

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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If it were as easy to invent a credible falsehood as it is to believe one, we should have little else in print. The mechanical construction of a falsehood is a matter of the gravest import.—DOD GRILE (AMBROSE BIERCE).

Dr. Wallace's Religion.

DR. ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE is both by age and intellectual distinction worthy of the highest respect. He shares with Darwin the honor of discovering the law of Natural Selection, though no one believes he could quite have done the great work that Darwin afterwards accomplished. We should be very sorry, therefore, to treat Dr. Wallace with even the slightest want of consideration. But he would agree with us that he is not infallible, and that his opinions are a subject of legitimate criticism. On this principle we venture to examine his latest utterances on religion in his *Fortnightly Review* article on "Man's Place in the Universe." But before doing so we shall offer a few observations on Dr. Wallace's general attitude towards the philosophy of evolution as expounded by Darwin, Spencer, and Haeckel.

It seems to us that Dr. Wallace has always been the victim of certain "spiritual" preconceptions. Those who have carefully read his writings on Spiritualism must have noticed how different they are from his writings on pure science. It is not so much that he argues badly as that he takes gossip and hearsay for absolute facts. On such a basis it is possible to rear a logical edifice of simple moonshine. It will also be remembered that Dr. Wallace was long cited as an opponent of Darwinism as applied to the origin and development of man. He was loth to accept what others saw to be inevitable. In the course of time, however, he was obliged to yield his assent, at least as far as the *origin* of man is concerned. The last chapter of his beautiful book on *Darwinism* unreservedly admits the descent of man "from some ancestral form common to man and the anthropoid apes." But further he will not go without being dragged. He sets up a strange distinction between man's brain and his higher faculties; as though man possessed *any* faculty that could not be paralleled, in some degree, in the lower animals. He even goes to the length of saying that there must have been at least three interpositions by the "unseen universe of Spirit" in the history of this planet. The first was when life was introduced; the second when sensation or consciousness appeared; and the third when man became endowed with his highest, noblest, and most progressive faculties. By such assumptions Dr. Wallace seeks to escape the "crushing mental burthen" imposed upon those who believe that man, like other forms of life, must eventually disappear from the world, and, "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wrack behind." Dr. Wallace shudders at the idea of bearing the "crushing mental burthen" of this "hopeless and soul-deadening belief." He prefers to regard the universe as "a grand consistent whole adapted in all the parts to the development of spiritual beings capable of indefinite life and perfectibility."

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After reading the last chapter of *Darwinism* very carefully, with every desire to do full justice to Dr. Wallace's arguments, we cannot help feeling that it is all along a case of the wish being the father to the thought. Dr. Wallace is resolved to adhere to his old spiritualistic philosophy, and is bent on making nature fit into it somehow. That is why some of his arguments in favor of a special origin for man's highest mental and moral faculties strike one as being almost puerile. We are all of us childish when we are the slaves of our prepossessions. Men of great strength of mind and character will sometimes, under the influence of prejudice, display an imbecility of reasoning that might astonish a school-boy.

Dr. Wallace exhibits the same tendency in his article on "Man's Place in the Universe." His object is to show that man is something unique—"the crown and roof of things," as Tennyson puts it. Here again he starts by explaining what a difference there is between the blank outlook of the "Agnostics and Materialists" and the encouraging outlook of those who "believe in some Intelligent Cause at the back of this universe, some creator or creators, designer or designers." But why this constant appeal to the emotions if there is any validity in the facts or any force in the arguments?

What is sought to be established by Dr. Wallace is this. Modern astronomy played the game of the sceptics at first, by making the old geocentric theory of the universe look ridiculous; but more recently it has brought that theory back, and rehabilitated it, by showing that "our position in the material universe is special and probably unique." In support of this view Dr. Wallace argues that the stars are limited in number and that the material universe is therefore not infinite. Fewer and fewer stars (he says) are revealed by powerful telescopes, and the same holds good of the photographic plate. This is true enough, but the fact may be admitted without accepting Dr. Wallace's conclusion. For, as the leading French astronomers have just pointed out, our visible universe may be only a part of the infinite and (otherwise) invisible universe. In any case, the statement that there is a point somewhere beyond which there is nowhere, is quite unthinkable. But this is not the end of Dr. Wallace's argument. He takes the Milky Way as the great bulk of our visible universe, regards it as a vast belt of constellations, and argues that the earth is central to its plane; so that our Sun is near the centre of the whole visible universe, and therefore "in all probability in the centre of the whole material universe."

Having shown that we are somewhere about the centre of *his* universe, Dr. Wallace proceeds to indulge in an imitation of Paley. He points out the curious assemblage of conditions that were necessary in the course of organic evolution on our planet. But here we need not follow him; for, as a matter of fact, the total conditions of any phenomenon are wonderful, and it may be said that all parts of the universe concurred through all time to produce any single grain of sand and place it where it is, either by the seashore, or in a London street, or on an Egyptian pyramid.

The whole of Dr. Wallace's argument is very much an appeal to the bump of wonder. It seems to us that if design and beneficence are to be proved in the pheno-

mena of nature, they should be most easily demonstrated from the more familiar phenomena of ordinary human experience. But to these Dr. Wallace makes no appeal. He does indeed urge that volcanoes and deserts, which are considered blots and blemishes on the fair face of nature, supply the atmospheric dust which is so necessary to our rain system. This we do not dispute. We only observe that when Mont Pelée, for instance, was to be set in violent operation to produce a fresh supply of atmospheric dust, it would have been more wise and humane if the Intelligent Cause of the universe had given the "tip" to the inhabitants of St. Pierre, instead of wiping them out of existence like so many vermin.

Perhaps the most curious feature of Dr. Wallace's argument is that it *tells both ways*. He admits that all he contends for, in point of fact, is quite consistent with the theory of the Materialist. Well, if that be so, there is no more to be said. The dispute ends in a drawn battle. But it appears that even a drawn battle affords Dr. Wallace much comfort and encouragement. Those thinkers *may be* right, he says, who hold that the universe is a manifestation of Mind, and that "we ourselves are its sole and sufficient result." They *may be*! Yes, and they may *not be*. Nobody knows, and Dr. Wallace has not advanced us a whit.

And now let us, in conclusion, draw Dr. Wallace's attention to a very important fact. He believes that his "spiritual" theory of things practically explains away the admitted evils of the world. But does it do so? Suppose we shall all grow wiser, better, and happier some day; how does that alter the fact that we are not wise, good and happy enough now? Cardinal Newman justly observed that the real point at issue in regard to the problem of evil, is not why evil continues, but why it originated. When all is said and done the dread *fact* of evil remains.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Scientific Apologia.

OF recent years the relations of the two parties concerned in the historic struggle of Science and Religion have undergone a marked transposition. It was once the case that men of science worked only by permission of theology. Every investigator of nature pursued his work on suffrage. If what he discovered or taught was believed to be in accordance with dominant religious teachings, he *might* be allowed to continue his work; if it were not, he was warned to desist, and the warning, if neglected, was followed by imprisonment or death. There was nothing to choose between the various Churches in this respect. They were all upon an equality of bigotry; Luther fulminated against Copernicus as heartily as the Roman Church, and Servetus, under the authority of Calvin, came to no worse fate than he would have suffered under the Popes of Rome.

But of late years the relations have been transposed. As science grew in strength, theology weakened. One was the reverse of the other. Science is no longer concerned to harmonise its teachings with religion; it propounds them independently. If they agree with religion, well and good; if not, that is the concern of the religious teacher, not of the scientific worker. And religion, cringing when it cannot terrorise, is adapting itself to the altered conditions. Its chief anxiety is now to prove that religious doctrines are in conformity with scientific teachings; and its endeavor is to secure testimonials from scientific men to that effect. And when these are obtained—and various *social* considerations make this always possible—they are hawked round with the assiduity of a soap or pill merchant circulating testimonials to the excellence of his wares.

The latest testimonial of this description has been secured from Sir Oliver Lodge, Principal of the Birmingham University, and one of our leading

physicists. Sir Oliver's articles on the "Outstanding Controversy between Science and Faith," formed the principal feature of the first two numbers of the *Hibbert Journal*, and it is significant that while the first article, which dealt with the antagonism between science and religion, that has and does exist, was passed by the religious press comparatively unnoticed, the second portion, dealing with the reconciliation of the two, has been quoted in almost every religious journal, and applauded as though it contained an unanswerable reply to all those who believe that religion and science are as irreconcilable as oil and water.

An outline of the first portion of Sir Oliver Lodge's article was given in this journal immediately upon its appearance.* In that article it was pointed out, rightly enough, that the essential issue between religion and science was that of Volitionism *versus* Mechanism. Either the universe was self-contained, evolving all its phenomena in virtue of its own inherent properties, or it was sustained by some external intelligent power. If the former, current science was right; if the latter, current religion held the field. This was illustrated by a review of both positions, which apparently left little to be desired—at least, so far as a Freethinker is concerned.

But in the second and concluding portion—appearing three months after the first portion, Prof. Lodge sets about sketching a proposed ground of reconciliation; and this piece of work has reminded me strongly of Swift's story about English Bishops in Ireland. Swift said that he believed all the Bishops in Ireland to be disguised highwaymen. His reason was that the government always appointed the best and wisest men they could find. But the Irish Bishops were neither good nor wise. Therefore, he said, on their way to Ireland these bishops must have been waylaid, murdered, and their murderers were then masquerading in their victim's clothes, and pocketing the fees. One is almost inclined to believe that between the writing of the first and second portion of the essay, some ordinary Christian lecturer must have broken into Birmingham University, murdered the Professor, and written the article in his name.

But the reconciliation. First among the truths that will be recognised by both the religion and science of the future is the reign of law, sometimes called the uniformity of nature. At first sight, the Professor admits, this doctrine excludes "Divine control," but a deeper understanding harmonises the two. He also points out that the discovery of uniformity may be regarded as "mainly the work of science." Had he have said "wholly" he would have been strictly within the truth, for it is surely idle to quote the religious expression that God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," as being at all like, or in any degree fostering, the scientific doctrine of uniformity.

No one, least of all the present writer, will question the position that the doctrine of uniformity is of the very essence of science. Without it science would be impossible. Once admit the possibility—save as an exercise in formal logic—of the same processes ending in different results, either past or future, to present ones, and science is reduced to a mere bundle of guesses. But *if* we admit the uniformity of nature—in the fullest sense—what room is there for religion? Certainly, God is no longer *immediately* necessary; and I believe that this doctrine, rightly understood, so far strengthens the probability of there being no external intelligent power sustaining the universe as to make it almost a certainty.

For what is meant by a "law of nature"? Nothing more nor less than the observed sequence of events. It is a law of nature that such and such a thing should occur, because?—well, because it always has been seen to occur under identical conditions. And, looked at closely, what does this involve? Simply that, so long as something exists

*Freethinker, October 19, 1902.

—and whether we call it matter, or force, or spirit, or simply X, matters nothing to the argument—the properties of this something persist also; and it is these properties that we recognise as natural law. To say that B always produces A is only another way of saying A remains unchanged; and any alteration in B would argue an alteration in A, or the *presence of some external force modifying its action*. Natural law is, then, the equivalent of the persistence of the properties of X, or bare existence, and its operation argues that there is *certainly* no foreign force—God—modifying natural phenomena, and *probably* that there is no such force to exert any such influence.

The growth of science, then, instead of making for Theism, makes, on the contrary, for Atheism. If it could be shown that the same causes did not always result in the same effects, there would be the same reason for deducing the presence of a Deity that Adams had for deducing the presence of Neptune from the perturbations of other planets. Had the various planets behaved as they should have done, assuming all the forces operating were known, no one could have deduced the presence of the largest member of our planetary system. And in the same manner irregularities of the kind referred to, in nature might prove the existence of a god, their absence renders such a theory wholly gratuitous.

Sir Oliver Lodge's reply to such an argument is that, in looking for God apart from nature and natural law—he habitually writes as though he believes the two things to be distinct—we are pursuing the wrong course. In looking at nature we are looking at God—that is, in trying to save Theism, Professor Lodge lands where many have landed before him, in Pantheism. He says:—

“That the all is a manifestation of God—that it is, in a manner, a dim and ungraspable manner, in some sort God Himself—may be readily granted; but what does the All include? It were a strange kind of all that included.....the visible material universe only, and excluded the intelligence, the will, the emotions, the individuality or personality of which we are immediately conscious. Shall we possess these *things* and God not possess them? That would be no Pantheism at all. Any power, any love, of which we ourselves are conscious does thereby certainly exist; and so it *must exist in highly intensified and nobler forms in the totality of things*—unless we make the grotesque assumption that in all the infinite universe we denizens of earth are the highest. Let no *worthy* human attribute be denied to the Deity.....Whatever *worthy* attribute belongs to man, be it personality or any other, its existence in the universe is thereby admitted; we can deny it no more.”

The italics are mine. The first general comment I have to make is that Pantheism does not save Theism; it annihilates it. Theism rests upon the belief that between God and the universe there is a real difference in kind; and although there is nowadays much vague talk about God being “immanent” in the world, the distinction is still maintained. And between Atheism and Pantheism the difference is purely verbal. To say that God is nowhere and to say that he is everywhere are substantially identical propositions. To say that God operates by *means* of natural forces as an electrician manipulates the force he is concerned with, is, while philosophically and scientifically absurd, yet an understandable statement. But to say that these natural forces *are* God is to destroy religion in essence while saving it in name.

In the next place, I seriously question, with all due respect for Sir Oliver's scientific attainments, whether any first-class scientist ever indicated in a single paragraph such loose thinking as that contained in the passage cited. Surely there is no question in anybody's mind that intelligence, will, emotions, personality, and individuality *exist*, however different may be the interpretation we place upon their existence. The question at issue is not whether they exist as facts—in the sense that all phenomena, mental and other, are facts—but whether, seeing that they are the

concomitants of special conditions, it is legitimate to assume their continued existence in the absence of these conditions. Heat, sound, and light are as real as emotion or intelligence; but I imagine that Sir Oliver would open his eyes if told by one of his students that, as we are conscious of them, so they “must exist in highly intensified and nobler form in the totality of things.” The student would, in all probability, be informed that, as heat and sound are phenomena that owe their existence to the presence of a sensitive organism, any talk of them existing as “things” apart from this is absurd. And it seems to me that substantially the same answer has to be made to the loose rhetoric quoted above.

Again, note the emphasis that no *worthy* human attribute is to be denied to the Deity—a quite inconsequential summing up, even if we admit the legitimacy of all that went before. Why limit the ascription of attributes to the Deity to “worthy” ones? Surely *unworthy* human attributes are as real as others! Malevolence is as real as benevolence, theft as honesty, cupidity as generosity, falsehood as truth, disloyalty as loyalty. Why, then, limit the selection of human attributes to the worthy ones? If we are going to give human attributes to Deity—and we cannot have a God at all unless we do—let us at least be fair, and give him the lot, good and bad. We may not be logical in doing so, but we shall at least be logical in our unreasonableness.

And, even were we to patch up a god by means of a selection of admirable human qualities, we should only succeed in creating that “magnified, non-natural man” of very ordinary theology. Not so, replies Sir Oliver; mere increase does create a difference of kind; and he offers, as an illustration, the fact of the sun being large, giving it a heat that it could not possess as a small body. It is perhaps presumptuous on my part to question so eminent a teacher of physics on the aptness of this illustration, but it does seem to me that Sir Oliver is sadly confusing a physical fact with a sensory experience. The physical fact is molecular vibration, the sensory experience is the *feeling* of heat. The fact of the sun being what it is does certainly make the vibration such that the feeling of heat is experienced by animal life, but can it be really and properly said that the increased rate of vibration has added anything to the sun? With due deference I question the position.

But, admitting the illustration, does it help the case? Increase any human quality to the utmost limit of our imagination, does it cease to be human? Does love, carried to its highest possible development, cease to be love? Will honesty, developed as highly as it is possible for it to develop, cease to be honesty? And, even if it did, what then? If human qualities, developed to their highest point, cease to be human, what, then, is the use of Sir Oliver's argument? The dilemma is plain. If human qualities in “highly intensified and nobler form” cease to be human, then these qualities do not exist in the “totality” of things. If they remain human, in spite of their development, then we have got our “magnified, non-natural man” for a deity, after all.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Grant Allen.

1818-1899.

GRANT ALLEN'S versatility was extraordinary. There was nothing he could not, and did not, write about, and whatever he wrote was always pointed and suggestive. This was, in part, due to the variety of his early experiences. Before he was twenty-five he knew Canada, England, and the West Indies. He was educated in America, in Dieppe, in Birmingham, and at Oxford. He also had some experience in the Indian Statistical Department. But there is no doubt his most successful and satisfactory work was that of a populariser of science. He fell early under

the complete domination of the master minds of Darwin and Spencer, and he was never tired of bringing their teaching before popular readers. He was not a profound scientist, but he had a complete acquaintance with science, and he had a splendid gift of lucid interpretation and exposition. The "Darwinian St. Paul" someone dubbed him, and certainly his power of expounding and popularising the Master's teaching was very remarkable.

His papers on biology, philology, the evolution of species, and kindred subjects, were entirely readable, even at times highly amusing. As a rule, when a scientist tries to be funny, the result is "too deep for tears." This gift of Grant Allen's made him anything but popular in scientific circles. Those dreadfully serious pedants, whose solemnity raises doubts of their mastery of their special topics, professed to scorn his scientific journalism. They despised the star-gossip of Richard Proctor on similar grounds, preferring, presumably, the scholastic and unbearable simplicity of the lamented Dionysius Lardner, whose chaste volumes adorn booksellers' fourpenny boxes. Whether they felt that, having gained their facts by years of hard work, it is prodigality to give them away so easily, or whether it is the old Puritan spirit has found a new stronghold in modern science may be an open question. Nothing appears to irritate some of the authors of ponderous monographs so much as having their life-work made intelligible to the masses. Grant Allen opened up a new universe to thousands, with a charm all its own. Who that came fresh to the study of science could ever say an ungrateful word of the author of *Carving a Cocoa Nut*, *The Aesthetic Analysis of an Egyptian Obelisk*, *The Romance of a Wayside Weed*, *The Daisy's Pedigree*, and numerous other papers. He awoke a new interest, that led the reader through a course of Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and many another disregarded writer.

By insidious reasoning and delightfully entrancing chapters he led so many of the outside public gradually to understand those esoteric mysteries that, expressed in the awful terminology of hand-books and chemical symbols, else had remained unknown for ever. Now, thanks to Grant Allen, the ordinary magazine reader has a faint idea of the labors of the great prophets of our day; and, it may be, see more clearly the tendency of those movements, than those who with far more technical knowledge, dissect the old faiths with a keen eye on Mrs. Grundy.

Grant Allen, be it remembered, was himself a scholar, but he carried his weight of learning gracefully. Though rather prejudiced against the classics, he could not help being an accomplished scholar, and he produced a translation, with an anthropological introduction, of the most famous poem of Catullus. From the lofty region of thought, and scholarship, it is a sharp curve to turn to Grant Allen as the author of novels which have earned the applause of readers of circulating libraries. In these days of threadbare plots, when all the old devices, that were as broidery to a well-spun story, are worn to be mere skeletons of harsh construction, it is a pleasure to find Gaboriau, Ebers, and Rider Haggard can be rivalled in their entrancing romances by facts from the laboratory and problems from the philosopher's researches.

Theology has always met strange bed-fellows, and one is not surprised to find Grant Allen among the theologians. He was proud to believe that he was the first seriously to apply evolutionary theories to the human belief in Deity. In his preface to *The Evolution of the Idea of God* he says:—

"Two main schools of religious thinking exist in our midst in the present day: the school of humanists and the school of animists. This work is to some extent an attempt to reconcile them. It contains, I believe, the first extended effort that has yet been made to trace the genesis of the belief in God from its earliest origin in the mind of primitive man up to its fullest development in advanced and etherealised Christian theology."

Grant Allen certainly made an honest attempt to

explain the whole matter. The whole drift of his teaching was Secularistic, and all his thinking was entirely untrammelled by any kind of religion. It was in a great measure owing to his inability to give full expression to his ideas that he fretted and chafed, and, occasionally, showed his contempt for English society. He despised Mrs. Grundy, though he feared to offend her. Science, pure and simple, did not pay; and novel writing, to which he turned, had to be carried on within narrow limits. The publishers were more afraid of Mrs. Grundy than he was. The last kind of work in which he exercised his versatile pen was art criticism and guide-book writing. His papers on *The Evolution of Italian Art* are as valuable as they are interesting, and in his series of books on *Historic Cities* he showed us what a guide-book should be.

Curiously enough, Grant Allen never liked fiction. Unlike Darwin, he never even read it, if he could help it. But, in spite of all this, he succeeded as a novelist. This is one of the most extraordinary things in his career. The truth was that Grant Allen could write anything, and wrote all things, well. He even attempted poetry, and proved himself a master in the ballade, though he seldom worked in that fantastic field.

No religious ceremony was permitted at his funeral. It would have been an outrage on his life and teaching if any theological invocations had been used over his helpless body. His life was a battle of continuous protest against creeds and conventions. He lived free of such bonds, and he died free of them.

Below all the strife of opponents the quiet growth of appreciation, silent but real, gathers strength. For in the hearts of self-educated democracy to-day Grant Allen's lessons have sunk deep, and if graduates sneer and professors affect ignorance of his claims, it is something to have helped the people to grasp the teachings of science.

And thou in this shall find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

MIMNERMUS.

Marie Corelli and Devils.

THE authoress of *The Master Christian*, Marie Corelli, is one about whose social and theological opinions there is much conjecturing; but, as is natural with human nature, much more curiosity is shown with regard to her personal appearance and ways of life. One wonders how many of her readers picture her as she really is, quite a small woman with fair hair—almost golden; hair which a reporter was once pleased to describe as "fluffy." There is nothing exceptionally remarkable about her face, excepting what those who are not intellectually above her books may care to see. Her portrait is never seen in the illustrated papers, for she refuses to allow herself to be photographed. Some people in the throes of their endeavors to be notorious will stick at nothing, and to this rule Marie Corelli is not the exception.

At Stratford-on-Avon, quite near to the birthplace of Shakespeare, there is a beautiful old-fashioned house, standing in a garden equally beautiful. Here, in the sweet peace of the country, and amidst surroundings closely associated with "her favorite poet" (save the mark!), lives—Marie Corelli. It is said that the Shakespearian pilgrims are as desirous of hearing about her, her house, and her daily life as they are to see the cottage of Anne Hathway. Whether this curiosity is inspired by a sentiment of affinity between the two writers does not transpire. Certain it is that one would need an inspiration in order to believe that any relation between either the personality or the writings of these writers existed. It seems quite sacrilegious to be found mentioning the immortal and enduring bard in the same breath with the evanescent and futile novelist. Very little disturbs the serenity of her days, unless it be an

occasional bout with her critics; even these she is schooling herself to ignore—and, it must be added, wisely. For some time she expressly forbade her publisher to send any of her works gratuitously to the press for review, as is generally the custom. This is, of course, another of those cheap affectations which are designed for advertisement, or perhaps worse.

Many are the opinions hazarded as to her religious views. Were it possible to judge of them by her books, one would imagine her to be orthodox, if with orthodoxy a large element of what is known as the "higher spiritualism" is compatible. Yet however this may be, she at any rate has got the tune of what appeals to the majority, and bangs the keys for all she is worth. The reason of her popularity is not far to seek; the public is ever agog for something marvellous both in the actualities of life and in fiction, and Marie Corelli, with her favorite themes of devils and angels (but more especially devils) amply satisfies their demands. For example, the novel, *The Sorrows of Satan*, is probably the most widely-read of all her books; the one by which her own particular public knows her best. Her conception therein of Satan is certainly original. She depicts him as a splendid divine being (shades of Milton!), condemned because of his great sin to dwell on this earth doing evil, and yet whose redemption will only be gained when mankind will have triumphed against him, and there will be no more sin. Thus his agony of despair only increases with each soul that yields to his temptation, whilst each one who resists him gives him a momentary hope of the Paradise from which he has been for so long an exile. The Churches have dropped the Devil, Marie Corelli gives him a lift up, and no doubt they may both be congratulated for proving of so much use to each other. Many of her books have a distinct purpose, which seems to be the utter annihilation of her critics. In *Ardath*, where she writes of life in a city about 2,000 years before Christ, there is a poet laureate, and, of course, a critic, and as we may readily suppose, she depicts the latter as a soulless individual, withered and contorted both in mind and body, who spends his days in uttering and writing satirical censures on the noble works of the more favored poet. Miss Corelli, of course, modestly leaves her readers to analogise things, and makes the analogy as simple as possible. Her critics accuse her of a love for the gruesome, and of a striving after effect. It is certain that she is not sparing in the details of the horrible, but then this same quality is frequently described as force and reality with other authors. The question really is, Does she dwell on these things as a means to an end—viz., the pandering to the unhealthy-minded of her hearers? If so, the censures of her critics are assuredly justified.

FRANK HALL.

True and False Inspiration.

BY INGERSOLL.

To prove that a book is inspired you must prove the existence of God. You must also prove that this God thinks, acts, has objects, ends, and aims. This is somewhat difficult.

It is impossible to conceive of an infinite being. Having no conception of an infinite being, it is impossible to tell whether all the facts we know tend to prove or disprove the existence of such a being.

God is a guess. If the existence of God is admitted, how are we to prove that he inspired the writers of the books of the Bible?

How can one man establish the inspiration of another? How can an inspired man prove that he is inspired? How can he know himself that he is inspired? There is no way to prove the fact of inspiration. The only evidence is the word of some man who could by no possibility know anything on the subject.

What is inspiration? Did God use men as instruments? Did he cause them to write his thoughts? Did he take possession of their minds and destroy their wills?

Were these writers only partly controlled, so that their mistakes, their ignorance, and their prejudices were mingled with the wisdom of God? How are we to separate the mistakes of men from the thoughts of God? Can we do this without being inspired ourselves? If the original writers were inspired, then the translators should have been, and so should be the men who tell us what the Bible means.

How is it possible for a human being to know that he is inspired by an infinite being? But of one thing we may be certain: An inspired book should certainly excel all the books produced by uninspired men. It should, above all, be true, filled with wisdom, blossoming in beauty—perfect.

Ministers wonder how I can be wicked enough to attack the Bible.

I will tell them:

This book, the Bible, has persecuted, even unto death, the wisest and the best. This book stayed and stopped the onward movement of the human race. This book poisoned the fountains of learning and misdirected the energies of man.

This book is the enemy of freedom, the support of slavery. This book sowed the seeds of hatred in families and nations, fed the flames of war, and impoverished the world. This book is the breastwork of kings and tyrants—the enslaver of women and children. This book has corrupted parliaments and courts. This book has made colleges and universities the teachers of error and the haters of science. This book has filled Christendom with hateful, cruel, ignorant, and warring sects. This book taught men to kill their fellows for religion's sake. This book founded the Inquisition, invented the instruments of torture, built the dungeons in which the good and loving languished, forged the chains that rusted in their flesh, erected the scaffolds whereon they died. This book piled fagots about the feet of the just. This book drove reason from the minds of millions, and filled the asylums with the insane.

This book has caused fathers and mothers to shed the blood of their babes. This book was the auction block on which the slave-mother stood when she was sold from her child. This book filled the sails of the slave-trader, and made merchandise of human flesh. This book lighted the fires that burned "witches" and "wizards." This book filled the darkness with ghouls and ghosts, and the bodies of men and women with devils. This book polluted the souls of men with the infamous dogma of eternal pain. This book made credulity the greatest of virtues, and investigation the greatest of crimes. The book filled nations with hermits, monks, and nuns—with the pious and the useless. This book placed the ignorant and unclean saint above the philosopher and philanthropist. This book taught man to despise the joys of this life, that he might be happy in another—to waste this world for the sake of the next.

I attack this book because it is the enemy of human liberty—the greatest obstruction across the highway of human progress.

Let me ask the ministers one question: How can you be wicked enough to defend this book?

For thousands of years men have been writing the real Bible, and it is being written from day to day, and it will never be finished while man has life. All the facts that we know, all the truly recorded events, all the discoveries and inventions, all the wonderful machines whose wheels and levers seem to think, all the poems, crystals from the brain, flowers from the heart, all the songs of love and joy, of smiles and tears, the great dramas of Imagination's world, the wondrous paintings, miracles of form and color, of light and shade, the marvellous marbles that seem to live and breathe, the secrets told by rock and star, by dust and flower, by rain and snow,

by frost and flame, by winding stream and desert sand, by mountain range and billowed sea.

All the wisdom that lengthens and ennobles life—all that avoids or cures disease, or conquers pain—all just and perfect laws and rules that guide and shape our lives, all thoughts that feed the flame of love, the music that transfigures, enraptures, and enthalls, the victories of heart and brain, the miracles that hands have wrought, the deft and cunning hands of those who worked for wife and child, the histories of noble deeds, of brave and useful men, of faithful loving wives, of quenchless mother-love, of conflicts for the right, of sufferings for the truth, of all the best that all the men and women of the world have said, and thought, and done through all the years.

These treasures of the heart and brain—these are the Sacred Scriptures of the human race.

Acid Drops.

THE Free Church Council Conference at Brighton was so delighted by the news of Mr. Will Crooks's victory at Woolwich that the delegates all stood up and sang "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." It is to be presumed that the Unionists would have had to return thanks to the Devil if Mr. Drage had won the seat. Such a theory makes politics wonderfully simple.

"Who is on the Lord's side?" is a very old question. It always means "Who is on mine?" Indeed, a reverend gentleman plainly said the other day that his God agreed with him, and that he should have a very poor opinion of him if he didn't.

"Are we losing our young men?" was discussed at the Free Church Conference. The Rev. W. J. Dawson said they ought to ask, "Has the Church ever had any real hold on young men?" He added that the recent census of Church attendance in London gave a profoundly discouraging reply to this question. The sooner they got rid of the delusion that London was a Christian city the better. It was a pagan city, with only a moderate leaven of Christianity at work in it. And it was slipping back deeper and deeper into paganism in every decade.

Now supposing that Mr. Dawson is right, the next question to ask is, "Where is the supernatural power of Christianity?" The honest discussion of this question would have been of more value than all the rest of the proceedings.

General Booth's recent visit to the "Great Republic of the West" seems to have aggravated his old megalomania. "I have travelled 16,000 miles," he tells an interviewer, "visited 52 cities, held 200 meetings, addressed 300,000 people, and seen more than 2,500 individuals in the Mercy Seat." There is something intensely comic about that last bit of arithmetic. Moreover, the word "individuals" in this sentence is very vile English. The speaker meant "persons," but the simple and shorter word did not satisfy him. Megalomania again!

It does not seem to occur to General Booth that a man might run all over America, visiting a great number of cities (they are all cities, over there), and haranguing countless crowds of people, and do no good all the time—or even do nothing but mischief. The gentleman in the Bible who runs about the world the most is the Devil. (See Job i. 7.)

Booth has discovered one important fact in America—namely, that "the spirit of unbelief is rife everywhere." Yes, the soul of Ingersoll still goes marching along.

The gambling fever, Booth says, is very strong in America. On this peg he hangs his theory of religion. "Man," he says, "cannot live by bread alone; he must have something else—some other interests, some excitement. I say, give it to him in the form of religion. That will satisfy the natural desire for excitement." There you have the Grand Old Showman naked and unashamed. He is a big provider of excitement. All the rest is *blague*.

Anyone who takes the trouble to "assist"—as the French say—at a Salvation Army meeting will soon see that *excitement* is the beginning and the end of the whole business.

Watch the captain or other officer in charge of the meeting. His one aim is to keep up the *excitement*. If a speaker deviates for a moment into common sense, and the meeting becomes languid, the vigilant officer ejaculates "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!" or something like that, and strikes up a hymn, with a tip to the shouting part of the chorus to warble it for all it is worth. He doesn't care if he interrupts the unfortunate speaker in the middle of a sentence. The *excitement* must be maintained. This is the one indispensable part of Salvationism.

The income of Self-Denial Week among the Salvationists is swollen by collections from the general public in the streets of London, and probably in the streets of other populous places. Salvation lasses shook their boxes under the present writer's nose a hundred times during those seven days. Many people gave to please the lasses. But it all went in to headquarters as "Self-Denial."

Russia is the land of queer sects. It beats America in this respect. Among the more extreme are the Skoptzy, who practise self-mutilation; the Khlysty, who practise flagellation; the Stefanovsky, who are said to abandon their children in forests to be devoured by wild animals; and the Raziny (or Gapers), who on Maundy Thursday stand with open mouths expecting the sacrament to be administered to them by angels. The Stundists simply refuse to recognise priesthood and sacraments. The Molokany (or milk drinkers) seem to have become extinct, and the Doukhobors (or spirit wrestlers) have gone to Canada.

How far the Czar's new manifesto will actually give freedom to the Christian sects outside the Orthodox Church, remains to be seen. "Freedom of creed and of worship" looks all right on paper, but it may wear a very different complexion in practice.

F. Volkovsky, the Russian refugee, does not take a sanguine view of the value of the Czar's manifesto. The following passage from his article in the *Daily News* will be of special interest to our readers: "The promise of religious toleration would be extremely welcome were it not qualified by the reference to 'the principles laid down by the fundamental laws of the Russian empire,' and the mention of the orthodox church as 'the ruling' one. Russian laws do not permit any orthodox Russian to change his faith for another creed, and any person who makes such converts is regarded as an offender. So we have to assume that the promised toleration will be within these limits—that is, it will probably give a little more liberty to the so-called 'Old Believers,' perhaps allowing them open worship and the building of new chapels, which is now prohibited. As is well known, the Government has already entrusted a large amount of the popular education of the country to the clergy. These schools proved an absolute failure. Yet the Government has just recently planned new privileges for them. This fact gives an ominous aspect to the statement of the Manifesto that the rural clergy will be enabled 'to take a larger share in intellectual and public life.'"

Russia, one of the most religious countries in the world, has been described as an interesting country to visit, a bad one to live in, and a good one to keep out of. Many things seem to prove the truth of the saying. Here is one of them. Recently it was proposed to celebrate the jubilee of the Russian press by holding a service to the souls of dead writers in Kazan Cathedral. Its promoters had evidently reckoned without the Procurator of the Holy Synod. This gentleman is no friend to the press, and is responsible for many of the retrograde movements in Russia during the past fifteen years. So he went to the head of the cathedral and prohibited the service, on the ground that some of the dead writers were enemies of the Church. The civil powers were also set in motion, and these sent for each member of the committee and warned them against attending a banquet it was proposed to hold after the service, threatening them with deportation if they disobeyed. So the service of the "souls of dead writers" never came off. We do not imagine the dead writers will be any the worse for it, although the living may. But, after all, the Russian Church is true to the traditions of the Christian Church in general, which has not only done its best to suppress the thinker while living, but has consistently striven to blot out the memory of him when dead.

Russia has manufactured a new saint. A certain Father Seraphim died in 1833, and some wonderful stories have been told concerning the miraculous cures and signs brought about by him. Since 1892 a Commission has been investigating the matter, and their report has ended in the manufacturing of "Saint Seraphim." The Emperor has taken

"deep interest" in the proceedings of the Commission, and has endorsed its report with "genuine pleasure and deep emotion." We are not surprised. The making of "saints" and the suppression of free speech and a free press are certainly the surest methods to perpetuate the rule of the Russian clergy and bureaucracy.

How the lie goes round! Here is the respectable *Rock* stating that Charles Bradlaugh died a Christian, on the authority of "his brother." We shall have Charles Bradlaugh's last dying speech and confession before long. His dear "brother" seems quite capable of producing it.

A correspondent has sent us a cutting from the London *Globe* four years ago, containing a report of a lecture by Prophet Baxter, in which he predicted that the 144,000 elect would be caught up in the air to meet the Lord on March 12, 1903. March 12 has passed, and the 144,000 are still waiting to levitate—and Baxter is still a Prophet. He has been found out a dozen times, but the game still pays, for the world is crowded with fools. Not that Prophet Baxter is one of them. He is one of the other sort.

Dr. Moorhouse, Bishop of Manchester, complains that the average Manchester man puts a penny in the collection. Even well-to-do people drop in bronze instead of silver, and many of them would give nothing if it were not for the look of the thing. According to the Bishop, the workingman in the colonies never gives less than threepence. Why on earth, then, did the Bishop leave the Colonial workingman? Because he saw a better job (for himself) in stingy Manchester.

In reviewing the new edition of the Life and Letters of the late Professor Huxley, the *Star* said that he was a hard hitter, but he avoided the excesses of the ordinary Freethinker and Atheist. What are these excesses? Take the *Freethinker*, for instance. This journal enjoys by far the largest circulation amongst English Freethought periodicals, and may therefore be considered as representative of the "ordinary Freethinker and Atheist." Now if this journal be not written as well as the *Star*, and with as good manners towards opponents, we will undertake to eat every copy of our next issue, and every copy of one day's issue of the *Star* to boot. We say this without anger or contempt. We admire the *Star* in some ways, and it has our best wishes always. But we cherish a little self-respect, and we resent gratuitous sneers at the Freethought party. We venture to suggest to our contemporary that it is not a brave policy to praise "respectable" Freethinkers and gibe at those who are in the thick of the popular battle.

Paul Heyse's play, *Mary of Magdalen*, is not allowed to be played in Prussia. The Final Court of Appeal has upheld the police prohibition. According to the Court's judgment, the play would leave an impression on the spectator that the death of Christ was brought about by human agency, which is "clearly an attack on the Christian religion." Well, what of that? The Court's judgment gives the answer, and a very curious one it is. The Christian religion in Prussia is "historically and constitutionally a branch of public order." Think of that. God Almighty's only true religion a mere "branch" of good government under the Hohenzollerns! Nobody need blame Emperor William after this for saying "Me and God."

Mr. Stephen Phillips's poetic drama *Bathsheba* is to be staged by Mr. Willard at the St. James's Theatre in the autumn. Will it contain the *washing* scene? Something of that sort would "fetch" the modest Christians of London by the myriad. Even the preachers would crowd in to see—well, what David saw.

Piety plays the deuce with logic. After referring to "the Providence that watches over the lives of children," the *Eastern Morning News* (Hull) goes on to relate how a boy was caught full tilt by an electric car, flung up into the air, tossed upon the driver's footboard, and then flung head over heels on to the street, where the wheels of the car just shaved him as it rushed by. There doesn't seem very much "Providence" in this incident. And this, indeed, seems to be our contemporary's real opinion, for it winds up with an appeal for "efficient guards." Evidently it doesn't pay to trust "Providence"—though it pays splendidly to talk about it.

"Providence" has allowed thousands of people to be frozen to death this winter in Russia. The snowstorms were unprecedentedly severe in February.

The Rev. Mr. Stoddart, of the United Free Church, Aberdeen, must be a pleasant kind of a clergyman to "sit under."

He believes there is no greater mistake than to imagine that punishment ought to be purely remedial. Pure unadulterated revenge is what he wants, and like the much-advertised baby with the soap, won't be happy till he gets it. "A hell of some kind is a necessity of the moral universe. What a blessing, what a blessing is the hope of hell." One is almost inclined to hope there is a hell—if only for the sake of Mr. Stoddart.

Mr. Stoddart shelters his brutality behind an alleged quotation from George Eliot. He says: "What a comfort to think, as George Eliot said, that so many scoundrels who escape the nets of justice in this world will be well damned in the next." We do not recall the quotation, and the spirit of it is so foreign to her writings and opinions, that we strongly question its existence, as George Eliot's own opinion, outside the preacher's imagination. Anyhow, we are quite at a loss to see what comfort any healthy-minded person can find in a fellow creature being "well damned" in the next world. It does not undo any of the injury that has been suffered, and it is too late to induce better behavior in the future. It ministers to only one feeling, that of stupid, revengeful brutality. Spinoza said, in a letter to a correspondent, that a great part of Christian morality consisted in subordinating vicious feelings in this world, in order to gratify them to a greater extent in the next, and Mr. Stoddart is a somewhat belated proof of the truth of his judgment.

Mr. J. R. Campbell, Dr. Parker's successor at the City Temple, agrees with Mr. Myers in believing that "all reasonable men a century hence will believe the Resurrection of Christ." The prophecy is dated just far enough ahead to relieve Mr. Campbell of any of the consequences of his prophecy being falsified by facts when the period has expired, but if "faith" counts for anything, he will leave his predecessor a long way in the rear.

Shortly before his death Dr. Parker was elected President of the Free Church Council, which met at Brighton last week. His Presidential address was written, and was read by a substitute. The title was "Early Training; its Effect on Thought and Habit." As a sermon we find less in it to object to than many others that we have glanced through lately, and its general tone does credit to its author. Dr. Parker points out how little of the old view of the Bible is left for modern Christians to hang on to. "Genesis turns out to be mainly fable; Abram is not a man, but 'an eponymous hero;' Joseph 'is not;' Shadrach, Meshac, and Abednego are mere dreams and nightmares; the Books of King and Chronicles are removed bodily; Ecclesiastes and Solomon's Song ought not to have been in the Bible." And Dr. Parker writes as though he is afraid all this, and more, must be admitted as true.

Dr. Parker illustrates the change in religious thought by what is, on the whole, a not unkindly reference to "Tom" Paine: "Many of us were brought up to believe that Tom Paine was an awful character—nothing short, indeed, of an infidel, blatant, presumptuous, defiant. Tom Paine was a kind of moral typhus, or a malignant form of small-pox. Every man who had a copy of the *Age of Reason* kept it in a secret drawer and lent it at night-time and under whispered vow of secrecy. To possess the *Age of Reason* was equal to having an infectious and loathsome disease. Bishop Watson answered the *Age of Reason*, but the Bishop is now nowhere. Tom Paine's 'soul goes marching on,' but the Bishop is forgotten as though his book were a mere escape of gas. Tom Paine showed wonderful insight, and in a manner anticipated all the higher critics. For example, Tom Paine said, 'Whoever wrote the Pentateuch, Moses had little or nothing to do with it.' But some who say this very thing have orthodox chairs in English universities and sign even more articles than thirty-nine, whilst Tom Paine is branded as an infidel and has no professional income. Tom Paine said there were at least two Isaiahs, in other words that the Isaiah who wrote the first part of the book never wrote the second, and perhaps never knew that a second part was written. Some higher critics say the very same thing to-day, whilst Tom Paine is still regarded by orthodoxy as a most noxious beast."

Dr. Parker is not inclined to revile "Tom" Paine, but he asserts that no such man ought to be in a Free Church pulpit. Well, no man who is like Paine is in a Free Church or any Church pulpit. There is not one that is large enough to accommodate such a character. If Dr. Parker meant that no one who shares his opinions ought to be there, we are inclined to agree with him. People who have ceased to believe in the inspiration of the Bible, or the legitimate doctrines of Christianity should come out, and seek a living in a more honest, if a more arduous manner. But this is to anticipate that the pulpit would breed honesty of character and sincerity

of purpose, and he at least ought to have known enough to have been on his guard against this delusion.

Lying about "infidels" is a common pastime in America as well as in this country. We see by the New York *Truth-seeker* that a Baptist minister in Minnesota has been saying that Colonel Ingersoll was once silenced and nearly driven off the platform by a woman who handed him a slip of paper bearing the words "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Perhaps it was the same woman who drove Charles Bradlaugh off so many platforms in England.

McMaster's *History of the United States* seems to be a work of some "authority" on the other side of the Atlantic. We believe it is used in many of the schools. But its chief merit can hardly be accuracy, judging by what it says of Thomas Paine. "Of all the human kind," it says, "he was the filthiest and the nastiest, and his disgusting habits grew upon him with years. It was seldom that he was sober; it was still rarer that he washed himself, and he suffered his nails to grow till, in the language of one who knew him well, they resembled the claws of birds. What gratitude was he did not know. For his word he had scarcely more regard than for his oath, and his oath he repeatedly violated when he held offices of trust.....Of all boys in Thetford he was the most idle and shiftless.....His wife ran away from him because he beat her." This may be as true as Gospel. We think it is. But it has no other merit. McMaster doesn't explain how such a man as the Paine he depicts ever "held offices of trust." Nor does he explain how one who was seldom sober wrote the brilliant works that bear his name. The notion that constant drunkenness is compatible with the production of such writings as Paine's is really fit for Bedlam.

T. P.'s Weekly gives a sort of editorial puff to a certain London firm. We do not choose to name it, but it *ought* to be named "The Trinity." For it is observed of this firm that "Their ramifications extend all over the universe." As the Americans say, a remarkably tall order!

There is a certain Congregational Chapel at Tooting the members of which believe in the precept, "Take no thought for the morrow," and also in "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." Nevertheless they started a Provident Club, and also a species of Loan Society. Then along came one John Crawford, an emissary of the Lord, disguised as an insurance agent, and sent to chastise their neglect of the Gospel teaching. £196 disappeared, and the said Crawford was charged, by the men who believed in not going to law "one with another," with stealing. Result, nine months' imprisonment for one who was as clearly God's instrument for the correction of the Tooting Congregationalists error, as the Martinique disaster was intended to call the world's attention to certain neglected "spiritual facts."

A stalwart Freethinker who died not long ago in West London was strong on the bad administration of chloroform in hospitals. He maintained that every death in such cases was a kind of manslaughter. His contention was that chloroform should be administered slowly and continuously, and that if it were so an accident would never occur. This view of the matter has just been taken by Mrs. Fenwick Miller, who writes "A Woman's View of Things" in the *Daily News*. "I am convinced," she says, "that in hospitals at any rate chloroform is frequently given far too rapidly. There is often a tremendous struggle against it on the part of the patient, simply because the chloroform is hastily pushed into the system, without allowing time for it to go on through the lungs, and thus avoid suffocation, which is always obviously most painful, and too often fatal. It is significant that there is no recorded case of death in a confinement, where the chloroform is always administered very slowly and gradually."

Mrs. Fenwick Miller further suggests that some deaths under chloroform are only apparent. Sir W. B. Richardson saw birds come to life again twenty-four hours after he had apparently killed them by chloroform. Human beings apparently dead have been restored to life after respiration had been carried on by artificial means for more than an hour.

After stating this fact, and adducing two cases of a mother and a child, Mrs. Miller suddenly asks (after Tennyson) "Where wert thou, Lazarus, those three days?" We presume this is the lady's indirect way of suggesting that the apparently dead are to all real intents and purposes as dead as the actually dead; and that, if the arts of resuscitation were not practised upon them, they would know no more for ever.

It is very curious, by the way, that Lazarus, who had

been actually dead (for he stank) three days before Jesus raised him up from the tomb, does not appear to have excited the curiosity of the people in those parts. Perhaps it was so common for the dead to rise again that nobody worried about him. They merely said, "There's Lazarus again," and took no more notice than if he had only been round the corner. But if such a thing occurred nowadays what a hubbub there would be! All the interviewers in the kingdom would be after Lazarus for details of his experience during those wonderful three days. Where did you go? What did you see? What did you hear? And it would all be printed by the column for the eager public. But there was no curiosity in those old days, and Lazarus can't be found now for love or money.

A religious census of Kettering has been taken by the local *Leader*. The previous census was taken in 1881, when the population of the town was 11,500. It is now 29,000. The total attendances of men, women, and children, both morning and evening, in 1881, was 5,415. In 1893 it was 10,416. The increase in religious attendances, therefore, has nothing like kept pace with the increase in population. This is admitted by the *Leader*, which says that the falling-off applies to all denominations.

Of course the incurably weak point of these religious censuses is that they do not inform us how many people really go to church or chapel. It is impossible to tell how many worshippers go morning and evening. That some do is certain, and all these are counted twice over.

A man called Chivers, hailing from Brockley, sends us a tract—the production of his own unaided genius—on "The Imbecile Creed of Atheism." We did not know that Atheism had a creed before. Whether its creed is imbecile or not, need not be discussed—at least with Chivers; for his tract clearly shows that he is imbecile enough for anything. Nor is he quite an innocent imbecile. His tract shows a considerable taste for handling the truth carelessly.

A Methodist lady in Newark, U.S.A., recently celebrated her ninetieth birthday. At the same time she finished reading the Bible for the ninetieth time. No doubt she expects a good seat in heaven, and she has certainly earned it.

Father's Faith.

THE son by the bedside bowed his head
To receive his sire's last blessing.

"May God be with you, my lad," he said,
The hand of the young man pressing.

"Cling to the faith that is simple, pure—
Cling to the hope that is certain, sure;
Study the Book from your Maker's hand,
So shall you enter the Promised Land,
So shall your soul be free.

"And say, my lad, if scoffers deride,
Christ for me! no other beside—

Say, The faith of my father's a good enough
faith for me."

The old man passed, but his words lived on,
(They came to the young man daily).

To walk in the steps of the loved one gone
He wrestled for weeks with Paley.

Apostles, Fathers, and later saints
He took with the Psalter and Job's complaints;

Codes of priests and of beasts—each line
He learnt by heart of the Book divine,
Yes, every word learnt he.

But O, alas! it grieves me to tell,
He "swallowed" not half, and he "jibbed"
at hell.

He said: "Though this faith was my father's,
yet it cannot descend to me."

He laid on the shelf the story old
Of the Man-God who ascended;
His Paley and fathers dirt-cheap he sold,
That's how the matter ended.

He'd more than a glimmer of intellect,
And he couldn't that musty faith respect,
With blood, blood, blood as its constant theme,
And its God like the ghoul of a troubled dream,
A thing unfit to see.

"Certes," said he, this folly must go!
Belief's not made to order, you know;
The faith that was all things to father's an im-
possible faith for me!"

J. YOUNG.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, March 22, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.: 7.30. "A Godless World: and What Would Happen."

To Correspondents.

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

T. THELWALL.—Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops." You will notice that we are dealing with Dr. Wallace's *Fortnightly* article.

R. B. HEATHER.—We have read your amusing letter with pleasure. Pleased to hear the Sunday evening lectures (mostly scientific) at Woking are well attended and patronised by a number of people who used to be churchgoers. Also glad to hear that the *Pioneer* began with one subscriber (yourself), and the next month had four, and the following month six. A similar increase of circulation might be realised everywhere if our friends would only bestir themselves as you have done. It is good to know that you think "the *Pioneer* is better than ever this month."

J. W. BEALE.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks. Always glad to receive cuttings or other "clay and straw" for a paragraph.

W. A. PYRKE.—There is no date to the Edmonton manifesto. The other we had already seen. Thanks all the same.

RECEIVED.—Herald of the Golden Age—Two Worlds—Daily Mail—Postal Record—Our Dumb Animals (Boston)—Crescent—Blue Grass Blade—Humanitarian—Truthseeker (New York)—Friedenker—Zoophilist—Western Morning News—Liberator.

ICONOCLAST (Birmingham).—The *Leamington Chronicle* is doubtless a distinguished organ of the Nonconformist Conscience, but it ought not to have doctored your letter in that fashion.

G. CROOKSON.—Thanks for your further letter with the agent's enclosed. We thought the case could not be as bad as you imagined. Henceforth, to avoid possibility of the delay being charged to our account, the *Pioneer* will be published a few days earlier.

VITA.—Pleased to hear from you again after your "many years' wanderings." We can quite understand that you quite horrified the newspeople by asking for the *Freethinker*. Strange that the very name of this journal should be shocking! It shows what stupidity and cowardice prevail. With regard to your question as to the name of David's mother, we are sorry we cannot inform you. The Bible wouldn't have told us the name of the mother of Jesus if it had not been for the miraculous character of his nativity.

F. ROGERS.—Thanks for paper. See paragraphs. We agree with most of what you say about "love of freedom" amongst Nonconformists when it serves their own ends.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks, once more, for your weekly batch of useful cuttings.

S. SYKES.—Yours is a curious sort of "friendly spirit." When you say we did know the writer of the libellous *Life of Bradlaugh*, and refer us to Mrs. Bonner's biography of her father, your impertinence is on a level with your accuracy. If there had been any suggestion of the kind in Mrs. Bonner's two volumes we should long ago have requested an explanation.

R. B. JACKSON.—Yes, we noticed, and were glad to see, the extract in last week's *Reynolds'* from our article on "Dr. Parker's Ascension."

LIVERPOOL FRIEND.—It certainly is strange, as you say, that the police should prevent the Secularists from charging for admission to their Sunday meetings, and yet allow Holy Cross Church to advertise "Nave, one shilling; aisle, sixpence."

A. G. LYE.—The column you refer to will be resumed.

ANIMO.—We do not recollect whether the Rev. Stanley Parker, of Barrow-in-Furness, has debated with Mr. Cohen or not. The latter will be able to say in our next issue. The Lord Lyttleton and the Mr. West referred to lived some hundred and fifty years ago. We give the chronology without endorsing Mr. Parker's story.

R. L.—Perhaps there was a misunderstanding. We don't think the editor of *Reynolds'* meant or means to be unjust to the Freethought movement. Christians like Mr. Fletcher cannot help themselves. Good and true men in other respects, they lose all conscience in dealing with "infidels."

SHILLING MONTH.—Late subscriptions, per Miss Vance: W. Turnbull (2), James G. Finlay (20), W. Varley (special for Athenæum), (2).

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.

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Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (March 22), and for the last time. As we explained a fortnight ago, the place is passing out of the hands of the present proprietor, and is to be pulled down to make room for a new railway station. The news came upon us very suddenly, but that cannot be helped, and our duty is to find another meeting-place. This we have been endeavoring to do, though as yet we have not been successful. We hope, however, that some announcement may be made this evening (March 22), before or after Mr. Foote's lecture.

There ought to be a strong rally of London Freethinkers at the Athenæum Hall at this last meeting, if only by way of thanks for the past and of encouragement for the future. For nearly seven years Mr. Foote has kept the Athenæum Hall open for Sunday evening meetings. He has frequently lectured there himself, and during his absence the platform has been occupied by leading N. S. S. lecturers, who have all received a better fee than they received elsewhere in London. Such an effort deserves some recognition—and it received some during Shilling Month, though the amount subscribed only represented a fraction of the total pecuniary burden. And the effort is not one to be dropped. A change of address there must be, but it must not be from a residence to a cemetery. Mr. Foote and those who have stood by him Sunday after Sunday at the Athenæum Hall mean to do their best in some other direction; and the general body of Freethinkers should at least see that the last meeting at the old place is cheerful and inspiring.

We have to add that Mr. Foote's subject for this last lecture will be "A Godless World: and What Would Happen." The working out of the Atheistic idea in the region of practice, especially in that of ethics, ought to prove interesting as well as useful, and should attract a large audience.

The new issue of the Twentieth Century Edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* is now on sale. Owing to unfortunate accidents at the printer's it has been delayed a good deal beyond our expectation, but it should go off rapidly now by the hundred, and even by the thousand. Freethinkers should busy themselves in the circulation of this book. Paine's theological masterpiece is one of the finest eye-openers ever written.

This Twentieth Century Edition of the *Age of Reason* is absolutely complete, which cannot be said of all editions. It is supplied with carefully-written Notes by Mr. Foote, and a biography of Paine by the same hand. Mr. G. J. Holyoake has described this biography as "masterly."

There is another thing to be said about this edition of the *Age of Reason*. It was the pioneer of sixpenny reprints. Many thought it an audacious experiment. Its success has inspired imitators.

The National Sunday League is praised by the *Daily Telegraph* for having, "after many conflicts, vanquished later-day Pecksniffs and Chadbands, and lived down formidable opposition," with the result that "the London Sabbath in the new century is nothing like so dreary and depressing as it used to be." A personal tribute is paid to Mr. R. M. Morrell, the veteran former secretary of the League, and Mr. Henry Mills, its present secretary; both of whom, by the way, are Freethinkers. At least they were so once, and we have never heard of any change.

We are glad to be able to agree with the Spiritualists in some things. Mr. Will Phillips, of the *Two Worlds*, sends us an outspoken pamphlet called *The Baby Murderer's Advice*. It is a trenchant criticism of the orthodox ideas of Salvation by Jesus involved in the letter of Anne Walters, the mur-

derous baby-farmer, prior to her execution in Holloway Gaol. The more widely it is read by Christians the better; and perhaps some Freethinkers would like to see what Mr. Phillips has to say on the pious start of a murderess "From Holloway to Heaven." The price of the pamphlet is one penny, and it is sold at the *Two Worlds* office, 18 Corporation-street, Manchester.

"Chilperic's" recent *Freethinker* article on "How Will Disestablishment Aid?" has been reprinted in Mr. Joseph Symes's *Liberator* (Melbourne).

Mr. Symes is still gallantly upholding the Freethought flag at the antipodes in the midst of tremendous difficulties. While offering him our admiration and sympathy, we beg to suggest that he should ask himself whether he has not striven and sacrificed enough out there. Something is due to himself as well as to others, and perhaps if he took a holiday the Australian continent would not sink in the ocean. And if the holiday were prolonged indefinitely, it might conduce to the peace and comfort of his declining age. For our old friend and colleague, however young he may feel, with that irrepressible buoyancy of his, is nevertheless but human after all, and time will tell upon us in our own despite.

"A London Friend," who has just returned to town, desires to be one of the responders to Mr. Umpleby's friendly challenge. It will be remembered that the latter gentleman offered to subscribe £10 to the funds of the National Secular Society if nine other gentlemen (or ladies) would subscribe a similar amount. As the matter now stands, there are seven fresh subscribers wanted. The list we have includes: Mr. J. Umpleby, Major John C. Harris, R.E., and "A London Friend." We wish those who can afford to join in this friendly competition would do so promptly, so that we might complete the list and hand over the £100 to the N. S. S.

The "London Friend" who stands third in this list is very well known to us personally, and has for some time been a good friend of the movement. He is not exactly anxious to conceal his name; in fact, he is rather indifferent on that point; but he believes there may be more than one reader of the *Freethinker* who would give a subscription, if it could be done without personal publicity; and he assumes the label of "A London Friend" in order to encourage them to respond to our appeal.

"Nunquam" (Mr. Robert Blatchford) of the *Clarion* is coming out hot and strong at last as a first-class "infidel." For some weeks he has been explaining his irreligion and answering his critics. Last week he replied to the Rev. C. F. Aked, of Liverpool; and the "taking down" he gives that rather bumptious man of God should do him good. When this discussion has run to its close in the *Clarion*, or perhaps before, we hope to deal with it in a special article. Meanwhile we venture to give our readers a sample of Mr. Blatchford's quality. There is nothing new in what he says; nothing new, that is, to our own readers; but it is pleasant to hear him speaking out in such a fashion to a more orthodox public.

Mr. Aked asked Mr. Blatchford to "think for himself what religion has meant to thousands upon thousands of millions of men all through man's troubled history." Here is Mr. Blatchford's reply: "Well, I will try to think for myself. But has Dr. Aked ever thought for himself what religion has meant to all the millions of men throughout those countless years of troubled history? Has he ever thought what it has meant? Dare he tell us what it has meant? Shall I try to tell him? My blood gets hot when I think what religion has done to men. I cannot think of it without grief and horror. I could not tell the long tragedy of shame, and blood, and cowardice, and torture. I have not the eloquence, nor the memory, nor the knowledge to do justice to those black annals of ignorance and crime. I do not think I can hold my pity and anger within the scope of measured language if I try to tell one tithe of what I know—although my knowledge is so limited. How many hundreds of millions of innocent children's lives have been blighted with terror by religion? How many sweet natures have been soured, and how many bright spirits have been broken, by the dread of hell? How many cruel wars have been waged upon religious grounds, wars in which millions and millions of brave men have been slain, in which millions and millions of women and children have been outraged and murdered in the name of gods who never existed? If you want pictures of these savage butcheries and devilish tortures, read your Bible. Read the Psalms, and the Chronicles, and the prophets. If you need historic proofs of what religion has been to thousands of millions of human beings throughout life's troubled

story, read the histories of the Christian and Mohammedan Churches. Read of the Spanish Inquisition; read of the Bartholomew massacres; read of the witchcraft trials; read of the martyred Jews, Christians, Pagans, heathen, Moslems; read of the persecution of the men of science and of reason in all ages by ignorant and black-hearted priests. If you want internal evidence of the gloom, the cowardice, the folly which have disfigured nearly all the religions of the world, read the miserable gibberings and cursings of the mental malformations which, before science let in daylight on a world of savagery and despair, passed current as works of theology. Think for ourselves! By thunder, it is only within the past century or so that we could think for ourselves what religion meant to us or to others, without danger of being murdered or tortured in the name of Christ, or Mahomet. But now we can think, if we can lay aside our theological crutches, and let our minds step boldly forward, now we can think what religion has meant, and what it does mean. Yes, I admit that religion, even in the black past, has meant golden dreams and soft delusions to many poor creatures who, in a world of Christ's followers, had no friend and no comfort to turn to on this side of the grave. I do not claim that murder, hatred, rapine, and terror of hell and the Pope comprise the whole truth about religion. Amongst much crime it has done some good. But the balance is against it a millionfold."

A Mad and Wretched World.

NO, I am no Pessimist, but I have always taken life seriously—have never been blind to the fact that there is always much preventable and curable evil, pain, misery, poverty, and agony in the world; that men do not lack the desire, the disposition, to escape from misery, but they do not know, and do not consider, the causes thereof. I am no Pessimist, but I am sure "the sorrow of others" has often enough destroyed my own possible enjoyment; and the wickedness of the few who trade on human misery, who cause and who cultivate that misery for their own vile ends, has roused my indignation to the fusing temperature, and kept it there for long periods of my life.

Go where you may, except in Australia, you find the face of the earth covered with ruined buildings, or you find the remains of ancient cities covered up with the accumulated dust of many centuries. This is so in Mesopotamia, in Spain, in Egypt, in India, in Central and South America, and in some parts of Africa. Whole cities and nations, entire civilisations, have passed away, and left nothing but fragments and ruins to tell us what they were. And what are the most striking ruins we find in every part of the world where such things are? The ruins that strike and stun the beholder, that overpower him by their beauty, are—what? The ruins of temples, tombs, palaces. The people spent life in hovels, slums, tents, in the open; and the wealth of nations, the livelihood of generation after generation, were spent upon the most useless beings ever born—kings, queens, priests—and upon their wretched carcasses after they were dead! Go through Egypt, and you would suppose that for thousands of years the Egyptian nation had no object in life but to house royalty and priestcraft while living, and to build splendid resting-places for their corpses when dead. Babylon, Nineveh, Persia, India, and America present the same features.

No doubt the temples, palaces, and tombs of those countries were magnificent buildings, that the Art displayed in their construction was of the highest; but the thoughtful student cannot blink the fact that the nations must have been all slaves to do as they did; that the selfish tyranny of kings and priests must have been most absolute in its hellish perfection. The people were taught to believe in gods and devils (under various names), and to submit to the tyranny of their leaders and tyrants because the gods had commanded it, and the devils would torture them if they refused. The nations, from time immemorial, have been taught, and made to believe most profoundly, that kings and priests were either

themselves gods, superhuman beings, or else were set over the nations by such beings. By wholesale lying and terrorism the Pagan priests crushed the nations and enslaved them, "body and soul," to such an extent that the people were afraid to think, afraid to inquire, to know the truth. They were cheated out of all the good things of life by promises of after-death rewards, or by threats of after-death tortures in the land of ghosts. This horrible state of things prevailed everywhere, and the chief employment of the nations was to enrich, to glorify, to deify the cheats who were robbing them of their all by means of the most outrageous lying and fraud that could be conceived.

When the old nations succumbed to the Romans, and went down in the general decay and extinction of the empire, the old priestly elements, slightly changed and re-christened, gathered themselves together and laid the foundation of something immeasurably worse than the ancient Pagans had ever known. From many sources the new army of priests, bishops, etc., gathered up legends, fudge, falsehood, cunningly edited them, passed them off upon the credulous multitudes as a brand-new revelation from a fiction called God, and gave it out that they were authorised by this sheer fiction to lead, guide, and rule mankind—if they didn't the entire race would go to hell and purgatory. Constantine the Emperor saw that those unprincipled villains would be worth more to him than a huge army of soldiers, and entered into a compact with the Christian bishops for the mutual advantage of both parties. Henceforth emperor and bishops had it all their own way, until the holy snakes taken up and warmed by the emperor's bit, poisoned, and annihilated the imperial authority, and transferred all that to the Bishop of Rome.

I wish I could say, or even admit, that this new priesthood was any improvement upon that of the Pagan nations; but it was worse—a thousand times worse—in every respect than the worst priesthood that had ever been known. Pope and priest plunged Christendom into far deeper vice, ignorance, crime, and misery than had ever before prevailed.

Pope and priests stole many fine structures from the Pagans, took over the Pagan arts necessary for architectural display, and covered Italy, Greece, Egypt, North Africa, France, Spain and Portugal, and the British Isles with their costly and useless cathedrals and churches, and with palaces and tombs for kings and priests after death. I have seen a few of those buildings, and can admire their grandeur and beauty; but I can never divest myself of the feeling that lies, selfishness, tyranny, and the helpless folly of the crowd reared every one of them. If the truth had been told, no palace for royalty, no cathedral or temple for priest, no costly tomb for any corpse would ever have been erected or constructed; but mankind would have spent upon their own necessities the wealth worse than wasted upon those mischievous buildings. If men were not mostly mad, kings, and especially priests, could not exist.

But the rascal priests set to work to create a huge system of fudge and fraud, called it holy religion, assured the people that they would live for ever, created a huge (painted) fire to frighten them, and gave them to understand that they would burn for ever if they did not believe the priestly lies and submit to priestly tyranny. This giant crime of the priests succeeded to admiration; the priests became more than princes; the people sank into apathy and despondency, with fits of violent madness and epidemics of absolute fury. The priests made hell-fire roar again; that reared the cathedrals, the palaces, and tombs of the few, and left the masses more deeply plunged in poverty than language can describe.

If the churches were used for anything rational, for the benefit of the people, I would say little about the motives that prompted their creation; but they are not. In them no truth is taught, none whatever—except, now and then, a scrap filched from Secular

knowledge, and turned to account for priestly advantage. In the churches people are stuffed with lies, with hatred of one another, and the clergy are utilising their costly buildings for the worst of all possible purposes. Their God, Trinity, Mary and her Son, their Holy Ghost, incarnation, mass, sacraments, ceremonies, are all lies and imposture, with no mixture or particle of truth in the whole mass of it. Once let people see that, as they *must* see it by-and-bye, and church building will come to an end. People will spend upon themselves and families what the wicked clergy now extort from them by wholesale lying and imposture. The Christian priests are even far worse than their Pagan brothers in roguery; and it is our duty to make that known to the people.

JOS. SYMES.

The Smoker's Dream.

I HAD been out one day on an angling exertion
And that night as I slept—in my sleep of vice
By the strictest method of mental inversion—
I dreamed that I went straight to Paradise
O I sailed to the land of moral giants
In an ærostat more safe and sound
Than your marvellous failures of exalted science
And reached the realms of the blest with a bound.
St. Peter flung open the Great Golden Door
With: "Hurry up there! you're five minutes late!"
Ah! where had I heard those words before;
At a pegged-down match, or a christening *fête*?
But my long journey over, I lit up my pipe
When the angel guardian (seeing the cloud)
In a voice with a phonographical gripe
Let fall these words, "NO SMOKING ALLOWED."
"Now! angel," I cried, "no unseemly jests
O! By my stars—my unholy planets—
Is this the way you treat your guests?
Then out I glide from this nest of gannets."
But that angel smiled. "Folks can never get out
When once they're in heaven—can cuss all they're worth
And cut up rough—we let them shout
Of their virtuous actions committed on earth.
Prayers and piety here are quite thrown away.
When they find they can't smoke they fly in a fit.
They see their mistake when they learn they must stay
In the gods when they ought to have booked for the pit."
I liked not the words of that guardian fair
With his whitewashed wings and manner inane
And my language flew, and colored the air
As I cursed my twinkling stars again:
"By the holy three and their confidence trick,
Hat-jib, and thimble-rig," I yelled,
"You must let me out of this place, and quick."
But up to me sidled a patriarch old—
An æsthetic old saint with a sinister nudge,
While he chewed the burnt end of a split malacca—
With: "Have you a bit of the weed—no fudge—
Have you got such a thing as a screw of tobacco?
I know a trap-door-sort of fire-escape
With a secret spring—for a quid for my lip
I will give you the wheeze—by a bit of a scrape
You can just squeeze through and give them the slip."
"Man," I replied, "with a tear in my eye,
"You mustn't smoke here; then what could you do
With the weed?" Then he, answering, winked, O! so sly.
"Of course you can't smoke, but then you can chew."
So I handed him over two Swiss cigars;
And he smiled as he smuggled those Vevy fins.
I slipped out to my airship, sailed swift mid the stars
And found myself still in my bed and my sins.

G. GUARDIABOSCO.

In Moliere's comedy, *Festin de Pierre*, the following passage was suppressed on the second representation. Don Juan meets a poor man in the forest and asks him how he passes his life:—

Poor Man. To pray to God for the people who give me alms.

Don Juan. You pass your life in praying to God; in that case you ought to be very much at your ease.

Poor Man. Alas! Sir; very often I have nothing to eat.

Don Juan (ironically). That cannot be. God would not leave to die of hunger those who pray to him night and morning; come, here's a louis! but I give it to you for the love of humanity.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your last week's article on "Downright Atheism" you present Mr. H. G. Wells with the alternatives of a "lapse to which all writers are liable, or a deliberate pandering to vulgar prejudice, or a casual flash of personal bigotry." The last one, I think, lies nearest to the truth, for this is not the first attack Mr. Wells has made upon Atheism.

In his book of short stories, *The Plattner Story and Others* (Methuen, 1897), we find the following piece of religious charity. It occurs on p. 296: "Of one fact about professed Atheists I am convinced; they may be—they usually are—fools, void of subtlety, revilers of holy institutions, brutal speakers, and mischievous knaves, but they lie with difficulty. If it were not so, if they had the faintest grasp of the idea of compromise, they would simply be liberal Churchmen."

Mr. Wells had evidently clean forgotten this paragraph when writing for the *Fortnightly Review*, for it flatly contradicts it. In his latest utterance the Atheist "has as much respect for truth and religion as he has for stable manure." In the earlier work professed Atheists "lie with difficulty." In the *Fortnightly* we read that the Atheist "finds it convenient to profess a lax version of the popular religion," while in the book we are told that "if they had the faintest grasp of the idea of compromise, they would imply be liberal Churchmen."

Of the vulgar vituperation Mr. Wells indulges in when speaking of Atheists, it bears out the truth of Feuerbach's saying that *Faith has within it a malignant principle*. It is difficult even for the cultured believer to preserve his wonted calm in the presence of the denier of the Gods.

I am sincerely sorry to see so talented a writer disfigure his work by such patches of hysteria. Personally I have derived much pleasure and enjoyment from Mr. Wells's writings, of which *The Invisible Man* and *The Sea Lady* are gems quite on a level with Anstey and almost equal with Stevenson, although, of course, quite in a different style.

WALTER MANN.

SPELLING REFORM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Individual liberty of spelling has in the final result given us our present absurdly irregular and uncertain methods of spelling. Revision by authority has given various continental countries a phonetic reform which England conspicuously lacks. I am therefore glad to see that Mr. Lodge is so far influenced by my letter that he would rely upon the unifying principle of authority as a necessary means of preventing or limiting the confusion which would result from liberty in spelling. He points to such unifying authority in the rules of printing bureaux, and a list of words issued by the American Bureau of Education for the guidance of printers. A duly authorised list of words or set of rules abolishing some of the worst anomalies of English spelling would, of course, be an excellent step in the right direction. But those who look deeply into the subject see that there are gross imperfections and omissions in the alphabet itself, and that these imperfections invite, or, indeed, almost necessitate, a maze of anomalies and makeshift devices in spelling. The same laudable reasons that lead Mr. Lodge to seek a reform of the obvious abuses that strike him lead other observers to desire still further and more fundamental reform.

There is no need to enter on any controversy concerning particular changes of spelling for which it is practically pleaded that they would not be worse than other anomalies. I will content myself with meeting Mr. Lodge's assertion that I had to employ two "s's" in writing "faculties," because one "s" would have conveyed the sound of "z." Such words as basis, axis, thesis, genesis, ibis, Isis, crisis, phthisis, tuberculosis, neurosis, iritis, bronchitis, Davis, Harris, Ellis, Inglis, Wallis, Willis, Lewis, Phyllis, etc., show conclusively that "is" at the end of a word would not convey the sound of "z," as Mr. Lodge mistakenly alleges. The words "is" and "his" are the only exceptions I can call to mind. The reason I employed two "s's" was to make my intention so clear that it should be free from all possible doubt.

Individual liberty of spelling is already extensively favored by the illiterate, who have not, however, succeeded in bringing about phonetic reform thereby. The indulgence in individual changes in spelling recommended by Mr. Lodge is a dangerous amusement, and I would strongly advise young men not to follow his advice. Correct spelling is often

essential to success in life. Such correctness depends absolutely upon the prompt and unflinching action of the principle of association in memory. To confuse or destroy correct associations and habits by employing unusual spellings is to court failure in examinations, office work, etc.; for the new habit would spoil or confuse the old one, so that the wrong spelling would often slip out unintentionally, and would cost many a young fellow his situation.

The difficult task of attempting to analyse sounds correctly while one's mind is occupied with other matters, would add greatly to the mental work and time required in writing. If a youth wishes to write phonetically, let him practise shorthand with purely phonetic spelling. Shorthand, with its totally different set of symbols, will be far less liable to disturb the usual visual associations between printed and spoken words, and will be a highly useful acquisition for business and other purposes.

W. P. BALL.

JUSTICE TO ANIMALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am sorry if I have in any way conveyed a wrong impression of Mr. Ball's argument. There is still, perhaps, a little misunderstanding between us.

When, in my book on *Animals' Rights*, I spoke of "universal justice," I did not mean to put forward a claim for an absolute justice, which is obviously unattainable, but to show that even the humblest sentient being has its rights, different in degree from those of higher species but not different in kind. All such rights, human as well as sub-human, are of course subject to what I called the "permanent needs and interests of the community"—that is to say, they are not absolute but conditional. Mr. Ball is mistaken in supposing that I first "loosely suggested" and then "definitely abandoned" any theory of absolute rights; I did not deal with the absolute at all. I can only speak for myself; but I should doubt if there are any anti-vivisectionists who claim "absolute justice" for animals in the sense which Mr. Ball uses the term.

I do not see why humanitarians need be afraid to cultivate what Mr. Ball calls "a sense of justice to earthworms." We are not bound to starve mankind by abstaining from agriculture on account of the injury which the plough inflicts on one of the lowest and least sentient forms of life; but we all remember what Cowper says of the man "who needlessly sets foot upon a worm." If our justice cannot be absolute, it can at least be universal in its scope.

Where I differ in principle from Mr. Ball, if I understand him rightly, is that he draws an absolute line of demarcation between the human and the non-human which seems to me to have no existence in fact. He says that the question how far we can extend the benefit of "morals" to non-human beings "has to be decided by practical considerations." But surely practical considerations also decide how far we can extend the same benefit to our fellow-men! Native races, for example, when their interests clash with those of the civilised, have to be content with something less than an absolute justice. "Justice," says Mr. Ball, "as we use the term among men, cannot be extended to all living things." But why not? We do not use the term among men in an absolute but in a strictly conditional sense, and in this sense it can be extended (with due regard to the scale of sensibility) to the lower races—certainly to those highly-organised and keenly sensitive animals who are subjected in vivisection to the severest and most protracted forms of torture.

HENRY S. SALT.

Humanitarian League, 53 Chancery-lane.

VIVISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Gibson suggests in the form of a question that I was "guilty of inaccuracy" in saying that disease, as measured by the death-rate, had decreased, and not increased, as Mr. Bailey had alleged. Mr. Bailey has not ventured to deny the truth of my statement, but Mr. Gibson endeavors to suggest its falsity by declaring that "baffling diseases—especially cancer—are greatly on the increase." That some diseases are on the increase is no proof that diseases in general are increasing, and it is ridiculous to put forth such exceptions to the rule as arguments against vivisection. Modern medical science, by curing the curable diseases, necessarily leaves us to die finally of incurable complaints, and thereby increases the death-rate from "baffling diseases—especially cancer," which mostly occurs late in life, and so carries off many people who under the old conditions would have died of other diseases in infancy, childhood, or early adult life. The increased returns of deaths from cancer and

appendicitis—the two diseases named—are also partly due to greater skill in diagnosis—deaths really caused by these diseases having formerly been returned under other headings. The increase in the mortality from cancer is thus largely due to medical skill, and if, as Mr. Gibson assumes, we should totally prohibit vivisection because it fails to remedy this state of things, still more ought we to prohibit medical skill, which not merely fails as yet to provide a remedy but actually figures as one of the chief causes of the marked increase in the terrible disease in question.

Seeing that Mr. Gibson either himself tortures, or, by buying at least bread and vegetables, pays others to torture thousands of "weaker and humbler fellow creatures" in the shape of worms, which are frightfully mutilated by ploughs and spades, I may point out that according to his own phrases and statements, *not mine*, he is guilty of cowardly and fiendish crime towards these dumb, defenceless victims of his callous selfishness and awful cruelty. Being thus, in his own words, "a disgrace" to this earth, he ought to betake himself to "another planet" as soon as possible. I am curious to know which planet he will select for his future abode and reformation, and how he proposes to reach it. As, however, he is gifted with the enviable infallibility of judgment and prescience which alone could enable him to prophecy that "no benefit to mankind can possibly accrue" from vivisection, I ask him to postpone his departure to the rings of Saturn or the deserts of Mars as long as possible, even at the expense of treachery to his professed principles, since his unique abilities as a prophet ought to enable him to render invaluable services to mankind.

W. P. BALL.

A Marvel of Science.

DURING a visit to the south with an eclipse expedition some years ago, an eminent American professor met an old negro servant whose duty it was to look after the chickens of the establishment where he was staying. The day before the eclipse took place the professor, in an idle moment, called the old man to him, and said: "Sam, if to-morrow morning, at eleven o'clock, you watch your chickens, you will find they will all go to roost."

Sam was sceptical, of course; but when at the appointed time next day the sun in the heavens was darkened, and the chickens retired to roost, the negro's astonishment knew no bounds. He approached the professor in awed wonder. "Massa," he asked, "how long ago did you know dat dem chickens would go to roost?"

"Oh, a long time," said the professor, airily.

"Did you know a year ago, massa?"

"Yes."

"Den dat beats de Debil!" exclaimed the astonished old man. "Dem chickens weren't hatched a year ago!"

His Conscience Did It.

Nor long since a respectable colored preacher, who was noted for his ability to "cuss out" people from the pulpit, was hurling thunderbolts of invective against his congregation because of a great wave of lying and stealing that was sweeping over the city. Among other things, he said: "No longer'n las' night, someone come in an' stole de las' two chickens dat me an' mah ol' 'oman had. I b'lieves de thief is in dis house right now, and I hereby countersigns him to everlastin' punishment. De nigger dat stole dem chickens is a-gwint' burn fur it sho, you hyeah me! De 'cree has gone forth!" Next morning a colored man with two fine hens came up to the preacher's door. He said: "Parson, hyeah's yo' chickens." "No, sah," said the preacher, eyeing the chickens closely, "dese ain't mah chickens." "I knows dey ain't perzackly yo' own," explained the parishioner, "but dese is to take de place of yo' own. Yo' chickens was et up 'fo' de 'cree went fo'th. An' las' night, aftah I went to bed, my consunce hurt me so tell I had to get up and go oval to Marse Bob's house an' git two mo' chickens. Parson, do tek dese chickens, an', fer de Lawd's sake, tek dat 'cree back, too."

A young man who was going to be married called on the minister to enlist his services. After the young man had stated his business, the minister said to him: "Well, Andrew, I trust that the young woman you are about to make your wife is a handmaid of the Lord?" "Weel, sir," replied Andrew, "I danna ken whether she's hand-made or machine-made, but she's damned weel made!"—*Statesman* (Calcutta).

As an Instance.

"Now," said the Sunday-school teacher, in her most winning tones, "which little boy can tell me about the still small voice that is within us?"

"Please'm," said the freckled boy at the end of the seat, "my uncle has one."

"He has?"

"Yes'm. He's a ventriloquist."

More Answers.

A Board school teacher at a continuation school reports the following as the best bright answer given him by grown-up pupils during the year just closed. A question as to the achievements of Lord Lister brought out the information that he was "the man who invented the antiseptic cure."

The following Bible biography by a Board School boy, clipped from a religious paper, shows the value of what is called religious education: "Abraham was the father of Lot, and had two wives. One was called Ishmale, and the other Hagar. He kept one at home and turned the other into the desert, where she became a pillow of salt in the daytime, and a pillar of fire by night." The other one was about Moses: "He was an Egyptian. He lived in a hark made by bulrushes, and kept a golden calf and worshipped golden snakes, and et nothing but kwales and manna for forty years. He was caught by his hair in the bough of a tree, and was killed by his son Abolom as he was hanging from the bough. His end was peas."

The *Kentish Gazette* tells a story of the new Primate in his curate days. When at Dartford he was once taking a Sunday school class in a neighbouring parish. The subject was King Solomon, and after the lesson he proceeded to catechise the children. "Tell me, boys," he said, "what was the difference between Solomon and other men?" No answer. "Come, come!" said the future Archbishop. "Was there any difference, for instance, between King Solomon and myself?" A tiny hand went up, and a tiny voice replied, "Please, sir, Solomon was wise!"

A minister, passing along the road one day, observed a number of boys in a circle, with a small dog in the centre. He inquired what they were doing, when one said they were telling lies, and he who told the biggest lie got the dog. "Dear me," said the minister, "I am ashamed to hear of you telling lies. When I was a boy like you I never told a lie." "Hand him the dog," said one of the boys; "he's won the prize."

A man attending a revival was pressed hard to repent and at last got up.

"Dear friends," said Bill, "I feel the spirit moving me to talk and tell what a bad man I have been, but I can't do it when the grand jury is to be in session next week."

"The Lord will forgive you," shouted the preacher.

"I guess that's all right," said Bill, "but he ain't on the grand jury."—*Warren Herald*.

A clergyman, proceeding along a country lane a few miles from Glasgow, met a lad and, in the course of some conversation, asked him if he had ever been confirmed. "What be that, mister?" asked the lad, whereupon the gentleman said: "Has the Bishop ever laid his hand upon you?" "No," said the lad, looking slyly up at the gentleman; "but the gamekeeper has."

Sunday-school Superintendent—"Who led the children of Israel into Canaan? Will one of the smaller boys answer?" (No reply.) Superintendent (somewhat sternly)—"Can no one tell? Little boy on that seat next to the aisle—who led the children of Israel into Canaan?" Little Boy (badly frightened)—"It wasn't me. I—I just moved yere last week fr'm Mizzoury."

A preacher, it is said, was once speaking of heaven's joys, and said: "There'll be no sermons in heaven," and the audience was quiet. "There'll be no prayer-meetings in heaven," and the audience still kept silence. "There'll be no collections in heaven." "Hallelujah!" broke in one lean, miserable-looking fellow.

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, "A Godless World: and What Would Happen."

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, Conversazione for Members and Friends.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Chapman Cohen, "The Problem of the Criminal."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Miss McMillan, "Heretics."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tun-stall-road, Brixton): 7, Thomas Adams, "The Rural Exodus."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Herbert Trench, "Functions of Poetry."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 3, Rev. Ernest Price, B.A., "A Confession of Faith"; 7, Herbert Thompson, "A Walk with a Naturalist" (Illustrated with Limelight Views).

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, "Karma," by an Edinburgh Lady. Discussion invited. Music at 6.15.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, "Balfour and the Bible."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road. All Saints'): 6.30, A Lecture on Vaccination.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, March 26, at 8, T. H. Elstob, "William Kingdon Clifford."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Geo. Berrisford, "Man, God, and Immortality."

LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool.—April 5, Liverpool; 19, Glasgow; May 3, Liverpool; 17, Liverpool.

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