

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not.—BACON.

Booth's Apotheosis.

THE Salvation Army has just had one of its great days. General Booth's return from the conquest of America was celebrated on Monday evening at the Royal Albert Hall. Now the great William is an incomparable showman; the late Mr. Barnum and the present Buffalo Bill being nowhere in comparison with him. Moreover he has trained up a number of subordinate adepts in this artful business. It was to be expected, therefore, that the Albert Hall "welcome" would be a grand affair. And it was. Stage management could hardly be carried further. What with the tornado of brazen instruments, the tempest of singing, the storm of "Hallelujahs," the frenzied waving of Union Jacks and Stars and Stripes, the riot of color in the Oriental toilets upon the orchestra, and the striking introduction of the General at the psychological moment which had been skilfully worked up to—the whole function was entitled to the epithet of prodigious. It was worthy of William Booth's peculiar world-wide reputation. For anything to eclipse it one would have to witness one of the magnificent functions got up in St. Peter's at Rome by the still finer showman who lives in the Vatican.

No wonder that this Albert Hall function attracted some distinguished spectators; such as Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Clarke, Sir George Newnes, Sir W. Wedderburn, and Mr. Lloyd-George. There were even two boxes occupied by members of the Stock Exchange; as if to emphasise the fact that William Booth, like Jesus Christ, came to save sinners. There were also several Metropolitan mayors in their official robes; as if to emphasise the fact that the Salvation Army is becoming very grateful to the powers that be.

We have said that General Booth's stage-entrance was skilfully worked up to. After a rousing hymn, in which the band, the choir, and the entire audience participated, there came a bit of real business in the shape of a collection. Then the brass instruments blared once more, and then there was silence and expectation. Suddenly the Moses of Salvationism—looking the part well with his luxuriant white hair and beard, to say nothing of the nose—appeared at the top of the right-hand gangway near the orchestra. The organ took and held a deep note, the brass instruments took and held the same deep note, as the new Moses limped down to the platform. For it must be remembered that the Providence which follows General Booth up and down the planet nodded at New York, and the Other Party set one of his imps to trip him up on the hotel stairs; the result being an injured knee, that was reported to be better, but the limp is too fetching to be hastily abandoned.

Just to show how admirably the Boothites sustain the sensationalism, it may be mentioned that the result of Self-Denial Week was announced by means of big hanging numerals. The sum to be built up was £55,170 18s. 11½d., and the smart advertisers began with the farthing; working from right to left,

instead of from left to right; so that curiosity was kept alive to the last chapter.

The collection this year is stated to be £6,000 better than last year's. But it is a mistake to suppose that this represents increased self-denial on the part of the Salvationists. Their women-folk held (and shook) collection-boxes in the streets during Self-Denial Week; and, judging by what we saw on many occasions, a good deal must have been collected in this way from the general British public.

These annual and other collections, however, do not satisfy the sublime pecuniary ambition of General Booth. He told the Albert Hall meeting that he wished the Government would give him the price of an ironclad, and he promised to put the million sovereigns to good use. If the Government would not give him money, perhaps they would lend him their credit. He would give five per cent. interest. For his part, he had no objection to his Army being associated with the State. The only stipulations he made were that he "got something out of the connection, and was still allowed to do what he liked." Modest William Booth! He was not joking. Oh dear, no. He was quite earnest in making these suggestions. In some parts of the world already, we understand, the Salvation Army is subventioned by the Government; and we should not be astonished to see it subventioned here. The pretence would be made that State aid was only given to the Social Scheme; but that Scheme is worked entirely by Salvationists, and in the final interest of the Salvation Army.

General Booth praised the work of the Salvation Army in Canada and the United States—and said nothing about the split over there, and the rival Army, led by "dear Ballington." But in praising the work of his own Army on the other side of the Atlantic he made a terrible admission. "The godlessness of the world," he said, "seems to be daily increasing. She may be growing more civilised, better clothed and fed, housed and educated, but she surely is becoming more indifferent to the love and worship and service of God and of his son Jesus Christ." Precisely so. Religion always dies out with the progress of civilisation. When people are civilised enough it will be all over with Churches and religious Armies. General Booth seems, indeed, to have felt that he had said too much. Immediately after the last words just quoted he tried to bring his hearers back to business. "The surging sea of pauperism, vice, and crime," he exclaimed, "with all its consequent miseries, still rolls around us." This is in direct opposition to what he had said in the previous breath; for, if the world is growing more civilised, it cannot also be sinking deeper into pauperism, vice, and crime. Nevertheless it is true that the "surging sea" which General Booth referred to still rolls around us. That it does so, is the ground (if we may be pardoned the Hibernicism) on which the Salvation Army appeals for support. But before that support is yielded more extensively, it would be well to know whether the Boothite organisation really defeats the evils against which it is always fighting. We contend that it does nothing of the kind. Its pretences are contradicted by national statistics. The real truth is that it deals with *effects* and not with *causes*.

G. W. FOOTE.

Labor, Religion, and Freethought.

IT is a pleasing sign to all sane students of social development that one of our leading labor journals should have been for some weeks devoting several of its columns to an attack upon Christianity. The *Clarion* is one of the most popular of purely labor papers, and its editor is one of the striking personalities of the labor world. Certainly no other labor leader has by sole influence of his pen made himself such a personal force in the lives of Socialists, and although his opinions on religion were tolerably well known to all who knew anything about him, it is well that these opinions should have been stated openly and unreservedly, so that there can no longer be any doubt as to the position he actually occupies.

I have no desire to intervene between "Nunquam" and his critics; he is well able to hold his own, and no doubt by this time many of them are regretting that they did not choose the better part of valor, which, while it may be mistaken for cowardice, at least would have saved them from an unmistakable drubbing. All that I now desire to do, in something of the "I-told-you-so" spirit, I admit, is to point out how events are justifying the attitude of avowed Secularists in relation to social problems.

It has long been the custom of many, either from a dislike to attack theology, or in the belief that there exists some short cut to the social millennium, to sneer at the leaders of the Secular party and at the movement as being devoted to Bible-smashing or an anti-Christian propaganda, and nothing else. All this was either a gross mistake or a wilful misrepresentation. I take it that no prominent Secularist finds much pleasure, and certainly no education, in the mere task of fighting theology. Speaking for myself, there are dozens of other subjects on which I could speak or write with infinitely greater pleasure. Sociology or philosophy offers one plenty of problems for examination, and in the task one feels that he is at least grappling with facts and genuine convictions. But in theology the air is thick with insincerities and absurdities. One can hardly realise that educated men and women now believe the follies and absurdities that lie at the root of all religion—Christianity included; and in arguing against their genuineness one feels very much as though he were trying to disprove a book of nursery rhymes. To argue against the reality of Biblical miracles is just upon all fours with arguing against Old Mother Hubbard or Puss in Boots; and there is really no difference in intellectual value in an article demonstrating that Jesus was never carried by the Devil to the top of a high mountain, and one proving that the genii never transported Aladdin's palace from one country to another *en bloc*.

Secularists have spent their time in demolishing these beliefs, first, because people believed, or pretended to believe them; second, because others who ought to have helped stood on one side; and third—and this embraces the other two reasons—because they recognised that theology was the great obstacle in the road of an orderly and continuous development. The Rights of Man is a fine phrase, and something worth aiming at, but as Paine saw, it must be preceded by the Age of Reason. To hope to get the rights of man established while the human mind is the prey of a number of senseless superstitions, is futile. Clear thinking and independent speaking are the essential conditions of effective and profitable social organisation; and, so long as human energy is spent on theological questions, so long as there exist thousands of clergymen up and down the country warring directly and indirectly against a complete freedom of thought and speech, so long are we placing a drag upon the wheels of progress. It is this conception which has animated the work of militant Secularists. Theology has been attacked, not because we thought

little, but because we thought much, of social development. We aimed, and are aiming, at that. And we recognised that the work of those who prepare the conditions of social development is at least as valuable—more so under present conditions—as the holding up of ideal social states before the public mind. Theology had, first of all, to be fought, and we fought it; and that Mr. Blatchford is now finding the same thing necessary is at least an admission of the soundness of our position.

Another cause that in all probability has led to the writing of the articles referred to is the recognition of the fact that, unless some very plain speaking was done, the labor movement in this country stood a great danger of being captured altogether by the religious world. Abroad, Socialism and Freethought are practically synonymous terms. In England, the land of compromises, there has grown up a hybrid affair called "Christian Socialism," which, apparently, contains enough of each to spoil the other. And, in addition, the vague talk by many labor leaders as to their reverence for the gospel Jesus, knowing all the time that the gospel Jesus is a mere patchwork of tradition and myth, has disclosed a muddled condition of brain not at all favorable to labor prospects in general. It is to be hoped that these articles will have the effect of showing those interested in the labor movement the direction in which they are drifting.

There can be no question as to the reality of the danger. One of the most striking facts of recent years has been the eruption of Nonconformists, as such, into the political arena. Nonconformist leaders are now openly demanding that their followers shall vote in this or that direction as *Nonconformists*. Religious opinions are being made the standard of political action. The clergyman of the Established Church, guiding his parishioners in the interests of his patrons, now has as an open rival the Nonconformist minister with his blatant talk of citizenship and Protestantism. Dr. Clifford, with unconscious humor, declares that clergymen should have nothing to do with politics, and defends the absurdity of his position by saying that he is not a clergyman. In the name of all that is sensible, what is he, then? The official Liberal party, too, seems to be selling itself, body and soul, to the Nonconformist interest. The danger is a real one, and a very serious one; and once we have religion of any kind re-established in the political field, who is to tell where it will end? Is there any doubt that Nonconformity in power would be quite as obstructive to real freedom as any other form of religion? Is there any doubt that the men who are seeking political power to dish their religious enemies, once having obtained that power, would use it against their non-religious enemies? The danger, I repeat, is a very real one, and labor leaders, above all, should be on their guard against it.

It is idle for those interested in the Labor movement to allow themselves to be led away by the liberal language of many of our prominent preachers. Whether they belong to one Church or another, whether they be conscious of it or not, the fact remains that they are all the strongest supporters of sinister vested interests, and the greatest obstacles to the development of society. Many of them are consciously obstructive, and have no other object but to keep things as they are because the present arrangement suits their interest better than any probable alteration would. But even when they are not consciously obstructive, they are yet unconsciously so. For all the energy they divert into theological channels is energy that might have been spent on social subjects. The young men and young women studying at a Bible class *might* be studying social or political science. The people studying how the Jews lived 2,000 years ago *might* be studying how people *are* living in the year of grace 1903. The men and women who are exhorting at street corners, singing hymns, and inviting all to partake of the Gospel of Jesus, might, under other conditions, be calling attention to the crying evils and injustices

that exist, and so speeding the date of their removal. Even the very charities of church and chapel are, in the main, so many bribes to people to remain content under conditions that would be absolutely intolerable to men and women whose minds were not narcotised by theological influences.

Does anyone doubt that the great social function of the Churches is to conserve sinister interests by diverting attention into other channels? If they do, let them ask themselves the simple question: How is it that certain people are so solicitous of the celestial salvation of the people, and yet so utterly heedless of their terrestrial damnation? How is it that the man who will not spend an extra five pounds a year to make a house a little more habitable for men and women will be found subscribing large sums to secure them beautiful mansions on the other side the grave? How is it that they who grind their workpeople down to the last halfpenny of wages are yet filled with an overwhelming interest for the safety of their souls? The answer is: Because they know full well that every sovereign given to keep the people religious is returning a handsome interest, by keeping them sluggish, indifferent, subservient. It is not the people's souls, but their own pockets, that is the principal motive for their subsidising church and chapel.

This is not the part played by Christianity now only; it is the part played by Christianity right through history. From the time when Constantine, with shrewd judgment, made Christianity the State religion, and, by opening fresh avenues for ambition, diverted it from the imperial throne, it has been the same. It has always stood between the people and their ideals; saving their "souls," but damning their minds and bodies. Let one only try and form some idea of the energy wasted generation after generation on theological squabbles that are now as dead as the dodo, or the social injustices inflicted as the outcome of religious jealousies and hatreds; let anyone observe how, even to-day, we have social work subordinated to the sectarian interests of Church and Chapel, and they will soon realise that there is no work so vital for the social reformer as that of crushing theology.

With the very best of intentions on the part of its preachers, Christianity is bound to be a social failure. Its dominant idea, at best, is not justice, but charity. "It is the duty of the rich to look after the poor" is its highest social teaching. I believe it is nothing of the kind. It is the duty of the poor to look after themselves. More; it is the duty of society as a whole to so organise itself that men and women shall be no longer dependent upon the chance charity of others, but that a livelihood shall be within the reach of all who care to earn it by honesty and sobriety. A society composed of paupers and almsgivers is no ideal for any healthy-minded man or woman to work for. The fact that we have, in so many instances, come to regard this condition of things as inevitable and eternal is only a fresh proof of how effectually Christian teaching has done its work, and how well it has earned the support it gets.

So far all reformers owe the editor of the *Clarion* their thanks for having brought the issue clearly before his readers. We have been preaching the same thing year in and year out, and we are naturally pleased to see that others are coming round to our point of view. As far as the simple issue of the necessity of clearing away theology is concerned, it does not matter whether we agree or differ with the sociology of the *Clarion*. Whatever view of sociology we take, so long as we agree that man's social salvation is to be found in a more complete development of his intelligence, and a more effective control of natural forces, we shall agree that theology is in the way and must be removed. If we remove theology the social millenium will not, it is true, be established thereby; but we shall have by so doing brought men face to face with facts. We shall have cleansed their mouths of cant and their minds of superstition, and that done all things are possible.

C. COHEN.

Dickens.

1812-1870.

"Chief in thy generation born of men,
Whom English praise acclaimed as English born."

—SWINBURNE.

THE site of the Old Fleet Prison, made world-famous by *Pickwick*, was last week the scene of an exhibition of Dickens relics. The Farringdon-street Prison, long since swept away, has been replaced by the Memorial Hall, and here the exhibition organised by the Dickens Fellowship attracted many thousands of the admirers of the great novelist. For, in spite of adverse critics, Dickens remains the first and most popular of English novelists. From statistics we find that *Pickwick* is beyond all doubt the prime favorite. But *Pickwick*, much as we like the book, seems to us, as Dickens himself thought, crude and juvenile. Indeed, it is not a work by which a writer's reputation should stand or fall. Necessarily, with the form of its publication and the peculiarity of its original intention, it is scrappy and disconnected. It has been called a comic middle-class epic, and in its delineation of character it is on occasions unrivalled even by Dickens himself. Sam Weller and Jingle are magnificent. The Eatanswill Election, the Trial Scene, and the pictures of the Fleet Prison are all incidents which rise to great heights of humor and pathos. With such attributes, *Pickwick* stands in goodly company with *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas*. By design it is a sporting novel; by sheer genius it stands the Iliad of Humor.

It is difficult to say in which of his books Dickens has put his best work. It is possibly, whichever it be, not what most people would consider his finest novel. The most popular after *Pickwick* is, undoubtedly, *David Copperfield*, and in many respects justly so. There are pages in it which, either for humor or pathos, have never been equalled. David Copperfield and the waiter, the storm, and the death of Steerforth, are incidents which stand at the remote ends of Dickens's genius; all other scenes and attributes lie between them. A great crowd of figures comes before us from this book. Mr. Micawber, Traddles, Peggotty, and villainous Uriah Heep rise before the mind's eye. We feel in reading the book that we are perusing the actual life of the author. What is most surprising about Dickens is the fact that he, who "awoke one morning and found himself famous," should have taken such pains to improve. From writing newspaper English he became a master of style. He who sketched Dombey drew Pecksniff, the nineteenth-century Tartuffe. Little Nell and Sidney Carton scarcely seem to have a common origin. *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a book with which he took more trouble than with any of his other novels, is, to our mind, undoubtedly the best of his works. With such masterpieces of delineation as Pecksniff and Mrs. Gamp, the book commands attention. Had nothing else survived from his pen, this work alone would have been sufficient to rank Dickens among the immortals. For mere word-painting, the second chapter is equal to anything Dickens has written, and the "leaves" in *Martin Chuzzlewit* forms a companion picture to the "footsteps" in the *Tale of Two Cities*.

Dickens never worried about art for art's sake. He always wrote with a purpose. Thus in *Nicholas Nickleby* he attacked the cheap boarding-schools. In *Bleak House* he showed the evil effects of the Law's delay. In *Hard Times* he deals with strikes, and in *Little Dorrit* the strangling of private people by the red tape of "the Circumlocution Office," and the evils of imprisonment for debt. Even in *Pickwick*, the most light-hearted of his books, he lashes religious hypocrisy. Dickens hides his motives with the skill of an artist. He never moralises like Thackeray, nor is he strenuous like George Eliot; but, like Molière, he looked upon literature as a tower from which to shoot the arrows of scorn at all things evil.

A Tale of Two Cities is the only one of Dickens's books in which the story is pre-eminent. For this

reason it is, with many critics, his most remarkable work. The splendid descriptive passages are equal to anything in Carlyle's *French Revolution* for power and splendor. Dickens was one of the kings of literature. Working at his best he was one of the greatest masters of humor and pathos. In that marvellously diverse and luxuriant genius of his, he embodies his age and expresses it with admirable and sensitive particularity. If his sentiment is sometimes melodramatic, his humor dangerously near grotesque, he was a supreme master of characterisation. He has permeated the language. It is impossible to imagine a time when he will not be regarded as one of the great masters. He has been reproachfully called the Cockney Shakespeare. It is the language of compliment and not of detraction. In Shakespeare he was steeped. Dickens, like the Master, was always an artist and not a dauber. There is little or no resemblance between Falstaff and Sam Weller; but they have equally seized upon the universal imagination. Touchstone and Pecksniff may be each a finer specimen of his creator's power; but they are both the work of triumphant genius. The characters of Dickens have been accepted by all as the true reflection of human nature. Squeers is to everyone the low, tyrannical schoolmaster; Bumble, the representative of parochial pomposity; Stiggins, the religious humbug; Bill Sykes, the criminal; Pecksniff, the arch-hypocrite. No more signal proof of Dickens's genius can be given than that his creations have worked themselves into the fibre of the language.

MIMNERMUS.

A Choleric God.

"Jah was a most haughty and humorsome gentleman, extremely difficult to deal with; liable to sudden fits of rage, wherein he maltreated friends and foes alike; implacable when once offended; a desperately sharp shaver in a bargain; a terrible fellow for going to law."—JAMES THOMSON (B.V.), *The Story of a Famous Old Jewish Firm*.

"When we think of the poor Jews, destroyed, murdered, bitten by serpents, visited by plagues, decimated by famine, butchered by each other, swallowed by the earth, frightened, cursed, starved, deceived, robbed, and outraged, how thankful we should be that we are not the chosen people of God."—INGERSOLL, *Mistakes of Moses*.

"No good father would wish to resemble our Heavenly Father."—DIDEROT.

OF all the gods of antiquity, the Hebrew Jehovah, or Jah, appears to have been the most difficult to deal with. One never could tell when one was transgressing. Upon one occasion he slew 70,000 people for having been enumerated in a census, and another 50,070 for looking into his private ark. For saving this ark from being thrown into the road, he smote a gentleman named Uzzah so that he died. If the ark had been allowed to fall it is difficult to imagine what would have happened; probably nothing less than a second deluge would have met the case.

Although we have searched the Holy Scriptures diligently from our youth upwards, we have been unable to discover the cause of this abnormal irritability; whether it was merely the outward and visible sign of old age—and the most orthodox admit that he was immensely old even in those days—or whether the persistent opposition of the Devil had tried a naturally genial temper past endurance, we do not know. Perhaps this is one of those subjects spoken of by St. Paul, which we know in part, but which we shall know more about hereafter. In the meantime, while waiting for fuller information, we make bold to advance a theory of our own. We know from Holy Writ that Jehovah delighted in the pleasures of the table. Upon one occasion he, with three companions, dropped in quite unexpectedly on Abraham, who evidently knew with whom he had to deal, for the inspired narrative tells us that he "ran unto the herd and fetcht a calf, tender and good," and he "dressed and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat."* Added to this, Sarah took three measures of fine meal, which

she made into cakes, the whole being served up with butter and milk. Not a bad meal for four persons—a calf, three measures of meal, with butter and milk *ad lib*. Under the influence of this generous repast, the stern features of Jehovah relaxed. Beaming benignantly upon Abraham, he promised that he should become a mighty nation, and departed with many expressions of goodwill. Again we read, that when Noah came out of the Ark he made a mighty sacrifice of every clean animal and fowl, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor,"† which so gratified the divine nostrils that he declared he would never curse the ground again.

To clinch the matter observe the minute instructions given to the priests as to the tit-bits to be reserved for himself, to be burnt "for a sweet savor before the Lord,"‡ and the rejection of Cain's vegetables and the acceptance of Abel's "firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof."§

With all due respect to what a London cabby would call a very "harbitary gent," the more so as there is only too good reason to believe with Heine, that Jehovah has taken his place in the pantheon of the dead gods of antiquity—the fact that his chosen people, the Jews, have had no communication from him for upwards of two thousand years, leads us to fear the worst; and bearing in mind that we should say nothing but good of the dead, we would humbly suggest that, seeing Jehovah's partiality for good living, he was at times liable to overdo it, with the result that he sometimes paid the penalty by a bad attack of indigestion; hence those periods of intense excitement and ungovernable temper, we find with such lamentable frequency in the inspired narrative, and which led Viscount Amberley to observe of Jehovah that—

"His service was at no time an easy one, and he was liable to outbursts of passion which rendered it peculiarly oppressive. Tolerant as he might be towards some descriptions of immorality, he had no mercy whatever for disloyalty towards himself. On one occasion he characterised himself by the name of 'jealous,' which was but too appropriate, and implied the possession of one of the least admirable of human weaknesses. Now the Jews were unfortunately prone to lapses of this kind. Such was the severity with which these offences were treated, that it is questionable whether it would not have been a far happier fate to be doomed in the Red Sea with the Egyptians than preserved with the Children of Israel."§

However that may be, it is certain, as Ingersoll remarks, that the Jews never found real prosperity until their God had abandoned them.

If our theory is correct we can make allowances for Jehovah; we make allowances for the author of *Sartor Resartus*, who suffered from dyspepsia, and why not for the author of the Bible?

However, let us make our peace with God. If he is not dead already, he is dying, and we feel with Heine: "A peculiar awe, a mysterious piety, forbids our writing more to-day. Our heart is full of shuddering compassion; it is the old Jehovah himself that is preparing for death. We have known him so well from his cradle in Egypt, where he was reared among the divine calves and crocodiles, the sacred onions, Ibises, and cats. We have seen him bid farewell to these companions of his childhood, and to the obelisks and sphinxes of his native Nile, to become in Palestine a little god-king amidst a poor shepherd people, and to inhabit a temple-palace of his own. We have seen him later coming into contact with Assyrian-Babylonian civilisation, renouncing his all-too-human passions, no longer giving vent to fierce wrath and vengeance—at least, no longer thundering at every trifle. We have seen him migrate to Rome, the capital, where he abjures all national prejudices and proclaims the celestial equality of all nations, and with such fine phrases establishes an opposition to the Old Jupiter, and intrigues ceaselessly till he attains supreme authority, and from the Capitol rules the city and world, *urbem et orbem*. We have seen how, growing still

* Genesis viii., 21.

† Exodus xxix., 25.

‡ Genesis iv., 4.

§ *Analysis of Religious Belief*, vol. 2, p. 308.

* Genesis xviii., 7, 8.

more spiritualised, he becomes a loving father, a universal friend of man, a benefactor of the world, a philanthropist; but all this could avail him nothing!

"Hear ye not the bells resounding? Kneel down. They are bringing the sacraments to a dying God!"

W. MANN.

The Future?

A WORD TO MY BRITISH FRIENDS.

HERE am I doing my best to keep the Freethought flag flying, but I am almost alone as far as public life is concerned. True, there are a few good men who carry on our propaganda work out of doors and may be working in odd ways, but there is no one here known to me who could keep my platform or my paper going if I become disabled. This is serious, and should be seen to.

True, I am not yet worn out, and my health just now is very good. I may or may not have ten years' work in me; of that no one can yet be sure. But even if I could be sure of working on vigorously until, say, 1913 or 1914, the question is, Who is going to take up my work when I am compelled to lay it down?

There is no spot in the British Empire more requiring Freethought propaganda than this. Australia has a great future before it, and when once it has dropped its infantile ways, and got rid of its fool-and-knave rulers, it will forge ahead rapidly. It will be to the lasting benefit of Australia if the Freethought leaven can be worked into her during the next few years. It must be either Freethought or popery or empty ritualism, for all real life has gone out of religion here, and mere form, ceremony, pantomime, and money-getting prevail in all sects. The Unitarians are quite played out, and so is Dr. Strong. There is nothing that has real life in it, for Sunday, but Freethought; but most of the people are afraid of that, without having the remotest notion of why they are so. They only know that I am spoken of as "That horrid man, Symes," and am slandered and boycotted all round; but that is quite enough for most people. Still, all that, and more, is not going to snuff out Freethought here; that can only be done by the neglect or carelessness of Freethinkers themselves.

Now, my British friends, cannot one of you pay a visit to Australia, or settle down here if it should suit you? Cannot the passage money for a young man—not too young—be raised in the old country? And may not a volunteer come over and try his luck here? I think we can guarantee him against starvation, though we cannot make him rich.

Remember, no other man can ever rouse the bitterness here that I have roused; no other man will ever be boycotted as I have been, and am. I do not expect to outlive the holy venom, I scarcely wish to in one sense. But, remember, I am a lightning conductor, and few of the bolts let fly at me will touch an assistant or successor.

Here is a good Hall, and here is the *Liberator*, an old-established journal, and one that may be made indefinitely more useful. Why will not some earnest and able man come along and make some use of these advantages? Were I twenty years younger, I should jump at such a chance, and never wait to ask if there were money in it?

Any volunteer coming over need not stay if he doesn't like me or the place or the people; nor need he settle in Melbourne if he doesn't feel inclined to, or if his judgment should order him to remove to some other spot.

I shall be glad if Mr. Foote will copy this into the *Freethinker*.

—*Liberator* (Melbourne).

JOS. SYMES.

Old Father Taylor once prayed: "O Lord, deliver us from bigotry and bad rum; thou knowest which is worse—I don't." Rather hard on the Lord!

* *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, p. 103.

Ingersoll on Prayer.

NOW there has been a struggle for thousands of years between the believers in the natural and in the supernatural—between gentlemen who are going to reward us in another world and those who propose to make life worth living here and now. In all ages the priest, the medicine man, the magician, the astrologer—in other words, gentlemen who have traded upon the fear and ignorance of their fellow-men in all countries—have sought to make their living out of others. There was a time when God presided over every department of human interest; when a man about to take a voyage bribed the priest of Neptune so that he might have a safe journey, and when he came back he paid more, telling the priest he was infinitely obliged to him that he had kept the waves from the sea and the storms in their caves. And so, when one was sick, he went to a priest; when one was about to take a journey he visited the priest of Mercury; if he were going to war, he consulted the representative of Mars. And so we have gone along. When the poor agriculturist ploughed his ground and put in the seed, he went to the priest of some god and paid him to keep off the frost. And the priest said he would do it; "but," added the priest, "you must have faith. If the frost came early, he said: "You didn't have faith." And beside all that, he said to him: "Anything that has happened badly, after all, was for your good." Well, we found out day by day that a good boat, for the purpose of navigating the sea, was better than prayers, better than the influence of priests; and that you had better have a good captain on board, attending to business, than thousands of priests ashore praying.

We also found that we could cure some diseases, and just as soon as we found that we could cure disease we dismissed the priest. We have left him out now of all of them, except it may be cholera and small-pox. When visited by a plague some people get frightened enough to go back to the old idea—to go back to the priest—and the priest says: "It has been sent as a punishment." Well, sensible people began to look about; they saw that the good died as readily as the bad; they saw that disease would attack the dimpled child in the cradle and allow the murderer to go unpunished; and so they began to think, in time, that it was not sent as a punishment; that it was a natural result; and thus the priest has stepped out of medicine. In agriculture we need him no longer; he has nothing to do with the crops. All the clergymen in this world can never get one drop of rain out of the sky; and all the clergymen in the civilised world cannot save one human life. They tried it. Oh, but they say, "We do not expect a direct answer to prayer; it is the reflex action we are after." It is like a man endeavoring to lift himself up by the straps of his boots; he will never do it, but he will get a great deal of useful exercise. The missionary goes to some pagan land, and there finds a man praying to a god of stone, and it excites the wrath of the good man. I ask you to-night, Does not that god answer prayer just as well as ours? Does he not cause rain? Does he not delay frost? Does he not snatch the ones that we love from the grasp of death, precisely the same as others? Is not the reflex action as wholesome in his case as in ours? Yet we have ministers that are still engaged in that business. They tell us that they have been "called"; that they do not go into their profession as other people do, but are "called"; that God, looking over the world, carefully selects his priests, his ministers, and his exhorters. I don't know. They say their calling is sacred. I say to you that every kind of business that is honest, that a man engages in for the purpose of keeping his wife and children, for the purpose of building up his home, and for the purpose of feeding and clothing the ones he loves, is sacred. They tell me that the statesmen and poets, philosophers, heroes, and scientists and inventors come by chance; that all other departments depend entirely upon luck; but that when God wants exhorters he "selects."

Acid Drops.

It was to be expected that Dr. Clifford would drop a few warm tears over the grave of Dean Farrar. He states that in his opinion Dr. Farrar was one of the foremost men of the past century. So much the worse, then, for the past century. But it is possible that Dr. Clifford is mistaken. His judgment on this point may be warped by professional bias. Outsiders see pretty clearly that "foremost men" no longer enter the Christian Church. Men of first-class minds find careers in other directions.

Dr. Clifford praises Dr. Farrar's "magnificent courage." What risk did he run? What danger did he encounter? He preached his mild heresy—and it was *very* mild—after the Westbury judgment had made it safe. As to "what it cost him," we can only say that he obtained promotion, though he was not made a bishop; and that a dignified position, and an income of two or three thousand a year, constitute an extremely tolerable form of martyrdom.

We agree with Dr. Clifford on one point. Of courage he says it is "a quality which the older I grow the more I value." We say ditto. Courage is one of the rarest of virtues. Hamlet says that to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand. He might have said that to be courageous, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of a million.

With respect to this same "courage," we beg to ask Dr. Clifford whether there was as much of it in Dr. Farrar as there was in Charles Bradlaugh. Was it the popular preacher or the Iconoclast who dared and did the most? The worst Dr. Farrar had to fear was the sneers of people whom he was not compelled to meet. Charles Bradlaugh faced poverty and persecution; his liberty was always in peril, and he sometimes risked his life. Dr. Clifford does well to admire courage, but we believe he has got hold of a poor illustration.

General Booth was orating to eight thousand people in the big St. James's Hall, Manchester, on Sunday evening, when a cry of "Fire!" rang through the building. Half the audience immediately rushed for the exit doors. They liked to hear the General talk about heaven, but they did not want to go there, if the journey could be postponed. Fortunately, it was a false alarm. The trouble was only the fusing of two electric wires, which produced a sound like wood burning. So the band and the choir struck up a hymn and checked the stampede. When the fainting Christians had been removed the General resumed business. But he did not forget to dig them sharply under the fifth rib. "If the fusing of a couple of electric wires causes such a terrible panic," he said, "I wonder what will happen when you hear the last trumpet sound?" Probably a lot of them will lie low and pretend to be deaf.

General Booth's family is not a happy one; at least it is not united. One by one his children break away from him. His daughter, Mrs. Booth-Clibborn, left the Salvation Army and went to America, where she and her husband joined Old Dowie. Very soon, however, they had enough of him. According to his account, he had enough of them. Anyhow they parted. The Booth-Clibborns are now back in London, where they are delivering evangelistic addresses. We hear that they are running a show of their own—called the Christian Mission, which was the original name of the Salvation Army.

Some man of God was bound to improve the shining hour in connection with the sad death of "Fighting Mac." Preaching at Trinity House Chapel, Hull, on Sunday morning, the Rev. M. Parkyn said that Sir Hector Macdonald was a beautiful character as a soldier, but he had "forgotten God." He had "gone down to an ignominious grave because he had forgotten to go with Jesus to Jerusalem." This is quite a new view of the case. We did not know there was anything wrong with "Fighting Mac's" piety. We understood he was on good terms enough with Jesus.

The men of God have always exploited women in the interest of religion. They have got the fair sex to visit the sick, and run the risk of catching all sorts of diseases; to dole out charity from house to house—carefully overlooking heretics; to get up bazaars for the benefit of church funds; to fetch and carry for the minister, and work slippers for his poor feet. But they have taken precious good care to keep the ladies off any paying jobs. When there is a salary attached they want it for themselves. And as preaching is a salaried job they have carefully kept the more fluent

half of the human species out of the pulpits. But this exclusion is not going to last for ever. The ladies are pressing for admission; and when they press hard enough who can withstand them. Already there are a good few women preachers in America. Even in sleeper Holland an effort is being made to introduce them. The Reformed Dutch Church Synod has had to consider the application of Miss Cremer to be admitted as a duly-qualified soul-saver. When the vote was taken there were nine for admitting the lady, and ten against her. Next time the figures may be reversed.

Paul said it was a shame for a woman to speak in the church. This kept the women out for a long while in the name of the Holy Ghost. But now they say, "Drat Paul!" Some of them, *sotto voce*, probably say something stronger.

What a pity it is, though, that the ladies have waited so long before attacking the male monopoly of the pulpit. They are trying to look in just as the business is failing.

Eva Earle, of Columbus, Ohio, was prosecuted for accepting a fee to pray at the bedside of a sick person. Judge Dick discharged her, and declared that any invalid had the right to hire another person to pray for him if he wished to do so. We should think so, indeed. What would become of the clergy otherwise?

Walter Bentley, the actor, son of a famous blood-and-thunder Scotch preacher, has become the Rev. Walter Bentley. He practises the soul-saving profession in New York, being the pastor of Holy Sepulchre Church. It is reported that he is having a theatre built under the sacred edifice. Which is a capital idea; for those who don't care for him in one part may be glad to see him in another. Pastor Bentley understands business.

The *Daily News* religious census of Lewisham is rather more gratifying, from the Christian point of view, than might have been expected. The population of the borough is 125,951; including 55,818 males and 70,133 females. The total attendances at morning and evening services—including men, women, and children—was 40,903. In the morning one person in five went to church; in the evening one person in six. One woman in six went to church in the morning; and one woman in five in the evening. One man in seven went on both occasions. Reckoning those who went twice, if we had the figures, it would perhaps be found that about one man in ten patronised the House of God.

Once more the Church of England comes out an easy first in the competition. Out of the total 40,903 attendances at Lewisham the Anglican churches accounted for 20,905. The Nonconformist aggregate was 16,990. The Roman Catholic aggregate was only 1,579. Other Services accounted for 1,103.

Considering the relative figures of Church of England and Nonconformist attendances in London, it is amusing to watch the airs the Free Churchmen are giving themselves. They are going to capture the Liberal party, repeal the Education Act, and disestablish and disendow the State Church. Probably also they will make Dr. Clifford the first Prime Minister—unless he is cut out by Dr. Campbell.

The recent Church Census at Marylebone disclosed about the same results as other London parishes. A very significant feature of the census, compared with that taken in 1886, is that, without taking into account the growth of the population, there is an absolute decline of 500 attendants at Dissenting places of worship, and 6,000 at those belonging to the Church of England. Yet we still continue to hear about the power of Christianity and the feebleness of unbelief!

Some good does come out of Nazareth occasionally. Mr. Anthony Deane, in *The Treasury*, an Anglican monthly, gives the following recipe to parsons preparing their sermons: "Take one skeleton, from someone's *Sermon Sketches*. Two stories from *Apposite Anecdotes* (Section ix.: 'Theological'). Three illustrations from *Hints for Muddled Ministers*, third series. One peroration from Liddon or Magee. One reference to the need of a new apparatus for the church. (This gives a topical flavor.) Mix the ingredients late on Saturday night, and serve up lukewarm on Sunday morning."

Just now Nonconformists are suffering from a bad attack of "swelled head." From the speeches of Nonconformist leaders and the articles in Dissenting journals, it would appear that whether elections are lost or won for the Liberal interest depends entirely upon the number of Dissenters in a division. We are told, for instance, that the reason why Mr. Longman was defeated at Chertsey was that Mr. Perks's letter split the Nonconformist vote. We are not pleased that

the Conservative member was returned, nor are we, for that matter, seriously grieved at the Liberal candidate being rejected; but at the same time we are not quite green enough to believe that the English electorate have come to the pass of looking to Church or Chapel for directions how to vote. Nonconformist leaders *may* believe this, and they are certainly trying to induce the general public to believe it. For our part, if sectarian religious interests are to be the determining factor in elections, we are of opinion that the old Tory prophecies as to the evils of a popular franchise may receive a justification very speedily. When an electorate looks to either Church or Chapel for political guidance, it is rapidly approaching political damnation.

Militarism appears to have invaded the public schools in the shape of the recent regulations concerning physical drill-course laid down by the Education Department. Against physical culture we have, it is almost needless to say, not the smallest objection. On the contrary, we believe that if more time in schools were devoted to this and less to senseless cramming, the results would be extremely beneficial to the nation at large. But a drill which deliberately aims at associating children's ideas of physical health with the military spirit is quite another matter. It is poor enough, in all conscience, to bring up children with the Samuel Smiles type of "thrifty" business man before them as an ideal, but the ideal of a soldier placed before young children is infinitely worse. An army may be necessary at present; the soldier may also be essential for the nation's welfare, for the reason that we, in common with other countries, are not yet sufficiently civilised to dispense with the argument of brute force; but we ought at least to recognise that the military spirit belongs to a low degree of civilisation, and to seek to curb it as much as possible. To introduce this element into schools is scarcely the way to bring this about. Nonconformists who have been shrieking about the dangers of having their religious rivals dominant in the schools, have on the whole been strangely silent on the matter.

The new program of physical instruction contains a letter signed by T. Kelly-Kenny, Adjutant-General. Since when has it been the rule to consult a military officer on educational matters? And for what reason? The *Times* gave an answer to the last question. In one of its articles on the Army, it said that "Some system of elementary training, including the use of the rifle, should be introduced in all schools in order to lay the foundations of a military spirit in the nation." This is letting the cat out of the bag with a vengeance. We are to fill children with the lust for fighting, and the worship of brute force, in order that the recruiting-sergeant may find his occupation easy! The main object of the schools is to benefit the Churches and the Army. The military and religious spirits have always gone well together, and they seem to agree now as well as ever. It is to be hoped that all parents, who really desire that their children will grow up with the better sides of their character developed instead of the worst, will raise an energetic protest against this exploitation of the schools in the interests of militarism.

"It is so easy to lose religion by criticising it," said the Bishop of Worcester, preaching in Westminster Abbey the other Sunday. So we have always thought; which is the reason why we continue to criticise it, and Christians to shun discussion.

The *Referee* notes that an American preacher advertised the subject of his sermon as follows: "Hell: What is It? Who Gets There? Seats Free. A Cordial Invitation to All."

Dr. Forbes Winslow, commenting on the rumor that identifies Chapman, or Klosowski, with "Jack the Ripper" asserts that the latter was a religious maniac who died in Broadmoor, after having been in the habit of attending service at St. Paul's every Sunday.

We notice, by the way, that Justice Grantham, in passing sentence on Klosowski, said that the only "satisfactory" feature about the case was that he was not an Englishman. We are not sure whether Justice Grantham is pleased to find that foreigners do poison people, or if he means that poisoning cases by Englishmen are unknown, or if it is merely one more specimen of judicial educated ignorance. Justice Grantham is a very religious man, we believe, and the expression so far serves to show how humanising religion really is.

Klosowski, it may be noted, is a very religious man, and has a Catholic priest in close attendance. Now, if he had only been an Atheist, we expect Justice Grantham's satisfaction would have been so great that he would have executed a *pas seul* upon the judicial bench.

The love of religious people for scientific developments is of a curious character. When the teachings of science can no longer be controverted, they are accepted as though the religious world had never entertained the least objection to them, and laborious and more or less dishonest attempts made to harmonise science and religion. But one can always detect the latent dislike, which expresses itself in a constant harping upon the limitations of scientific knowledge and the uncertainty of scientific generalisations. The recent discovery of "radium" offers an illustration of this. Radium, according to Professor Crookes, possesses the quality of giving out intense heat without any apparent loss. In some unknown manner it absorbs or utilises etheric vibrations sufficiently to compensate for the loss by vibration. The pious *Daily News* hereupon exultingly remarks that the principle of the Conservation of Energy is endangered by this discovery, and scientific men will have to reconsider their generalisation. Needless to say, the doctrine of the Conservation of Energy, which practically killed the doctrine of Creation, stands where it did. If "radium" manufactured the heat it dissipates out of nothing, or if it did not absorb etheric vibrations in order to give out this heat, then there would be the doctrine of the Conservation of Energy be at fault—or at least would be inadequate to account for the facts. As these things do not happen, the editor of the *Daily News* is only exhibiting his religious bias and scientific ignorance.

Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Sunday-school teacher and Standard oil magnate, drew a quarterly dividend of eight million dollars from the Company in which he is the principal figure. He bears this infliction of worldly goods with commendable fortitude.

Father Glader, a Catholic missionary priest, has been killed and partly eaten by a tiger near Someswa, Bengal, where the reverend gentleman was stationed. What a curious illustration of the doctrine of "Providence"! God made the missionary, and God made the tiger. God sent the missionary to India, and God put the tiger there to wait for him. God designed the time and place of their meeting "before the foundations of the world." God, in brief, made the tiger to eat the missionary, and the missionary to be eaten by the tiger. How beautiful!

A Christian Temperance orator induced a number of persons to sign the pledge to abstain from alcoholic drinks for Christ's sake. Twenty-three of them belonged to the Salvation Army. As members of that body they were already teetotallers. If this is how Christian Temperance orators make converts, it is not surprising that England's drink-bill goes up instead of down.

Mr. Charles Booth, in the new section of his *Life and Labor of the People of London*, deals with "Religious Influences." He does not take a very sanguine view of the influence of any of the religious denominations. Of the Wesleyans, in spite of their "forward movement," which is often too "forward," he writes very disparagingly. "With all this energy, activity, enthusiasm, and zeal," he says, "there is something hollow, unsatisfactory, and unreal about Wesleyanism as a religious influence which I find it difficult to put into words. I have said that the hard work and self-confidence of Congregationalists led to self-sufficiency, and the deep religious convictions of the Baptists to an obtrusiveness of piety which favored cant; so the enthusiasm and overwrought emotions of the Wesleyans produce a false atmosphere of exaggerated language." Mr. Booth adds that "Reports are set in a high key in order to get money," and that "In self-deception the Wesleyans have no equal."

It was not Mr. Booth's business, of course, to point out that self-deception leads to other forms of deception. Having got right behind the scenes in relation to the late Hugh Price Hughes's *Atheist Shoemaker* story, we were able to see how the Wesleyan "sisters" deceived themselves—with a little aid from another lady; how they deceived Mr. Hughes, who did not want much deceiving; how he deceived himself into believing a good deal more than was ever told him; and how he then proceeded to deceive the general body of Wesleyans "in order to get money" (as Mr. Booth puts it) for the West London Mission.

The Bishop of St. Asaph preached in London the other day on Pride. He said that the old Greeks regarded it as a virtue, while Christianity looks upon it as a sin. The great Christian virtue is humility. The first beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew's version) is "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

Whether humility is a virtue at all is open to question. The old Greeks understood *modesty*, and perhaps that is

something better. But if humility is the greatest of virtues, it must be admitted that the Christians are its worst practitioners. Their insolence is a bye-word all over the globe. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," said Jesus. "That is us," say the Christians; and they proceed to get hold of the inheritance of the meek with rifles and Gatling-guns.

Mr. George Jacob Holyoake's eighty-sixth birthday is approaching. It will arrive on April 20. On that day a reception in his honor will be held at South-place Institute. This is, of course, as it should be. But why does Mrs. C. Fletcher Smith, the honorary secretary of the South-place Ethical Society, in her letter to the press announcing this function, refer to Mr. Holyoake as representing "the last of the martyrs for free speech"? If this sort of thing goes on we shall hear by-and-bye that Mr. Holyoake's death will be the end of the world. It is not denied that there were "martyrs" before him; and, as a matter of fact, there have been "martyrs" since. Mr. Holyoake was prosecuted and imprisoned for "blasphemy" in 1842. There are three men still living in England who were not born then, and who have suffered imprisonment—and, in the case of two of them, longer imprisonment—for the same "offence." This fact is very well known, but is alluded to as seldom as possible, because these three men were attacked for their connection with the organ of fighting Freethought; to wit, *this* journal, the *Freethinker*—which has always been hated by the half-and-half, timid, and "respectable" Progressives.

Mrs. C. Fletcher Smith is not too happy in her method of expression. She concludes by saying that Mr. Holyoake's imprisonment proved that "fine and imprisonment were not after all the most effective weapons with which to combat freedom of thought and speech." Unintentionally, of course, this is a very poor compliment to Mr. Holyoake. It implies that his imprisonment taught the enemies of freedom of thought and speech a more effective policy of opposition than they knew before.

The Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association invites Church clergymen and Dissenting ministers to make Sunday, April 19, a special time of prayer against "the torrent of Sabbath desecration which seems to be flooding the country." Mr. Charles Hill, the secretary of the Association, can hardly believe that prayer will have much effect on this evil; but, of course, he is obliged to look to business and keep things humming. If the Lord means to stop "Sabbath desecration" he will do so without prompting. If he doesn't mean to stop it, he won't be egged on by any amount of supplication.

The President of the Wesleyan Conference is reported to be "actively co-operating" with the W. M. L. D. R. A.—What a name! He has addressed a letter to all Wesleyan ministers, asking them to preach sermons and arrange for instruction on observance of the Lord's Day to be given in their Sunday-schools. Are we to suppose, then, that this is not already done? The idea is ridiculous.

Canon Barnett told the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration that the morality of the Jews in East London did not compare unfavorably with that of their Gentile neighbors, and they were more sober. It is really very odd, considering the pretensions of Christianity, that Christians should be the most drunken people on the face of the earth.

Frau Rothe, the so-called "flower medium" of Berlin, has been tried for fraud, found guilty, and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. This lady was no doubt a swindler, but she does not appear to have done any worse tricks than are reported of most professional mediums. She made her living by the bump of wonder; not on her own head, but on other people's. This same trade is followed, not only by Spiritualist mediums, but by the men of God of all denominations. Catholic priests live on tricks that are performed now; such as turning bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, liquefying the blood of St. Januarius, curing sick people at shrines of the Holy Virgin, and hurrying the souls of the dead through purgatory. Protestant priests—for they are all in the same line of business—live a little more cunningly on tricks that were performed a long while ago, during and immediately after the fabulous career of Jesus Christ. That these gentlemen are not sent to prison like Frau Rothe only shows that they are powerful enough to keep at liberty. They belong to old and strong organisations; moreover, they control the education of the young; and thus they are able to carry on their imposture with success and impunity.

It is to be noted that Frau Rothe's performance always opened with prayer. This is the common practice of charlatans. You have only to go into a church or chapel to see a professional impostor bowing his head, shutting his eyes, screwing up his face, talking in an unnatural voice, and pretending to be communicating with a conjectural being called God. They differ a good deal amongst themselves in many respects; one says God commands this, and another that God commands that; but there is one point upon which they all agree, namely, that God loveth a cheerful giver.

Frau Rothe's imprisonment will not cure the credulity of her dupes. They love to be deceived, and are willing to pay for it. Many years ago a French charlatan was prosecuted for spiritualistic frauds. He made a full confession in open court, and showed how he had manipulated his dummies. One old colonel, however, declined to be disabused. "No," he told the court, "the man may have resorted to tricks and deceived everyone else; but he did not deceive me; what I saw was the spirit of my dear wife." And if he is alive now we dare say he believes it still.

During one of the recent storms the Rev. W. R. De Winton, a Primitive Methodist minister, of Hetton-le-Hole, was killed in his bed by the blowing down of a chimney. His funeral was a great demonstration, and an address was delivered by the Rev. A. T. Guttery, of Newcastle. "They were face to face," this gentleman said, "with what seemed to be a cruel mystery. God was not angered, yet they felt the cruelty of it." The preacher overlooked the fact that cruelty cannot be wrought except by a thinking, deliberate agency. Nature is not cruel, because nature is not conscious, and has no intention. But nature's proceedings are cruel, when they cause gratuitous suffering, if there is an intelligent being *behind* nature. Now this is precisely what Mr. Guttery believes; and it is he, and not the Naturalist, that has to account for the "cruelty" in this particular case. Of course he cannot account for it. He can only call it a mystery, and trust to God's beneficence. But this view of the matter was not shared by the jury. They recommended that the chimney should be rebuilt more securely, and indicated how this could be done. Presumably, therefore, the next Primitive Methodist minister who lives in the same house will be fairly safe when future storms beat upon it; and proper construction will prevent any further "cruel mystery."

Dean Lefroy has been obliged to utter a solemn warning in Norwich Cathedral against young persons who make that house of God a "place of assignation." With his own eyes he had seen young men come to the steps of the west door and beckon out young women—who had, alas, responded to the signal, and left Jesus for Tom, Dick, and Harry. Dreadful, no doubt! But the Dean should reflect that if young women didn't care more for Tom, Dick, and Harry than they do for Jesus, the human race in these parts would soon come to an end.

Mark's Precautionary Questions.

SENATOR Stewart of Nevada tells a story of Mark Twain's early days in Carson City.

"At that time," says Senator Stewart, "the humorist had not attained to the philosophic calm which comes with college degrees. He was a journalist, and an unterrified one. In Carson City he boarded at the home of his brother, who was a Christian.

"One morning I was a guest of this brother at breakfast. We had just seated ourselves at the table, when a voice drawled from the stairway above:

"'Have you read the Scripture lesson this morning?'

"'Yes,' was the reply.

"'Had family prayers?' continued the voice from above.

"'Yes, Sam,' said the host, smiling at me.

"There was a pause, and then, in the now well-known drawl, came the further question:

"'Said grace?'

"'Yes,' responded the patient head of the household.

"'All right, then,' came the cheerful comment from the stairway, 'I'll be right down.'

"And presently the irreverent youth, who in a few years was to promote the gaiety of nations, joined us at the breakfast table."

Adam was one day remonstrating with Eve on her extravagance in dress. She pondered for a minute or two, then said meekly that she would try and turn over a new leaf.—*Statesman* (Calcutta).

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

April 19, South Shields; 26, Manchester. May 10, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

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

TRUTHSEKER.—We regret to hear that Mr. Will Crooks would not answer your question, "Are you in favor of a purely secular system of education in the State-supported schools of the country?" It is, as you say, a "most deplorable thing that a man of Mr. Crooks' undoubted honesty generally should not think such an important question worthy of his notice."

R. S. CLARKE.—(1) Whoever doubts Thomas Hardy's being a Freethinker must be ignorant of his writings, or have read them inattentively. The fact is plain enough in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. It is also obvious in the two volumes of poems. One of these days, when an adequate opportunity occurs, we may take up this subject, and treat it with some fullness. (2) We have no great opinion of the character and value of Mr. Benjamin Kidd's work. To use an expressive vulgarism, it seems to us simply "kidding." We refer in particular to his *Social Evolution*. A certain pretentiousness of style may give it an air of profundity to unknowing readers.

E. PARKER.—Lecture Notices must be written separately. We cannot undertake to extricate them from your letters. Please give this your attention. The matter is very simple.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. R. MONRO.—We are obliged. See paragraph.

W. GHEAVES.—You cannot expect any writer to be always up to his best level.

OLD SECULARIST.—You are quite right, and our esteemed "Mimnermus" was wrong for once; at which he will not be surprised, for it is given to no man, not even to the editor of the *Freethinker*, to be infallible. Phil Robinson is not the author—that is to say, the original author—of that joke about the giraffe's "seven feet of sore throat." You say you have heard us use it in a lecture at least twenty years ago. Very likely. We used it in criticising the Design Argument, and we borrowed it, with acknowledgment, from Douglas Jerrold.

D. FREMANTLE.—Two of Gustave Le Bon's books have been translated into English—*The Crowd* and *The Psychology of Peoples*; both published by T. Fisher Unwin. They are powerful, profound, and suggestive. His *Psychologie du Socialisme*, a later work, is well worth studying; although he is opposed to a good deal that is commonly regarded as progress. On one point, at any rate, we agree with him, There is no baser or more baneful idolatry than the worship of the mob.

JAMES NEATE.—See paragraph. We hope your Branch will have a thoroughly successful season this year in Victoria Park.

E. CHAPMAN.—Subjects forwarded as desired.

A. NOTLEY.—Thanks for your cuttings; see paragraph. Thanks also for your efforts to promote the circulation of the *Pioneer* by distributing six copies monthly. You must kindly excuse us, though, with respect to the manuscript you refer to. We cannot undertake to revise it. Our work is already too heavy.

GEORGE JACOB.—Cuttings received with thanks.

INQUIRER.—Mr. Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* is an admirable piece of work, but it is too expensive for the general pocket. Unfortunately there is no cheap and trustworthy Biography of Paine in the literary market. We have often thought of writing one ourselves; but our time for such work is very limited, and we should be glad to see someone else tackle the job.

T. CARPENTER.—Certainly it is better for Secularists, whether old or young, to try their own hands at hard work than to spend their leisure in criticising those who are already doing it.

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.

We return again to the subject of that £100 we spoke of raising for the National Secular Society. Mr. Umpleby, it will be recollected, made an offer to give £10 if nine others would give a like amount. This friendly challenge was promptly taken up by Major John C. Harris. But there the matter rested for a while. A third promise came along, however, in the person of "A London Friend." And there the matter rested once more. Now a fourth promise comes along in the person of "A British Farmer." We know the gentleman very well, and are sure he will be as good as his word. "I regret to think," he writes, "of the feeble response you have yet obtained. For myself, I have had to work hard all my life, and live very economically; yet, to promote this object, I give you my word that if you obtain nine others I will contribute my quota. When the others are ready it will be my great pleasure to respond to your call."

Here, after a lot of trouble, are four names. Will the other six kindly hurry up? We don't mind if they all rush in at once. Six names in one week are a lot better than one name in six weeks.

Search is still being made for a suitable hall for Sunday evening Freethought meetings in West London. The task is one of very great difficulty; nevertheless, we are not without hopes of an early success, and we trust to be able to say something more definite next week. Should this be impossible, and a more serious delay be inevitable, Mr. Foote intends to deliver Sunday lectures in different parts of London. Some of the suburban parts need waking up, and we wish the "saints" would inform us as to suitable (and available) halls in such localities.

The West Ham Branch has secured the use of the Stratford Town Hall on Easter Sunday evening, when Mr. C. Cohen will deliver a seasonable lecture that ought to attract a large audience, and will do so if the local "saints" advertise it as they should throughout the district. The chair will be taken at 7.30.

The Bethnal Green Branch begins early its open-air propaganda in Victoria Park. The meetings are held in the afternoon at 3.15, near the Fountain. Mr. Cohen starts the new season to-day (April 5) with a lecture on "Our Objects." Local "saints" will please note, and notify their friends.

Freethinkers throughout Great Britain should note that the National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place on Whit-Sunday—the last Sunday in May. Branches of the Society should be making arrangements to be represented. Full particulars will appear in later issues of the *Freethinker*. The place of meeting cannot be announced until the voting papers come back to the Executive.

Now that the Twentieth Century Edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* is once more on sale, we venture to ask our readers again to do all they can to give it the widest possible circulation. Some of them might even give copies away to their friends and acquaintances. They can obtain copies for this purpose from our publishing office at the rate of 4s. 6d. per dozen. The carriage, of course, would be an extra 1s. By parcel post the cost would be 9d.

A list of the contents of the April number of the *Pioneer* will be found on the last of our advertisement pages. This is the fourth issue of the new venture, which is gradually taking its place as a live organ of advanced ideas. It is still but young, however, and requires nursing. We are doing our own best for it, and we once more solicit the assistance of our friends. Many of them could easily circulate a few copies among their acquaintances or in other judicious ways; in fact, many have done so hitherto, and we hope they will continue in well-doing. Copies for gratuitous distribution can still be had from the publishing office as follows:—Six for threepence, twelve for fivepence, and twenty-four for ninepence—in each case post free.

Mr. Foote has revised and amplified certain contributions of his to the *Freethinker* between June and October of last year. They are being reprinted in pamphlet form, with a Preface, under the title of *God Save the King; and Other Coronation Articles by an English Republican*. We hope to have the pamphlet on sale next week.

The N.S.P.C.C.

ON Thursday, March 12, an extremely respectable set of people (I think the Mayor was the most respectable and I was the least) assembled in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall. It was the annual meeting of the Leicester and South and East Leicestershire Branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I am a member of the Branch, and I think the work is very useful and deserving of general support. During the past year, by means of warnings, prosecutions, etc., the parents of 636 ill-treated or neglected children were dealt with by the committee through Inspector Ritchings and his successor, Inspector Mallett.

When the usual commonplaces had been commonplacéd about funds, thanks, etc., we all became expectant at the rising of the secretary of the parent society, the Rev. Benjamin Waugh. This gentleman has a well-modulated voice; his tones rise to declamation and fall to the whisper of pathos. While he spoke, the platform seemed a pulpit, the Council Chamber a church, and I felt I was a pew-opener.

"You have wiped the tears from sixty-two babies' eyes," he said, referring to the statistical report which told how the Branch had intervened to help sixty-two children under one year of age. "It is enough," added Mr. Waugh, "to make Leicester go into hysterics of gladness; and you may feel thankful you have had your share in a work so divine."

Certainly Leicester should be glad; but there are elements in the whole business which might make us too sober for hysterics. For instance, Mr. Waugh went on to say, with pride, that the National Society had, in the course of its career, sent between 35,000 and 36,000 men and women to prison for neglecting their own offspring. Now, this is a striking and unhappy fact which should claim the attention of the country in general, and of Imperialists and Jingoës in particular. How is it we have so many unnatural mothers and fathers among us? What social conditions breed them? And can any of these conditions be altered? To try and answer such questions would be philosophy—not the moon-struck philosophy of academics, but the plain, honest, common-sense philosophy which seeks for the causes of great social evils instead of resting content with sensational details.

—F. J. Gould, in the "Leicester Reasoner."

The Peasant of Nazareth.

By HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(Concluded from page 203.)

As a matter of fact, Jesus was mistaken about himself when he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," if we are to decide by the world's attitude towards him, for it is a truth that the world has not gone his way; the world has passed him. The very ones who worship him do not believe him; they do not keep his commandments, and they do not order their lives on the principles of his teachings, not one of them. There is not a minister of the Gospel to-day, bishop or clergyman, who, if called to a sick-bed, tries to pray devils out of a sick man. There is not a minister of the Gospel to-day who teaches the Sermon on the Mount, or who, if he did teach the Sermon on the Mount as it is written, would not lose his pulpit in thirty days. You do not loan to everybody who wants to borrow from you; neither does John Rockefeller. You do not give a man your overcoat and then say, "Here, take my undercoat, too, while you are about it." That shows you how mistaken Jesus was in supposing he had spoken the last word, and that nobody would ever go beyond him. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and you cannot have the way nor the truth nor the life unless you come to me. You see he was not only mistaken, but had that smallness of mind that belongs to teachers who are establishing sects here and there.

Another thing: Jesus was unkind and uncharitable in his judgment of others. It was he who said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," and then, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, he addresses the Pharisees: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.....For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made,

ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.....Ye fools and blind.....Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

And Jesus went about from city to city in the same mood. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you" (Matt. xi. 21, 22).

Suppose I should go around raving at people because they do not come to hear me, and necessitate our moving to larger and larger halls! Would not those who hear me say that I was foolish? Well, if that would be foolish in me, why was not that just as foolish in Jesus? The wise man, the great man, teaches what he has to say; and if people do not accept what he teaches, he knows that for some good reason they do not wish to, or cannot, accept it.

At times Jesus flew into violent fits of anger. Once the Pharisees brought a man to him on the Sabbath day to find some excuse for arresting him—the man with a withered arm. They brought the man to Jesus in the synagogue and laid a trap for him, and Jesus knew it was a trap, and the Scripture says Jesus looked upon them with anger.

Then, he did not like the way the people acted in the temple. Doves were being sold there, because the Jews used pigeons in their sacrifices. In giving tithes a special kind of coins had to be offered, and the money-changers were there to supply those coins, and it may be to furnish smaller pieces to put into the contribution boxes. The money-changers were there to furnish a particular kind of coin to be contributed in the temple. That displeased Jesus, and he went and got a cat-o'-nine tails, and began to whip the money-changers out of the temple and turn over tables. What right had he to do anything like that? To-day he would be arrested and sent over to the island as a disturber of the peace. The point is not because he violated the law, but he undertook his reform in an angry, foolish way. The wise man knows that the religious or economic policy of this world will never be changed except by thought. People act as they think, and a reformer should never allow himself to get into a passion. Why is it that people either denounce or make fun of Carrie Nation, and then worship a man who did just the same thing? Whatever her methods are, we are willing to admit that her intentions are good and honest; but we must admit that she is not a model woman, and if she is not a model woman why is he a model man?

And we read of his cursing a fig-tree because it was not laden with fruit out of the bearing season. Then, again, he was not respectful to his mother. I am the last person in the world who thinks a man should allow his mother to hold him back, and I have no sympathy with that large class of persons who say, "My mother's religion is good enough for me." Your mother, my friend, belonged to the generation before you, and nothing she believed should be good enough for you simply because she believed it. You are one step further along than your mother, and if you allow your mother to dominate your thoughts you become a nonentity in the world. If no person got beyond his mother's religion, we would all still be worshipping idols and stones. When Jesus was twelve years of age he wandered off away from his mother and father—or at any rate he wandered away from Joseph—and they found him some days after in the temple, talking with the doctors. When asked why he put them to that stress of mind, he said: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" He lacked consideration for his mother's feelings.

I repeat that I am not carping or simply finding fault. The character of Jesus to me has many attractions, and reading his biography gives me pleasure in certain ways. There are pictures of him that are beautiful and there are things he said that we

should all remember. I am not trying to take away any respect for him; but when told that he was a perfect man or a model man or a divine man, he was not so. He was just what he had to be in his time and environment. Let us be thankful that such a person ever lived, if he did live, but do not let us say that he was a model person.

Teachers like Jesus and Ralph Waldo Emerson are blessings to the world because they bring many persons of a lower plane of mind up to their planes, or as Walt Whitman said in one of his passages: "I want to bring you up flush with myself." But the difficulty of that is that they not only bring their times up flush with themselves, but they hold future generations back to themselves. To-day the great mass of Unitarians do not dare go beyond what Emerson said on any subject. That is what Jesus has been for nearly two thousand years, he has been a block to the world; he has held the world back. That is what Mrs. Eddy is going to do. She has written a book, and says: This is the last word. She has brought many persons out of some of their superstitions, but she will be a drag on the coming generations who will not reach beyond her thoughts of her day.

There has been no greatest man. Delmonico was probably the greatest cook that ever lived; Shakespeare was a great play writer, and Edison a great inventor. Many persons have been great in certain directions, but there never has been a greatest man. When an artist paints a picture he gets a model, or a half dozen models, and paints the qualities of all of them, and makes a picture that is not like any one of them, because no one man or woman is a perfect model. And so with teachers; there is no one great enough for you to pattern yourself upon. We don't want models in this world; we want our own ideals. If you should pattern yourself upon Jesus or Emerson or any other person you can think of, you would be doing yourself a great injury. The world has had one Jesus, and that is all that it needs. Work out your own idea of what you want to be, and then live to those ideas.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Book Chat.

GLADSTONE called John Stuart Mill "the saint of Rationalism." What would he have called Darwin, if he had known him? Darwin was the "Newton of Biology." He revolutionised the world of thought. But he was something still more attractive. He was a man of a simple and beautiful character. This is admitted by all who came into close contact with him, and is apparent in the *Life and Letters* edited by his son. He was also singularly fortunate in his wife, who was indeed his guardian angel, and without whom he could never have done the work he did. She was still living when the *Life and Letters* was published, and his noble and touching tribute to her in his Autobiography was held back in consequence. But it is given to the world now in the recently published *More Letters of Charles Darwin*.

This Autobiography of Darwin's was written for his family, and not intended for publication; though it was too characteristic and valuable a document to be left for ever in manuscript. Knowing this, the reader will understand the form of Darwin's tribute to his wife. It ran as follows: "You all know your mother, and what a good mother she has ever been to all of you. She has been my greatest blessing, and I can declare that in my whole life I have never heard her utter one word I would rather have been unsaid. She has never failed in kindest sympathy towards me, and has borne with the utmost patience my frequent complaints of ill-health and discomfort. I do not believe she has ever missed an opportunity of doing a kind action to anyone near her. I marvel at my good fortune that she, so infinitely my superior in every single moral quality, consented to be my wife. She has been my wise adviser and cheerful comforter throughout life, which without her would have been during a very long period a miserable one from ill-health. She has earned the love of every soul near her."

There can be no doubt that Darwin greatly exaggerated his "frequent complaints." He was one of the most patient

of men himself. But a tender and modest nature is apt to be too self-reproachful in thinking of trouble given to a beloved object. And in this case the beloved object must have been of the highest excellence to win the constantly reverential regard of such a man. Darwin was obviously quite sincere in wondering how such a woman became his wife. To a good man there is always something sacred in a good woman. Her living with him seems at times like a divinity consorting with a mortal. Even men of baser quality feel this reverence for the nobler sort of woman. Shakespeare was true to nature in making the light and sensual Lucio say to the beautiful and high-minded Isabella—"I hold you as a thing ensky'd and sainted."

Several of the letters in this new collection are addressed to Huxley. One of them is worth a special reference. It will be remembered how Huxley pitched into Bishop Wilberforce at the Oxford meeting of the British Association, when the fight over the *Origin of Species* was at its hottest. "I must send you a line," Darwin wrote, "to say what a good fellow you are to send me so long an account of the Oxford doings. I have read it twice and lent it to my wife, and when I get home I shall read it again; it has so much interested me. But how durst you attack a live bishop in that fashion? I am quite ashamed of you! Have you no reverence for fine lawn sleeves?" On another occasion he wrote, "You are my good and admirable agent for the promulgation of damnable heresies."

The Humane Review is published quarterly by Ernest Bell, 6 York-street, Covent-garden. It is handsomely got up, and the price is one shilling. This periodical is devoted, though not officially, to advocating the general objects of the Humanitarian League. The April number contains some interesting articles; notably a beautiful one on "The May-Fly" by Edward Carpenter. The front article is on "Cruelty to Animals and Theology," by M. A. R. Tucker, who writes as a Roman Catholic, believing that the great ecclesiastical organisation whose headquarters are at Rome is "the Church of the future as well as of the past." This writer hits out boldly against his Church's theology and practical attitude in regard to the rights of animals. "While Pius IX.," he says, in his opening paragraph, "was still nominally ruler in Rome the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals approached him for permission to establish a branch association in the city, where cruelty was rampant. The Pope's reply was set forth in a written document, in which he said that societies such as these might exist in Protestant countries, but could not be tolerated among Catholic peoples." The axiom is common to Catholic theologians that "Animals have no rights." Among the Latin race it is common to say that "Animals are not Christians." "Callousness to the fate of animals," Mr. Tucker says, "is embalmed in Christian theology." Cardinal Manning, who was an Englishman before he was a Catholic, once "tried to engage the interest of the Catholic clergy on the side of the animal creation," but he "met with absolutely no response."

It does not appear from anything that Mr. Tucker says how the Catholic Church is going to improve in this respect. Being infallible, its dogmas are unalterable. Individual Catholics, of course, may adopt the loftier humanitarian view, as Mr. Tucker does; but when did individuals or laymen determine the doctrines and policy of the Catholic Church?

Turning to the Bible, Mr. Tucker points out that it contains "three texts of great beauty":—"The merciful man is merciful to his beast." "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox which treadeth out the corn." "Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk." It should be observed that all those texts are from the Old Testament. They come down to us from the Jews. The Christians, who boast a higher morality, put nothing as good in the New Testament. On the contrary, Paul exclaims, "Doth God care for oxen?" This was a distinct retrogression.

Mr. Tucker speaks of Jesus Christ as "our Lord," and pretends that the sentence, "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father," carries us as far as we can go. But we cannot agree with him. No murder, no cruelty, on this earth is committed "without your Father." If there be a God, he looks impartially upon all actions. If you say that he prompts the good, you must confess that he allows the bad. Nor can we agree with Mr. Tucker that Jesus Christ "never supplies the theological ground for an ethical truth." We should say that he scarcely ever does anything else. We refer Mr. Tucker to the Sermon on the Mount.

Britain for the British is a little book of nearly two hundred pages published by the Clarion Press at the very

low price of threepence. Its author is Mr. Robert Blatchford—"Nunquam" of the *Clarion*. The title suggests a diatribe against foreign immigration, but the book contains nothing of the kind; it is really another plea for Socialism, and may be taken as a supplement to *Merrie England*. Mr. Blatchford has a simple and charming style, and is a winning advocate. He always tries to make things plain to ordinary readers, and this is one of the secrets of his literary success. But whether the social problem itself is as easy as Mr. Blatchford's treatment of it is readable, is, of course, quite another matter. Be that as it may, this little book deserves to find a wide public. It is written by one of the ablest spokesmen of the Socialist party in England; it is full of facts and earnest reasoning; and it is bound to do good, even amongst those who may be unable to accept the author's ultimate conclusions.

Mr. Blatchford states in his preface that the present state of affairs in Great Britain, and presumably elsewhere, is "contrary to Christianity." But what does that matter now? Mr. Blatchford has gone farther, at least openly, since writing *Britain for the British*. He is now attacking Christianity as a false and harmful religion. And in this work we wish him all prosperity.

Nonsense in the Pulpit.

LAST Sunday morning, having heard again and again of the wonderful fame of a certain Baptist preacher in the West-end of London, I wended my way to his chapel, which is a lovely building, capable of accommodating about twelve hundred people. On entering at the stroke of eleven, I found, not an eager crowd overflowing area and galleries, but a mere sprinkling of people, mostly women and children, in the area, and not a single person in the deep and spacious galleries. A voluntary was beautifully played on the organ by a lady, at the close of which the preacher made his appearance in the pulpit. As soon as he began to pray, two things became undeniable—namely, that he possessed a magnificent voice, and that he had nothing to say, either to God or to man, worth listening to. No wonder, then, that the area was less than half full, and the galleries entirely empty. He prayed three times, gave out several sentimental, trashy hymns to sing, read a Lesson, and preached a sermon. The Lesson was in 2 Kings, chapter four, and first seven verses. It was the account of an utterly incredible miracle, and between the different verses and clauses he interjected dead platitudes of his own. The poor widow of a departed prophet had a pot of oil, and nothing else except crushing debts. In her trouble, she went to Elisha, who told her to go and borrow as many empty vessels as possible from her neighbors. Out of the one pot she poured and poured until all the empty vessels were full. Then she sold the oil, and paid her debts. "Such things do not happen in our day," said the preacher; "but they *did* happen in olden times, and your duty and mine is simply to believe the inspired record." The Lesson consisted of seven verses, but the preacher's comments would have formed fifty additional verses, which doubtless will find their way into the text in some future editions of the Bible. Then came the sermon, which was founded on 2 Kings iv. 35. Here was a second miracle, more incredible than the first; but the preacher was delightfully at home with it. "Here is a truly great miracle for you," he said. "Some fine gentlemen in our day laugh at it, and assert that it never happened; but I believe that it did. I believe this old Book of God from cover to cover." When he said this, I noticed that several of the more intelligent-looking members of the congregation put their heads down, as if the statement somewhat disgusted them. Then he gave a painfully colloquial account of the friendship between Elisha and the Shunammite woman, of the miraculous (at every turn the miraculous was swallowed as a sweetest morsel) conception and birth of the child, of the child's illness and death, and of the great Elisha lying on the dead child, mouth to mouth, cheek to cheek, eyes to eyes (another mighty miracle, surely), until the child's flesh waxed warm, and he sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes, and became as much alive as ever he had been. Such was the sermon, which lasted thirty-seven minutes. A few women listened to it with rapt attention; but, judging by appearances, the bulk of those present regarded it as unspeakable twaddle. The church is situated in a densely populous thoroughfare, and yet, on one of the finest Sunday mornings imaginable, only the area-section of it was occupied, and that portion much less than half filled! The preacher referred to the enormous amount of Sabbath-breaking that now prevails in the metropolis. Of course, all who do not go to church are guilty of Sabbath-breaking! But I am convinced that I broke the Sabbath by going and listening to such unutterable nonsense. The truth is that

people are giving up church attendance because they cannot tolerate such impious charlatanry.

"Miracles do not happen in our day, but they *did* happen in ancient times." So the preacher assured us. He *knew* that they *did* happen long, long ago, in pre-historic days, but did not condescend to inform us *how* he knew. Some of us who have studied nature a little are fully convinced that they did *not* happen at any time. We fully endorse Matthew Arnold's famous saying, "Miracles have never happened." But if they did occur four thousand years ago, why are they not performed to-day? Yesterday a mother, in the East End of London, lost her baby, who had been born three months after the cruel murder of her husband. That baby was all in all to her—her one consolation in her terrible grief. Why did not some man of God visit that poor, heart-broken mother, and restore her only child to life again? Had he done so, what an infinite blessing it would have been to the grief-stricken mother, and as another result, by next Sunday there would have been 100,000 converts to Christianity east of the Bank of England. Why do not such miracles happen to-day? Because they never did and never can happen. Why are the churches of London empty? Because the ministers preach a dead faith, a faith in which the half of them do not believe themselves. I do not say that all preachers are hypocrites; but it is incontrovertible that most of them are guilty of playing to—the *empty* gallery; and ere long the area will be empty, too.

ANTI-HUMBUG.

Correspondence.

VIVISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Kindly allow me, for the second and last time, to reply to Mr. Ball. I shall not again trespass on your space. Mr. Ball's theory that the increase of cancer is largely due to medical skill, which, by preventing us from dying of curable diseases in early life, leaves us to fall a prey to a most terrible and *incurable* complaint in after years, is a distinctly novel one, but hardly likely to find favor with the medical profession, because, in that case, it might be best to dispense with doctors altogether, and take our chance of dying in some way that would cause us less suffering.

I certainly do not condemn vivisection on the ground that it has failed to afford guidance for the treatment of any specific disease. I denounce it for its appalling, demoralising, and, for the most part useless, cruelty; and I repeat my former assertion that many of the most ghastly and inhuman "experiments" of "scientists" are of no practical use, and merely demonstrate what a little common sense might teach us—*i.e.*, that certain tortures and mutilations result in agony and death. Those who wish to know what vivisection really is, should read *Scientific Research* by Dr. Stephen Smith.

Mr. Ball draws a truly affecting picture of the sufferings of worms under the plough and spade, and the consequent guilt of people who are selfish and callous enough to consume bread and vegetables, but I am still unregenerate. I fancy it is scarcely in the fitness of things that man and beast should be starved off the face of the earth in order to leave worms, slugs, snails, etc., in undisturbed possession. Seriously, what has all that ridiculous nonsense to do with the stern and awful realities of vivisection? There is a wide difference between killing animals required for food or destroying creatures that are harmful, and deliberately inflicting prolonged and cruel torture.

It was Mr. Ball, not I, who considered that, under certain conditions, man's speedy departure from this mundane sphere would be desirable. These conditions do not affect me, and I have at present no desire to take flight to another planet; but, when I do, I trust it will be to one from which vivisection and their supporters are carefully excluded.

A. GIBSON.

UNIVERSAL JUSTICE AND EXTRA-HUMAN RIGHTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is a matter indeed for profound astonishment, as well as for profound lament, on the part of every serious thinker, that any one aspiring to be an instructor of his fellows should attempt to undermine the philosophy of humaneness and of universal right—the only basis and the only hope of true progress for the world. Yet such seems to be the perverse ambition of too many "superior" persons who yet, in respect to theology and religionism, entertain more rational ideas than the generality; and Mr. W. P. Ball, in recent letters to the *Freethinker* apparently has chosen for himself that unhappy rôle. It was, therefore, with very great feeling of satisfaction that in your current issue I read

the very able and conclusive reply to his marvellous sophistry by Mr. H. S. Salt, who exposes so well the utter futility—may I add, and subterfuge?—of the amazing contention that, because earth-worms are unavoidably cut in pieces by the ploughman, therefore the frightful atrocities inflicted by the human animal (in the most various ways) upon his highly-organised four-footed fellow animals are not to be denounced by the promoters of the higher ethics. Such has not been the conviction and the teaching of the profounder thinkers and would-be radical reformers of their species, whether in the younger or in the older world, from the days of Sakya-Muni and of Pythagoras, of Plutarch and Seneca, to those of Voltaire and Bentham, of Wagner and Tolstoy.

In the same number of the *Freethinker* in which the admirably philosophical letter of Mr. H. S. Salt appears, Mr. B., I observe, "strong upon the [numerically] strongest side," associates himself to the pseudo-scientific Inquisitors, and again resorts to the most puerile subterfuge and sophistry—*quousque tandem?* I commend to his serious study the noble utterances of the late Col. Ingersoll (whose eloquent profession of faith is published) upon that most iniquitous of all the innumerable atrocities to which the harmless non-human races are submitted by Yahoo callousness and selfishness—the hellish tortures of the helpless, *voteless* victims of the physiological "experimentalists." But, judging from the position which he takes up, I much fear that he would be found, in this most significant department of the Higher Ethics, on the side of the sacerdotalists—of the notorious Father Rickaby (S. J.) *e.g.*, and that he would be quite ready to join in the ecstatic eulogy of Louis Pasteur—one of the Arch Inquisitors—recently delivered by a Rev. P. N. Waggett (S. S. J. E.) in one of a series of "Lent Lectures" upon "Science and Faith"—as I have chanced to learn from a sacerdotal paper sent so me by a friend. And yet no mediæval Torquemada has inflicted—it is notorious—more horrible agonies of torture upon his defenceless victims (and to make the iniquity yet more shocking, not only futilely, but even with positive mischief to the human world) than this especial pet of the allied sacerdotalists and pseudo-scientists. I say "allied" of set purpose, for beyond doubt there has long been an alliance—not the less firm because unacknowledged—between the two powerful institutions which have so much in common, paradoxical and strange as the assertion may seem to be.

I shall give myself the pleasure, in concluding this brief and inadequate protest, of citing a passage from *Animals' Rights*—the ablest and, what is more, most logical and consistent of assertions of extra-human rights known to me—of high significance:—"The present condition of the more highly organised domestic animals is in many ways very analogous to that of the negro slaves of a hundred years ago. Look back, and you will find in their case precisely the same exclusion from the common pale of Humanity—the same hypocritical fallacies—to justify that exclusion; and, as a consequence, the same deliberate, stubborn denial of their social 'rights.' Look back—for it is well to do so—and then look forward, and the *moral* can hardly be mistaken." In fine, as Michelet protested, there can be no such thing as *exclusive salvation*. H. W.

THE INQUISITION AND THE "GOLDEN RULE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Cohen asks, in your issue of the 15th ultimo, "Did not the members of the Spanish Inquisition believe in the teaching, 'Do unto others,' etc., on the grounds that if they became heretics they would deserve to be burnt?" I think they either did not believe or narrowed the application of Jesus's teaching to suit their own murderous appetites, otherwise the broad application of the rule would have been: "We burn you to death because you do not believe as we believe, and you have an equal right to burn us to death because we do not believe as you believe." Such seems to me to be a full and right application of the so-called Golden Rule. In matters of persecution it justifies any man that does not mind being burned to death himself in burning his fellow-man, woman, or child to death in the name of Jesus, although his said fellow-man may object to either burning to death others or being himself burnt to death for a difference of opinion on speculative or any other grounds. The fact is, this much-misunderstood "rule" justifies any man in inflicting on any other man any agony or suffering the former thinks he would submit to or deserve in a similar case; in other words, whatever loss, torture, or death you are prepared to suffer for your own opinions, you are justified (by the "rule") in inflicting on any other man who does not hold your opinions! So, even in the widest application to religious persecution, it is the fanatic's, or the wicked man's, weapon.

On this said "rule" I know of nothing quite so finely written by way of explication and analysis as the passages in William Renton's *Jesus*, under the heading of "The Artificer," and I think nowhere else have I seen it quite so

clearly shown that the so-called Golden Rule is a mere advice to every man to make his own desires and conduct the rule by which he should regulate his actions towards his fellow-man. I quote a very small portion of Mr. Renton's analysis: "Now, it is a curious fact that the standard which is selected for the primary purpose [*what he would wish to be done to himself in the same circumstances*] is that of self-interest. This standard is, of course, immediately negated or reversed so as to produce, as far as may be, an unselfish result. But it is assumed that the individual will naturally wish the best he can for himself, and that what he wishes for himself, if he will only disinterestedly apply it to other people, will be the best for them. The suggestion is an acute one—for it is exceedingly clever to take the individual at his most selfish point and make him abnegate, at his own expense and in another man's favor, that which he would most have desired—and might be just were the principles of self-interest, which it follows by reversing, a high one, and not the very lowest which exists.....It is actually supposed that what a man would like done to himself, however selfish and wrong, it is right that he should do to another, supposing himself and that other alone to be affected.....The radical fallacy in the maxim is the assumption that everything a man wishes to be done to himself is *right*; as if everything he does wish were what he ought to wish....."

Jones very much wishes to be made drunk; therefore he is to make his neighbor Brown drunk! Robinson would very much like Smith, who is a Pagan, to be converted by his (R.'s) arguments; therefore he is to allow himself to be converted to Paganism by the arguments of Smith, and thus is doing by Smith as he would have Smith do by him. Whereupon, if Smith reciprocates, a perpetual *chassez-croissez* is established between the pair! SIRIUS.

Contributions.

The Rev. Dr. Cunningham instructs his congregation that it is not enough to give to the Church what they can spare, but to give and keep giving until they feel it to be a burden and a sacrifice. These, brethren, are the inspired words of one who has a deep and abiding pecuniary interest in what he is talking about. Such a man cannot err, except by asking too little; and empires have risen and perished, islands have sprung from the sea, mountains have burnt their bowels out, and rivers have run dry, since a man of God has committed this error.—*Dod Grile (Ambrose Bierce)*.

Charity.

Charity is certain to bring its reward—if judiciously bestowed. The Anglo-Saxons are the most charitable race in the world—and the most judicious. The right hand should never know of the charity that the left hand giveth. There is, however, no objection to putting it in the papers. Charity is usually represented with a babe in her arms—going to place it benevolently upon a rich man's doorstep.—*Dod Grile (Ambrose Bierce)*.

The Strenuous Life.

A Nebraska cowboy eloped with his employer's daughter; the angry father shot him in the hip; a preacher married the pair while the doctor probed for the bullet, and then the preacher went out with a gun and chased the father away.—*Buffalo Commercial*.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held on Thursday, March 26. The President (Mr. G. W. Foote), in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, F. Davies, W. Leat, J. Neate, C. Quinton, S. Samuels, T. Thurlow, F. Wood, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting were confirmed; monthly Cash Statement read and adopted.

The President reported that a remittance for the N. S. S. share of the Shilling Fund had been handed to the Secretary.

Three new members were admitted to the parent society, two for Kingsland Branch and one for South Shields.

Invitations for the reception of the Society's Annual Conference were received from Birmingham and South Shields, and others were under consideration.

The Sub-Committee elected to deal with the re-organisation resolution presented their report, which will appear on the Conference agenda.

Other minor matters of business were dealt with, and the meeting adjourned. EDITH M. VANCE.

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.)

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, G. Spiller, "Herbert Spencer's Conception of Justice."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Aylmer Maude, "The Root of Religion."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tun-stall-road, Brixton): 7, John C. Van der Veer, "Ibsen's Brand."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Harrold Johnson, B.A., "St. Francis."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen, "Our Objects."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, J. Fagan.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, Mr. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): Harry Snell, 3, "What is Left to Believe?" 7, "Marcus Brutus and the Ethics of Assassination" (a Shakespearean Character Study, with Readings).

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, John C. McDougall (Glasgow), "The Church, the State, and the Social Problem." Discussion invited. Music at 6.15.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "How God was Made."

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

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson. "Spencer's Reconciliation Between Religion and Science."

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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