

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Welcome the beggarliest truth, so it BE one, in exchange for the royallest sham.—CARLYLE.

Downright Atheism.

MR. H. G. WELLS, an interesting and suggestive writer, is contributing a series of articles to the *Fortnightly Review* on "Mankind in the Making." This is an ambitious title; a very great philosopher might fail to do justice to it; and Mr. Wells is not exactly a Herbert Spencer. But he is generally well worth reading, and we were going through his latest *Fortnightly* article with pleasure, when we were brought up sharply by an extraordinary passage on "the downright Atheist." Of this personage Mr. Wells has a most amazing conception. He does not say whether he gathered it from experience, hearsay, or tradition. In either case it is so peculiar that we think it the fairest way to let him speak for himself before we say anything further. Mr. Wells was dealing with education, and objecting to religious instruction being imparted by school-teachers; and in the midst of this objection he broke forth as follows:—

"I must confess that there is only one sort of man whose insistance upon religious teaching in schools by ordinary school-teachers I can understand, and that is the downright Atheist, the man who believes sensual pleasure is all that there is of pleasure and virtue no more than a hood to check the impetuosity of youth until discretion is acquired, the man who believes there is nothing else in the world but hard material fact, and who has as much respect for truth and religion as he has for stable manure. Such a man finds it convenient to profess a lax version of the popular religion, and he usually does so, and invariably wants his children 'taught' religion, because he so utterly disbelieves in God, goodness, and spirituality, that he cannot imagine young people doing even enough right to keep healthy and prosperous, unless they are humbugged into it."

Now this is very plain speaking, and it may do Mr. Wells good to have some of the same sort in return; so we tell him that this passage is unworthy of him, because it is so ill-conditioned and absurd. We hardly know whether to regard it as one of the lapses to which all writers are liable, or a deliberate pandering to vulgar prejudice, or a casual flash of personal bigotry.

We beg to ask Mr. Wells, first of all, whether he draws any distinction between an "Atheist" and a "downright Atheist"? If he does, what is it? If he does not, why does he use the adjective? Is he merely aping the common practice of the clergy of all denominations, who seem afraid to let "Atheist" stand by itself, and tell its own story; and who therefore put a warning adjective in front of it—such as "utter," or "grovelling," or "blatant"? "Downright" is not bad, but "blank" is better. It leaves infinite room for prejudice to operate in. There is also a suggestion of swearing about it. You might take it for a parliamentary form of "damned Atheist." Or a still redder epithet might be borrowed from the man in the street.

Of course the word "downright" has a meaning
No. 1,129

of its own, quite irrespective of Mr. Wells's taste or convenience. What does Johnson say of it—and Carlyle praised Johnson for his definitions? The great lexicographer gives the adjective "downright" as signifying "Plain, open, apparent, undisguised." The up-to-date Findlater defines it as "Plain, open, artless, unceremonious." Now in this sense there may be a "downright Atheist." There are, in fact, many such downright Atheists. Plain, open, avowed, honest Atheists.

Mr. Wells's "downright Atheist" openly professes the popular religion. He does not avow his Atheism, he conceals it. Yet in spite of his concealment he is quite a familiar figure. Such a jumble does Mr. Wells fall into in one of his unfortunate moments!

Now let us drop the word "downright" altogether and confine ourselves to the word "Atheist." For every substantive must ultimately stand on its own legs, and there is a sense in which the adjective is its natural enemy.

Is it possible that Mr. Wells really thinks an Atheist is a man who believes that there are none but sensual pleasures, that virtue is no more than a restraint put upon young people by their elders, and that doing right is a species of humbug? If this is Mr. Wells's idea of an Atheist, where on earth did he obtain it? If it is not his idea of an Atheist, what on earth is he driving at? Is he merely playing clown to the orthodox pantaloons?

Note the way in which Mr. Wells follows the orthodox fashion in mixing up different things at the Atheist's expense. This gentleman's Atheist lacks "respect for truth and religion," and "disbelieves in God, goodness, and spirituality." One would fancy that truth and religion, and God and goodness, always went together; that it was impossible to separate them, or even to conceive of them as separated. But this is *too* absurd. Mr. Wells must for once be humbugging. It is not a pleasant word, but we borrowed it from himself.

Mr. Wells cannot be ignorant of the fact that some Atheists have been men of the loftiest intellect and character. "Atheism," said a far greater man than himself, "leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation." Religion often does not even leave a man to sense, to begin with; and we are afraid that Mr. Wells has had the misfortune to illustrate this truth.

A few words may be offered, in conclusion, on Mr. Wells's assertion that it is the Atheist—downright or otherwise—who wants his children taught religion at school. This is so ridiculous that it scarcely deserves a contradiction, much less a refutation. But absurd work of this kind is often forced upon us, and we must not shirk it. Mr. Wells appears to be living out of the world of common facts; otherwise he would know that both the great Christian parties in the recent education struggle fought for the teaching of religion in the public schools. The only difference between Church and Chapel is as to the amount and quality of the religion that should be taught. And the only serious protest against such religious teaching has been made by the Atheists. Mr. Wells ought to know this. But he evidently does not. We therefore bring it to his attention, and hope he will have the honesty to correct his egregious blunder.

G. W. FOOTE.

Cackle about Christ.

I ONCE had a notion to collect all the silly things that preachers and publicists had to say about Jesus. Such a collection, arranged and annotated, could hardly have been without interest. In humor of the unconscious variety it might have ranked as a classic of its kind, while its social significance would have been of no small value. After a time, however, I desisted. The materials were so voluminous that an essay threatened to become a volume, a volume gave promise of a series, and the humor of the collection would have been lost in repetition. Still, every time I came across one of those laborious attempts to prove that Jesus foreshadowed municipal tramways, taught the iniquity of private ownership in land, and laid down rules for a twentieth-century civilised community, I regret never having carried out my original purpose.

I am reminded of this abandoned purpose by the report of a sermon delivered by a Rev. Mr. A. E. Bach, Baptist minister of Barrowford. The sermon was a reply to Mr. Phillip Snowden, Socialist parliamentary candidate for Blackburn, entitled "The Christ that is to be." Mr. Snowden apparently belongs to that now common class of Labor leaders who, while seeing the intellectual difficulties in the way of accepting the theological Christ, have not sufficient control over their emotions to induce them to give up at the same time the teaching Jesus. Mr. Snowden does not, judging from Mr. Bach's criticism, believe in Jesus as God incarnate or as a miracle-worker, but he does believe in holding up Jesus as an ideal for Socialists and those who are interested in labor questions to follow. Perhaps it is merely an electioneering dodge, and Mr. Snowden is dragging in the name of Jesus for vote-catching purposes; but if it is not, Mr. Snowden should be able to realise that there is really no more warranty for the belief in Jesus as a social reformer than there is for the belief in Christ as "very God of very God." His clinging to Jesus while rejecting Christ has, in this instance, only enabled the far less logical parson to score pretty smartly over the more logical Labor leader.

Here is one example of this. Mr. Snowden rejects the miracles of Christ; but, according to Mr. Bach, he yet "loves Christ too well to wish to destroy his influence." And Mr. Bach properly remarks: "One thing is certain. Christ claimed to work miracles; and if you reject them you sacrifice his veracity, and that brings you face to face with the greatest of all miracles—that a kingdom of truth can be established upon the foundation of falsehood, an impostor influence the world for good and dead men to righteousness."

The latter portion of the sentence may be open to question, but the first part is unimpeachable. Taking the New Testament as it stands, Jesus is a believer in and worker of miracles. Miracle is now rejected by nearly all educated people, both inside and outside the Churches. The man, therefore, who does not believe in the Jesuine miracles is accusing Jesus either of deliberate imposture or of ignorance. If the former, there can be no grounds whatever for holding up Jesus as a whole-souled social reformer. If the latter, it is simply grotesque to claim as a social ideal for all time one whose teachings, on matters where they can be tested, shows him to have been intellectually upon the same level as the ignorant peasantry who listened to his teachings. If the Labor leaders of this country would but realise that intellectual sanity is the prime condition of progressive social improvement, the outlook of labor would be much brighter than it is at present.

Mr. Bach, as is only to be expected, indulges in a number of cheap sneers at the efforts of secularists to destroy Christianity. "History," he says, "to the secularist, must appear as a huge satire on his philosophy. Nearly every age has produced men who have made it their life's mission to destroy the Christian faith.....How is it that this mythical

Christ goes on and influences the world, while these greater lights spend their days in obscurity?" If Mr. Bach looked a little closer and a little deeper into the progress of the world he would hardly find history so much of a satire upon Secularism as he imagines. It is easy enough to point out that a Christianity exists now, and simple enough to conclude that therefore those who sought to destroy the Christianity of a century since have failed in their work. Such a conclusion is simple, but fallacious; for the truth is that the Christianity against which Freethinkers of a century or more ago warred is now to all practical purposes dead. What has now become of the doctrine of eternal torments, of Biblical infallibility, of special creation, or of the belief in miracles? These are all excluded from educated religious circles. Even the belief in a personal god is visibly weakening. Christians have not beaten back the Freethought attack of a century ago; they have very largely surrendered to it. The old form of the Freethought attack has been robbed of part of its force by the simple fact that hosts of Christians would now repudiate the teachings against which it was aimed. Instead of history being a satire upon Freethought, it is its principal justification. Doctrines that are now counted as aids to faith, have cost many Freethinkers years of imprisonment and persecution for advocating. The liberal Christian is now where the old-fashioned Freethinker was, and in all probability the future will see the process continued by Christians adopting more and more of Freethought.

Our Baptist preacher repeats the old nonsense about there being a perpetual miracle in the Jesus of the gospels, since he cannot be "accounted for or explained by the age in which he lived. His teaching was wholly opposed to the ideas of his time, hence its rejection." Mr. Bach should really read his New Testament before venturing on a statement of this wild character. There is no hint there that the teaching of Jesus was "wholly" opposed to the times. He was, following the New Testament narrative, condemned upon the definite ground of blasphemy, which so far from being novel had been legislated against, and for which punishment was very common, as a reading of Josephus would show.

What, indeed, *was* there novel about either the teachings or the life of Jesus? Was it the moral exordiums? Mr. Bach could find all their equivalents in the Old Bible or other Jewish writings. They were commonplaces to the people who lived at that day. Was it the celibate life? This was a common characteristic of Eastern religious teachers. Was it the working of miracles? This was as well recognised a trade in those days as the purveying of quack medicines is in ours. Was it the preaching concerning poverty? The Jewish sect of the Essenes is disproof of this. Poverty, celibacy, and communism were their chief features; and their likeness to the early Christian communities is so close, that De Quincey in his well-known essay argues that they actually *were* Christians masquerading in a Jewish dress. Was it the stories related of the character of Jesus, the virgin birth, the crucifixion, and resurrection? I imagine that it is too late in the day for even a Baptist preacher to argue that these beliefs originated with Christians. They were hoary with age long before Jesus is said to have been born, and as much part of the professional accoutrements of the character, as a wig and gown are of a K.C.'s.

This talk of Jesus being vastly superior to his age, and unexplainable by it, is one of those fictions which are repeated so frequently that they pass into currency as unquestionable axioms. It was assisted, too, by no less a person than John Stuart Mill, whose knowledge of history was not of the strongest, and of comparative mythology weaker still. Upon the face of it, such a belief is a philosophic fiction. A man who is not to be accounted for by the tendencies and forces of his time, cannot be understood by the people of his time. He can have no followers, for the simple reason that no one will understand him. And Jesus,

once more following the Gospels, had many followers. Moreover, "the common people heard him gladly." The *common people*, mark you. That is, the ignorant, the uneducated. He was so far above his times that the educated rejected him, and the uneducated heard him gladly. There is a world of information in that "Common People," read aright.

And there is more truth than our Baptist preacher imagines in his sarcastic summary of the inscription written by modern thought over the tomb of Jesus. "Jesus of Nazareth. Born in the minds of a few fanatics. Lived and thrived in a dark and superstitious age. Died from undue exposure to the light of modern thought, and buried amid the lamentations of his followers." It would have been vulgar blasphemy had this been written by a Freethinker, but one may accept it with due appreciation from a Christian preacher.

As a sober matter of fact, judged from any really testable point of view, Jesus is inferior, not superior, to the best teachers of antiquity. Of intellectual greatness there is about the New Testament Jesus scarce a trace. There were multitudes of superstitions about him, and against which, even at that day, many voices had been raised, but his was not one of them. His Hindoo prototype, Gautama Buddha, had much to say concerning the cultivation of the intellect and the development of a spirit of *mental* charity. On this Jesus is silent; and the man who is silent on these topics might, without much loss, remain silent on others. Even in morals, much more real moral sustenance may be gained from the virile philosophy of Marcus than from the "pathetic extravagances" of the Sermon on the Mount.

Moral platitudes, of the emptiest character, was the dominant note of the New Testament Jesus, whenever it is not theological. And its very vagueness has, in a sense, been its salvation. For once, having been created the figurehead of a State religion, and of vested institutions, people were able to read into these vague utterances whatever they pleased. The laborer is worthy of his hire, is counsel that will suit equally well Mr. Phillip Snowden, the Socialist, or the vilest sweater on the face of the earth. One class has never found these texts in their way in the work of extortion or tyranny, and another class has been equally ready to crystallise their demands in their repetition, because they, too, discovered therein a meaning previously placed there. Did not the members of the Spanish Inquisition believe in the teaching, "Do unto others as ye would have others do unto you," on the grounds that if they became heretics they would deserve to be burned? And did not their victims believe in it with equal fervor, and on the grounds that *they* would act in quite a contrary manner?

From Christian preachers one expects as a matter of course this laudation of the Gospel Jesus, but with leaders of the democracy—particularly with those who repudiate the name of Christian—it is surely time that it should cease. Criticism has shown once for all that the Gospel Jesus is more or less of a myth, and therefore to speak of carrying out his teachings and of living up to his example is pure verbiage. It is, moreover, distinctly dangerous to the best interests of the democracy. The reason given for the lavish use of Jesus, that people have associated their ideals with his name, indicates the nature of the evil. You cannot separate the Jesus from the Christ, the preacher of moral platitudes from the miracle-worker and devil-fighter. And this drags with it a whole host of subservient and demoralising feelings. It is not without good reason that far-seeing Churchmen and certain shrewd employers take up with *Christian* Socialism as their best defence against the Labor movement that leaves Christianity outside.

Mr. Bach says—although with a theological implication—"a dead Christ is powerless to save," and I agree with him. A poor, ignorant Syrian peasant is no guide for men and women who are now faced by problems that were undreamed of 2,000 years ago.

It is for each age to face its own difficulties, and, if possible, master them. And in this task our minds are better fitted for thought and our limbs freer for action when we have discarded all useless shibboleths and senseless beliefs. C. COHEN.

Father Dooley sees "The Christian King."

No, said the good Father, it isn't Edward the Sixth I'm after seeing: Ye can't call him a Christian King at all, at all. He insulted the Blissid Catholic Faith in the Coronation Oath, and it was a Prothistint bishop that put on his crown. No, no! It wasn't Edward the Sixth I want to see, but Wilson Barritt.

What d'ye say? Niver heard of a king called Wilson Barritt? Who said ye did? It isn't Wilson Barritt the king, but Wilson Barritt the actor, that I'm talking of. It was the *character* of a king he was impersonating—King Alfrid the Great, that lived in England years and years before Henry the Eighth destroyed Christianity, and made Atheism the established religion of the country. And Father Rooney said it was our duty, as Catholic priests, to go and see what the kings of England were like in the old days, when they still had the chance of being Christians. I objected that, as I'd taken a life of religion, I had no business with carnal pleasures. "It's pleasure ye call it!" said Father Rooney, "ye may take it from me that the witnessing of the majority of the stage-plays in this city isn't a pleasure, it's a penance. It's many a long year of purgatory that the audiences have escaped by virtue of enduring the misery of some of these theatrical representations. It's a dispensation from the bishop that they ought to have, for purging their sins so easily, without confession and absolution." For I may tell ye that Father Rooney makes a point of seeing all the plays as they come out, so that he may advise his congregation about them. As he says, a priest can't preach sermons about the wickedness of the world without some practical acquaintance with it. And once before I'd nearly made up my mind to see Wilson Barritt in a religious piece that he brought out, where he persecuted the Christian martyrs in *The Sign of the Cross*. But Father Rooney said he didn't recommend it because, when *The Sign of the Cross* wasn't very naughty, it was beastly dull. And, as he said, "ye can excuse a play being naughty, but ye can't forgive it for being dull." He didn't know how dull *The Christian King* might be, but I'll tell ye about it as far as I remember.

When we got inside the theatre, what did we see but a big picture with lights burning before it, and an orchestra playing; and I asked Father Rooney if it was the picture of a martyrdom that they had candles burning before it. And he nudged me, and said: "It's the curtain. Don't ask questions. The performance is beginning." And then they pulled up the picture, and started play-acting. It appears it was the dying wish of his brother that King Alfrid should marry a lady named Elswitha, and he joined their hands together.

What's that? Ye ask me if the lady was called Hell's-with-her on account of her abominable bad temper? Now I ask ye, as a Catholic and an Irishman, do I spake my English like a London cockney? It's Elswitha that I'm after saying. E-l-s-w-i-t-h-a—one of those crackjaw Saxon names, that caused tetanus to be the prevailing disease of the country. And it appears that, in those days, a Christian king always had a lot of bad women running after him; and there was one especially, of the name of Zebuda, and she —

What d'ye say? Ye want to know what countryman she was? She was an Irish actress, Lily McCarthy; for it's Ireland that produces the best actresses, the best soldiers, and the best whiskey.

Eh? What? Ye meant what nationality the character on the stage was supposed to be—a Turk, or a Macedonian, or an Armenian atrocity?

I beg your pardhon. Zebuda was supposed to be a Martian from Mars or Martia, or some such place, and Father Rooney said that H. G. Wells had written some novel called *The Martians*, that they took her out of. I haven't read the book myself, for when a priest has gone through the offices, and visited the sick and the poor, he hasn't much time to read anything but his breviary. And Zebuda tried to poison Elswitha; and Alfred, feeling thirsty, would have drunk the poison, but Zebuda knocked the cup out of his hand—carefully standing behind him when she did it, because no one stands in front of a sthar actor when he's on the stage. And, from where we were sitting, I could look right into the cup and see it was impty, and I towld Father Rooney so; but, of course, as he said, it wouldn't do to have rale poisons poured about on the stage, for fear of accidents; and so they perform with impty vissels. And, afther that, the haythin Danes are lid into the counthry by Guthrum; and, as the Christians in those days hadn't invinted magazine rifles and dynamite and concentration-camps for killing off the haythin, Alfrid got defated, and went to hide himself with Ethel Ney. And, while he was there, they took him for a baker and set him to watch the cakes they were toasting for tay; and, as kings mismanage most things, so King Alfrid spoiled the cakes, and got hit for it. (Father Rooney said this was a new fature. At first they only *talked* about the incident on the stage, but the audience insisted on *seeing* it, so as to enjoy the plizure of seeing Wilson Barritt get a thrashing from someone.) And thin the villain of the piece came in, and his name was Seed-Rock, in allusion to the blissid Parable of the Sower; for ye'll remimber that some of the seed fill on rocky places, and withered away because it had no root. And Seed-Rock eloped with Elswitha to the Danish camp, and Alfrid followed to see what capers they were up to. "I will congeal my identity," said he, "and go as an artist. They don't know me, and I shall be taken for Chirgwin, or Dan Leno, or some other cilibrity." But the Danes wint and towld Guthrum that there was a Saxon minstril twanging a harp outside the camp, and making himsilf a nuisance. So Guthrum had Alfrid brought in, and the Christian king and the Haythin king mit together, and got quite chummy. And Alfrid talked to the Danes as if he'd just kissed the Blarney Sthone; and he praised their valor, and he dhrank their whiskey, and he chaffed the haythins about their hair, that was rather towzled, and they all said he was a jolly good fellow, and they were glad he'd come. And he slapped Guthrum on the back, and called him Owld Fuzzy Wuzzy, on account of his big wig, and he dhrank his health, singing:—

Here's to ye, Fuzzy Wuzzy, with your *Heer* and your *Heer-ban*.
Your a poor, benighted haythin, but a furrust-class fighting-man.
Here's to ye, Fuzzy Wuzzy, with your hayrick head of hair,
Ye great, big, bounding beggar—for ye broke a British square.

And so they all shook one another by the hand, and wint home to bid.

But Father Rooney, he said this was a long play, and the sight of so much dhrinking made him thirsty; and so we went round to the back, where there was a bar, and barmaids, and it's rarely thoughtful of Wilson Barritt to provide such refreshment for the audience. And, as we went in, an Irishman came up and shook us both by the hand, and said: "It's rale plased I am to see your two riverinces. It's Irish I am mysilf, and Corcoran's my name. And what will ye take to dhrink; for no throe son of owld Erin can bear to see the clargy go thirsty whiles he's got a shilling in his pocket." "It's very kind of ye, my son," says Rooney in his fatherly way, "and it's Binediothine I'm taking, seeing that I'm an O. S. B. mysilf; sure, and the owld monks knew what was good for the sowl whin they concocted it." And whin the gowlden-haired young lady had handed us the dhrinks, "It's delighted I am to wilcome ye," she says to me, "for it's Kitty Butler, that's my name, and it's from Longford I come." "Here's health to ye, my daughter," says I. "Sure the Butler's are a fine family, and ye do thim mighty credit. Longford's a dull owld town enough; if it

wasn't for the milithary, it would kill iverybody with stagnation. And it's glad I am to see that there's one Irish violet that's not wasting its sweetness in the desert air. I sartainly wondher how all these young min can sit still looking at the sthage, whin they know that there's a jewel like yourself at the back of them." "They don't," says she; "they stop in here all the time." "More credit to their taste," said I. "I'll take ye round to the back of the stage," said she, "and inthroduce ye to Misther Wilson Barritt. He'd be mighty plased to see ye, for he always wilcomes the clargy to his theatre, and he's parsuaded that his mission in life is to ilivate the Church by manes of the Dhrama." "Success to him," says I; but just at that moment a big bill over my head stharterd ringing. "Hivins!" I cried, "is that an alarum? Is the place on fire?" "No, your riverince," says Misther Corcoran; "it's all right. It's only a signal that they're ready for the next scene, and want ye to git back to your places." So we wint back to our sates; and, as I looked down I noticed that narely all the gintlemin at the bottom of the house had bald heads, and I pointed it out to Father Rooney. "Yis," said he, "it's one of the laws of nature, that the more tights there are on the sthage, the more bald heads there are in the sthalls." "Ye surprise me," said I; "I should have thought it was the young men."

What d'ye say? Young men have got no money? Yis, there's something in that. But we clargy always prache at the young min; partly because they can't git away, and partly because, if we offind them, we don't lose any subscriptions. But, as I was tilling ye, the curtain wint up, and they defated the Danes; and Guthrum and Alfrid mit once more, and Guthrum consinted to be baptised, and so they had two Christian kings instid of one. And Guthrum asked what was to be done with the poor Danes, that couldn't go on fighting now there was pace. But Alfrid said, "That's all right. They're aliens. Whin they're in prison they'll be criminal aliens, and be kept by the English taxpayers: and whin they're out of prison they'll be distitute aliens, and be kept at the ixpinse of the ratepayers. Don't sind thim back to Dinmark on any account. They'll be iver so much bitter off here, and needn't do any work." And so all was pace and joy once more, and we got up and wint home.

C. E.

Ever a Fighter.

Robert Buchanan: Some Account of His Life, His Life's Work, and His Literary Friendships. By HARRIET JAY, with additional chapters by H. S. Salt, G. R. Sims, etc.

"The animosities pass, the humanities are eternal."

—CHRISTOPHER NORTH.

THIS deeply interesting record of the life of a most remarkable man should find a wide circle of eager readers. Miss Harriet Jay has done her work well—that is to say, she has managed to convey a living picture of the poet. The book is largely autobiographical. Miss Jay has very skilfully selected and pieced together so many of Buchanan's letters and personal references from his writings in their chronological order that the book has all the charms of an autobiography.

Buchanan always bulked largely in the literary arena. His excursions into print attracted enormous attention, and made warm partisans and vehement opponents. Hence a certain difficulty in fixing Buchanan's place in literature. It is impossible, in considering the poet, to forget the critic with whom we more or less enthusiastically agree or disagree. His work, both in prose and poetry, was distinguished by characteristics of the strongest individuality. His work displayed qualities which are as much over-rated by some minds as they are depreciated by others. It frequently enforced ideas about which men have differed since the dawn of history. Buchanan had very strong religious opinions, and the critic who undertakes to review his literary work

can hardly but be conscious of doing so from the standpoint either of a convinced believer in his Theistic views or of a heretic hardened in their rejection. The whole of Buchanan's theological excursions were in part futile and in part superfluous—superfluous because unneeded by those who have accepted, with him, the conclusions of science, and who, if they retain any Theistic views at all, are quite competent to devise their own "religious accommodations" for themselves. His incessant iteration of his favorite ideas was, no doubt, a tactical expedient deliberately adopted for controversial purposes. Buchanan was well aware that to provoke, to irritate, is better for a disputant than to fail to impress; and he had no doubt persuaded himself that, to get our religious defects acknowledged and the proper remedies applied, it was necessary to be as importunate as the widow suitor of the unjust judge. In this, as in other matters, we see how Buchanan's persistent determination to play the advocate enticed him beyond the limits of that poetic genius in which his true strength lay.

A most versatile man—novelist, dramatist, critic, but most of all a poet; and it is as a poet that he will be known to posterity. Robert Buchanan was born at Caverswall in 1841. His father was a follower of Robert Owen and a militant Freethinker. His mother was the daughter of a solicitor of Stoke-on-Trent. In 1859 young Buchanan came to London and began that fight with fortune, in which he showed such courage and tenacity. In these years he was associated with David Gray, the gifted and unfortunate young writer to whom Buchanan was united by the bonds of an affection which may be soberly described as passionate. His early death was, to the surviving friend, as bitter a blow as the loss of Henry Hallam to Tennyson. And, as Hallam's death inspired one of the most exquisite poems in the world, so the death of David Gray moved Buchanan to utterances of sorrow which rank amongst his best and most artistic verse.

Buchanan's early struggles left a deep impress on his sensitive nature. That there was a spice of malice in some of his criticisms is true enough. He would have been more than mortal had it been otherwise. For many years his work was adversely criticised by a crowd of anonymous scribblers. He scored a sweet revenge in 1873, in which he published *St. Abe and His Seven Wives* and *White Rose and Red*. Both volumes appeared anonymously and were received with roars of applause by the very journalists who had hitherto stigmatised the author as a pretentious poetaster. The books were generally ascribed to James Russell Lowell, one of the few writers for whom the contemporary press had much enthusiasm. Like most men of genius, Buchanan had "a good conceit of himself." One publisher, it is said, declared of Buchanan: "I can't stand that young fellow—he came into my office, and he talked to me as if he was Almighty God, or Lord Byron."

Buchanan knew many fluctuations of feeling and belief regarding belief in deity, but only in one sonnet has he expressly voiced denial. "Does God exist at all?" asks the poet:—

I found thee not by the starved widow's bed,
Nor in the sick-rooms where my dear ones died;
In cities vast I hearken'd for Thy tread,
And heard a thousand call Thee, wretched-eyed,
Worn out, and bitter. But the Heavens denied
Their melancholy Maker. From the dead
Assurance came, nor answer! Then I fled
Into these wastes, and raised my hands, and cried
"The seasons pass—the sky is as a pall"—
Then wasted hands on withering hearts we press—
There is no God, in vain we plead and call,
In vain with weary eyes we search and guess—
Like children in an empty house sit all.
Castaway children, lorn and fatherless.

In his last-published volume, *The New Rome*, he declares deity to be "in process of becoming":—

No God behind us in the empty Vast,
No God enthroned on yonder heights above,
But God emerging, and evolved at last
Out of the inmost heart of human Love!

The deity of Buchanan is as misty, uncertain, and as useless as the god of Jean Jacques Rousseau.

In the Proem to "The Book of Orm," Buchanan attempts a definition in lines of singular beauty:—

When in these songs I name the Name of God,
I mean not Him who ruled with brazen rod
The rulers of the Jew; nor Him who calm
Sat reigning on Olympus; nay, nor Brahm,
Osiris, Allah, Odin, Balder, Thor
(Though these I honor with a hundred more);
Menu I mean not, nor the Man Divine,
The Pallid Rainbow lighting Palestine,
Nor any lesser of the gods which Man
Hath conjured out of Night since Time began.
I mean the primal Mystery and Light,
The most Unfathomable, Infinite,
The Higher Law, Impersonal, Supreme,
The Life in Life, the Dream within the Dream,
The Fountain which in silent melody
Feeds the dumb waters of Eternity,
The source whence every god hath flown and flows,
And whither each departs to find repose.

Nebulous enough, but nebulosity is the natural and inevitable result of any endeavor to define the indefinable.

The first of the "Antiphones," which follow and complete "The Ballad of Mary the Mother," opens with the tremendous adjuration:—

How can I love Thee, God who madest me?
Who says he loves Thee, lies!

And further:—

Thou Vision of my Thought! Thou Mystery
Of which men preach and rave!
I would not look, if Heaven held only Thee,
One foot beyond the grave!
I seek the gentle ones who once were near,
Not Thee, O Light above—
I crave for all who learn'd to love me here
And whom I learned to love!

Small wonder that the religious journals pronounced the poet a blasphemer.

The Judgment of Jesus in *The Wandering Jew* is as impassioned as Swinburne's "Lines Before a Crucifix":—

"Since thou hast quickened that thou canst not kill,
Awakened famine thou canst never still,
Spoken in madness, prophesied in vain,
And prophesied what no thing of clay shall gain,
Thou shalt abide while all things ebb and flow,
Wake while the weary sleep, wait while they go,
And, treading paths no human feet have trod,
Search on still vainly for thy Father, God;
Thy blessing shall pursue thee as a curse
To haunt thee, homeless, through the Universe.
No hand shall slay thee, for no hand shall dare
To strike the Godhead Death itself must spare!
With all the woes of earth upon thy head,
Uplift thy Cross, and go! Thy doom is said."

Space forbids further reference to Buchanan's religious views. In Miss Jay's fascinating pages we find many interesting reminiscences of celebrities whom Buchanan was privileged to meet—George Eliot, George Henry Lewes, Browning, Roden Noel, and others. The life of this most gifted man of letters shows that character and genius are more than mere opinion. Here was one who, as Browning put it, was "ever a fighter"—strenuous, eager, un-sparing; but he had, as was said of Byron, the "imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength." Not only the world of literature, but the infinitely larger world of unexpressed thought and feeling and unembodied imagination, is sensibly the poorer for the loss of Robert Buchanan. MIMNERMUS.

Instinct and Pedantry.

The mass of mankind have common sense, which the learned in all ages want. The vulgar are in the right when they judge for themselves; they are wrong when they trust to their blind guides. The celebrated Nonconformist divine, Baxter, was almost stoned to death by the good women of Kidderminster, for asserting from the pulpit that "hell was paved with infants' skulls"; but, by the force of argument, and of learned quotations from the Fathers, the reverend preacher at length prevailed over the scruples of his congregation, and over reason and humanity.—*Haslitt*.

Acid Drops.

The British and Foreign Bible Society secured the Prime Minister as the "lion" of its Centenary meeting. The Lord Mayor, who is a Jew, occupied the chair. He evidently thought his presence required some explanation, so he talked of "charity" and "toleration." Perhaps he felt that the biggest portion of the Bible—the Old Testament—was Jewish from beginning to end, and that the Bible Society was doing the House of Israel a good turn by scattering it broadcast amongst all the various nations and tribes of the earth whose ancestors migrated from the Tower of Babel. Mr. Balfour's speech was clever, decidedly clever. It was graceful and eloquent—and there was nothing in it. Yet the *Daily News* pointedly complimented him in a special leading article. "We could wish," it said, "that the Prime Minister had always been in the mood which inspired his eloquent and sympathetic address to the Bible Society yesterday afternoon." What the *Daily News* meant, of course, was not that it *could* wish but that it *did* wish. This muddled condition of mind is obvious throughout.

Our Nonconformist contemporary waxes eloquent (in its way) over "steeping the growing minds" of the children of this country "in the purest product of the English language at the supreme moment of its development." Really the ignorance of these Christians about their own affairs is amazing. We recently had occasion to correct Earl Russell on this question of Bible English, and now we have to apply the same correction to the *Daily News*. The English Bible is not written in Elizabethan or Jacobean English. A very simple test will show this without the assistance of scholarship. Read the dedication of the translators to James I. That is their own English—the English of their time. And it is not a bit like the English of the Bible itself. The truth is that the English of the Bible never was spoken or written at any period. It is a special form of English, gradually built up from the time of Wickliff to the time of the Authorised Version. It was devoted to translations of the Scriptures, and to nothing else. We defied Earl Russell, and we now defy the *Daily News*, to refute this argument by an appeal to English literature. The case is a very simple one. Show us if you can a single book before 1611 written in Bible English or anything approaching it. Of course it must be *before* 1611. That almost goes without saying. For later books, such as Bunyan's masterpiece, might be inspired, or at least influenced, by the "sacred" model.

The *Daily News* makes light of the "Higher Criticism," and says it is often seen that "young men turn to scepticism long before their minds are ripened, while afterwards, on fuller knowledge, the mind reverts to its former faith." But is this really *often* the case? Are not the reasons that drive sceptical young men back to the faith of the fathers too often *worldly*? Do they not frequently find it prudent to conceal their real opinions and pretend to believe with the majority? How many a young man, as he grew older, has felt, like the clergyman in the story, that a wife and eight children are nine very strong reasons against doing anything unpopular.

The *Daily Mail* turned on one of its extra special gushers to write up the Bible Society's Centenary. The heading selected was "The Greatest Circulation in the World." Naturally the subject was treated from a journalist's point of view. To have the greatest circulation in the world—even if all your readers are fools—is the summit of the ordinary newspaper man's ambition. It is not astonishing, therefore, that the *Daily Mail* falls down with hysterical veneration before the book which is circulated east, west, north, and south, and easily out-distances every rival. Circulation is everything. Whether you are read or not—in any proper sense of the word—doesn't matter. Circulate, circulate! That is the whole duty of man.

There is a certain fact, however, which is well worth remembering in this connection. The Revised Bible was first published in America at the same time that General Grant's *Autobiography* was published, and it was the latter book that had the "biggest run." The reason of this is perhaps not far to seek. Societies with bursting bank accounts were not interested in thrusting the Revised Version of the Bible upon the public attention, as they are interested in pushing the circulation of the Authorised Version. The result was that the Bible was left, for once in a way, to stand upon its own merits. And the people who wanted, without prompting, to see what the Bible really said when it was more accurately translated, were less numerous than the people who wanted to read about the life of General Grant.

When ordinary men are promoted they say they have got a better situation. When men of God are promoted they say the Lord has called them to a wider sphere of usefulness. They are so sorry to leave their old congregations, but they go all the same. The sorrow is but for a night, and joy cometh in the morning. In fact it was under the pillow all the time.

The gentleman who succeeds the late Dr. Parker at the City Temple keeps to the fashion. The Rev. R. J. Campbell would never, never, never have left his Brighton congregation if he had his own choice. But he feels he must "obey the call." "This is not man's call," he tells them, "but God's." Of course it is. It *always* is. It doesn't take much inspiration to recognise God's call to a better pulpit. When a bigger salary, a bigger church, and a bigger popularity all go together, God's call is quite unmistakeable.

The last number of our excellent contemporary, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, contained an echo of a certain controversy with which our own readers are somewhat familiar. In answering a Plaistow correspondent, the editor said: "Mr. A. E. Fletcher, in calling Shelley a Christian, has made his position perfectly clear, namely, that Shelley would have accepted the ethical portion of the teaching of Christ. In that sense, even an Atheist may be called a Christian." Why, certainly. And in the same sense every vegetarian may be called a Brahman, and every teetotaler a Mohammedan. But is it worth while carrying on in this way?

Shelley, by the way, did *not* accept the ethical portion of the teaching of Christ. Put in that absolute way, without any qualification, the statement is untrue. Shelley accepted a portion of the ethical portion of the teaching of Christ. Some of the rest he condemned with considerable severity.

Everybody accepts some portion of the ethical teaching of Christ; just as everybody accepts some portion of the ethical teaching of the founders of other religions. But that only means that such founders have had some good things, as well as some not-good things, ascribed to them. Had their real or supposed utterances been entirely evil, they would never have "caught on" at all. There are certain things that every moralist *must* say. No man could stand up in public, with any acceptance, and declare that lying, theft, adultery, and cruelty are virtues.

Mr. Philip Snowden has been lecturing in the Mechanics' Hall, Keighley, under the auspices of the Independent Labor Party, on "The Christ that is to be." We thought the I.L.P. did not meddle with religion, but it seems to strain a point in favor of "Christ"—perhaps because it pays. Mr. Snowden began by saying that "the life of Christ had for 1800 years been the great example of human perfection." Towards the end of his lecture he declared that the future work of the democracy was "to translate the will of God into Acts of Parliament and to make our industrial and social conditions conform to the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount." Now we beg to say (1) that the "great example" has never been followed by anybody who kept outside a workhouse, a prison, or a lunatic asylum; (2) that the will of God has nothing to do with any Acts of Parliament, and that neither Mr. Snowden nor anybody else has any means of ascertaining what is the will of God; and (3) that Mr. Snowden should make his own "conditions" conform to the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount before he recommends them to the nation at large. Does *he* take no thought for the morrow? Does *he* never resist evil? Does *he* give his cloak to the man who steals his coat? Does *he* give to everyone that asketh? Does *he* invite the man who blacks his right eye to color the left one on the same pattern? When he *does* these things, and more like them, he will be worth listening to on the subject—and probably worth seeing.

Mr. Snowden says that if Christianity had been of man it would have come to nought. Does he not see that the very same may be said of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism? He also says that "the robber landlord stands between God and man." Does he not see that this makes God as poor and helpless a being as man himself? The landlord is too much for both of them. Mr. Snowden builds great hopes on the Christ that is to be. It would be more to the purpose if he could show what good resulted from the Christ that has been.

We have a last word for Mr. Snowden. Let him cease this chatter about Christ. If the problems of industrialism cannot be settled by the knowledge, the common sense, and the humanity of the men of to-day, they will never be settled by the mystical sayings of an "inspired tramp," who lived (if he ever *did* live) a long way off and a long time ago.

Coroner Baxter held an inquest on Louisa Blackham, of 99 Rowsell-street, Limehouse. The poor woman's body was terribly emaciated, and the jury found that her death was due to phthisis, accelerated by want of food, proper attention, and nursing. They added that her husband was deserving of the severest censure. Her son also figured in the case. He was nineteen years of age and a "War Cry" sergeant in the Salvation Army. A juror asked him: "Couldn't you have got some of your nurses to come and look after your mother? You see her lying in bed, weak, ill, emaciated, and dirty, and with the face of an old woman of ninety." The Salvation Army sergeant's reply was colossal in its selfish stupidity. "I never thought of it," he said. He was out saving souls for General Booth, and never thought of assisting his own poor dying mother. She was only forty-six, though she looked ninety. And her pious son helped her to look it.

The Ameer of Afghanistan is in a reforming mood. He has cut down the number of his own wives to the orthodox four, and ordered all his many-wived subjects to do the same.

"What, four wives!" some Christians will exclaim, and then denounce Mohammedans as lascivious devils. But soft awhile! Let us look into the facts. A heathen marries all the women he has to do with. The Christian marries one and keeps the others dark.

Dr. Clifford could not help talking "shop" at the meeting he addressed in favor of Mr. Will Crooks's candidature. He held forth on the persecuting Anglicans and the poor suffering Nonconformists till his hearers might almost have fancied themselves in Macedonia. Dealing with the matter of the Training Colleges, he said that he knew of a case in which a girl who had been training herself for years to pass the Queen's Scholarship examinations, on getting through successfully and wanting to take the three years' training, was told that first she must become a member of the Church of England. She received five hundred marks above those who took the training, and yet she was denied unless she renounced the faith of her fathers. Was this (he asked) a paper grievance? Certainly not, Dr. Clifford; it is a very substantial grievance. But why do you make so much of Nonconformist grievances, and then help to inflict the very same grievances upon others who go a bit farther in Nonconformity than yourself? You know very well that no Freethinker can enter any of the so-called undenominational Training Colleges without professing himself a member of some Christian denomination. And perhaps you will kindly explain how the very same grievance is intolerable in one case and not worth mentioning in the other case. Is it wrong to try to force a Nonconformist into the Church of England, and right to try to force a Freethinker into the Church of Christ? We invite you to reply.

Some time ago we referred to a Religious Discussion Society at Clapham "to convert Atheists and to convince sceptics and doubters." We hear that this Society is doing a great and splendid work. We are credibly informed that some of its collections have realised the magnificent sum of twopence. This shows the deep interest in the Society's work throughout the neighborhood. Up to the present, however, we have not been favored with a list of the Atheists converted or the sceptics and doubters convinced.

Some of this Society's speakers are reported to be men of amazing eloquence. Their profound erudition and sagacity may be judged by the fact that they have been known to declare that the earth is a flat disc with ice-bound edges, that mankind has existed for about six thousand years, and that the Devil created himself. It is evident that this Society is destined to a career of immense usefulness, and to achieve a most brilliant reputation.

Mr. Maskelyne, the well-known Egyptian Hall entertainer, is too much for the Spiritualists. All their wonderful powers fade away in his presence. Our readers will be glad to see the following extract from his reply to an interview on the subject of the planchette: "None of these things will stand scientific examination. Wherever you make it impossible that there should be trickery or self-deception, there is failure. I have a test as to whether what mediums say is true, but they will not try it. Mr. Stead, when he commenced spiritualist investigations, wanted me to assist him to guard against fraud. He was investigating slate-writing, which was produced by a Mr. Eglinton, a well-known medium. I suggested a test contrivance, which a medium could take away with him, to see whether he could produce any writing. I put two pieces of slate together, with a small piece of pencil between them, as mediums do, but instead of tying them together I put them into a tin box, soldered it up with very rough soldering, and photographed the box, so that there was no possibility of its being unsoldered, and soldered

up again in exactly the same way. I had written two questions on the slate, which were to be answered by spirits. Mr. Stead took this to a *seance*, and gave it to Mr. Eglinton, who said it would require very great power to do what was asked, and that he must get some other medium to help him. He said he would take it with him, and he put it on one side with his hat, but he went off in a great hurry to an appointment, and did not take it, and I have the box now. It is still open to any medium to answer those questions. I have suggested any number of things, but mediums will not take them up. There would be no difficulty in proving spiritualism, if spirits really made communications."

It is well known that "Providence" travels around the world with General Booth. It overlooked him a bit at New York, though, and he slipped down the stairs and sprained his knee. Of course it is conceivable that this was "Providence's" rough and ready way of telling him to take a rest. Those who object that "Providence" does not act in a rough and ready way must be reminded that, according to the Bishop of London, the town of St. Pierre was wiped out, with its forty thousand inhabitants, in order to stimulate the rest of mankind to the study of earthquakes and volcanoes.

President Roosevelt is said to be "a warm friend and supporter" of General Booth. President Roosevelt called Thomas Paine "a dirty little Atheist." That is how justice is meted out—to Christians and Freethinkers.

Thomas Paine, by the way, was not "little." He was two inches taller than President Roosevelt. Thomas Paine was also not an Atheist. He wrote to prove the existence of God. The "dirty" charge is about as true as the others.

Sir Hiram S. Maxim has a very interesting and amusing article in the *Fortnightly Review* on "The Chinese and the South African Labor Question." After showing how the American whites tried in vain to exterminate the industrious, thrifty, and sober Celestials, Sir Hiram has a glance at the missionaries. "At this point," he says, "the pious and good missionary appeared upon the scene. As all efforts to civilise the Chinaman had failed, as nothing could be done for his body, the missionary thought that at least his poor soul might be saved; but, upon visiting the Chinese quarters, he was greatly pained and disappointed. He found that they had built a cheap Joss-house out of old packing-cases, and made a cheap 'wooden god with a long red tongue.' The missionary's feelings were greatly outraged. He reported what he had seen, and a petition to Congress was drawn up, which received a great number of signatures. The people of California protested against heathenism in general and this 'wooden god with the red tongue' in particular. They pointed out that such a parody on religion had a bad effect on the rising generation. Even in this case, the Chinese found a defender in one of the greatest lawyers living in the States at the time. He pointed out that the 'Chinese wooden god with the long tongue painted red' was perfectly harmless, and certainly no more objectionable than the local article which was said to have a tongue of flame. All this is a matter of public record; and still the Chinaman went on as merrily as ever."

The "one of the greatest lawyers" who defended the Chinese against attack was of course Colonel Ingersoll. Particulars will be found in the new Ingersoll pamphlet, *The Wooden God*, just issued from our publishing office. Sir Hiram Maxim, who is an American, must have read it when it was first printed as a letter to a Chicago paper; and it seems to have stuck pretty hard in his memory.

Laffan's Agency seems to be forcing business. Why else did it wire over that "blasphemy" story from the City of Mexico? According to this precious yarn, a drunken woman, prevented from entering a shrine at Bagos, swore horribly at the priests, and while in the act of cursing a bolt fell from the sky, turning her into a rock statue, which was removed to the house of a priest, who is exhibiting it at a charge of fifty cents a head. This is an improvement on Lot's wife. And note the priest's eye to business.

Dr. Torrey, the evangelist, who is doing the Moody business in this country at present, confidently predicts a revival of religion throughout Great Britain. Of course he does. No one expects him to cry stinking fish. But, on the other hand, how many people really believe that this imported Revivalist will make any appreciable difference to the figures of a religious census?

The Camberwell religious census, taken and published by the *Daily News*, is not very encouraging to the orthodox world, though rather more encouraging than that of some other districts. About one person in four attended church

chapel, mission house, or theatre service, on Sunday, February 22, in fairly favorable weather. But this one in four was obtained by reckoning the morning and evening attendances as entirely different persons. By this means, of course, many must have been counted twice over; how many it is impossible to decide—which is really the weak point of this census.

In some parts of London the Church of England worshippers equal those of all other denominations put together. But the case is different at Camberwell. The Church total is 18,888, then come the Baptists with 10,575, the Congregationalists with 7,128, the Roman Catholics with 4,533, and the Wesleyan Methodists with 3,529.

The population of Camberwell is 255,604; including 121,061 males and 134,543 females. The total church and chapel attendance, morning and evening, was 63,903. In the Borough of Camberwell, therefore, it may be taken that more than 191,701 persons do not darken the doors of "God's house," except now and then, perhaps, on some extra special occasions like weddings and funerals.

The Bishop of Lincoln is alarmed. And on the whole we are rather glad to hear it. What he is alarmed about is "the condition of our English Sunday." "There are thousands of persons," he says, "of independent means who spend the greater part of Sunday in pleasure—in driving, cycling, boating, and in pleasure." Yes, and in our opinion it is a pity that lots of other persons, not of independent means, are unable to spend the greater part of Sunday in the same fashion. Naturally the Bishop thinks that Sunday pleasure empties churches. To some extent undoubtedly it does. But there are other causes—the chief of which is the indifference of the masses to the stuff that is preached in the Houses of God. The religious census which is being taken by the *Daily News* shows that the vast majority of Londoners, for instance, simply don't go to church because they don't care to. Their means do not enable them to indulge in expensive pleasure on Sundays, but they prefer walking the streets or sitting at home to listening to stale nonsense in pious tabernacles.

According to the Bishop of Kensington "the serious religious question of the day is the growing neglect of public worship." Heresy is not half as bad as indifference. And the Church is finding it out.

Dr. Cobb, rector of St. Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate-street, thinks this indifference to religion is largely the result of "self-indulgence, especially in drink and immorality." Trust a clergyman to find bad motives for the neglect of his patent medicine.

"Eclipse of the Curate" was the heading of a special study in the *Daily Telegraph*. One reason for the curate's eclipse is that girls need not run after him so much now, as they "enjoy wider opportunities of meeting potential admirers" than they did of yore. In the country the curate "regards the farmers and laborers as pagans if they will not after their week's toil come to an early service, and as he displays no interest in their crops or work, they show none in his endeavors." Our contemporary does not note the fact that the Church has to tap for curates in lower and lower strata of intellect and personality. This is owing to the indisposition of promising young men to take holy orders.

Mrs. Ismay, widow of the great shipping Ismay, has given £10,000 towards the building fund of Liverpool Cathedral. We are sorry to see good money wasted. But there are some Freethinkers who take a hint in the "giving" line from some of these Christians.

Many lies were circulated about Mr. Will Crooks at Woolwich. The "most infamous," according to the *Daily News*, was that he was an infidel. Had he been called a thief and a scoundrel, it wouldn't have been half so bad. But an "infidel!" Just fancy! It is enough to shake a "Woolwich Infant."

What price a murderer's tears? Edwards, the Leyton murderer, seems to have shed a good many, and the Rev. Charles H. Kelly—a man of God of the Wesleyan persuasion, the same as Edwards, you know—bottled them up for public exhibition. Neither the murderer nor the clerical gentleman who prepared him for the kingdom of heaven seems to have spared a thought for the fate of the victims. Whether they went to hell or not didn't matter. The great thing was to get Edwards to heaven. Mr. Kelly administered the "sacra-

ment of the Lord's Supper" in the condemned cell the evening before Edwards started his compulsory emigration. "The Lord drew near," the reverend gentleman says, "and blessed all there." Indeed! Why didn't the Lord draw near when Edwards was getting ready to murder his victims? To them, at least, his "drawing near" would have been more useful just then. Mr. Kelly says that Edwards sang thrice over "And I shall be forgiven." He also sang

Jesu, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.

This was almost with his last breath. We suppose Billington jerked him to Jesus. Anyhow, as Mr. Kelly says, he died with "a strong faith in his Savior."

We can quite understand Mr. Kelly's professional interest in doing a conspicuous bit of soul-saving, but the story he tells is enough to make an ostrich sick.

Spring and the Chrysalis.

An insect swelled in a chrysalis case,
With a pollywog stare on his startled face,
As he stretched first one leg—then another,
Till the butterflies owned him as a brother.
He buzzed around, with his wings scarce grown,
And complained in the car of Oberon:
"O why do the butterflies fly so high,
Like Will-o'-the-wisp or lantern-fly,
And so wide apart—as they always did?
('Sad! sad!' echoed the Katydid.)
How strong are the worms in their mossy nests,
As they lie in rows and regular cests.
Soon I will spread my gauzier wing,
And the butterflies all will come as I sing.
I will train them in concourse, and organise,
Till they're safe as the worms in their winter guise."
Oberon smiled in his kingly way,
And a moth who happened to pass that way
Lisped: "One thing you forget. 'Tis this:
You are no longer a chrysalis."

A. FERNSTONE.

A Jolly Little Heathen.

You can't think how nicely the two boys go on with Mrs. Querini, their governess. From my little study I can hear all that passes. She said to Budge this morning, "Who do you love best of anybody in the world?" "Nobody at all," says Budge. "Yes," says Mrs. Querini, "you love your papa and mamma." "Well," says Budge. "But," goes on Mrs. Querini, "you are to love God more than any one, more even than your papa and mamma." "No, I shan't," says Budge. Jolly little heathen!

—Matthew Arnold, "Letters," Vol. I., p. 77.

Every Time.

"Excuse me," said the observant person who had just listened to a string of talk by an irate man, "but weren't you once a pillar in the Church?"

"I was," said the irate man in astonishment; "but how did you guess it?"

"I have lived long and observed closely," said the watchful citizen, "and never did I meet a man with your peculiar kind and degree of proficiency in the use of profanity and blasphemy who had not at one time been prominent and zealous in church work."

—Los Angeles Herald.

A Discovery.

The following story is told by a correspondent of a contemporary:—When the late Lord Iddesleigh, as Mr. Stafford Northcote, left Oxford, he was appointed a magistrate for Devon. He attended at the Castle of Exeter to be sworn in, and was handed a book which had been of what the late Charles Dickens called the "underdone piecrust" color. It was tied round with red tape. Mr. Northcote did not quite like the look of it, so he took out his knife and cut the tape, and on opening the book discovered that for about thirty years the magistrates had been sworn on a ready reckoner!

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, March 15, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.: 7.30. "Mr. Balfour on the Bible: a Plain Reply."

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—15, Liverpool.

LIVERPOOL READER.—Charles Bradlaugh's "Christian brother"—what a good job he is a Christian—knows absolutely nothing about the great Atheist's dying hours. There had been no intercourse between them for many years, and for very good reasons—some of which (but far from all) have been made public by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner in her father's Biography. Those who know the facts are able to appreciate the "Christian brother's" platform talk of how he "loved his brother Charles." Common decency might have suggested the impropriety of thus trading upon his dead brother's name. When he says that Charles Bradlaugh "made his peace with God" before dying, he is romancing for the sake of notoriety or profit—perhaps for the sake of both. He never saw his "dying brother." That fact is decisive. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner helped to nurse her father in his last illness, and acted throughout with filial devotion. What she says is authoritative, and it may be read in her pamphlet, *Did Charles Bradlaugh Die an Atheist?* What the "Christian brother" says is humbug from beginning to end. And certain newspapers are only acting after their kind in giving publicity to it.

J. E. LING.—See "Acid Drops." We note your compliment, but don't reproduce it. Thanks for your personal inquiries. Mr. Foote's health has improved, but is not yet settled on the right side. What he really wants is a long rest and change, such as men of God often obtain from their churches; chiefly a rest from platform work, his doctor says.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your useful batches of cuttings, and for other valued services rendered during our late illness.

SCPTIC (Battersca).—See "Acid Drops."

W. BINDON.—The key to the difference will be found in the word "mind." Your Theistic friend uses it as denoting an entity. We used it as denoting certain aspects of a material organism. In that sense, you cannot jump from the "minds" of others to the "mind" of the universe. Moreover, it is not true natural processes show a "similarity" to human processes. That idea was practically killed by Darwin. You will find the subject dealt with in our *Darwin on God*. It is impossible to carry on a long argument in this column.

S. SYKES.—The writer of any book may say he is "indebted" to anybody he chooses to quote, but it is ridiculous to make the person so quoted bear any responsibility for the book. The writer of the book you refer to was free to quote Mr. Foote's published writings; as, indeed, we understand, he quoted Mr. Bradlaugh's writings. By "free" we mean that there were no means of preventing his doing so. For the rest, Mr. Foote did not, and does not, know the writer from Adam—as the saying goes; never exchanged a word with him, never met him, never had anything to do with him. The whole find is a mare's-nest. And it is very strange that it should occur now, after the lapse of some fifteen years. Who is prompting you? And how did you get hold of the libellous *Life of Bradlaugh*? We thought the book was suppressed. If you have a copy you should honorably send it on to Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner for destruction.

SYDNEY A. GIBSON, president of the Leicester Secular Society, returns thanks for Mr. Painter's subscription of £1 left at our office. He says: "Mr. Painter's gift is welcome, and we appreciate his kindness." The other £1 left by Mr. Painter was paid over to the Camberwell Branch.

WEST-END FRIEND.—Of course the Athenæum Hall was a considerable expense to Mr. Foote during his illness, and his own platform earnings were suspended at the same time.

A. G. LYE.—(1) We do not contemplate issuing a second volume of the late J. M. Wheelers's *Footsteps of the Past*. The first volume, able, informing, and interesting as it was, has not been sufficiently appreciated. (2) Dr. E. B. Foote's works are all valuable, and the more so for being honest. We say this, of course, without endorsing all his opinions; and he is one of the last men in the world to expect us to do anything of the kind. (3) Your request is being attended to.

UNKNOWN.—Thanks. We shall find a corner for "Brimstone's" verses.

SHILLING MONTH.—J. Prior, 2s.; E. Chapman, 1s. This subscription is closed.

A RANGOON SUBSCRIBER to the *Freethinker* reports that he has forwarded the names of thirteen subscribers (with cash) for one year to the *Pioneer*. Among the subscribers are one Armenian, one Hindu, and seven Burmans. This subscriber hopes other friends in that part of the world will do likewise.

II. HARRISON.—Our view is well known, we believe, that the Failsforth Secular Sunday Schools deserve the fullest support.

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.

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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.

THERE was another capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and Mr. Foote's reply to Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace was to all appearance immensely appreciated. Unfortunately a nasty cold made the lecturer's work harder than it should have been. He still carries about the dregs of his late illness, and will probably do so until some decent settled weather comes along in the South of England.

Mr. Foote occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (March 15), taking for his subject "Mr. Balfour on the Bible." Since the "Acid Drop" in this week's *Freethinker* was written, we have met with a fuller report of Mr. Balfour's speech to the Bible Society, and while we do not say it is worth a reply we think it ought to be answered on account of the speaker's position. Mr. Foote intends to speak out very plainly on this occasion.

The Athenæum Hall platform will be occupied by Mr. Foote again on March 22. What will happen after that remains to be seen. The fact is that efforts have to be made, and are being made, to find another meeting-place. Adequate notification of the necessity for this was not given. It was discovered almost by accident, subsequent to Mr. Foote's return from Glasgow, and not in time to say anything definite in last week's *Freethinker*. But the fact remains all the same and has to be faced. The proprietor now says that the Athenæum Hall premises have been acquired by the new Tube Railway from Hampstead to Charing Cross, and the Act of Parliament gives the Company power to proceed in a peremptory manner. The formal notice to "clear out" seems to cover only three weeks, and it is only that time that was left for the interests of our Sunday evening propaganda to be dealt with. Those interests will not be neglected. All who are concerned may depend upon that. And if another meeting-place cannot be secured immediately, it is probable that a course of lectures will be arranged for at the Queen's Hall or some other well-known building.

Those who want to hear the last of the Athenæum Hall lectures will therefore have to crowd in on Sundays, March 15 and 22. On the last Sunday evening Mr. Foote hopes to be able to make a definite announcement as to the immediate future.

Mr. C. J. Quinton has checked the Shilling Month subscriptions on behalf of the National Secular Society's Executive, as the President requested. The grand total was £92 7s. 6d.—which is above the average of previous Shilling Months. The grand total included—General, £54 3s.; Athenæum Hall Special, £25 2s. 6d.; N. S. S. Special, £13 2s.

The result, as far as the N. S. S. is concerned, is very welcome, but is not exactly sufficient. For that reason we tried to make use of Mr. Umpleby's offer to give £10 to the N. S. S. providing nine others would do ditto. Major John C. Harris, R.E., promptly accepted Mr. Umpleby's friendly challenge. But the eight others have not appeared on the horizon yet. Perhaps they had to travel a great distance. When we see one of them advancing we shall take the matter up again; but it is no use, as the proverb says, to thump cold iron. Meanwhile we may note the following suggestion by an N. S. S. supporter:—"I trust that you will have no difficulty in finding eight other sympathisers willing to give the necessary sums, and so fulfil the terms of Mr. Umpleby's offer. Like many another Freethinker, £10 to me

is a sum of importance. The spirit is willing, but the finances are weak. I have, however, a suggestion to offer, which is in no way intended to clash with Mr. Umpleby's generous scheme. There is a vast difference in my case between £10 down and £10 paid out by instalments. My suggestion, if carried out, would raise more funds for the Society, and enable some who could not possibly pay £10 at once to help you. I will gladly give a guarantee to pay £10 to the Society in four quarterly payments of £2 10s. if only four readers of the paper will promise similar sums. The more the merrier. I enclose name and address, and remain, E. J. M."

The Failsworth Secular Sunday School holds a Gentlemen's Tea Party on April 4 in aid of the Whit-Friday Procession. Donations will be thankfully received, and should be sent to Mr. H. Harrison, hon. sec., 5 Clegg-street, Failsworth, near Manchester.

Mr. H. M. Hyndman, the Social Democrat, was sixty-one on Saturday, March 7. He is a Freethinker as well as a Socialist. His father, the late Mr. John Beckles Hyndman, gave £150,000 to build and endow churches in East London. He was unable, however, to provide that his own son should be a churchgoer.

The second collection of Darwin's Letters, edited by his son, and published by Murray, contains few things as striking as the heterodox utterances in the first collection. He repeats that he "can see no evidence of beneficent design, or indeed of design of any kind, in the details" of nature. Writing to Hooker he exclaims, "What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low, and horrible works of nature." Darwin evidently meant every word of this. The expression is quite vehement for so placid a character. Some day or other that devil's chaplain will turn up, and fulfil the impeachment which Mill attempted in his essay on "Nature."

The Average Parson.

Our objection to him is not that he is senseless; this—as it concerns us not—we can patiently endure. Nor that he is bigoted; this we expect, and have become accustomed to. Nor that he is small-souled, narrow, and hypocritical; all these qualities become him well, sitting easily and gracefully upon him. We protest against him because he is always "carrying on."

To carry on, in one way or another, seems to be the function of his existence, and essential to his health. When he is not doing it in the pulpit he is at it in the newspapers; when both fail him he resorts to the social circle, the church meeting, the Sunday-school, or even the street corner. We have known him to disport for half a day on the kerb-stone, carrying on with all his might to whomsoever would endure it.

No sooner does a young sick-faced theologian get safely through his ordination, as a baby finishes teething, than straightway he casts about him for an opportunity to carry on. A pretext is soon found, and he goes at it hammer and tongs; and forty years after you shall find him at the same trick with as simple a faith, as exalted an expectation, as vigorous an impotence, as the day he began.

His carryings-on are as diverse in kind, as comprehensive in scope, as those of the most versatile negro minstrel. He cuts as many capers in a lifetime as there are stars in heaven or grains of sand in a barrel of sugar. Everything is fish that comes to his net. If a discovery in science is announced, he will execute you an antic upon it before it gets fairly cold. Is a new theory advanced—ten to one while you are trying to get it through your head he will stand on his own and make mouths at it. A great invention provokes him into a whirlwind of flip-flaps absolutely bewildering to the secular eye; while at any exceptional phenomenon of nature, such as an earthquake, he will project himself frog-like into an infinity of lofty gymnastic absurdities.

In short, the slightest agitation of the intellectual atmosphere sets your average parson into a tempest of pumping like the jointed ligneous youth attached to the eccentric of a boy's whirligig. His philosophy of life may be boiled down into a single sentence: Carry on and you will be happy.

—Dod Grile (*Ambrose Bierce*).

"The deacon prayed for rain six days an' nights on a stretch, an' when the rain come"—"What then?" "Drowned two of his best cows and washed the foundation from under his house. An' now he says that hereafter he's a good mind to keep quiet, an' jest let Providence run the weather to suit itself!"

Thank God!

Christians, and other thoughtless Theists, exclaim, "Thank God!" for *good*, but not for *bad*, things; they should, of course, thank God for *everything*, or *nothing*.

The earth is flattened at the poles. Thank God!

A fishing-net is full of holes. Thank God!

Though priests are warmly housed and fed,

A homeless wretch may get, instead,

A storm-blown slate upon his head. Thank God!

Whatever is is always best. Thank God!

A thoughtless boy can rob a nest. Thank God!

The largest streams by cities run;

Our maxim is a Maxim gun;

And youngsters torture cats for fun. Thank God!

The Lord of Heav'n came down to die. Thank God!

A spider's-web can catch a fly. Thank God!

The face of Nature's stained with blood;

The Thames is well supplied with mud;

We sometimes break a collar-stud. Thank God!

He missed the train, as Heav'n had willed. Thank God!

The folk that caught the train were killed. Thank God!

He missed the ship, and so survives;

The ship was lost with scores of lives;

On pious frauds the parson thrives. Thank God!

The godly man grows fat on lies. Thank God!

The honest man of hunger dies. Thank God!

The human race through Adam fell,

The most of whom will burn in hell;

They say that roasted corpses smell. Thank God!

A God-planned end includes the means. Thank God!

The God-planned Jews got God-planned "beans." Thank God!

Earth's fauna live and die in dread,

As hunters, hunted, food, and fed,

On flood, and field, and feather-bed. Thank God!

The martyrs in their faith were firm. Thank God!

And, so, in flames they had to squirm. Thank God!

Religious faith can always fill

The pious fool with strength of will

To suffer, persecute, or kill. Thank God!

They say the Bible is divine. Thank God!

The word "divine" they can't define. Thank God!

The man who thoughtfully inspects

The "blessed book" therein detects

The warrants of the warring sects. Thank God!

If God exists, we ne'er do ill. Thank God!

Whate'er we do, we do his will. Thank God!

In him we live and think and act,

Blaspheme, believe, indite a "tract,"

Expose a lie, or fight a fact. Thank God!

We pray for Brown, and Smith is spared. Thank God!

We pray for peace, and war's declared. Thank God!

The God of Love does all things well,

As freezing beggar-brats can tell—

We're told there's little frost in hell. Thank God!

A lot of snakes are poison-fanged. Thank God!

The innocent are sometimes hanged. Thank God!

We can't, by prayer—howe'er we beg—

On Alpine tops hard-boil an egg,

Nor cure, by faith, a wooden leg. Thank God!

The Earth produces fruit and flowers. Thank God!

And weeds, and hot volcanic showers. Thank God!

Tornadoes, earthquakes, tidal-waves,

Remorseless tyrants, trembling slaves,

And consecrated mitred knaves. Thank God!

The Lord was nailed to save our race. Thank God!

He wisely chose the time and place. Thank God!

The time: an age of mental lack;

The place: a sort of cul-de-sac;

A sordid slum—by Culture's track—

Of cobwebbed moral bric-a-brac. Thank God!

Folk then and there believed in dreams. Thank God!

So Christ came down to die, it seems. Thank God!

He couldn't *now*, within our coasts,

Because we smile at dreams and ghosts,

Nor think of nailing gowks to posts. Thank God!

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!" Thank God!

And ev'ry ill, as well, you know. Thank God!

The famine, harvest, fast, and feast,

The best and greatest, worst and least,

The sceptic, and the lying priest. Thank God!

Woman and Christianity.

BY JOSEPHINE K. HENRY

(A leading American Freethinker).

(Continued from page 156.)

The Chinese women have their feet compressed; but, unlike Christian women, they do not need their feet to give broom drills or skirt dances for the "benefit of the church."

The child wives of India need to be rescued and protected, but no more than thousands of adult wives in Christian lands need protection from drunken and brutal husbands.

The heathen wife seeks death on her husband's funeral pyre, but the Christian wife is often sent to death by a bullet in her brain, or a knife at her heart; 3,841 wives were murdered in the United States in the 1900th year of Christian civilisation. Yet who ever heard of the Christian clergy instituting a crusade against wife-murder? It has been asserted from the pulpit that "woman's ballot is unknown except where the Gospel of Christ has mellowed the hearts of man until they became willing to do women justice."

Justice through the ballot has been accorded fully to the women only in Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and as far away as New Zealand.

In these States the people are honest, industrious, and law-abiding, but the influence of religion, according to religious statistics, is so small it would take a search warrant to find it, while Utah is full of Mormons whom all other types of Christians would exterminate, and New Zealand is a convict dumping ground for Christian nations. In regard to New Zealand this strange phenomenon presents itself to the world, that these people who have sprung from the loins of transported convicts are the first in the history of the race to erect a nation without rebellion, revolution, war, or compulsion. These people are attacking and solving the complex governmental and social problems that have baffled the great Christian nations of the earth, building an ideal commonwealth and becoming the torch-bearer to light the world into a grander civilisation than the world has ever seen.

These few exceptions are the extent of justice accorded to woman after the influence of the Gospel of Christ has mellowed the hearts of men for 1900 years. A monster petition of 50,000 names will be presented to the Ohio Legislature asking that the women of Ohio be granted the ballot.

Let us see how many ministers of the Gospel, whose hearts have been mellowed by its teaching, will advocate from their pulpits that the Bible demands that justice be rendered to woman by giving her a voice in the making of the laws that govern and tax her.

The fact is that woman has been emancipated and elevated to her present position in spite of Bible influence. The most pathetic picture in all history is the great conflict that women are waging for their liberty. Men armed with all the death-dealing weapons that human ingenuity has devised, and with the wealth of nations at their command, have waged wars of extermination to gain *Freedom*, but women, with no weapon save argument, and nothing save the justice of their cause, are waging a war of education for their liberty, and as soon as they desert the bypaths of Faith, and enter the highway of Reason, there is no power that can keep them from winning the victory.

Every effort that woman has made to ensure education, mental or political liberty, has been challenged by popes, bishops, priests, moderators, conferences, and college presidents; yet, in spite of all these protests, she has overthrown all barriers, and with increasing knowledge, woman is founding her faith on reason and demonstrated truth, instead of a faith formulated by priest, parson, or presbyter.

Remove from the Bible lands the busy brains and hands which have guided the plough and the locomotive, driven machinery of the mine, the foundry, the factory, the home. Remove the manual and mental labor which have brought material prosperity, broadened the mind, subdued the brutal instincts, and humanised the race—remove all these, and leave us nothing but the Bible and its influence, and where, let me ask, would woman be to-day?

Where, indeed, would man be?

A crouching and cowering slave to the Bible doctrine of divine rights of kings, living as the brutes of the field, as he did when Bible Christianity was at the zenith of its power.

Wherever the Bible lands man has been a slave, woman has been the slave of the slave.

Imagine the condition of woman if to-day should be removed from our boasted Christian civilisation the school, the steam engine, the smoke stack, and the printing press. Imagine the condition of woman in the twentieth century, if the Bible commands in regard to woman were obeyed and literally lived up to.

The command for the silence and the subjection of woman rings clear and true through the whole Bible.

Bible commands in regard to woman are in plain language. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

Now, we all know that the average husband cannot successfully rule himself, and he is entirely unfit to rule over a woman.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."

This is virtually saying that all men are better, wiser, and purer than women, and that woman needs a master, and that the Bible decrees that she shall have one, and that the rule of the husband is co-equal with the Bible God. "If woman would know anything let her learn of her husband at home." Under this command the educational outlook for woman is dark, indeed. In the first place, any woman can learn more from a spelling book, a dictionary, an encyclopædia, or a daily paper, than from the wisest husband on earth, and in the second place, millions of women have no homes and no husbands, and millions of women are married to men who are not the fountains of wisdom.

"I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

Yet, in face of this Bible command, the fact is before us that our educational interests are largely in the hands of women.

They do most of the Sunday-school teaching. It may not be teaching of a very high order, because teachers cannot elucidate subjects they are ignorant of.

Our public school system has been almost captured by women. Tip your hat to the public school teacher; she is the guardian angel of the American Republic, and when she discards superstition and replaces Faith with Reason the cause of Liberty will be won.

Liberty is never given, it is always taken; and woman must throttle the life out of superstition before her human rights will be conceded to her.

There is nothing in all the range of the literature of religions that so enslaves and humiliates woman as the commands of her Bible for her subjection and obedience. If the Bible is God's Holy Word, when it says that "wives must obey their husbands, and learn in silence and subjection," I take it for granted that the divine author means what he says, and the men who do not enforce this law are not living up to their Christian privileges.

Mr. Gladstone, shortly before his death, in addressing the graduating class of a woman's college, said: "Young women. enormous changes have taken place in your position as members of society. It is terrible to look back upon the position of women sixty years ago, upon the manner in which they were viewed by the law, the scanty provision made for their welfare, the gross, flagrant, and shameful injustice to which they were subjected. Great changes are taking place, and greater are impending."

This is from Gladstone, the greatest exponent of modern times.

If Mr. Gladstone acknowledged this shameful injustice to women sixty years ago in Christian England, what can be said of woman's condition 600 or 1,600 years ago, when Bible Christianity was at the zenith of its power?

If it can be proven that during the last 1,000 years the Christian clergy, with the Bible in their hands, have attempted to remove one single wrong which women have suffered, now is the opportune time to furnish such proof.

If the clergy would fairly discuss Bible commands for women with such women as Helen M. Gardner, Marilla M. Ricker, Harriet M. Closs, and many others, they would cut a sorry figure; but they will never do this, for they cannot afford to do so, so they quiet the questionings of their female flocks by telling them that women that question are breaking God's law, and that a woman who reasons is a moral monstrosity. Now, to-day, when the myth and miracle of Bible teaching is rejected by the strongest brains and most heroic hearts in Europe and America, woman is arising in her mental and moral majesty, and demanding that her wrongs be righted; and this is the very age when the position of woman is more exalted than it has been since the Christian religion was launched upon the world. It is absurd to claim that the Bible alone has elevated her to her present position, but even if the claim were true, when the light is turned on the social, domestic, and religious life of the Christian world this achievement reflects no credit on Bible teaching.

Monogamic marriage is the strongest institution of the Christian system.

The Bible teaches that all the men of the Old Testament were polygamists, and Christ and Paul, the central figures of the New Testament, were celibates, and condemned marriage by both precept and example. In Christian lands monogamy is strictly demanded of women; it does not demand a white life for two. In all Christian lands large classes of men practice bigamy, trigamy, and polygamy. These conditions certainly cannot be claimed to elevate woman.

Largely, the majority of men have one legal wife; but, assisted by a small per centage of youths and bachelors, Christendom maintains an army of several millions of out-cast women, the pariahs of society.

Thousands of wretched women are yearly driven to degradation and the potters' field, while manhood is degraded by deception and dissipation. Surely, in the face of these actual conditions, the claim that Christian civilisation alone elevates woman falls to the ground.

I do not say that Christianity has caused all the wrongs, miseries, and woes that women have suffered, but I do say that Christianity has never made an effort to remove them; and yet, in the face of these facts, the claim is made that Christianity alone has elevated, advanced, and protected woman. If we, as a nation, desire to be true, heroic, noble, and sublime, we must remove the iron grasp of ecclesiasticism from the brains and hearts of mothers of the race; we must utilise the mental and moral forces inherent in women.

These are far more valuable than the wealth of our coal, iron, oil, or goldfields.

The ownership of the wife promulgated under the Bible teachings, and the vow required of woman at the marriage altar to obey the man with whom she links her fate, is the tap root of the domestic warfare which reigns throughout Christendom to-day. Women who make a vow to obey, which they never expect to keep, and never do keep, can only give birth to cowards, deceivers, and criminals. And all priest-ridden and policed civilisations swarm with these classes.

The Christian clergy from their pulpit reprove women for not bearing more children, in the face of the fact that millions of children that have been borne by Christian women have been targets on the battlefield, or are homeless tramps, degraded drunkards, inmates of prisons or insane asylums, victims of the mob or the executioner, or bond slaves to priests or plutocrats who revel in ease and luxury at the expense of women, whom it is claimed, in the words of Canon Farrar, "Bible influence has elevated woman, and shrouded with a halo of sacred innocence the tender years of the child."

The bypaths of ecclesiastical history are fœtid with the records of wrongs against women. No American woman has rendered greater service to her sex than Matilda Joslin Gage in her great work, *Woman, Church, and State*, and it should be read by all thinkers.

And what is Christianity doing for woman to-day?

Answer, ye victims of domestic warfare who crowd our divorce courts of Bible lands.

Answer, ye wretched offspring of involuntary motherhood.

Answer, ye 500,000 outcast women of Christian America, who should be 500,000 blessings bearing humanity in your unvitiated blood down the stream of time.

These women are the wreckage of our Christian civilisation cast upon the shores of time. They certainly would not be if they were not driven to it. Yet the Church recoils from the scarlet wine and blessings.

While these answers echo through the stately cathedrals of Bible lands, if the clergy, with the Bible in their hands, can show just cause why woman should not look to reason and to science rather than to Scripture for deliverance, let them speak, in this, the dawn of the twentieth century, or forever hold their peace.

When reason reigns; when science lights the way, a countless host of women will move in majesty down the coming century.

A voice will cry out: "Who are these?" and the answer will ring out: "These are the mothers of the coming race, who think for themselves and who drink deeply at the fountain of knowledge that flows copiously on the highway of reason."

The National Liberal Party of the United States welcomes all women who recognise that knowledge, guided by reason, is the force that will liberate women and elevate the human race.

When woman awakes from her nightmare of superstition, then, and not till then, will liberty and justice reign throughout the earth.

I am but a straggler marching a hundred years in advance of the age in which I live.

I do not believe, because I cannot believe, the impossible and unjust dogmas of theology, so I flash the torch of reason above my lonely way, and in the name of humanity, reason, and justice, I plead with the women of this great so-called Republic who are defrauded of their human rights by Church and State, and who are laden with wrongs which 1900 years of Christianity has not relieved, to help the National Liberal Party to storm the citadel of superstition and release the prisoners of fate.

I am no venal pleader who labors for a price, or for ambition's laurel, but I plead because I love humanity, and would unlock the dungeon door of faith and lead into the glorious effulgence of intellectual liberty.

—Blue Grass Blade.

The Nebraska Case Again.

THE Christians of Nebraska have gone to work to gain a reversal of the decision of the Supreme Court of the State, which excludes the Bible from the schools. Attorney E. O. Kretsinger is the spokesman, and presents the case in nearly a three hours' plea. Here are some of his statements: "The Bible is not a sectarian, but a Christian, book." If the people of Nebraska accept that statement the dozens of denominations should scamper back into the Catholic Church toward which many of them are already heading. Here comes the usual legal or illegal quibbling. The attorney says: "As a matter of fact the Constitution of Nebraska does not prohibit the teaching of non-sectarian religion in our public schools; but, on the contrary, the Constitution specially favors the teaching of religion, morality, and knowledge as being essential to good government. No distinction is made, he tells us, between sectarianism and religion, and between religion and morals." If this legal authority is going to draw such a fine point that adherents of the Bible cannot comprehend it, and therefore cease the effort to intrude, we would cheerfully accept the implied, though not applied, distinction between sectarianism and religion; but in this case it is only a subterfuge to gain control. We are not informed by the pleader what the difference is between religion and morals. Infidels have asserted time after time, and shown statistics to sustain such assertion, that the religion of the Bible—viz., Christianity—has furnished history with all the immoralities in the calendar. Christians have, however, shrieked their protests and declared religion and morality to be synonymous terms, and we would be glad to hear a legal opinion on the subject. The little fact that in the sixty-six American prisons there are over 41,300 representatives of our Christian Bible religion and only half a dozen infidels, carries no weight as against a definition by an attorney, and now that he has finished his impassioned plea for Bible reading in the public schools because of the great moral teachings it contains, it might be instructive for him to go into the criminal history of France, where Church and State are united—the Christian Church—and find there a recent report listing 19,500 Christians, 130 Jews, 50 Mohammedans, but not a single Atheist. A little research in this direction, and less time would be spent in stretching legal technicalities to cover an undeserving case.

Sec. II., Art. 8, Nebraska Constitution, reads: "No sectarian instruction shall be allowed in any school or institution supported in whole or in part by the public funds for educational purposes."

"But," says Mr. Kretsinger, "*it does not say that no religion shall be taught in any school or institution supported by the people.*"

If there are any Buddhist or Mohammedan families in that locality they should at once proceed to the schools if the decision is reversed on this declaration that religion is not excluded by the terms of the Constitution, and insist that selections from the sacred books of the Lord Buddha and from the prophet of Allah be read. These constitute *religious* teaching, which we are told is not excluded, but we very much doubt whether they would be considered non-sectarian as well.

Christians prate about being law-abiding citizens, but when matters touch them at a religious angle they veer in their course and not infrequently bolt and disregard the decisions entirely. The reports of this case show that Bible-reading in the schools rests on a legal basis in nine states—viz., Massachusetts, New Jersey, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

In eleven states there is no specific mention in the Constitution or law, but decisions of courts and State superintendents give authoritative character to the custom. New York is among this kind. Still other states have no legal provisions, but the custom prevails.

In five states—viz., Missouri, Minnesota, Montana, Washington, and Wisconsin, courts and attorney-generals and superintendents' decisions are adverse to Bible-reading, but selections from it are in use.

This advocate of the Bible in the public schools closes his argument thus: "I deem the question discussed in this case, one of very great importance. This court should vacate its judgment of October 9, and this could be done without re-argument, because it seems that the error of the court is so plain that re-argument would be unnecessary. The judgment of this court is contrary to law."

Christians are making great effort to set aside this decision which sustains the Constitution and safeguards religious liberty.

(Reprinted.)

HARRIET M. CLOSZ.

Correspondence.

ULTRA-MORALISM AND VIVISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Salt takes exception to my statement as to his apparently unwitting abandonment of the claim for absolute justice to all living things. Mr. Salt appears to forget that he has urged us to "cultivate a broad sense of universal justice (not 'mercy') for all living things" (*Animals' Rights*, p. 21). This appears to me to be a claim for justice pure and simple, and other anti-vivisectionists against whose Ultra-Moralism I was arguing were still less guarded in their language. (I presume, of course, that cultivating a sense of justice means that we are to *practice* justice, and not merely to descend to the contemptible hypocrisy or cant of saying or feeling such a thing without acting accordingly.) Seeing that Mr. Salt fully admits that he does not deliberately support the claim for absolute justice, but only, after all, for what is really a very limited and imperfect kind of justice, I fail to see that I have done him any injustice in my presentment of the matter.

In the concluding part of his letter Mr. Salt, quite unintentionally I am sure, misrepresents my argument. He seems to forget that I was not contending against his own perfectly sound view of gradual humanitarian progress, but against other anti-vivisectionists, whose arguments in the *Freethinker* have been largely based on the unqualified assumption that justice to all sentient beings is an absolutely imperative moral duty—a view so far opposed to Mr. Salt's as well as to mine that he insists, rightly or wrongly, that anti-vivisectionists (or those who hold the humanitarian position) are far from postulating the doctrine of absolute justice to which he and I alike decline to commit ourselves.

In advancing arguments which to my mind were absolutely fatal to the Ultra-Moralism that I was attacking, I fail to see that I was "trifling with a serious question of ethics and humanity." If Ultra-Moralism were really adopted even to the extent loosely suggested but afterwards definitely abandoned or rejected by Mr. Salt, the result, as I showed, would be ruinous, if not universally suicidal, to the human race. If we cultivated a sense of justice to earthworms, for instance, and *honestly and consistently obeyed* that sense of justice, we could not crush and tear and chop the worms in pieces by the million (or probably billion) for no crime or fault of theirs, as we do by the annual ploughing and digging which are necessary if mankind is not to perish of starvation.

W. P. BALL.

VIVISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, W. P. Ball, roundly accuses Mr. Bailey of making inaccurate statements. Is he quite sure he is not guilty of inaccuracy himself?

According to medical testimony, some of the most terrible and baffling diseases—especially cancer—are greatly on the increase. We have lately heard a good deal about appendicitis, and we are now told that this alarming complaint may follow an attack of influenza. Has vivisection proved of any service here? No. Many eminent surgical authorities, including Sir Frederick Treves, are of opinion that the hideous practice has hindered rather than forwarded the spread of knowledge. Sir F. Treves states that in his earlier years he made numerous experiments on the intestines of dogs, but afterwards found the deductions drawn from them so misleading when applied to human beings, that he had to unlearn all the supposed knowledge thus acquired.

We need not regard vivisection from the Christian point of view, to which Mr. Ball takes exception, to be convinced that it is a crime, and a most cowardly one, for its victims are the weak, the defenceless, and the dumb; and from the common standpoint of humanity one stands appalled at the awful and almost unnamable cruelties perpetrated upon sensitive creatures in the name of "science"—experiments which can only be described as fiendish, and from which no benefit to mankind can possibly accrue.

Mr. Ball asks, "Is it a crime to cause intense pain to an animal for the benefit of man?" and then makes the remarkable assertion that if it be, "moral man is in a universe for which he is horribly unfitted." I can only reply that if the existence or well-being of "moral man" be dependant on a selfish, cowardly, and callous willingness to torture his weaker and humbler fellow creatures, on the off-chance of some possible good to himself, the sooner he betakes himself to another planet the better, for he is a disgrace to this.

A. GIBSON.

HUMANITARIAN LEAGUE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The Executive Committee of the Criminal Law and Prison Reform Department of the Humanitarian League desires to call special attention to its important public work which it is conducting with the utmost economy and without any expenditure on official salaries.

The Department is in great need of financial assistance, and is compelled to ask for further help from its contributors and friends. If funds were available it would be possible to influence public opinion much more widely by publishing and circulating more literature, and likewise to deal with several highly important questions which are at present not touched upon by any other society.

The Executive trust that this appeal will meet with a prompt and generous response, and that all who sympathise with a movement conducted on the broadest humanitarian principles will become subscribers and give it their utmost support.

JOSEPH COLLINSON, *Hon. Sec.**Humanitarian League, 53 Chancery Lane, W.C.*

SPELLING REFORM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should like to reply to Mr. Ball respecting his searching criticism of my article on Spelling Reform. I will deal first with the criticism and then with the conclusion which Mr. Ball has drawn.

In the case of the omission of "e" from the word "more," is the word rendered unintelligible? or is the pronunciation more obscured than in "adorn," "afford"?—words which pass current in ordinary spelling.

Are we farther from the truth when we omit "l" from "full" than we are when we constantly write "fulfl"?

It would not be less safe to write "gide" than "gild," "gift," "gig," "give." In the unaccented syllable represented by "le" the vowel is obviously in the wrong place, and as "e" is not the proper representative of the phoneme heard it would be a retrograde step to introduce that letter before "l." Why does Mr. Ball employ two s's in "facultiss"? Evidently because one would have conveyed the required sound of "z."

In the word "purpose" the accent falls upon the first syllable, and the omission of the "e" would at any rate serve to distinguish the pronunciation of the last from that in "transpose," "compose." The accent is likewise upon the first syllable of "foreigner." The "p" in "attempt" is at least superfluous, since it would be difficult, if not impossible, to pronounce the word "attem't" without forming the mouth to the same position in which we utter "p."

I do not apprehend that any real inconvenience or misunderstanding would result from the use of simpler spellings. In the first place, not many writers would so far disregard conventionalities as to adopt a system so revolutionary, both as to the means of representation and to the pronunciation, as that exemplified by Mr. Ball. But even this spelling is not unintelligible. Further, we would always have the printing bureaux, with their rules, which would with most people effectually prevent over-great liberties being taken.

Does Mr. Ball seriously believe that the English-speaking world is just simply waiting for a perfect alphabet, and would at once commence writing with it as soon as presented? I would again earnestly urge that the imperfect phonetics of Pitman and Ellis proved far more practicable than the common spelling for tutorial purposes, and the results achieved fully warrant the adoption of such a system.

No; the initial step of reformers must be to break down the despotism of indifference and ignorance; and the most effectual means of accomplishing this will be the adoption, by those who favor the movement, of some modifications of their own. A list of words for the guidance of printers—in which, I should mention, to save Mr. Ball a tingling of the spinal column, the elision of "e" from "more" is not recommended—is issued by the American Bureau of Education.

T. TALBOT LODGE.

"I have heard," said one minister accosting another, "that you do not believe in the Incarnation." "It is an infamous falsehood," replied the other. "I have always declared my most unflinching belief in the doctrine. I have even said that I did not understand it."

In religion

What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

—Merchant of Venice.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.**LONDON.**

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Mr. Balfour on the Bible."

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, E. B. Rose, "And the Lord said —." 7, Music.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Stanley's Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney): 3.30, Adjourned Annual Meeting.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "The Church and Education."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tun-stall-road, Brixton): 7, J. E. Godard, "Crime and its Treatment."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Gustav Spiller, "This World and the Next."

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, Henry W. Memmuir, "Philosophy of Rationalism." Music at 6.15.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, C. Cohen, "Materialism and its Critics"; 7, "Sir Oliver Lodge on Science and Religion."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 3, H. Percy Ward, "Charles Bradlaugh and his Service to Humanity"; 6.30, "Balfour and the Bible: a Reply to the Prime Minister." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, J. McCabe, "The Unknown God"; 7, "The Future of Catholicism." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Important Business Meeting.

LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

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