

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Whenever knowledge takes a step forward, God takes a step backward.—NACQUET.

Bible Difficulties.—II.

V.—IMPURE BIBLE STORIES.

DR. TORREY admits that the Bible contains "chapters which describe sins that cannot wisely be dealt with in a mixed audience." But for all that it is not obscene. It does not aim at provoking lust. There are passages "in the very best and most valuable medical works that are not fit to read in public, and ought they not to be there?" Dr. Torrey contends that the Bible is "in part a book of moral anatomy and therapeutics" and must be criticised in the light of that fact. It would, indeed, be less the Word of God than it is if it did not contain the very things to which the "infidel" most loudly objects.

There is undoubtedly some force in this argument, but not force enough. The medical books that Dr. Torrey refers to are not pressed into the hands of children like the Bible. That is one answer to what he says, and it will hold good until an "inspired" edition of the Bible is provided for children and another "inspired" edition for adults.

We need not follow Dr. Torrey in his defence of the story of Onan as a part of God's Word, except to say that he does not seem to understand it. Onan's offence had nothing whatever to do with "lust and its sickening consequences." Dr. Torrey is simply misled by an accident of language—the misuse of a proper name.

It would have been more to the purpose if Dr. Torrey had defended what the "infidels" regard as the unnecessary grossness of many parts of the Bible. The story of Lot and his daughters, for instance, has little if any ethical value. As a warning against drunkenness it is extremely crude, and only adapted to a very low state of society. It is not one of the arguments of the temperance cause to-day that if a man gets drunk he may commit incest with his own daughters. The truth is, indeed, that Lot's daughters made him tipsy for a purpose that is given in the text. They did not see that they were doing anything wrong in the circumstances; neither, apparently, did he; and there is no condemnation of their conduct in the Bible. Of course the true "inwardness" of the story is simple enough. The Jewish chroniclers wanted to throw a filthy aspersion on the origin of two of their hereditary enemies—the Moabites and the Ammonites; and that filthy aspersion is now offered to Christian children as part of the very Word of God.

Naturally this is a subject that we do not wish to treat with much fullness in a public journal. We feel bound, however, to allude to the manner in which the Bible writers go out of their way to be offensive. Sometimes, instead of simply saying "man" or "woman," they indicate the sex by the method of performing certain natural functions. Surely, if God is the author of the Bible, and meant it to be read thousands of years afterwards by the children of civilised parents, he would have guarded against such brutal modes of expression.

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Dr. Torrey evidently feels he has a bad case in hand in this division of his pamphlet. Why else should he think it necessary to appeal to the most vulgar prejudices against "infidels"? When a man answers his opponent, and then shakes his fist and swears, we know he is getting the worst of the argument.

This is what Dr. Torrey permits himself to say to Christian audiences; this is what he permits himself to write and print:—

"The Bible is not a favorite book in houses of prostitution. The books that try to make out that the Bible is an obscene book, and to keep people from reading it, are favorite books in houses of prostitution. The unclean classes, both men and women, were devoted admirers of Colonel Ingersoll. They do not frequent Bible-classes; they did not frequent his lectures and similar lectures."

Anger need not be expended on the author of these sentences. He suffers from a very ancient curse, and is perhaps to be pitied. It is to be feared that upon his belly he will go, and dust will he eat, all the days of his life.

Dr. Torrey may be a good authority on the literature of brothels. We will not pause to inquire how he became so. We want to say that he is not to be trusted to tell the truth about "infidels" or their literature when there is anything to be gained by telling the opposite.

Why the "unclean classes" should rush after Colonel Ingersoll is in this respect like the peace of God, that it passes all understanding. There is the Dresden Edition of his lectures, speeches, and writings, in twelve big volumes. Is there an "unclean" or "suggestive" word in all that multitude of pages? Are there not a thousand tributes to the beauty of pure love, of the true marriage of one man with one woman, of sweet and tender homes, and of all the holy joys that make the real greatness of life for every section of human society? Are not his utterances on these themes so numerous, so noble, and so poetic, as to leave little but gleanings to those who go over the field after him?

We hope Dr. Torrey speaks out of a plentiful lack of knowledge. Sin through ignorance is not as bad as sin against the light. We should be sorry to think he had ever heard Ingersoll or read a line of his writings. It would be so infinitely sad if there were a single human being—even a revivalist—who could be so little impressed by Ingersoll's beautiful speech on these beautiful things as to make him a target for the most putrid insults.

But enough of Dr. Torrey in this connection. To mention him in the same breath with Ingersoll is almost a profanation.

Let us take a more general calumny from this American revivalist. He says that "the child who is brought up on infidel literature and conversation is the easiest prey there is to the seducer and the procuress." It is the infidels, then, who provide the supply of prostitutes! We do not believe it; we call it a ridiculous theory; we say it is bigotry run mad. But suppose for a moment it is true. Who pay for the prostitutes? Why, the Christians of course. There are not "infidels" enough to keep up the wretched business—and Dr. Torrey knows it.

All this, however, is a digression. We had to follow Dr. Torrey, and we have done so. (But we repeat, in conclusion, that his personal abuse of

"infidels" only shows that they have hit him very hard in relation to the impurities of the Bible.

VI.—CONTRADICTIONS OF THE BIBLE.

Dr. Torrey says—but what will he *not* say?—that he is constantly meeting "infidels" who tell him that the Bible is full of contradictions, but they are puzzled and confounded when he asks them to produce one. They caught a "sceptic" at one of Mr. Moody's meetings and handed him over to Dr. Torrey. And this is what followed:—

"I handed him my Bible. He was greatly disconcerted, and began fumbling with the leaves, saying it was somewhere in Psalms. Finding that he was searching for Psalms over in the New Testament, I offered to find Psalms for him. He did not seem to know much about the book of which he was so sceptical and about which he had been so dogmatic. Having found the book for him, he was now at a loss to tell in what Psalm the contradiction he referred to was found."

There is more of the same sort about the same "sceptic," but it is not worth following. Dr. Torrey has simply overdone the story. It is ridiculous to represent a "sceptic" as fancying the book of Psalms is in the New Testament. Even a Christian knows better than that.

In case Dr. Torrey is really anxious to obtain an "infidel" list of contradictions in the Bible, we may inform him that he can obtain one for fourpence—twopence less than the price of his own pamphlet—at the publishing office of the *Freethinker*. There are forty pages of them, printed in parallel columns, and we invite him to deal with them.

Only one contradiction is tackled by Dr. Torrey in his pamphlet. The Bible says that "No man hath seen God at any time." It also says that Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders, went up a mountain and "saw the God of Israel." This certainly *looks* like a contradiction. Yes, says Dr. Torrey; but that is because you don't view it the right way. Then he enters upon a rigmarole about "seeing the back of his head," which he might say he had done, although he had really only seen the reflection from one glass in another. We are unable to see the relevance of this illustration, so we will leave the back of Dr. Torrey's head, and take the front, and see if that is any better.

Dr. Torrey's position is that God is "essentially invisible," but "has been pleased in his great grace to manifest himself again and again in bodily form." We are not told what "essentially" invisible means. We understand the adjective, but we suspect the adverb in front of it is one of those "blessed words" like "Mesopotamia." It is a handful of dust thrown into the reader's eyes to make him see clearly. But the principal point is that Dr. Torrey has not "solved" this contradiction. He does not even face it. There is no need to talk about essential or inessential invisibility. The Bible says in Exodus that seventy-four men saw God; and it says in the New Testament that no man ever saw God. There the contradiction stands. And if Dr. Torrey talks for a week he will find the contradiction standing still.

VII.—THE UNJUST STEWARD.

This is the most civil division of Dr. Torrey's pamphlet. It seems to be chiefly addressed to Christians. He begins by telling of a lady who was puzzled by the parable of the unjust steward and had "about made up her mind not to teach that lesson." Thereupon the American evangelist proceeds to answer her doubts. We do not propose to follow him. The trouble is of a domestic character, and the Christians may be left to settle their own disputes amongst themselves. Besides, it is a thankless task to discuss the meaning of a parable. All sorts of different and even contradictory meanings have been got from such things in the Gospels. We shall not aggravate the Babel.

VIII.—WAS JESUS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH?

Sceptics have often asked, and quite naturally, how three days can be figured out between late on Friday afternoon and early on Sunday morning. It

has been suggested that most of the period could be reckoned as overtime, under Trade Union rules, and that this would pretty nearly save the credit of the Bible chronology. But this does not satisfy Dr. Torrey, if he has ever heard of it. Being an American, he is too good at arithmetic to believe that the necessary three days and nights can be obtained by any of the hackneyed methods of interpretation. He therefore starts the theory that Jesus was really crucified on Wednesday. That gives plenty of time. And the sceptic may consider himself annihilated.

Dr. Torrey forgets that he has to convert his fellow Christians to the Good-Wednesday theory before he can have a right to fasten it upon sceptics. Until then he must not expect to be taken too seriously. What he says on this point is really "rich." Disregarding the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—who represent the Passover as having begun, he accepts the quiet correction of the later and more erudite Fourth Gospel that it was only "the preparation of the Passover." This quiet correction was made in order to stop the discredit thrown upon the story of Jesus Christ's death by the ignorance of Jewish laws, customs, and manners displayed by the other Gospel writers. It was a clever move, and it has our admiration. But we are not going to let it serve the turn of Dr. Torrey—unless he expressly denies the accuracy of the Synoptics. If he does that, he can have a long free run in John's company, as far as we are concerned.

IX.—JONAH AND THE WHALE.

The mention of Jonah always raises an ancient and fishlike smell. It is really wonderful that people should be found at this time of day who believe in the literal truth of Jonah's submarine adventures. Dr. Torrey is one of them. He accepts the story in a spirit of faith; moreover, it has the endorsement of Jesus Christ himself. God, he declares, could "without the least difficulty prepare a fish with a mouth and throat big enough to swallow not only Jonah, but the whole ship too." Of course he could. Granting the conception of a miracle-working God, the curate was not such a fool as he looked who said that he would have believed the Bible if it had made Jonah swallow the whale. One miracle is just as easy as another.

But the American evangelist does not know when he is safe. He will sally out from cover and tackle the "whale" story. "The Bible," he declares, "nowhere says that Jonah was swallowed by a whale." Yes it does, in Matthew xii, 40. The Old Testament says "a great fish" and the New Testament margin suggests "sea monster." But no such species are known to the biologists. Let us be more definite. Really the whale will do as well as anything else. It has got into the story, and let it stop there. Dr. Torrey's efforts to remove it only display a want of humor. There is no need to consider physiology in a miracle. The more romantic—that is to say, unscientific—it is the better. We feel inclined to demand three cheers for the whale. It really adds to the gaiety of nations—which is more than you can say of Dr. Torrey.

X.—THE FATE OF REJECTERS.

Dr. Torrey ends his Jonah chapter by declaring that no one can believe it is an allegory "who accepts the authority of Jesus Christ." In the next, and final, chapter he declares that all who do not accept Jesus Christ will have to go to hell and suffer there for ever and ever. It follows, therefore, that hell has just swallowed Dean Farrar, and is waiting for Canon Driver, Dr. Sanday, Dr. Cheyne, and other exponents of the Higher Criticism. The only way to reach heaven is to believe what Dr. Torrey does, to read the Bible as Dr. Torrey reads it, and generally to say "Ditto!" to all his opinions and sentiments. No wonder they have imported him from America to save England!

G. W. FOOTE.

Dissenters and the Education Act.

"OH, LIBERTY," cried Madame Roland, "what crimes are committed in thy name!" Madame Roland's own position at the time had, doubtless, much to do with the cry, but it might have been uttered with as much force in the study, after a careful survey of human history, as amid the stirring scenes of the French Revolution. The world's reformers have fought to the battle cry of liberty, and not unfrequently their opponents have used the same word as a battle cry. The movement of the Protestants against the Church of Rome was on behalf of "liberty"—liberty of conscience, liberty of belief, liberty of action—yet events showed only too plainly that their understanding of the phrase meant little but liberty to differ from others, and freedom to suppress others when they had the chance. The man to whom liberty is a real thing, who values it as something not only to be gained for himself, but for all others likewise, is not often met with, and when he does arise he is generally a lone fighter carrying on a solitary warfare against an army.

Point is given to this by what is now taking place in the religious world over the new Education Act. For over thirty years the leaders of the Established Church, who believe that it is part of the business of the State to teach religion, and the leaders of the Nonconformists, who profess to believe that the State should not interfere in matters of religion, have agreed in maintaining religion in public elementary schools. There has never been quite a state of peace during this period; peaceful hostilities—if the phrase is permissible—would better describe the condition. But both parties have agreed in maintaining religious instruction for the simple reason that for them some religion was better than none at all, and to make children followers of the Christian religion before they were old enough to understand it, was essential if they were to grow up in that faith.

During all these years all sections of the community, whether they believed in Christianity or not, whether they believed in religious instruction by the State or not, have been taxed, and both locally and nationally compelled to contribute towards the teaching of the Christian religion. Freethinkers have never ceased protesting against this, and in return have been answered with specious arguments as to the value of Christianity to a nation's development. Of course this was not the point at issue. The point at issue was the injustice of compelling people to pay for a religion they did not believe in, and in using public money for the maintenance of a number of schools over which there was no efficient public control. Still, it suited the purpose of both Christian parties, and Nonconformist and Episcopalian agreed in maintaining this moral and political iniquity.

All at once there is a change in the position—not a change so far as principle is concerned, but only one of detail. The whole of the voluntary, that is, religious, schools are thrown upon the State for their complete maintenance. Religious instruction is no longer compelled to find a portion of its support by private begging, public funds supply all that is needed. If the majority of the voluntary schools had been Nonconformist I have no doubt but that this would have been hailed as a stroke of enlightened statesmanship. But the majority of the schools are in the hands of the Church party, and this measure means giving the Episcopalians in relation to the Nonconformists—and in relation to them only, since on the whole the *public* have more control over the elementary schools of the country than ever it had before—a larger measure of power and influence. At once the country is deafened with the cry of "Liberty." Those dissenters who saw no harm whatever in compelling an Atheist or a Jew to support Christianity, so long as *they* were getting something like a fair share of the support, are horror-stricken at the idea

of compelling Nonconformists to pay school rates while their religious rivals get the best of the bargain. Dissenters awake to the consciousness that there is a principle at stake the moment that their sectarian interests are touched. The position, let me repeat, is exactly what it was, in principle. Some have all along been made to pay for the religion of other people, and Dissenters have helped to enforce the payment. The only new feature is that Dissenters are now getting the worst of the bargain. They are being hoist with their own petard.

I have gone over what is anything but virgin ground because, with demonstrations and addresses going on, it is well to bear in mind what exactly is the principle in dispute. Nonconformists are now threatening opposition to the Act, and their opposition is to take the form of a refusal to pay rates, and to allow their goods to be seized in default. A "Passive Resistance" Committee has been formed, and it is quite probable that this form of resistance will be carried into effect. Martyrdom in a crowd is an attractive pastime, and there is sufficient *clat* about the present agitation to screw a certain class of people up to the striking point. It is also probable that, if the opposition is general enough, the Government will yield so far as to modify the Act in operation sufficiently to meet the demands of Dissenters. So far as Freethinkers are concerned, we can await either result with perfect equanimity. So long as it is a question of *which* form of religion shall have the upper hand, I have little or no preference—or, if I have any, it is a preference for the most objectionable.

The *British Weekly* asserts that the present question is "for us a matter of life and death." This may be true. From a sectarian point of view it is doubtless vital which sect controls the majority of children, but to foist this upon the public as a *national* question is absurd. If the *British Weekly* wishes to raise a question of really national importance—a question that does involve a distinct principle—let it and others fight the Church of England on the plain, straightforward grounds of absolute non-interference of the State in matters of religion. It will then have all people of genuine principle on their side; and it will show that their talk of "A free Church in a free State" has something in it more than sectarian rivalry. Until this is done one may be excused for believing that the grand objection of the Dissenter to the present measure is not that it benefits a Church, but that it benefits *the* Church that is opposed to their own.

If anyone doubts that this quarrel is at bottom a sectarian one, in spite of the talk of Dr. Clifford and his supporters, let them reflect first that, so long as the arrangement suited Dissenters, they were imposing upon non-Christians every one of the hardships they now complain is being imposed upon them. Second, that in some cases—notably in Wales—rather than have a religious teaching that might favor the Church of England, School Boards actually adopted secular education, and eliminated religious instruction altogether. Which meant either that all the talk of religious instruction in public schools being necessary was so much bluff, or that they were giving the children a defective education rather than give their religious rivals an advantage. And, thirdly, that no one is more eager to invoke the aid of the State than the Dissenter, whenever it is to his advantage to do so. He seeks relief from various rates, and so throws a heavier burden upon others. He invokes the aid of the State to maintain laws which either directly oppress anti-Christian forms of thought or stands in the way of an anti-Christian propaganda. Yet these are the people who shriek about "principle" the moment they are made to swallow some of the physic with which they have so liberally dosed other people. The Dissenters' real objection is not to the State favoring a religion, but to the one favored.

The new President of the Baptist Union, Mr. Alderman White, M.P., gives as the reason for his resisting the Education Act that it subjects teachers

"to religious tests which place a premium upon hypocrisy, and are a bribe to dishonesty." I am not aware that the Act actually does this to any very much greater extent than has been the case since 1870. As a matter of fact, religious disabilities have existed under nearly every School Board in England; not legally, I admit, but actually. What chance has a known Atheist stood of promotion by School Boards where there existed a majority of religious members? All teachers know as well as I do—little or none. If they were known as such their chances of promotion were doomed. If they were known as Atheists when applying for a post their chances of appointment were diminished. Teachers have had to keep their opinions to themselves; they have had a bribe held out to hypocrisy and a premium placed on hypocrisy; and many will support me in saying that the necessity for silence was strongest when the Nonconformist strength was greatest.

Not in school life only, but in social life generally, has this been the case. Let anyone honestly ask themselves what kind of a chance a known Atheist stands of succeeding in business in the midst of a large Baptist or Methodist population? Let any such stand as candidate for a public office, and see who works the theologium odicum hardest. Anyone who is honest to themselves and their convictions knows full well that in applying the weapon of social ostracism as a punishment for heresy the dissenter is, if anything, even more ready than his fellow Christian of the Established Church.

Let me take but one instance of this. Some time ago I called attention to a sermon of the Rev. R. F. Horton, in which he said that people who did not believe in the doctrine of immortality bestialised life, lowered the tone of everything, and ought to be ostracised from decent human society. This dictum, if acted upon, would exclude as unfit for human society men like Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, or John Morley, to go no farther back, and to keep to our own country. This is the class of men whom Mr. Horton would shut out from human society for the crime of not agreeing with his religious opinions. Yet this is the man who now joins with others in denouncing the intolerance of other Christians, and weeping over the iniquity of imposing religious disabilities. One may guess the amount of intellectual freedom that would be current if Mr. Horton had full power to put his opinions into practice.

The truth, the whole truth, is that the present agitation is only a new form of the old sectarian quarrel. It is not education that the "Passive Resistance" Committee is interested in, but religion. Education will not suffer under the Act; taken all round, it stands to gain. What will suffer will be a particular section of the Christian world; and, as this section has been largely instrumental in perpetrating an injustice upon the general community, as it was the recreancy to principle of the Nonconformists in 1870 that opened the way for religious obstruction and intolerance in the field of education, there is a certain melancholy satisfaction in the present condition of affairs. The only honest solution to the present difficulty would be secular education. But this one religious party dislikes as much as the other. Meanwhile, the only hopeful feature about the position is that it is just probable that sectarian jealousy may produce what a sense of social justice seems powerless to obtain.

C. COHEN.

NOT THE ONLY ONE.

One day while the Rev. H. M. Purrington was pastor of the Baptist Church at Canton he was riding towards Gilbertville with a dilapidated old horse. He overtook a young French lad and gave him a lift. As they rode along the parson asked the boy where he was going.

"To Gilbertville. Where are you going, sir?"

"I am going to heaven, I hope," replied Mr. Purrington.

"By gosh you'll have to change horses, sir, or you'll never get there."—

—*Lewiston Journal.*

Balzac.

1799-1850.

THERE are few writers so difficult to estimate as Honoré Balzac—or de Balzac, as he loved with pardonable vanity to hear himself called. His ill-assorted literary gifts, his coarseness, his sensationalism, his inexhaustible fecundity, make up a bewildering and disconcerting personality. With the exception of a few short stories, there is hardly a piece, certainly not a book, in the whole collection of his work which is a thoroughly artistic performance. Nor is there a single piece which does not convey an impression of tremendous power.

Personally he would seem to have been of an ardent and energetic nature; possessed by a rage for work. His one passion is power. His notion of the world, a struggle where victory is won by strength, courage. Success is in no way a matter of morals. The battle is to the strong, not to the righteous. For himself he saw in literature his way to the exercise of the power which he loved. His whole character in its assumption and ambition is epitomised in the line which he inscribed below his bust of Napoleon: "What he could not achieve with his sword, I will accomplish with my pen."

Balzac's life reads like a romance. Burdened by debts, undermined by conspiracies, so falsified by the forgeries of his imagination that it is no longer possible to disentangle truth from—let us say, with Goethe, poetry. But, amid the extravagances of an overwrought fancy, one fact is certain. Abandoned by his family to the pursuit of letters, without means, he fought his way to success, in the very teeth of starvation, by sheer perseverance and labor. His was, perhaps, the longest and severest apprenticeship ever served by a great writer. His unacknowledged work alone would constitute in quantity a very respectable achievement. Yet he never succeeded in mastering a style or acquiring a form. To the last his work is confused and amorphous, crammed with irrelevant details, crowded with episodes. At most he learned how to dominate his readers.

Yet upon some minds—and they are neither few nor commonplace—he acts like a powerful stimulant. That the fascination is frequently morbid may be allowed; but that it is on the whole genuine is proved by the fact that he has long survived Eugene Sue, into whose province the remoter confines of his realm shade imperceptibly. For these minds it is Balzac's ineradicable romance which constitutes his perennial charm. For, after all, his realism, of which so much has been made, is only superficial. His circumstantial descriptions, his physiology, are all pretences—the cloak that he assumes to disguise the real extent of his fabrications. At the last resort he is a dexterous manipulator of intrigue, a manager of powerful situations, and a maker of highly sententious phrases. It is for the sake of his bewitching women, who bear the burden of their years so lightly; his outrageous scamps like Maxime de Trailles; his whole gallery of preposterous and admirable prodigies—the Marneffes, the Rastignacs, the Goriots—that we delight in him.

It was in 1836, according to his own story, that the notion of the "Comédie Humaine" took shape in his mind. It was not until six years later that he found himself in a position to justify the announcement of so stupendous a conception. His idea was nothing less than that of correlating all his work, past and future, into one vast system, having for its end the complete description of French society in all its phases and activities, its businesses, professions, philosophy, science, art, government, religion—in fact, all its multifarious, pulsating life.

Behind this design there is, as might be surmised, a pretence of cosmical philosophy. Avowedly his point of departure is Geoffroy Saint Hilaire's well-known postulate that the differentiation of animals

is brought about entirely by the individual's adaptation to its environment. Following this clue, Balzac came to see in humanity a different species for every pursuit. And as the natural historian could make up his account of the animal only in the effect of its environment, he aspired in the same way to become the natural historian of society.

It is always necessary to follow a writer with caution when he begins to theorise about his own work. At the same time, it is interesting to notice here the first appearance of that kind of scientific arrangement which was to continue to our own day and figure so largely and triumphantly with Zola and his "Rougon Macquart" series. This, after all, is Balzac's most original contribution to the idea of the novel. Writing before the formularisation of evolution, he was the first in letters to grasp the general principle that man is generally what his business or profession makes him. Acting courageously on this conviction, he was able to rescue him from the abstraction he was rapidly becoming in fiction by reinstating him in his environment. And so, if Rousseau was the first, as Sainte Beuve says, to introduce verdure, Balzac may be said to have been the first to introduce money into literature.

By no means faultless, Balzac remains, like Shakespeare, a creator. The "Comédie Humaine" is a transcript of life itself. Fragment that it is, a monstrous Babel as Zola calls it, with its forty volumes and its two thousand characters, it still looms colossal in its ruins. Unique and magnificent, like the pyramids of Egypt, testifying to the gigantic powers of its architect.

"A fortified residence 'gainst the tooth of time,
And rasure of oblivion."

MINNERMUS.

LITTLE LYRICS.

ORTHODOXY.

This god you blindly fashion doth insult,
The omniscience and omnipotence you lend him;
While praise of his perfection is your cult,
With piteous puerilities you blend him.
You mold him in man's likeness, undismayed
That in man's worst corruptions he should revel,
Nor heed that man himself, when all is said,
Too oft hath shown himself three parts a devil.

TWI-NAMED.

Beyond our ken lies a vast expanse
Which knowledge has never trod;
The scientist calls it Ignorance,
And the pictist calls it God.

SNEERS.

I know the sneer of the wicked,
I know the sneer of the wise;
I know the sneer of the harlot's curse,
And the sneer in the outlaw's eyes;
But the sneer of all that I love the least
Is the sneer on the face of the cocksure priest.

JARGON.

You vaunt, in sermonising strain,
The vital "discipline of pain."
You urge that all our woes arise
From heavenly mercy in disguise;
That stings of sufferings have been sent
Only with one divine intent;
That courage, reverence, faith, should glow
More bright beneath affliction's blow.
—Good friend, my faithful hound last night
Perished in anguish of some blight,
Earth, air, had given.....Could his poor brain
Conceive your "discipline of pain?"

ON THE PIETY OF WILHELM II.

The number of monarchs our world has seen
Is beyond conception prodigious;
But, wicked or virtuous, all have been
Irreproachably religious.

—The Conservator (America).

EDGAR FAWCETT.

God is a pure spirit, but, nevertheless, he has an eye to the temporal blessings of this world, without which his spiritual ministers could not subsist.—Voltaire.

International Freethought Congress.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE GATHERING AT ROME.

M. Léon Furnémont, Deputy for Charleroi to the Belgian Parliament, and General Secretary of the International Freethought Federation, has been in London for the purpose of forming an English Committee in anticipation of the International Congress to take place at Rome on September 30, 1904, the thirty-fourth anniversary of the entry of the Italian troops into Rome.

Similar committees have already been formed in various other countries, notably France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Holland, and Switzerland. On the several national committees there figure such well-known names as those of Professor Haeckel, the illustrious German professor, who continues the work of Charles Darwin; Professor Berthélot, secrétaire perpétuel of the Académie des Sciences at Paris; MM. Aulard, Gabriel Séailles, professors at the Sorbonne; M. Hervé, director of the Institut des Hautes Etudes at Paris; such distinguished senators as MM. Clemenceau and Delpech; and numerous deputies, representing all shades of the Republican party, amongst whom MM. Buisson, Lockroy, and Hubbard may be noted.

THE WORK IN ITALY.

In Italy the Committee is headed by such well-known men as Professor Lombroso and Signori Enrico Ferri, Colojani, De Cristoforis, and Pellegrini (Deputies of the Italian Parliament), and Professor Sergi, of the University of Rome. Professor Bovio, the distinguished savant and patriot, whose lamented death occurred a few days ago, had accepted the position of honorary president of the Congress.

The recent successes of the Spanish Republican party have sent to the Cortès a number of deputies who have already joined the Committee in that country. Amongst these may be mentioned Nicolas Salmeron, the former President of the Spanish Republic, Miguel Morayta, the Grand Master of the English Freemasons, and Admiral Marengo (Deputy for Cadiz).

On the Belgian Committee will be found the names of Professor Hector Denis and the following Deputies: M. Léon Furnémont, Paul Jansen, the leader of the Liberal party, and Georges Lorand. The office of the Federation is at 13 Rue du Moniteur, Brussels.

WORK OF ORGANISATION.

It may be noted that M. Furnémont is now proceeding to Berlin, Vienna, and Buda-Pesth, in order to form the German, Austrian, and Hungarian Committees. Already in the various Republics of South America similar Committees are being constituted.

The English Committee will comprise representatives of all grades of rationalist thought. Professor Henry Maudsley and Mr. George Jacob Holyoake will be the presidents d'honneur. The other names include those of Earl Russell, Lady Florence Dixie, Mr. Joseph McCabe, Mr. John M. Robertson, Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. F. G. Gould, Mr. Edward Clodd, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, Mr. E. Belfort Bax, Mr. Victor Roger, Mr. C. Watts, and Mr. W. Heaford.

THE CHURCH AND SCIENCE.

Has Science ever retreated? It is Catholicism which has always retreated before her, and will always be forced to retreat. Never does Science stop; step by step she wrests truth from error, and to say that she is bankrupt because she cannot explain the world in one word and at one effort is pure and simple nonsense. If she leaves, and no doubt always will leave, a smaller and smaller domain to Mystery, and if supposition may always try to explain that mystery, it is none the less certain that she ruins, and with each successive hour will add to the ruin of the ancient hypotheses, those which crumble away before the acquired truths.....It makes one laugh to hear people assign a rôle to Science, forbid her to enter such and such a domain, predict to her that she shall go no further, and declare that at the end of the century she is already so weary that she abdicates! Oh! you little men of shallow or distorted brains, you politicians planning expedients, you dogmatics at bay, you authoritarians so obstinately clinging to the ancient dreams, Science will pass you and sweep you all away like withered leaves!

—Zola, "Rome."

I hold that the human body, like all living bodies, is a machine, all the operations of which will sooner or later be explained on physical principles. I believe we shall sooner or later arrive at a mechanical equivalent of consciousness, just as we have arrived at a mechanical equivalent of heat.
—Huxley.

Acid Drops.

Some "citizens of Oxford" have issued a sort of manifesto, which is honored with a great deal of space in the *Westminster Gazette*. For this reason we suppose it is of some importance. It appears that the manifestors felt bound to give public reasons for their resolution "to leave the law to its own resources for the collection of that portion of the Education rate which is levied for the maintenance of Denominational schools." These gentlemen—for we dare say they are all Nonconformist preachers—talk a precious deal about "conscience," but what they mean by it has no relation to the dictionary meaning of the word. The real reason of their outcry is a wound to their self-interest. They say so with wonderful plainness in the following passage;—"The Education Act affects all sections of the nation, religious and non-religious. Yet (to use the word of the late Archbishop of Canterbury) the Act was the outcome of a 'bargain' with the Established Church alone, Nonconformists and those who belong to no Church being entirely excluded from consultation. To the result of such a bargain, made with one section and imposed upon all the others, those not consulted cannot be a party."

Note the artful way in which the "no Church" parties are drawn into this little argument. It is done, of course, for the purpose of *looking* impartial. But the "no Church" parties are not taking any part in this pantomime. Under the old Education system they were the victims of a "bargain" between the Church and the Nonconformists; when they complained of it they were only sneered and laughed at; and it was the Nonconformists who did most of the sneering and laughing. But the case is altered (of course!) when the Nonconformists themselves are excluded from the "bargain." Then it becomes a sanguinary tyranny, and must be resisted to the death—or at least to squabbling with the poor-rate collector. Verily the joke is upon the Nonconformists this time, and the laughing is done (for once in a way) by the "no Church" parties. It is so delightful to see the hypocrites caught in a trap made after their own original model.

There is a Bradford Citizen League (Yorkshire for Nonconformist Association), formed for the purpose of resisting the operation of the Education Act. Addressing a meeting of this body on April 27, the Rev. D. Walters, of Leeds, said that the time had now come for them to be prepared for sacrifice, and the shedding of blood if need be. The matter is really getting serious in Bradford. We do not know whose blood it is that must flow, but evidently somebody's is to be shed. Heroics seem as contagious as fever.

King Edward, while in Rome, could hardly help paying a visit to the Pope. It was a "private" visit, of course, although the old Pope would not have cared twopence to see him if he had not been King of Great Britain and Ireland.

When at home, King Edward is the head of the Church of England as by law established. Now the Church of England has a Book of Homilies, and in it the Pope is described as "Anti-Christ." Having visited Anti-Christ, the King should try to visit Christ. But this might be more difficult.

Professor Henslow was lecturing at University College, London, the other night on "Christian Apologists," and a vote of thanks to him was proposed by Lord Kelvin, who took the opportunity to say a few words "on his own." His observations were reported as follows in the *Westminster*:—"He was in thorough sympathy with Professor Henslow, but he could not say that with regard to the origin of life science neither affirmed nor denied creative power. Science made everyone feel a miracle in himself. Modern biologists were coming once more to a firm acceptance of something, and that was a vital principle. They had an unknown object put before them in science. In thinking of that object they were all Agnostics. They only knew God in his works, but they were absolutely forced by science to admit and to believe with absolute confidence in a directive power—in an influence other than physical, dynamical, electrical forces. Cicero had denied that they could have come into existence by a fortuitous concurrence of atoms. There was nothing between absolute scientific belief in creative power and the acceptance of the theory of a fortuitous concurrence of atoms. Was there, he asked, anything so absurd as to believe that a number of atoms by falling together of their own accord could make a crystal, a sprig of moss, a microbe, a living animal? People thought

that, given millions of years, these might come to pass, but they could not think that a million of millions of millions of years could give them unaided a beautiful world like ours. They had a spiritual influence, and in science a knowledge that there was that influence in the world around them. He admired the healthy, breezy atmosphere of free thought in Professor Henslow's lecture. Let no one, he urged, be afraid of true freedom. They could be free in their thought, in their criticisms, and with freedom of thought they were bound to come to the conclusion that science was not antagonistic to religion, but a help for religion. (Cheers.)"

Lord Kelvin is not a biologist. That is why he finds so many proofs in biology of the existence of God. Would it not be more to the purpose if he found those proofs in his own science of chemistry? Darwin, on the other hand, *was* a biologist—the greatest in the world. Haeckel also is a biologist. Do they encourage the idea that science is a help to religion? Nothing of the sort. Darwin was an Agnostic, and Haeckel is an Atheist.

It is odd to see Lord Kelvin falling into a mathematical blunder. Diderot long since pointed out, and Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace evidently feels, that there is a blunder in the theory that "chance," in the sense of matter operating by its own inherent force under strict necessity, could not produce "a beautiful world like ours." Given infinite matter, infinite time, and infinite space, and nothing is impossible.

Why does Lord Kelvin talk so about this *beautiful* world? It contains a multitude of things that are *not* beautiful, and some very beautiful things are very terrible. The under-jaw of a tiger is said to be one of the most lovely bits of plastic machinery in the world; and the best view of it is when you lie on your back and the tiger stands over you. With regard to the *general* beauty of plain and hill, and sea and sky, and vegetation, it is enough to say that nature could not produce a race of beings to whom her common aspects were *ugly*. This is to suppose a chronic and continuous maladjustment of organs to their environment. Is it not easy enough to see that our sense of beauty has been bred in us in subordination to the great and durable aspects of nature?

It does not seem to us that Lord Kelvin does his own intellect justice in his excursions into the realms of theology. Probably the reason is that he has learnt science for himself, and that he first took his religion (on trust) from his mother, and afterwards had it fortified by his "spiritual pastors and masters." What he now puts forward as arguments for the religion thus acquired are only excuses for retaining it.

The *Christian Commonwealth* is much perturbed over the "anti-Christian" Socialism of "Nunquam." "Mr. Robert Blatchford," it says, "writes with the accent of sincerity, but seems to be deficient in the historic faculty." We should hardly have thought this to be true of "Nunquam's" indictment of Christianity. It is only when one really knows the history of Christianity—knows it, not in the sense of a theological professor, but in the sense of feeling that it was with men and women that Christianity was juggling for centuries, and realising how much of our present evil is a heritage from these Christian times—that one begins to also realise what an obstructive force Christianity has been. Finally, it thinks that "Mr. Blatchford would be in a stronger position if he would point to any hospitals, orphanages, almshouses, or other institutions created and supported by the representatives of unbelief." After this there is nothing more to be said. To paraphrase Lucian, when a man takes refuge in a hospital or a lunatic asylum it is time for criticism to leave him alone.

Many attacks have been made upon the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. The Rector of Cloncha, Derry, has just added to their number—if not to their wisdom—by the criticism that much of the contemporary indifference to the depth of sin is due to the influence of the *Data of Ethics*. We do not quite understand in what way the *Data of Ethics* has contributed to this result, and we have always been of opinion that those who have really read the work have found its influence anything but demoralising. Mr. Rolph imagines that he is disposing of Spencer by firing at him a number of questions such as "Why must I do right?" and "Why must I hate sin?" If he spends a few hours over the book he is talking about, he will find these questions answered as no other ethical treatise of the last fifty years has answered them. And after all it will require more than the conundrum of an obscure Irish rector to undo the influence of Herbert Spencer. The old simile of the glow-worm and the sun is hardly in it with such a comparison.

A Liverpool paper has the following: "The Curate of Christ Church, Sefton Park, desires another Sphere of Duty, as the Curacy Fund is in debt; excellent testimonials." Poor curate! There is a certain ingenuousness in the desire to be transferred to another "sphere of duty," because the "curacy fund is in debt," and no salary, we presume, forthcoming. We have for a long time been expecting to see a procession of out-of-work curates and underpaid clergymen parading the streets with an unemployed banner. We wonder, though, if there would have been any desire for "another sphere" if the salary had been secure? Probably not.

From Switzerland the news comes that many of the clergy there are so badly paid that they are turning up the churches and taking to the trade of innkeepers. However, this is a transposition rather than a change. It is only another branch of the spirit business.

The Calcutta *Statesman* has some pretty plain speaking on the British expedition to Kano. It asserts that the missionaries have played a large part in inducing the Government to undertake the expedition, in the hopes of overthrowing the Mohammedan influence. All men, it says, Christian and Mohammedan, will honor the missionary who preaches a religion which he honestly believes to be superior to Islam. "It is a very different matter, however, when Christian missionaries bring secret influence to bear upon a Christian Government to make war against a Mohammedan Power. Such action is inspired by identically the same spirit which justified to contemporary minds the barbarities of the Inquisition and the savage war of religion which for so many generations desolated Europe." From what we know of the tortuous tactics of missionary societies, we are inclined to think there is probably something in our Indian contemporary's remarks.

The same paper also reports the burning down of the Bradlaugh Congress Hall, on March 8. The hall was a standing monument of the great Atheist's interest in Indian affairs, and also of the native recognition of his work. We sincerely hope that another building will be erected in its stead and with the same name. Unfortunately the hall was not insured, so that there may be some little difficulty in the matter of rebuilding.

At Chard, Somerset, part of the funds for building a Sunday-school was raised by a public dance. The Rev. R. F. Horton was much scandalised at this method of raising money. It showed the growth of a terrible infidelity in their midst. When money was wanted, he said, they should hold a prayer meeting, not a dance. Probably they had tried both methods, and had discovered which brought in the most cash.

The *Bath Argus* reports that 1,000 acres of land has been bequeathed to the Salvation Army in Australia. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

According to the Rev. F. J. Bouskin, Baptist minister of Bath, God always dwells amid "cloud and darkness." We presume this is only a euphonious way of saying that people must get in a fog to hear him.

A "relic of the true Cross" was exposed for the worship of the faithful in St. Paul's Catholic Church in this city on "Good Friday" after the "service in memory of the three hours' agony of Christ on the Cross." Of all the thaumaturgical humbugs of the Church this "true Cross" relic humbug is about the baldest. If Christ ever lived, and died on a cross, which is very doubtful, that cross has ere now been made away with. During the Crusades every fanatic who went to Palestine brought back a part of the "true Cross," and during the Middle Ages there were cords upon cords of wood denominated pieces of the "true Cross" in the monasteries and churches of Europe. But "the faithful" like to be gulled, and so the priests kindly oblige them.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A laundryman named Edward John Munn, 55, of Beethoven-street, Queen's Park, W., who was very devout and was believed to have developed religious mania, shot himself after writing a long letter, from which the following are extracts:—"My dear wife Lizzie, and my loving children and grandchildren,—I am compelled to leave you all. My sufferings are great and unjust. I have prayed thousands of times to the Lord for relief, but my prayer was never answered. It is very hard to leave you all; obligation is no choice. Hell on earth for a long while. Look after mother; the shock will be severe.....With tears in mine eyes I write, but of tears I have shed torrents." The verdict of the jury was

"Suicide while of unsound mind." We do not question that the man's mind *was* affected, the fact of his having "prayed thousands of times to the Lord" would be an indication of this. Still, these verdicts are distinctly suggestive. Last week we called attention to the fact that the *Daily News* characterised a suicide's belief in the omniscience of God, and faith in a future life, as "strange delusions." This week it is the fact of praying "thousands of times" that gives part of the grounds for a verdict of insanity. What next, we wonder?

Many a man has been told to "Go to hell" on making a request of some kind or other, and the *Referee* now calls attention to the fact that many dramatists and novelists are visiting the same region for plots and inspiration. Miss Corelli started with *The Sorrows of Satan*; Mr. Robert Buchanan produced *The Devil's Case*; Mr. Bernard Shaw manufactured a play called *Hell* in the United States; another play, called *Heaven and Hell*, has been produced; and, last, Sir Henry Irving is now appearing in *Dante*, in which hell plays a prominent part. Literature and the drama seem to be going to the Devil in double quick time. It is, too, perhaps a sign of the times that, after people have been for centuries terrified with hell and the Devil, these should now be subjects to while away the tedium of an evening. It will be the turn of their opposites next.

Mr. Keir Hardie appeared twice in a *Daily Telegraph* leaderette as Mr. Keir Hardy. Such is fame! Mr. Hardie was mentioned in connection with the Penrhyn debate. Another M.P. thus mentioned was Mr. Jones, who gave a new recipe by an eminent authority for keeping Lent:—"Conceive," he said, "a desire for mortifying the flesh and mortify the desire."

Mr. Lloyd George is proud of the Welsh mountaineers, who mostly live in the valleys. He describes the mountains as "the ramparts thrown up by God for the defence of freedom upon the earth." Was it intended by God, then, that the inhabitants of flat countries should be the victims of tyranny? Holland is flat enough, but its inhabitants made perhaps the greatest stand in history against an alien despotism; and some of their descendants in South Africa gave John Bull a terrible lot of trouble.

What we have said all along about the reforming zeal of the Czar of Russia is now being seen to be true even by the *Daily News*. We laughed at the Czar's recent manifesto—in which, by the way, religious toleration figured—just as we laughed at his project for a Peace Congress. Words, we said, were cheap enough; it was deeds that counted. And what were Nicholas's peaceful and progressive words worth, when the pen that signed them was used to destroy the liberties of Finland? The *Daily News* itself now finds that the Czar is "as clay in the hands of the potter," and has "succumbed to the bureaucrats."

The tender mercies of pious Czar Nicholas will be understood by the following incident—which is not our invention, but is recorded in the *Daily News*. Cossacks were commanded to knout a perfectly orderly crowd in the square of Helsingfors. General Von Kraemer, a Finlander, interfered to protect a defenceless lady who had been driven into solitude by a Cossack, where she was being savagely maltreated with the most cruel of whips. For this the General was severely reprimanded by the Czar!

There is a Theistic book published by the Church of England Book Society, under the misleading title of *Modern Atheism*, from the pen of M. Naville, late Professor of Philosophy in the University of Geneva. Referring to Secularists as a "sect," he says: "At the present moment the affairs of the sect would not appear to be very flourishing. A few years ago, a Secularist orator had delivered a vehement speech in favor of virtue. Just as he had resumed his seat, a policeman entered the room and took him into custody. A few days afterwards the *Times* informed its readers that the orator of virtue had just been condemned for theft to twelve months' imprisonment." Someone has evidently been "getting at" M. Naville. We never heard of the case, and have no doubt it is imaginary. Even if it were true, we might ask M. Naville if he has never heard of Christian preachers being sent to prison. This gentleman seems to be either very innocent or very something else. We give him the benefit of the doubt.

By the following resolution, introduced in the Kansas House of Representatives recently, it will be seen that prayer is believed to have its limitations in that vicinity: "Whereas, Ordinarily we have implicit faith in the efficiency

of the prayers offered by the chaplain, and believe that much good will come from them, yet we also realise that in praying for the Mayor of Topeka he is tackling a job too large for the salary involved, and is uselessly consuming the Lord's time by such prayers; therefore, be it Resolved, That our chaplain be requested to limit his supplications to those for whom there is still hope of redemption."—*Boston Investigator*.

The Deceased Wife's Sister Bill has been carried again in the House of Commons, and we suppose it will be contemptuously kicked out again in the House of Lords. The Bishops will come down in strong force, and implore the Peers to save the honor of England as a Christian country. And the Peers will save it. Some of them haven't too much honor of their own to save. But what does that matter, if they save the honor of their country?

One speaker in the House of Commons, during the debate on this Bill, asked where in the Bible a man was forbidden to marry his deceased wife's sister. No one was ready to oblige him with the reference. So far from forbidding this practice, the Bible informs us that a man whom God loved, named Jacob, married two sisters without waiting for a funeral. Not only did God love Jacob, but there is positively no other person in the whole of the Bible, with the exception of the ambiguous case of Jesus Christ, of whom the same fact is recorded.

It was not a full House that divided on the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, and the majority was therefore not actually as large as on former occasions. Relatively, however, it was quite satisfactory. The numbers were, 166 for, and 96 against. The minority was composed of 87 Unionists, 1 Liberal (Mr. Caldwell), and 8 Nationalists. The majority was composed of 62 Unionists, 89 Liberals, and 15 Nationalists. Thus the Liberals presented a practically unbroken front in support of the measure.

Rev. H. Fisher Short, Unitarian Minister, of Aberdare, has been preaching what the local *Leader* calls "an interesting and edifying discourse" on "A Young Man's Religion." In the course of it he made the following observations of two giants of Freethought: "He would like to say a word or two to readers of Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. He had not a word to say against the moral character of these men, but he protested against their being regarded as giants of learning. Paine had been superseded by modern scholars in even orthodox circles. As to the work of Robert Ingersoll, there was very little in it. Where it was destructive, he was simply thrashing a dead horse; and where it was constructive, it was only third-rate."

It is very good of Mr. Short not to say a word against the moral character of Paine and Ingersoll. But his drawing attention to the fact shows what Christians—even Unitarian Christians—generally expect when ministers criticise Freethinkers.

Mr. Short need not have protested against Paine and Ingersoll being regarded as giants of learning. We never heard of their being regarded in that light by their warmest admirers. They had learning enough; and enough is as good as a feast. In addition to a sufficiency of learning they had strong powers of mind—not excluding common sense. Ingersoll had also a strong poetical faculty, which often give his utterances a remarkable beauty. To say that he was only third-rate when constructive is to say what is not quite capable of discussion; for there is no standard which can be appealed to. To say that he was simply thrashing a dead horse when destructive, is a great absurdity. The horse is not dead yet, and it was very much alive in Ingersoll's time. If he only thrashed a dead horse, why did the American religious world beg God to convert him? And why did it breathe a big sigh of satisfaction at his death?

Just a special word about Paine. Suppose we admit that he has been superseded by modern scholars in even orthodox circles. What does that prove? Does it prove that Paine was a failure? Quite the contrary. It proves that he was a splendid success. When your enemies take up your work for you, and carry it farther than you did yourself, you have won the greatest victory.

The late Dean Farrar—that painfully good Christian—feathered his nest pretty well. His estate is valued at £37,391 5s 9d. We hope the religion he taught is not true. It is not pleasant to think that all that weight of money is dragging him down in the bottomless pit.

Roman Catholic Progress in the United States.

THE *Catholic News* has just issued this statement:—

"It is perhaps not generally known that there are fourteen States and Territories in the Union in which Catholics outnumber all the Protestant denominations combined. The following table, which is accurate, will therefore be of interest;

	Catholic Population.	Per cent of Catholics.
New Mexico	120,000	96
Montana	51,281	85
Arizona... ..	42,710	74
Nevada	9,900	72
Massachusetts	862,500	71
Rhode Island	291,330	69
Louisiana	355,120	65
Wyoming	6,640	62
New York	2,174,300	58
California	312,370	55
Colorado	61,200	54
Connecticut	271,880	53
Minnesota	333,311	53
Michigan	367,400	51

"In the 125 largest cities of the United States the Catholic population aggregates 3,644,000, while the total number of Protestants is only 2,117,000. The entire population of these cities is 14,110,000. In the country as a whole one person in every 3.21 is a communicant of a church; in the cities, one person in every 2.24."

Whether these figures are accurate we cannot tell, but manifestly some explanation is needed. If the population of the 125 large cities amounts to 14 millions, with only 3.64 millions of Catholics and 2.11 millions of Protestants, a total of 5.75 millions, of what religion are the remaining 8.25 millions? If they are simply the non-communicants estimated to belong to the different religions, then we have the 3.64 millions of Catholic communicants representing a Catholic population of 8.2 millions in the 125 large cities, in which, however, our Catholic contemporary gives a total "population" of but 3,644,000. It would almost seem as if Catholic population had been compared with Protestant communicants. But there need be no doubt that the same "steady and sure" policy is being pursued in the United States as we see being carried out in Canada, and it may not be many years before we may count more Roman Catholics on this side of the Atlantic than in Europe; for it must be remembered that a large portion of the immigrants entering the United States are Catholics.

—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

The duty of a philosopher is clear. His path lies straight before him. He must take every pains to ascertain the truth; and having arrived at a conclusion, he instead of shrinking from it because it is unpalatable, or because it seems dangerous, should, on that very account, cling the closer to it; should uphold it in bad repute more zealously than he would have done in good repute; should noise it abroad far and wide, utterly regardless of what opinions he shocks, of what interests he imperils; should, on its behalf, court hostility and despise contempt, being well assured that if it is not true it will die, but that if it is true it must produce ultimate benefit, albeit unsuited for practical adoption by the age or country in which it is first propounded.—*Buckle's "History of Civilisation."*

Even under David, the man after the Lord's own heart, we find him torturing to death the prisoners taken at the fall of Rabbah, and giving up seven of the sons of Saul to the Gibeonites to be sacrificed before the Lord as human victims. It is one of the strangest contradictions of human nature that such atrocious violations of the moral sense should have been received for so many centuries as a divine revelation, rather than as instances of what may be more appropriately called "devil worship."—*Samuel Laing*.

Man has properly as his own but the use of his opinions.—*Epictetus*.

If on his specious marble we rely,
Pity such worth as his should ever die!
If credit to his real life we give,
Pity a wretch like him should ever live.

Samuel Wesley.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(All Engagements suspended for the present.)

To Correspondents.

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

BRUNO.—(1) Pleased to hear from one who has been a reader of the *Freethinker* from the beginning. You pay us handsome compliments on our "having kept the good old flag flying so bravely through all those years of storm and stress." What we know is that the task has been hard, and that we have done our best. We have suffered many disillusionings; there are some things we regret, and some persons we could wish we had never seen; but never for a moment have we regretted our fight for Freethought; and we would rather stand alone, or fall beside a broken blade, than abandon it. Whatever else we have missed, we have "drunk delight of battle" against the enemies of liberty and reason. (2) Yes, you can be a member of the N. S. S. through headquarters by applying to the General Secretary. There are individual members as well as Branch members. (3) We have no idea whether you could purchase the complete file of the *Republican*.

R. LINTON.—We are unable to give you particulars of the Church of England deriving revenues from slum property in Bethnal Green. Perhaps one of the local saints can supply the information—if it exists. We cannot recommend you any one history of the Reformation. You will have to read many to get at the truth.

G. W. FIDLER.—Pleased to hear you enjoy "Acid Drops." The case in the cutting being still *sub judice*, we do not care to deal with it yet.

E. CHAPMAN.—We note what you say, and agree with it mainly.

STAFF-SERGEANT.—We note your reference to *Reynolds*'. Anything that Mr. Thompson may say will receive attention, and will doubtless deserve it; but we cannot trouble ourselves about poor Morrison Davidson's views on religious matters.

NEW READER.—You ask us to "pulverise this frightful fool"—meaning Evangelist Torrey, the author of an article on God in the *Christian World*. You will see that we are dealing with him in relation to another matter.

W. J. RUSSELL.—Thanks for cuttings.

ICONOCLAST (Birmingham).—We have noticed most of the points in the cuttings already. With regard to *Reynolds*', we think the editor has a difficult task. He is not the proprietor, and the publication is first of all a newspaper. You see he has a variety of readers to consider, and we sometimes wonder that he is as outspoken on religious matters as he is.

W. P. PEARSON (Liverpool).—Thanks for your sympathetic letter. We regret the "great disappointment" you say you will suffer by not hearing Mr. Foote to-day (May 10) as you expected. You express a kind wish that he may "regain health and strength by means of a complete rest." May your wish be realised.

R. LLOYD.—Glad to hear Mr. Cohen had good meetings at Aberdare. Mr. Foote will visit the district at the earliest opportunity.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

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

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.

Next week's *Freethinker* will contain the Agenda of the National Secular Society's Conference on Whit-Sunday at South Shields. Meanwhile we beg to remind all the Society's friends of the necessity of making this Conference a great success. The local "saints" are doing everything to prepare for the comfort and satisfaction of visitors, of whom a large number should come from all parts of the country. Branches

of the N.S.S. should be making arrangements to be represented. Individual members will also be very welcome if they can make it convenient to attend.

The evening public meeting in connection with the Conference will be held in the new Assembly Hall, a fine building in the main thoroughfare, capable of holding 2,000 people. A full list of speakers will appear in due course—probably next week. The N.S.S. President will take the chair.

We print in another column an account of the arrangements that are being made for the formation of an English Committee to participate in organising the next International Freethought Congress at Rome in 1904. We are not conscious of violating any secret in stating that this account is supplied to us by Mr. William Heaford, who chaperoned M. Furnémont about during his recent visit to London. Unfortunately we were unable to meet our Belgian *confreire* on that occasion. We had an appointment with him, but were unable to keep it in consequence of very vile weather co-operating with personal indisposition to hold us within doors. M. Furnémont was not discommoded by this incident, we are happy to say, having the society of another friend to fall back upon. Had he not left London the next morning, we should still have tried to see him. We met him with pleasure at Paris in 1889, and shall always be delighted to meet him again. With regard to the English Committee, all we know of it at present is just what is published. We were asked to serve upon it, and we agreed to do so. We are not at all responsible for its *personnel*. Nor do we wish to quarrel with it. We only hope that such a Committee will be able to find a common policy.

A good deal of the matter relating to the Rome Congress appeared in the *Morning Leader* under the heading of "Rationalist Congress," and the International Freethought Federation was referred to as "The International Rationalist Federation." Whoever was responsible for this, it is very regrettable nonsense. The Federation is a Federation of *Libres-Penseurs*—which is literally "Freethinkers." Its organ, *La Raison*, is extremely outspoken. Some things in it would appear rather *outré* if printed even in our own "blasphemous" columns. We are quite sure that the Continental Freethinkers would hate to be involved in what has been called "the blight of respectability." But it seems to be different in England. Atheists become Agnostics, Agnostics become Rationalists, and Rationalists will presently become something else—perhaps Interrogationists.

Mr. Cohen had three capital meetings on Sunday last at Aberdare, South Wales. The morning and afternoon meetings were well attended, and in the evening a hall twice the size of the one engaged might have been filled. Each of the lectures was followed with close and appreciative attention, with some questioning at the close. There was also a good sale of literature. To-day (May 10) Mr. Cohen lectures in Victoria Park at 3.15.

The May number of the *Pioneer* is in circulation. We believe it will be found an excellent issue. There are two pages of topical paragraphs headed "Matters and Musings." "Julian" writes on "Progress" and why we should strive for it. "Ignotus," the editor, contributes what our readers would find a very interesting article on "Church and State in France." "Sphinx" devotes his "Bookland" paragraphs to a most unconventional chat on Shakespeare. Max Otho, a new writer in the *Pioneer*, has a scathing article on "The Priest." The lady who takes the pen-name of "La Pensee" continues her well-written "Questions Concerning Women." There is also a very outspoken article on what can be learnt from the attitude and teaching of Jesus with regard to the great Woman Question. Last, but not least, there is an article by Ingersoll on "The Jews," never before printed in this country. Surely a good list of contents for a penny!

The Chief Justice of New Zealand, Sir Robert Stout, who has been lecturing the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, is a native of Shetland, where he was for some years a pupil teacher. Emigrating to New Zealand a comparatively young man, he took a post as schoolmaster in Dunedin. Later he studied law, and was called to the Bar when he was twenty-seven. He afterwards entered the New Zealand Parliament, taking office as Attorney-General and Minister of Lands under Sir George Grey, and ultimately attaining the Premiership himself in 1884. He is an open and avowed Agnostic, and has attracted attention on more than one occasion by his public declarations on the subject. —*Westminster Gazette*.

Moses and the Pentateuch.—II.

IN commencing an examination of the evidence contained in the Pentateuch it may be stated at once that we need not expect to find a more ancient form of language in those books than in other portions of the Old Testament; for all the Hebrew Scriptures were written after the return from the Exile by Ezra, Nehemiah, or others. Many of the books, no doubt, were derived from older writings (some of which are named in the Kings and Chronicles); but these were carefully revised and brought up to date. It is probable that this edition was recopied, without much alteration, down to the Christian era; but later, according to the best Hebrew authorities, the editors of the Masoretic texts so dealt with the texts of the different books as to make the language of the Old Testament—Aramaic as well as Hebrew—uniform, though, it is said, they did not carry out their plan thoroughly, but allowed a few vestiges of the older stages of the language to remain. Whatever, therefore, may have been the differences between the language of the oldest and the latest books, these have now disappeared—or nearly so. I propose, then, to notice only statements of fact which appear inconsistent with the age in which Moses is supposed to have lived.

1. There are, in the first place, numerous passages in the Pentateuch—passages referring to Moses himself—which obviously could not have been written by that mythical legislator. Foremost among these is the last chapter of Deuteronomy (xxxiv.), which records the death and burial of Moses and the mourning for him by the Israelites. This chapter, marvellous to relate, is generally admitted to be by the hand of a later writer.

Again, we may safely say that passages such as the following were not written by Moses:—

Exod. vi. 26.—“These are that Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,” etc.

Exod. xi. 3.—“Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt,” etc.

Num. xii. 3.—“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth.”

Num. xv. 22.—“And when ye shall err, and not observe all these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses, even all that the Lord hath commanded you by the hand of Moses,” etc.

Deut. xxxiii. 1.—“And this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said,” etc.

Deut. xxxiii. 4.—“Moses commanded us a law.”

These passages all contain clear evidence of being by the hand of a later editor.

Next, we have the expression which runs through Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers—“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying.....” These words, there cannot be the slightest doubt, were inserted to give weight and authority to the laws and commands that follow. In the book of Deuteronomy (which I may suggest, in passing, was written long before the other three books, and by a different writer) this expression is conspicuous by its absence. Throughout the latter book the words employed are: “The Lord said unto me,” or “The Lord spake unto me, saying” (Deut. ii., 1, 3, 9, 17; iii. 2, 26, etc.). The last two sentences *could* have been written by Moses, though it does not at all follow that they were; the first could not. If it be urged that the words “unto Moses” in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers are the work of a later copyist, then some good reason should be advanced explaining why this copyist made no alteration in Deuteronomy.

2. Amongst the stories related of Abraham in the book of Genesis is one in which it is stated that that patriarch, when he heard that his nephew Lot had been carried away captive by Chedorlaomer and his allies, “led forth his trained men born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them *as far as Dan*” (xiv. 14).

According to the book of Judges (xviii. 27-29) the city known as Dan was in the time of Moses, and

for many years afterwards, named Laish; consequently, the passage in which Dan is mentioned, if not the whole story, could not have been written by the great law giver to whom it is ascribed. Commenting upon this very obvious fact, a certain Christian Evidence man, who is great upon what he calls “Infidel Objections,” says: “Thomas Paine (who raised this objection) and all his admirers would find it difficult to prove that no such place as Dan existed in the days of Abraham..... Besides, it is quite possible there may have been two places of that name. Such is common enough in this country..... Admitting, however, that the city of Laish was meant..... some transcriber in later times, knowing that Laish was then commonly called Dan, might insert this name in a note in a parenthesis..... and this note might afterwards be continued instead of the text.” After these attempts at reconciliation the writer ends by saying: “Arguments must be very scarce with infidels when a single word has to be brought forward with great parade and confidence, as though it contained a complete demonstration that the books of Moses were anonymous impostures.”

This Christian Evidence man appears to imagine that the question of the authorship of the Pentateuch rests upon the word “Dan.” In this he is very much mistaken. The presence of that name in a document which professes to have been written by Moses is but one small link in a long chain of evidence. There is but one city named “Dan” mentioned in the Old Testament, viz., that in the extreme north of Palestine, whence came the expression “from Dan to Beersheba.” The city is named twice in the Pentateuch. In Deut. xxxiv. 1 we read: “And the Lord shewed him [Moses] all the land of Gilead unto Dan.” In this passage, as in Genesis, the same Dan is meant. In the latter case the statement made is not in harmony with fact; for Dan was in the extreme north of Canaan, about a hundred miles distant from the mountain from which Moses is stated to have viewed the land. There can be little doubt that both passages were written in later times when Dan had become a well-known place.

3. We are told in the Book of Joshua (v. 2-9) that the Israelites, immediately after entering Canaan, received a command from the Lord to be circumcised. The reason for this is said to be that “all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, they had not circumcised.” This neglect appears incredible after the warning Moses received just before leaving Egypt (Exod. iv. 24-26). However, after the rite had been duly performed “the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. *Wherefore* the name of that place was called Gilgal unto this day.”

Whether the name “Gilgal” really means “rolling away” we need not stay to inquire; enough that the inspired historian believed that it did. In any case, we have here the origin of the name Gilgal, and it is clear from the story that no such name existed before the Israelites entered Canaan under Joshua. Bearing this fact in mind, we turn to the following passage in Deuteronomy in which Moses is represented as saying:—

“When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, thou shalt set the blessing upon Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal. Are they not beyond Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites which dwell in the Arabah, *over against Gilgal*, beside the oaks of Moreh?” (xi. 30).

In this passage Moses is represented as referring to a place—not a city, but an open tract of ground—by a name which was not given until after his death. He speaks of it, too, as a locality which was well-known to the Israelites whom he was addressing. We can imagine the Christian Evidence reconciler harmonising this second “objection” as in the case of Dan: “Infidels would find it difficult to prove that no such name as Gilgal existed in the days of Moses..... Besides, it is quite possible there may

have been two places so named.....But, admitting that there was only one, might not some transcriber in later times have inserted the name Gilgal in the margin instead of—ahem!—instead of some other name which the place may have anciently borne," etc. This argument, it is scarcely necessary to say, is not wonderfully convincing.

4. Setting aside, however, for the moment what has been said respecting Dan and Gilgal, we may carry the argument farther. The mention of places in the land of Canaan, and the knowledge shown of their geographical position, prove the writer or writers to have lived later than the time of Moses.

Assuming, for the sake of argument, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were historical characters, it is evident that any knowledge which they possessed of places in Canaan died with them. Moses and the Israelites who came from Egypt could have no such knowledge. It is true that in the wilderness Moses is stated upon one occasion to have sent spies into Palestine; but these were sent only "to see the land, what it is, and the people what dwell therein, whether they be strong or weak, whether they be few or many" (Num. xiii. 18-20). They receive no orders to draw maps of the country, nor (according to the story) do they appear to have done more than cross the border of the land near Hebron and Eshcol in the extreme south. The mere fact of the sending spies implies that Moses was in entire ignorance both of the inhabitants and the geography of Canaan, as, of course, he would be were the story of the exodus from Egypt true.

An examination of the books ascribed to this legislator proves beyond a doubt that the writers were well acquainted with all the cities, as well as all the physical features of the land. This will be seen by the following examples:—

"And the border of the Canaanite was from *Zidon*, as thou goest from *Gerar* unto *Gaza*" (Gen. x. 19). Abraham "removed from thence unto the mountain to the east of *Bethel*, and pitched his tent, having *Bethel* on the west and *Ai* on the east.....he journeyed from thence toward the land of the South, and dwelt between *Kadesh* and *Shur*; and he sojourned in *Gerar*" (Gen. xii. 8; xx. i.). The same patriarch, on another occasion, "pursued as far as *Dan*.....and smote them, and pursued them unto *Hobah*, which is on the left hand of *Damascus*.....And the king of *Sodom* went out to meet him.....at the vale of *Shaveh*—the same is the *King's Vale*" (Gen. xiv. 14-17). Abraham's servant *Hagar* "wandered in the wilderness of *Beersheba*" (Gen. xxi. 14). Jacob "journeyed to *Succoth*.....And the sun rose upon him as he passed over *Penuel*.....So *Jacob* come to *Luz*, which is in the land of *Canaan*.....And they journeyed from *Bethel*, and there was still some way to come to *Ephrath*" (Gen. xxxiii. 17; xxxii. 31; xxxv. 6, 16). Jacob sent his son *Joseph* "out of the vale of *Hebron*, and he came to *Shechem*.....And *Joseph* went after his brethren, and found them in *Dothan*" (Gen. xxxvii. 14, 17). *Tamar* "sat in the gate of *Enaim*, which is by the way to *Tinnah*" (Gen. xxxviii. 14). "From the valley of *Arnon* unto mount *Hermon*.....the good land that is beyond *Jordan*, that goodly mountain, and *Lebanon*" (Deut. iii. 8, 25). "Mount *Gerizim* and.....mount *Ebal*. Are they not beyond *Jordan*, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the *Canaanites*, which dwell in the *Arabah*, over against *Gilgal*, beside the oaks of *Moreh*"? (Deut. xi. 30).

Moses could know nothing of these places in Canaan. Any that were within the range of vision from mount *Pisgah*, supposing he saw them, would be unknown to him by name; besides which, all his writing—if he ever did any—was completed before he was favored with a view of the promised land. The writers of the foregoing passages, there cannot be the smallest shadow of a doubt, were men who lived in the land at a later period, and who were well acquainted with all the localities named.

It will be perceived, from this aspect of the case, that it does not matter in the least whether the stories respecting the origin of the names *Dan* and

Gilgal are true or false. The writers of the Pentateuch had a perfect knowledge of the respective positions of both places, as well as of all the other cities in Canaan—which knowledge neither Moses nor any of the Israelites who accompanied him from Egypt could possibly have possessed. Here, then, is the first evidential proof—which, it may be noted, is not founded upon "a single word"—that Moses had no hand in writing the so-called "books of Moses." And, it may be added, not all the clergy of the United Kingdom, nor all the members of the Christian Evidence fraternity, can by their united efforts weaken its testimony one jot.

ABRACADABRA.

The Darkness of Ignorance.

BY DR J. E. ROBERTS

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

(Concluded from page 284.)

An important part of human progress is the willingness and ability of men to unlearn things. A man who is ignorant is not in so hopeless a condition as the man is who knows a great deal that is not so. Every generation must review, amend, and correct the work of its predecessors. No error can be old enough to be sacred. Truth does not depend upon a pedigree. There is no part of the progress of man in the intellectual and religious phases more important than the unlearning of things. Such is the infatuation of conviction, that men unconsciously make the conviction an instrument for self-assertion. The man is truly wise and great who can make himself the mouthpiece, the instrument, the speaking lips, the throbbing, thrilled heart of truth itself. Doubt is an incentive, not an end; it is a method, not a result; it is an attitude, not the traveller on his way. It is the taking off of one's coat, the work of learning comes afterwards. "Believe," said the old gospel. "Learn," says the new. Belief, as such, is hostile not only to intellectual progress, but moral progress as well. It is the men who have believed with all their souls that have persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, exiled, and slain.

PROFESSION OF FAITH IS AXE AND CLUB.

The man who has won by his own thought and pain the right to call a conviction his own is the man whose acts are gentle and whose words are kind to those who differ from him. But the man who has put into his hand a creed, into his mind a belief, into his mouth a profession of faith, is the man that has been armed with the club and axe of savagery, and believes he is advancing the faith and honoring God when he extirpates heresy, that is, when he destroys every man who differs from himself.

The education of a man involves the orderly development of brain and hand and heart. To be an independent man in thought is to be born again and again, it is to come into the estate of intellectual manhood. Great mental force does not depend so much upon the vastness or encyclopedic nature of the knowledge that a man possesses; it depends rather upon the fact of his absolute intellectual honesty. The man with a little conviction and small but pathetically cherished hope has more intellectual grandeur and merits, more respect, than the man with all the creeds and all the professions that hang loosely upon him like a garment.

"To feel that a man counts one in the census of the universe, that he has attained to the dignity of the unfit," that he is to be reckoned with, to be able to feel that there is no triple crowned potentate that has any right to command the head to bow or the knee to bend, to be able in imagination to strip the robes of usurped power from priest and potentate and stand alone to defy the utterances of councils and the anathemas of ecclesiastics, is to be intellectually born again, and it is better, vastly better, for

the moral development of mankind than the other regeneration they have told us of so long. That kind of birth came in some mysterious way by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, or something of that sort, and when a man was really born again he was not quite sure about it; he never could exactly know whether he was born or whether it wasn't quite time yet. He never could tell, but the man with intellectual manhood stands strong and square upon his feet, compelled to apologise to no power above or beneath. That is the beginning of all education. It is not attack and denial and negation; if any one has that opinion, let him get away from it. It is not presumption, nor conceit, nor vanity, nor arrogance, nor boastfulness, neither is it humility; it is not cringing, like the suppliant or the sycophant, nor is it an exercise of power or the arrogance of the tyrant; it is simply standing conscious of one's own selfhood, of one's birthright of intellectual independence and mental freedom.

THE WINGS OF PROGRESS.

The education or development of the hand is just as necessary. The thinker and the toiler are the matched wing and wing of human progress. A man is never free in this world until he has within himself the power, by the partnership of hand and brain, of making an honest living for himself and wife and child. The man who lives by his cunning, by his scheming—that is, by diverting the production of other men's labor to his own profit and aggrandisement—is not the most useful member of society. Moral progress and religious progress, too, will for ever be conditioned upon material good and material progress.

Have you ever thought how simple a matter it is to convert a man on the gallows? They all become penitent. Trembling there on the brink of the unknown, they grasp at anything; they respond to any appeal. It is solemnly argued, and probably true, that times of great depression, when people are overtaken by distresses, by floods, by famine, are times of great religious awakening. When men can take nothing else they take religion. It is the religion of the last hour, the gospel of calamity. That is not the strength of religion, it is its weakness. The religion that will win as the years increase will be that religion which has the power to persuade, the beauty to attract, the sympathy to woo and win the minds and hearts of men and women when they are in good health and happy. That is one reason why there is such a wide and widening chasm between the Church of to-day and the multitude of people. The people have come upon exigencies that the Church is not equal to; the people are discussing questions and facing problems for which the Church has no light and can offer no solution.

It is not the fault of the people; it is the fault of the Church. To educate the brain, to train the hand, to bring them into partnership, and set men and women upon their feet; to make them first comfortable and happy and free; then, if there is inclination for considering the mysterious, the vague, the mystic, the unknown, there will be time enough for that.

HEART AND IMAGINATION.

Along with the development of hand and brain there must go the development of heart, and that implies development of the imagination. Men are weak upon that side—upon the side of fancy. It is certainly true that if the old creed-makers had been possessed of imagination the doctrine of an endless hell would never have fallen from their lips or from their pens. No man believes that, or can believe it, who has the least degree of imagination. If men were not only developed mentally, but had this power of picturing consequences before they occur, what we call sin and evil would lose much of their power over men. Sin is ignorance; every crime is a mistake; every man who fancies there is a short cut in the moral world, or some cloister or hiding-place where he can escape or avert the consequences of his deed,

lacks in knowledge and imagination. Let men know that there is no escape; that the blood of all the prophets that ever died will not avail. Let men be persuaded that there is no possible way cross-lots; that everything in the natural world is administered with exactitude. We may seem to fool or cheat or blind Nature for a while, but she never sleeps. No happiness, no welfare, no good of any kind was ever yet purchased by a wrong—not one—not one; but men don't know this, and the Church hasn't taken any pains to teach them. It has said to them, to the moral bankrupts, to those convicted of crime: "It is not too late; there is a door standing open. Hear the pleading voice—believe and be saved." This gospel may seem hard and unkind; but it is the gospel of Nature, of reason, and of common sense that there is no escape from any deed of wrong or evil. The man that has walked upon the heated bars must walk afterwards, and always, with his feet seamed with crimson scars. Let men know that; teach them to depend upon themselves for salvation, and the world will speedily become better.

The doctrine of self-reliance is the ultimate end of religion, of moral progress, of education, and of the development of man. There is no reason any longer in depending for anything whatever upon supernatural aid or interferences. Men have long enough believed that to their disappointment. Just now there is in this city a good old man of three score and ten who has been all his life preaching the doctrine of dependence upon God. Honestly and faithfully he has gone up and down the streets of this city telling the people to cast themselves upon God's mercy and he would care for them in this and in the world to come. Again and again on winter nights, to my knowledge, he has filled a sack with coal and put it upon his bent and crippled back, and carried it to some poor cabin, to keep the mother and children from freezing. I have known the old man to take a stove on his back to a hut where there was no fire, and put it up and build a fire in it, and spread the cheer of warmth on a desolate hearth. And now, old and bent and destitute, wanting even the necessities of life, he lies there abandoned of God and forsaken of men, or he would be but for the fact that an infidel went yesterday in the rain and collected money and made him comfortable for the time.

RAVENS ARE OUT OF BUSINESS.

Had that man been taught fifty or sixty years ago a gospel like this: "God will not help you; you may starve, but his ravens are not keeping restaurants in these modern days; you may stretch empty hands in vain to deaf and heedless skies; your first duty to God and man is to make an honest and independent living for yourself, your wife, and children. Now get a little garden patch or a shoemaker's bench, and make a living, and be industrious; save a little money for your old age; and then, if you have any time to teach and help other people, do it, but take care of yourself first." One of the things that prevent the swifter movement forward of the religious world is that nine out of every ten of the ministers wear the chains of debt. They can't be rid of them. I depended on God so long that I shall have to live a long time in order to die solvent. That is the case with a great many of the preachers. They were honest; they were sincere. They said: "The Lord will take care of his own; he will not neglect us. We will be free and open-handed with our means; we will think of others before we think of ourselves and our own." But God never paid a debt, nor bought a loaf of bread, nor a ton of coal. We may just as well be honest about these things. This old human world, if it is ever redeemed, ever lifted up, ever illuminated, ever glorified, man himself must be its redeemer and savior

The mind of man is as a country which was once open to squatters, who have bred and multiplied and become masters of the land.—George Eliot.

Did Christ Preach Hell?

"Did Christ preach Hell?"

I saw upon the placards of the *Clarion*.

Did He foretell

Cremation of revivicated carrion?

Well, read the Book

That's edited by God or by a third of God,

The Holy Spook;

[God,

The Book that priests maintain to be the Word of
By hook or crook.

If God made them, 'twas really most absurd of God.

Hell-fire preached He?

[said

"Believe, or when you're dead the Devil hath you,"

The Lord J. C.

I quote what John and Luke and Matthew said.

"I'll say to ye

"That gave to me no water when athirst," He said,

"Depart from me—

Depart into the lake of fire, ye curs'd," He said.

"Children of Hell,"

Said Christ to honest folks who disagreed with Him,

"You'll never dwell

[Him!

With me." Thank God! A jolly life they'd lead with

Did Christ preach Hell?

The question is absurd upon the face of it!

He came to tell

The only way to go to Heav'n in place of it.

Preach Hell? Why that's

Expressly what he came to *terra firma* for,

To frighten flats

Who'd never heard of the undying worm afore;

To save the "blest"

[so.

From where the rest are gnashing teeth and booing

If Hell's *non est*,

Why, what the deuce could be the use of doing so?

Of his Hell-fire,

[at all.

Damnation doctrine, loathed by men who've thought

The Christians tire,

And say that such a thing he never taught at all.

But Christ preached Hell;

If Scripture's true, the fact they can't get rid of it;

And Science—well,

It had no bottom, and she's smashed the lid of it!

ESS JAY BEE.

Correspondence.

CONVERTS IN INDIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You are right. The missionaries we send to India are a benighted lot, indeed. I spent several years in that land of solar and prickly-heat, and I found that the low-caste Hindoo who wanted a holiday betook himself to the Church Mission (I beg pardon, no capitals), became a "convert," and was provided with old clo' (European), meals, and backsheesh until the gilt wore off; then Johnny was found a job, which, of course, he didn't keep long, there being another missionary—a Roman Catholic this time—willing to entertain him next. After the Catholic, Johnny next sampled the clothing, menu, etc., of the rag, tag, and bobtail, such as the Wesleyans, American Methodists, etc. By this time he has been entered as a "convert" in half-a-dozen local "reports," but he detests honest labor more than ever, so much so that, having exhausted local missionary fields, he trots off to the next city and repeats his performances, finally getting to the end of these resources and then commencing to thieve. He is apprehended, convicted in the name of John Smith or Patrick Flanagan, and enjoys the "bill of fare" and apartments allotted to Europeans in the prison he is sent to. He is a "civilised convert." There are thousands such, thanks to that curse of India, the missionary.

STAFF-SERGEANT.

BURIED ALIVE!

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you kindly permit me to call the attention of readers of the *Freethinker* to a highly important, but much neglected subject, which concerns every human being more or less. I refer to the danger that one of the various

counterfeits of death may be mistaken for actual decease, and the unhappy victim buried alive. The great uncertainty of the so-called signs of death relied on by doctors and undertakers to denote decease, and the reality of the danger of premature burial (which is not restricted to warm climates, as many suppose), have recently received several startling proofs from countries where precautions are taken by the State to prevent living burial. When will the public arouse from the unaccountable apathy and indifference concerning this serious peril which threatens everyone, there being no safeguard whatever against it in this country, and earnestly support those who are endeavoring to obtain legislative precautions in order to prevent any possibility of these tragedies happening, as, from the frequent narrow escapes, it is to be feared they do in these islands? The Secretary of the London Association for the Prevention of Premature Burial, Dr. J. Stenson Hooker, M.D., 44 Gloucester-place, Portman-square, W., or myself, would be pleased to send literature on "Burial Alive: and its Prevention" on receipt of an envelope, stamped and addressed.

Sincerely thanking you for your valuable assistance in pressing forward the much-needed reform, I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAS. R. WILLIAMSON.

Montagu-road, Lower Edmonton, London, N.

Gaieties.

REPARTEE BY BEN BUTLER.

A great number of anecdotes are related to illustrate the readiness of Butler in repartee. During the deadlock on the force bill the question of adjournment over Sunday was before the leaders, and Butler favored a Sunday session. Randall opposed it.

"Bad as I am, I have some respect for God's day," said Randall, in private converse with Butler, "and I don't think it right to hold a session on the Sabbath."

"Oh, pshaw," answered Butler; "doesn't the Bible say that it is lawful to pull your ass out of the pit on the Sabbath Day? You have seventy-three asses on your side of this House that I want to get out of this ditch to-morrow, and I think I am engaged in a holy work."

"Don't do it, Butler," pleaded Randall; "I have some respect for you that I don't want to lose. I expect some day to meet you in a better world."

"But you will be there, as you are here," retorted Butler, "a member of the lower House."

INCOHERENT.—Piety was a marked trait in the domestic who held sway in our kitchen a few years ago. This was well enough, but the manner in which she mixed up pious utterances with ordinary worldly conversation was a little startling. One day her mistress said to her: "Ann, I would like to have you clear the laundry and the cellar entry." "Certainly, ma'am," replied Ann. "They do need cleaning, and in a week or two they'll need it again, an' so it goes on, but by and by we'll all be goin' home to die no more, an' to sing praises eternal on golden harps where there ain't no laundries nor no scrubbin' goin' on, for the Lord is the light thereof—Halliloooy!" At another time Ann came to her mistress and said: "You'll have to order more potatoes, ma'am, for they have all given out, as things will here below, but to them as are faithful is given the promise of life eternal, where there is no need of potatoes nor yet of molasses, for grace will be all abounding and time will have no end for all who git salvation—thanks be! We need more codfish, too, ma'am."—*Lippincott's Magazine*.

A letter was recently received at a post-office in Ost-Gothland, Sweden, addressed "Our Lord in Heaven." On being opened at the Returned Letter Office, the missive proved to have been sent by an eight-year-old girl, who had chosen this method of trying to obtain a guitar from her heavenly father, and supposed "giver of all things," as her earthly father was unable or unwilling to supply her need. And the wish was granted, if not by the "party" addressed, yet by a number of kind-hearted persons who heard of the letter and subscribed to purchase the coveted prize. The girl is now practising for her eternal employment, but we think the chances are that she will tire of it before she reaches eternity.

THE EVIL EFFECTS.—The elder was being shaved, and the barber, whose hand was unsteady from drink, cut him four or five times. Regarding gravely in the mirror his countenance bleeding from all those cuts, the elder said: "Friend, you now perceive, I trust, the evil effects of intemperance." "Intemperance does make the skin rather tender, sir," was the reply.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, Conversazione.

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

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Stanton Coit, Ph.D., "Mysticism and Religion."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, G. Jackson (Essex C.C.), "Whittier and his Work."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen, "The Search for a Soul."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S. (Station-rd.): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; Brockwell Park, 3.15, R. P. Edwards.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. Mile End Waste.—11.30, C. Cohen. A Lecture.

FINSBURY BRANCH N.S.S. (Clerkenwell-gn.): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, W. J. Ramsey.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies; (Hammersmith Broadway) 7.30, F. A. Davies.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, W. B. Thompson.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, A. Paul, "Bible Difficulties." Discussion invited. Music at 6.15.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Annual Meeting; 6.30, Social Meeting in Commemoration of Mill and Owen. Tickets 6d.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "Witches and Witchcraft"; 7, "A Christian Short Story." Mr. Ward Lectures in Islington-square on Saturday at 8 p.m., weather permitting.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, William Simpson, "What is Science, and What is Religion?"

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, G. Berrisford, "Heredity and Environment."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business meeting—Conference arrangements.

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