books, Richard shows himself as great an adept as any modern Biblical apologist in extracting unforeseen meanings from Scriptural passages. Moses is quoted as teaching us to make bookcases in a neat manner, because he said: "Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God." "Moses on the Utility of Bookcases" strikes one as quite an original and striking heading for a Biblical chapter. Jesus also, we are pleased and surprised to hear, lectured his apostles on the duty of taking great care of books, as follows:—

"The Savior also has warned us by His example against all unbecoming carelessness in the handling of books, as we read in St. Luke. For when He had read the Scriptural prophecy of Himself in the book that was delivered to Him, he did not give it again to the minister until he had closed it

with His own most sacred hands. By which students are most clearly taught that in the case of books the merest trifles ought not to be neglected."

Jesus as a bibliophile would, again, be quite a new character in which to present him.

But the good bishop's exegetical vagaries will be overlooked by all book lovers, if only for the sake of the object for which he was writing. "Books delight us," he rightly says, "when prosperity smiles upon us; they comfort us inseparably when stormy fortune frowns upon us." Richard found his chief solace in books, and he labored to give to others the same comfort. His books he left to the University of Oxford, and it is to be hoped that they were not given reason for a fresh series of "complaints." He only asks future generations to remember his efforts on their behalf. "Let us live when dead in their memories who have lived in our benevolence before they were born, and lived sustained by our beneficence." It is to be feared, though, that his efforts on behalf of books were poorly appreciated by those around him. Hallam remarks that he had not an equal in England during the century. Books were apt to suggest thought, thinking bred heresy, and the Church wisely sought to prevent the last by discouraging the first. C.

Independent Department.

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

Spelling Reform: Its Claims.

Note.—The letters printed in italics constitute a few examples of letters which might be deleted without their absence affecting either the intelligibility or pronunciation of words.

The art of reading is vitally related to all modern education. The assistance rendered, and the influence exerted, by the printed page in the pursuit of all branches of knowledge, cannot readily be over-estimated. By means of books ideas are preserved and promulgated, as they could be by no other instrument of civilisation. It is, then, in the interests of education, of the most serious moment that every facility should be afforded for acquaintanceship with the contents of books. Because of the cheapness and excellence of modern books, and the existence of public libraries, etc., no financial bar is opposed to their accessibility.

The current unscientific representation of English by means of our inefficient alphabet—deficient in characters to represent the readily distinguishable elementary sounds of English speech, and inconsistent in the application of the rules for their combination to eke out this lack of letters—and the consequently corrupt method of spelling, raises an intellectual barrier always disastrous in waste of time and energy, and often, because of the brevity of school-life, insurmountable.

The employment of phonetic spelling is calculated to reduce the task of learning to read, and the time and expense involved in this branch of education, to more natural proportions. It has been estimated that quite two years of the school life of every English-speaking child could be saved, and of course more profitably be devoted to the pursuit of more important and helpful studies. This estimate has been supported by actual tests strictly carried out, and proved to be well within the mark.

Consider the anomalies presented by a comparison of the following words:—No, to; is, this; cave, have; get, gem; charter, character, champagne; beauty, duty; few, view; beast, breast. It may be shown that similar inconsistencies extend over a very great portion of the most common words in constant use.

It can readily be conceived that the learner's mind must be confused, and the analytic and co-ordinative powers weakened or destroyed, in the attempt to master this utterly irrational spelling. Unable to trust its own reason, it is thrown back upon the authority of the teacher and the dictionary. The moral effect of this practice is of the most damaging character. The child who can believe that s-o is so, whilst d-o is doo, is well qualified to become the servant of conventionality and superstition. Education, properly

understood as the drawing-out of the intellect and the development of the natural faculties, is defeated, and the vicious habit of cramming is resorted to in the earliest days of school-life.

Other reasons for the application of the phonetic principle to English spelling may be given. Phonetic English would be much more easily acquired by foreigners, and this would facilitate the spread of the English language as a world language; for which purpose it is well adapted, both by the simplicity of its grammatic construction, and on account of its wealthy literature.

Our current spelling is a prolific cause of mal-pronunciation, stuttering and stammering; and phonetic spelling, being much more stable in its character, would directly tend to diminish these habits. The use of phonetic spelling, by making the ordinary printed page the equivalent of the pronouncing dictionary, would unify and purify standard English speech. It would also help to arrest the constant tendency to change of pronunciation.

The difficulties in the way of the adoption of phonetics are great but not insuperable. The greatest opposition to this reform—as is the case with most other reforms—arises out of ignorance of its scope and character. The inconvenience of change is regarded as too great. But the trouble necessary to accomplish the reform is altogether insignificant compared with the constant inconvenience and injustice entailed on every section of the community by the current illogical and wasteful spelling: and in view of the immense practical advantages which phonetic spelling offers to the service of education.

Another objection raised is that such a reform would destroy the historical character of the language. The researches of the ablest philologists, including Professors Max Müller, W. W. Skeat, Francis March, Sayce, and Drs. A. J. Ellis, J. H. Gladstone, and Murray, have demonstrated this supposition to be erroneous. "Oftener wrong than right" the current spelling cannot be accepted as a trustworthy guide to this history of language. The old books are much safer helps in the study of philology and etymology.

All old books would be rendered unintelligible and lost, or would have to be reprinted, is the plea of others. But in the tests before mentioned it was found that children taught phonetically were ultimately much more fluent readers and more correct spellers in the orthodox manner than those who had a training in ordinary spelling alone. In any case, the saving effected by the phonetic printing of newspapers and periodicals would more than compensate for the cost of re-printing all old books which it would be necessary or desirable to retain in use.

The reform will probably be carried through, in its earliest stages at least, by a process of evolution.

The dropping of silent, useless letters (as exemplified in the spelling of this article), the substitution of f for ph, the removal of the more glaring anomalies in words like tho, thru, tuf, catalog, and program, are practical steps of the reform. The teaching of pure phonetics in elementary schools, and the printing progressively of primers, readers, and text books will eventually follow when public opinion is sufficiently educated to recognise the absurdity of the old, and the advantages of the new system.

Every educationist can help the reform by adopting simpler spellings in his correspondence. The question is full of interest, and will not suffer in estimation from the strictest investigation.

T. TALBOT LODGE.

Correspondence.

VIVISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to the correspondence on Vivisection, to which you have given publicity in your columns, allow me to present to your readers another aspect of this subject, in which may be discerned a very serious danger to society.

It is well known that, for some time past, poor patients in many foreign hospitals have been subjected to cruel and unjustifiable experiments prompted by morbid curiosity, professional rivalry, and a desire to gain fame and wealth regardless of the cost. So common has this abominable practice become in Germany, that hospital patients are there contemptuously called "Beasts for Research (Versuchsthier); and even in this country they are sometimes described and treated as "Clinical Material." But, were human Vivisection once sanctioned by law, it would speedily transgress all limitations, and no poor or friendless person would be safe. The supply of capably-sentenced criminals now demanded for this purpose by Dr. Fletcher, of Indianapolis, U.S., and others, would be utterly insufficient to meet the demand for living human "subjects," and hospital patients, lunatics, and paupers would be laid under contribution. At last a

reign of terror for the whole community would set in, the working-classes would rise in open rebellion, the Government would be overthrown, and the practice of experimenting on living creatures would be completely and finally stamped out.

I maintain that the results of the innumerable experiments which have been performed upon living creatures during the last two thousand years or more, have been infinitesimal in comparison with the physical suffering and moral evil which have thus been caused. Were this method of research as useful as its warmest admirers assert, I should still condemn it, as no material benefits can compensate for moral evil, nor can it ever be right to do evil that good may come. The cure of disease, the relief of pain, and the prolongation of life, are of less importance to the human race than the cultivation of justice, mercy, and humanity; and these principles are, in my opinion, incompatible with the practice of Vivisection, the increasing prevalence of which has already, I fear, undermined them to a considerable extent. It is, however, very probable that when the British working-classes are fully enlightened on this subject, they will demand and enforce the suppression of a practice which leads directly to experiments on living human beings, and which threatens to turn the hospitals into establishments for experimenting upon helpless patients.

J. H. THORNTON, C.B., M.B., B.A.
(Fellow of King's College, London,
Deputy Surgeon-General I.M.S., retired.)

Obituary.

ON Wednesday, February 11, were laid to rest in Abney Park Cemetery the remains of the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Pinnell, of Stoke Newington. Mr. E. B. Rose delivered an appropriate address at the graveside in the presence of a number of friends who had attended as a mark of respect to the bereaved parents. We are sure that the sympathy of our readers will be extended to Mr. and Mrs. Pinnell, who are both earnest and energetic members of the Dalston Branch of the N. S. S.

A Remarkable Sermon.

CANON PAGE ROBERTS has been preaching on the text, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Dealing more especially with the Christian hell, he said, according to the account in the *Daily Telegraph*:—"Crude and rude ideas were a necessary stage in the development of all theories. In science and philosophy such ideas had reigned supreme. So in Christianity. But the ideas which were suited to a lower stage of civilisation were, in the case of science, put aside when the higher stage was reached. It was only in theology that man refused to accept progress. The preaching of the early fathers and of the monks of the Middle Ages had been entirely of the wrath to come and of the day of judgment. The Sistine picture of Christ at the day of judgment was a conception almost inhuman in its cruelty. The Reformation had done much to deepen the belief in a material hell fire, and had made the bottomless pit even more engulfing. Latimer had not hesitated to condemn the most perfect men of Pagan times to the pain and torment of hell fire because they had not known Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church, more humane in its sympathy, had created, whether rightly or wrongly, a purgatory. The Italian epic had a purgatory as well as a heaven and hell. Our own sublime English epic had nothing between eternal bliss and endless torment. It might be urged that such ideas were only nightmares of the past. It did not look as if this were so when they read the gruesome pictures of fire and torment which Dr. Newman had drawn for the crowds that came under his spell at St. Mary's, Oxford. That conception of God which could believe Him capable of casting aside His poor, weak, cowering creatures promiscuously—nay, even contemptuously—was a libel—an abominable lie. All honor to the authorities at Westminster Abbey who had the courage to suppress the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed. For those who had been brought up in a lurid belief in the terrors of hell there was always the dread that, although now in the full vigor of health and strength they might fearlessly face the end, yet when advancing age brought with it declining health the memory, going back to the days of childhood, might revert to its early lessons, and the end might close in upon a scene of terror and affright.

Progress does not walk with seven-league boots. Man has not reached his present civilisation by magic or miracle, but by slow toiling and building, by repeated reverses and failures, by ever pushing onward past defeat, and by removing the obstacles that beset his path.

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, C. Cohen, "Roger Bacon and the Awakening of Europe."

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, Mr. Hewitt, S.D.F., "Socialists and the Unemployed." 7 to 7.30, Music.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "How I Found God."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Mrs. Despard, "Mazzini and Democracy."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tunstall-road, Brixton): 7, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Paganism, Christianity, and Atheism."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, H. Snell, "Shylock the Jew."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 3, Willie Dyson, "The Teachings of Evolution." 7, "Dishonest Christianity" (with reference to Dean Freemantle, *et hoc genus omne*).

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, R. Brown, "Mrs. Annie Besant." Discussion invited. Music from 6.15.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Secularism Superior to Christianity."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, Percy Redfern, "Science and Religion: a Christian's Reply to Robert Blatchford."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Geo. Berrisford, "England's Food Supply in Case of a Great War."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Victoria Hall, Fowler-street): 7, C. W. Spedding, "Herbert Spencer on Religion."

LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool.—February 22, Liverpool; 25, Preston; March 8, Liverpool; 22, Liverpool; April 5, Liverpool; 19, Glasgow; May 3, Liverpool; 17, Liverpool.

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