

THE Freethinker

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Who resists a first attack with unshaken fortitude may be sure of victory—most men are conquered by fear, not by force.—PETRARCH.

Lies about Thomas Paine.

WHEN the author of the Book of Revelation wrote that all liars should have their portion in the lake which burneth with brimstone and fire, he did not know that he was consigning such a vast multitude of future Christians to eternal perdition. There never was a religion on earth that could rival Christianity in lying for the glory of God, as well as for many other less disinterested objects. Thomas Carlyle called Roman Catholicism "the Great Lying Church." He might with equal accuracy have called Christianity "the Great Lying Religion." Not only has it palmed off upon the world a lot of decidedly human documents as the Word of God, but it has systematically lied about every man who had the sense and courage to laugh at the imposture. Generally the lie has taken the form of a libel, since it was felt that if the "infidels" were only painted black enough the public would keep at too great a distance from them to hear what they had to say.

It is sometimes objected that lies cannot prosper for any great length of time. Carlyle himself used to preach this doctrine. But at the same time he was never tired of denouncing the lies and hypocrisies which had flourished for ages in his own country, and seemed likely to achieve a very respectable longevity, even if they did not ultimately die of sheer old age. The truth is that lies which trade upon the passions and prejudices of the ignorant and thoughtless multitude, in the interest of artful and designing charlatans, will live for centuries, and even for millenniums, if they once succeed in getting thoroughly established. When they are once set up in the world, they are handed down from father to son, until they come to be regarded with the most profound veneration.

Lies about Voltaire and Thomas Paine have certainly served the purpose for which they were intended. The clergy begged the people not to read those abominable writers, who were such recking cesspools of immorality that to go within measurable distance of them was to risk the most terrible infection. Naturally the people shuddered and kept aloof. And the names of Voltaire and Thomas Paine raised as much terror in orthodox breasts as the names of virulent diseases like cholera and small-pox.

These lies have flourished for more than a century, and they are still robust. We meet them every now and then in the best of health. There is not a sign of age or infirmity about them. They are brisk and bright-eyed, and look good for another hundred years. Any insurance company would give them a life-policy at a very small premium.

We have recently called attention to President Roosevelt's description of Thomas Paine as a "filthy little Atheist." Here is a devout Christian, a leader of "the strenuous life," a writer of many books, a popular politician, and at present the appointed Head of the United States of America; and this gentleman stands up in broad daylight, in the sight of the whole

world, and calls Thomas Paine a "filthy little Atheist." No respect is shown Paine for having contributed by his pen as much as Washington did by his sword—and for less return in wealth and reputation—to the cause of American Independence. President Roosevelt spits at him. And he spits a lie. Which is after all a triumph for the intended victim. For, if lies are necessary, the truth is insufficient. If you have to paint a man black you prove he is not a negro.

When the great Cuvier was asked what he thought of the definition of a crab as a red fish that walked backward, he replied that the crab was not a fish, that it was not red, and that it did not walk backward; but that, with these exceptions, the definition was a very good one. Something of the same kind may be said of President Roosevelt's description of Thomas Paine. He was not filthy, he was not little, and he was not an Atheist; but, with these exceptions, the description is a very good one.

Thomas Paine was taller than President Roosevelt. He stood about five feet ten, and was of rather athletic build and broad-shouldered. In dress and person he was very clean. He looked every inch a gentleman. This is the testimony of all who knew him. That he was not an Atheist we shall see presently.

The "filthy" falsehoods about Thomas Paine nearly all emanated from two sources. One was a man called Cheetham, whom Paine had to prosecute for libel, with the result that he obtained a verdict and damages against his defamer. The other was George Chalmers, a clerk in the Civil Service of England, who was hired by the Earl of Liverpool to vilify the author of the *Rights of Man*, which he did in a pretended Life of Paine written ostensibly by "Francis Oldys, A.M., of the University of Pennsylvania." This malicious personal enemy and this hired traducer supplied the clergy with their budget of scandal about the noble and intrepid author of the *Age of Reason*.

That the clergy should go on lying about Thomas Paine is intelligible. But why should ordinary journalists do it? It is bad enough to lie for a living; it is worse to be a gratuitous liar.

A correspondent has favored us with a cutting from the *Burton Evening Gazette*—which may, for all we know, have been extracted from some other journal. Whether it is borrowed or original makes little difference. We reproduce it as a sample of what petty anonymous persons can say about their political, intellectual, and moral betters.

"How many people are there even now who still imagine that it was Tom Paine, the atheist, who in a moment of unwonted tenderness wrote 'Home, sweet home'?" For seventeen years contemporaries, there is, after all, little wonder that in a good many minds the two famous Americans—Paine and Payne—should get mixed up. Curiously enough, John Howard Payne, who wrote the immortal sentiment, and whose birthday is to be kept to-day in Elysium, arrived in the world the very day after the anniversary of his namesake's death. Famous in his generation as actor, dramatist, and American Consul at Tunis, John Howard Payne was of an especially graceful and engaging address, a complete contrast to Tom, who once received an admiring deputation in a state of such personal filth that they hurriedly 'left the apartment in astonishment and disgust.' Their interpreter alone remained, and, having duly conveyed his message, induced Tom Paine to undergo the rare ordeal of a bath."

President Roosevelt said that Thomas Paine had no claim to be considered an American citizen. This writer calls him "a famous American." We leave the President and the anonymous journalist to settle it between them.

The "Tom" does not matter much, of course. It simply shows the writer's manners. But the story about Paine's dirtiness, and his semi-compulsory bath, is a pious lie. Not that it originated with this writer. Oh dear no! It is a hoary fable, and was picked up out of a public gutter for an object worthy of its character and position.

It is conceivable that this writer might plead that he had been misled. But what excuse can he offer for describing Thomas Paine as an Atheist? On this point information is easily obtained. The *Age of Reason* can be purchased for sixpence. The price is not prohibitive. Even a free and easy journalist might speculate to that extent for the sake of accuracy.

Thomas Paine says on the first page of the *Age of Reason*, "I believe in one God and no more, and I hope for happiness beyond this life." Towards the end of the same work he wrote:—

"Were a man impressed as fully and as strongly as he ought to be with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief: he would stand in awe of God and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either.

This is the Burton paper's "Tom Paine, the *Atheist*." This is President Roosevelt's "filthy little *Atheist*."

Thomas Paine wrote a beautiful composition on the being and attributes of God for the Society of Theophilanthropists at Paris, and the following is its opening paragraph:—

"Religion has two principal enemies, Fanaticism and Infidelity, or that which is called Atheism. The first requires to be combated by reason and morality, the other by natural philosophy."

The fifth paragraph runs thus:—

"Do we want to contemplate his [God's] power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful."

This is "Tom Paine, the *Atheist*." This is the "filthy little *Atheist*."

Thomas Paine's will is dated January 18, 1809. He died on June 8 of the same year. And what does he say in this document? "I die," he says, "in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my Creator God."

This is "Tom Paine, the *Atheist*." This is the "filthy little *Atheist*."

Why, the fact is these people cannot speak the truth about Paine even on so plain a point as this. They call him an Atheist when anyone who refers to his writings may see that he was nothing of the kind. What is the value, then, of anything else they choose to say about him?

President Roosevelt not only called Paine a "filthy little Atheist," but said that he occupied himself in prison in Paris by "writing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ." This is just as true as the "Atheism." Let us see what Paine wrote in his *Age of Reason*.

"Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind."

This is the man who wrote "a pamphlet against Jesus Christ." It is really enough to make one sick.

We do not agree with Paine's belief in God, but we should be ashamed to hide his Deism in the interest of our own Atheism. Facts are facts, and truth is truth. Yet we fancy that if Paine were living now he would be the first of pioneers, and the defender of far more advanced heresies.

Our object, however, is to correct the lies that are

told about this great man. We have done it before, and we shall probably do it again. It is not enough to say that our correction is ancient. The lies are more ancient still.

A witty Frenchman once said in a debate on capital punishment that he was opposed to it, and wished to see it abolished; but he added, "Let the murderers begin first." We also wish to see an end to this wrangling over Thomas Paine; but we add, "Let the liars begin first."

G. W. FOOTE.

The Meaning of Rabelais.

AT the crisis which historians call the Protestant Reformation (which was a sequel to the Renaissance, or revival of learning), it was a question whether France would choose the side of the Catholic Church or throw in its lot with the Bible-worshipping Lutherans and Calvinists. Events have proved that France has not cared to do either. Sooner than any other European nation, it is learning to be a proud and progressive Self, superior to Rome, and superior to Luther. The leaders of its national thought have shone pre-eminent in a genius for emancipation. They have been peculiarly rationalist, positive, and humanist. One of the bold spirits who helped to preserve the spiritual liberty of France was François Rabelais (born about 1490, died 1553).

The works of Rabelais are of so extraordinary a character that many people completely misunderstand his significance. There are hundreds of passages in his writings which could no more be read in public than certain passages of the Bible or Shakespeare. Indeed, it would be far more uncomfortable to read aloud from Rabelais than from any other writer of distinction. For this reason, of course, some persons select the more pungent Rabelaisian pages as tit-bits, and all the time no more comprehend this brilliant satirist than one can comprehend a man's character by looking at his dirty linen or the mud on his boots.

If you look at an illustrated edition of Rabelais' works, the pictures will at first sight suggest that he has written a mere burlesque like the adventures of Baron Munchausen, or the romance of Don Quixote. His leading personages are two giants, Gargantua and Pantagruel his son. Gargantua, when a baby, had an appetite so vast that it needed 17,913 cows to supply him with milk; but even in babyhood he dreamed of stronger drinks, and loved to hear the rattle of pint-pots and wine flagons. Gargantua, says Rabelais, was continually wallowing in the mire; he would wash his hands in the broth, and comb his head with a broken ladle: he would hide himself in the water for fear of the rain, strike the iron before it was hot, leap before he looked, spend his Michaelmas rent at Midsummer moon, and beat the bushes without catching the birds; he thought the moon was made of green cheese, and that everything was gold that glittered. That is Rabelais's wild, bustling way. But he is never hysterical, and never loses command of himself. In his swiftest drive he never lets go the reins. At the back of his broad and easy smile there is a satire as cold and sharp as steel. "If," he observes, "if you say to me, Master, it would seem that you were not very wise in writing to us these flim-flam stories and pleasant fooleries; I answer you that you are not much wiser to spend your time in reading them. Nevertheless," he goes on, "if you read them to make yourselves merry, you and I both are far more worthy of pardon than a great rabble of squint-headed fellows, counterfeit saints, demure lookers, hypocrites, and zealots, who disguise themselves like maskers to deceive the world; for whilst they give the common people to understand that they are busied about nothing but contemplation and devotion, God knows what cheer they make; they appear like sages and live as sots; you may read it in great letters in the coloring of their red snouts," etc. Monk or Protestant, all the sham pietists received his liberal

scourge. We have a rich sample of his anti-theological raillery in the story of Pantagruel's fight with Loupgarou and the three hundred monsters. Pantagruel uplifts a prayer: "O, thou Lord God, who hast always been my protector and my Savior, thou seest the distress wherein I am at this time.....if it may please thee, therefore, at this time to assist me, as my whole trust and confidence is in thee alone, I vow unto thee that in all countries whatsoever I will cause thy gospel to be purely, simply, and entirely preached," etc. At the close of this orthodox prayer, a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "Do this, and thou shalt overcome." After the divine service followed a farce. Pantagruel finished up the comic battle by killing Loupgarou; and then, seizing the dead giant by the heels, he used the corpse as a sort of club or broom to dispatch the surviving foes. The slaughter over, Pantagruel pitched Loupgarou into the middle of a neighboring town, "where, falling like a frog upon his belly, he [Loupgarou] with his fall killed a he-cat, a she-cat, a duck, and a goose!"

If you want a feast of extravagance, read Rabelais's account of how a man lived for six months in Pantagruel's mouth, wandering about the tongue and jaws, and visiting the cities, forests, and deserts, and studying the manners and customs of the natives who live, some on this side of Pantagruel's teeth, and some on the other. "There," says the traveller, "I began to think that it is very true, which is commonly said, that the one-half of the world knoweth not how the other half liveth."

Some very clever chapters form an essay on the subject of debts and debtors. Rabelais maintains that running into debt is really a virtue, and that a world where nobody owed anything would be a failure. He draws a picture of a debtor surrounded by creditors who want his money. "You can hardly imagine how glad I am, when every morning I perceive myself environed with brigades of creditors, humble, fawning, and full of their reverences; and whilst I remark, that as I look more favorably upon and give a more cheerful countenance to one than another, the fellow thereupon buildeth a conceit that he shall be the first dispatched, and the foremost in the date of payment, and he valueth my smiles at the rate of ready money." In the midst of the fooling, however, Rabelais suggests to us a profound truth—that all living things need mutual help, that we are all natural debtors, and that our happiness and welfare depend upon our just payment of social obligations. And thus, while Rabelais appears to laugh, he is teaching us the doctrine of the social organism.

Rabelais also had something to say on education. The young giant, Gargantua, had been set to the study of books, books, books, as if the teachers thought there was some magic in mere printed letters. At last his father perceived that "indeed he studied hard, and that although he spent all his time therein, yet for all that did he profit nothing, but, which is worse, grew thereby a fool, a sot, a dolt, a blockhead." The system was changed, and Gargantua spent his time with tutors who interested him—talking over the subject, discussing obscure points, etc. As Herbart has taught us since, nothing can be done until you ensure your pupil's interest. Also Gargantua devoted much time to open-air exercise; and thus, as the ancient Greeks advised, he joined Music and Gymnastics; that is to say, intellectual training and bodily training.

And when men and women are educated on this wise plan, they will live as lived the inmates of the abbey of Theleme which Gargantua built by the river Loire. The abbey had charming apartments, and gardens, and recreation grounds; and the men and women who dwelt there were fair and healthy. They were made for love and marriage. There was but one regulation to govern the abbey—"Do what thou wilt." A loose Rabelaisian maxim, apparently! But Rabelais hastens to explain that the rule worked very well, for "men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur which is called Honor,

and which prompts them to virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice." The love of the men and women of Theleme is so rational and loyal that it binds each couple "to the very last day of their life, in no less vigor and fervency than at the very day of their wedding." Thus, in an unexpected vision, the Rabelais who is commonly supposed to be a ribald and careless jester at the subject of sex, teaches us the ideal of monogamy.

Rabelais's work stands for the love of life, energy, action, expansion. Rabelais represents the spirit of Europe freeing itself from the old Church, the old dogmas, the old restraints of the Middle Ages, and rushing out under the open sky, shouting and beaming with joy and the enthusiasm of liberty. Rabelais is so glad to be unchained that he values everything, admires everything, grasps at everything that has the quality of passion, effort, self-assertion, masterfulness, life. In his books, therefore, he tells us everything he sees in light or twilight, in sober moments or the hours of love, in church or ale-house, clothed or naked, all is told. He burns the fig-leaves and takes us back, with infectious guffaws, to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life; and he dances on all prohibitions. He reveals all that man thinks. It is just as if, on a sudden, the multitude of the thoughts of men and women could be trapped and discovered and displayed to the sun—we see the movements of the heart and brain; we see the machine in every wheel and spring. Rabelais will not pause to be shocked. He is delighted with the warmth, the rush, the whirr of it all. He shouts because he is alive, because he is human, because he has a strong intelligence. That is the philosophy of Rabelais; that is the meaning of his jests and his farce. I do not claim more for Rabelais than that—a large, manly, liberal sentiment which insists on the right of human nature to expand, to develop, to exercise all powers, physical and mental. There are times when it is peculiarly necessary to press for this right. It was necessary at the period of the Renaissance. It was necessary—and still is—that Walt Whitman should tell modern civilisation that human life is of more value than commerce, or creeds, or literature.

Rabelais gives, in effect, a man's view of life—bold, splendid, original. But he lacked—what civilisation lacks to-day—the strong moral reaction which womanhood alone can create. Rabelais knew much of *women* and little of *woman*; and the difference is great. When he bounded forth, in the energy of the Renaissance, to announce what man was and felt, only half the secret was related. In time to come, when our industrial and educational conditions are wholesomer and sweeter, the spirit of woman, in another Renaissance, will unfold its moral power and complete the book of the human soul.

F. J. GOULD.

A Nonconformist Megalomaniac.

JUDGING from certain sections of the Nonconformist press, there are three men in England on whom the moral welfare of the country chiefly depends. This triumvirate is Dr. Clifford, Mr. R. J. Campbell, minister of the City Temple, and Dr. R. F. Horton, chairman of the Congregational Union. The first has shown his value in this direction by consistently running away from every attempt to raise a discussion on the question of secular *versus* religious instruction in State-supported schools—which is the only genuine point at issue on the subject. This may have been politic on his part, but it was hardly courageous. Several examples of Mr. Campbell's intellectual charlatanism have been given in these columns, and, if the people are to look to *him* for salvation, one feels inclined to drop into religion as Silas Wegg did into poetry, and say "God help the people!" The calibre of Mr. Horton has also been noted more than once in these columns; but the report of a recent sermon of his that has just reached

me affords a fresh opportunity for a word upon this gentleman.

Some weeks ago this shining light of North London Christianity remarked, in an airy, superior kind of way, that thinking people in Germany and England regarded Ernst Haeckel, one of the greatest living exponents of the doctrine of Evolution, "as a subject for apology rather than a subject for admiration." This was "rough" on Professor Haeckel, and those who happened to have some admiration for the man and his work, and who did not wish the last days of the veteran scientist to be clouded by the weight of Dr. Horton's disapprobation, could only comfort themselves with the reflection that in all probability Dr. Haeckel was not even aware of Mr. Horton's existence, and if it was pointed out to him that such a gentleman did exist he might, in his scientific way, label him as a member of a very common species that began to exist in pre-civilised days, but which is slowly disappearing under civilised conditions.

In a sermon preached on June 7 Mr. Horton returns to the task of demolishing Haeckel, although he has discovered, in the meantime, that in some directions at least the "German Darwin," as he calls him, knows what he is talking about. Only in one or two things, however, because Haeckel is still an "unthinking mind," full of "obvious ignorance and weakness" and "childish credulity," and Mr. Horton, from his own lofty altitude, looks upon him "with the compassion due to every afflicted human being." It sounds almost like an echo of the sixties, when the Horton's of that period were using the same language of Darwin. Perhaps Mr. Horton has picked up a batch of these old sermons cheap, and is retailing them to his congregation, substituting the name of the living scientist for that of the dead one.

Mr. Horton starts his sermon with an expression of thankfulness for the English translation, because "apparently" its summary of scientific results is valuable, but really "because the book shows clearly the depth of degradation into which the teaching of Haeckel will plunge mankind"—after hearing which, I presume, the religious portion of his congregation will repeat the statement as though it were quite beyond question. Mr. Horton admits, by the way, that "in statements of scientific results Haeckel is a master," but—there is, of course, a "but"—"in moral and religious matters he is a child, and not a sweet innocent either, but a crude, ill-mannered, ignorant child. And when the personal factor is understoodyou will see at once that he is not, and cannot be, an authority upon questions of this kind." I wonder whether Mr. Horton would have the courage to say this upon a public platform where talking back is allowed? It is easy enough to use this kind of language in the coward's castle—the pulpit—where a preacher who knows his congregation knows how far he can trade upon their ignorance and credulity; to say it elsewhere might invoke the necessity of *proving* it, and that would be a little awkward.

Incidentally, and I believe accidentally, Mr. Horton does at this stage make a sensible remark. He says that Haeckel's devotion to scientific pursuits weakens rather than strengthens the value of his opinion on religion. *Prima facie*, I agree that this is so. A man who devotes himself to one pursuit is very likely to blunder when he tries another, for the reason that his energy has been expended in a special manner and in a particular direction. True, this does not always happen; still it is always likely to happen. But Dr. Horton quite fails to see the bearing of the only sensible remark in his sermon, for very soon after he is found at the old game of quoting Kelvin and others who differ from Haeckel as to the bearing of scientific results on religious beliefs.

Now what is sauce for the goose ought to be sauce for the gander. If Haeckel's devotion to science prevents his being an authority against religion, Kelvin's devotion to science must disqualify him as a witness for religion. Either you must admit both, or neither. This is probably an abstruse point for Dr. Horton to master, so I will content myself with the hope that he may see it.

One might add, in defence of Haeckel, that his view is at least based upon the verifiable results of science. Lord Kelvin's view is based upon weakness and want of knowledge. As I do not mean to be disrespectful to Lord Kelvin, I will explain what I mean. Haeckel says, as the result of the *knowledge* at his disposal, that the doctrine of evolution, the state of chemical and biological science, warrant us in saying that the Theistic hypothesis is no longer necessary to explain the phenomena around us. All these can either be explained now, or will be explained as knowledge grows; and Dr. Dallinger, a scientist and a clergyman, agrees with him. Haeckel further says that our knowledge of the evolution of fundamental religious ideas warrants us in saying that these beliefs answer no known facts; they have arisen as the results of ignorance and credulity, and are in process of disappearance.

Now Haeckel may be right or he may be wrong; but he is at least basing his opinions upon facts that are in his possession and may be in the possession of anyone who cares to acquire them. Lord Kelvin's opinion, however, that there is a creative force *behind* evolution, is one on behalf of which not a single fact has been or can be produced. It is an opinion, and nothing more. His only reason for believing it is that he cannot conceive how otherwise certain phenomena have been produced. But this is not a statement of scientific knowledge, or even of logical inference, but one of mental inadequacy in face of certain facts, and at any moment this belief may be completely destroyed by an enlargement of our knowledge. Yet, according to Mr. Horton, Haeckel's inference, based upon knowledge, is that of a rude, ill-mannered, ignorant, unthinking child, while Kelvin's inference, with nothing better than want of knowledge to support it, is justifiable, and even conclusive.

Mr. Horton is thankful for the translation of the *Riddle of the Universe*, because it shows "the depth of degradation and despair" into which Haeckel would plunge the race. This degradation and despair turns out to be the result of the teaching that God and the soul are, from a scientific point of view, exploded hypotheses. And because Haeckel had said that he felt impressed by the simple and tasteful decoration of a Mohammedan Mosque, and that "sun worship, as a form of naturalistic Monotheism, seems to have a much better foundation than the anthropoistic worship of Christians," and that there are certain low races that are without the belief in God and a soul, our preacher concludes that "primitive barbarism, sun worship, Mohammedanism, self-love, are the awful rapids to which Haeckel would steer the ship of humanity." Really one feels thankful that the list is not further extended by the addition of cannibalism, human sacrifices, witch hunts, and other characteristics of men untouched by science, and fresh from the workshop of God Almighty.

To anyone less impervious to common sense than Mr. Horton appears to be, it would be unnecessary to point out that, in saying sun-worship has a better foundation in reason than the deified man-worship of Christianity, Haeckel is only saying what all sane students of nature will agree to. The sun is the immediate cause of much that makes life worth living, if not of life itself; we do know that the sun exists, and that its existence is beneficial to mankind; and there is surely more reason in worshipping this, if we must worship something, than in worshipping the unknown Trinitarian puzzle of Christianity. Nor is it quite clear how, if there are certain low races without the belief in a soul or God (a statement which I think is open to question), *our* ceasing to believe in these will plunge us back into barbarism. If Dr. Horton could find time to acquire a knowledge of anthropology and history, such as might be picked up from the study of a couple of cheap text-books, he would realise that man develops during his evolution a number of ideas and beliefs that he subsequently loses; and it really does not follow, because these are dropped, that he at once reverts to the stage anterior

to the development. It is man's growth away from pure barbarism that first of all suggests certain beliefs, and it is further growth that destroys them. If I may put the lesson in a sentence for Mr. Horton's benefit, it is thinking that brings the gods into the world, and it is more thinking that carries them out again.

But Dr. Horton says it is not altogether fanciful that Haeckel's theories should lead to degradation. To prove this, he quotes from an unnamed paper a statement by some unnamed "Anarchist" to the effect that people must tear out of their hearts the belief in God and the soul; and, when this is done, "all the remaining claims which bind you, and which are called science, civilisation, propriety, marriage, morality, and justice, will snap asunder like threads." And this, Mr. Horton says, is the result of people accepting Haeckel's view of the universe, that is if you dismiss the Christian Deity, whom Haeckel, much to Dr. Horton's disgust, calls a "gaseous vertebrate," then you get rid of "love and truth and peace and joy and civilisation and progress generally, and poetry and life."

Well, I am not an Anarchist; but if some Anarchist did use the words Mr. Horton quotes, then I venture to say he meant something very different to what Mr. Horton gives his congregation to understand; and I will also add that the worst and the most despicable form of untruthfulness is the *suggestio falsi*. It is more than stupidity—it is downright dishonesty—for any man of ordinary education and average common sense to assert that Haeckel's views as to the constitution and development of the universe lead logically to the conclusion drawn by Mr. Horton. I have not a very high opinion of the mental ability of the clergy—particularly of the shrieking section to which Mr. Horton belongs; but I find it impossible to believe that any of them occupying a responsible position can be so unutterably stupid as to honestly come to the conclusion announced by this preacher. To brand one's opponents as criminals in embryo is not controversy—it is sheer ruffianism, and the ruffianism is all the more contemptible because these statements are made in a church, where a contradiction is not permitted. It would do Dr. Horton some little good, perhaps, to look up the history of the Church, and reflect on the fact that the teaching that, once a man believed in Christ he was absolved from all moral and social ties, has been, not a scientific doctrine, but one of the most constant features of Christian belief.

We are thankful for the assurance that Mr. Horton is not angry with Dr. Haeckel—he is only sorry for him. "I do not rail, I do not reproach" (!) he says; he is a poor, afflicted human being; "he is not conscious of his own degradation," and "has passed into that state where prayer alone can save him.....and we shall bring him to God in our prayers as we bring the sick and the afflicted." So the innate gentleness of the Christian character cannot be suppressed, after all. "Haeckel," says Horton, "you are a rude, ill-mannered, ignorant child; you are guilty of ignorance, dishonesty, and irrationality; you have an unthinking mind; you wish to plunge the race into Mohammedanism, self-love, sun-worship and primitive barbarism; you are on the level of the stocks and of the stones; you are not conscious of your own degradation. But I do not rail, I do not reproach; I pray for you as a poor, afflicted human being." The picture is quite affecting; one of the greatest living scientists being admonished in this fatherly and Christian manner by a preacher who owes his own emergence from obscurity solely to the mental poverty of his brother clergy.

It is difficult to deal with a man like Dr. Horton seriously. To do so would be apt to inflate his sense of self-importance more than is already the case. The gravity of the position is adventitious. Dr. Horton, as I have said, is one of the people whom certain sections of the press are booming. He is one of those who direct that monstrous hybrid, the Nonconformist conscience, and this is beginning to play a prominent part in English political life. With Dr.

Clifford and Mr. Campbell, he has, I understand, numbers of young people under his influence. And when we find men of this stamp, intellectual charlatans at best, exercising an influence in public affairs, it would seem either that the Freethought work of the past thirty or forty years has been a failure, or that there is much more still to be accomplished than many seem to imagine.

C. COHEN.

Praying for Rain.

As if "the all-wise Disposer of events" did not know the need of rain to quench the flames of Adirondack and Canadian forest fires, ere woful damage was done. Could he not—if there is such a being—through his supreme omniscience, and by his omnipotent fiat, see that his aid is needed, and come at once to the rescue, nor wait for supplications?

But does he? Rather, *can* he? If he is such a force in the universe, "almighty to rule and command," as the hymn says, and "the Sovereign Protector.....unseen, yet forever at hand," why does he not interfere and protect when his help would be most precious?

Humanity protects where it can. A poor youth turned adrift and utterly homeless because penniless, unable to get work and starving, obliged to sleep in the fields at night having no money for the humblest lodging, prayed in vain to this being "whose smiles and whose comforts abound," as this same hymn sings, till he came to the door of an Atheist and applied for food and mercy. His steps were not "directed" there. His heart told him he would not apply in vain. Nor did he. He was bountifully fed and sheltered. His rags were replaced by better garments from that Atheist's wardrobe. When he went forth again to seek employment, money was given him to be of service in his wants. "You are my God, my kind Providence!" said the grateful lad to the Atheist. "You save me from starvation and misery!"

Is the "All Father" less considerate, less merciful? Does he rescue the perishing, as the Atheist did? Does he ordain that the windows of heaven shall open in time to send down the gracious rain on the burning forests? Does he, "sitting above the water-flood, and remaining a king for ever," order that the swelling waters shall not overpass their banks, nor destroy happy homes and the dwellers in them, devastated by furious floods as recently in the Mississippi Valley and elsewhere? Where is he when most needed? Is he asleep, or on a journey, or lost in the delight of angelic hallelujahs?

Again we have to ask: If he is, where is he? "Echo 'answers, Where?'" In vain we wonder at his silence. No satisfaction is afforded, and we think it cannot be given. This sublime indifference seems to us a proof of nonentity and absolute non-existence of a supreme Personality. If there is any central Intelligence, any great motive force of Deity in the universe, it is not apparent. We know nothing whatever about it, or its modes of operation. "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself," says the Bible. And we respond, "Yea, verily!"

It is related of a late great Evangelical clergyman of New York (old Dr. Tyng) that once, when besought in a very dry season to pray for rain, he turned on his pious but importunate suppliant with this suggestive rebuke: "You may pray and pray, but it won't rain till the wind changes!"

GERALD GREY.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY.—A minister travelling through the West in a missionary capacity, several years ago, was holding an animated theological conversation with a good old lady on whom he had called, in the course of which he asked her what she thought of the doctrine of total depravity. "Oh," she replied, "I think it a good doctrine, if people would only live up to it."

Acid Drops.

Herder, the great German writer, historian, and critic, knew what he was talking about when he said that "Christian veracity" deserved to rank with "Punic faith." Even when Christian advocates are not telling downright lies they are often astonishingly inaccurate. Indeed, it seems impossible for most of them to speak the exact truth, except by a deliberate and painful effort. Their general attitude is that of "Oh, it's near enough." They feel that almost anything will do for the uncritical audiences they address.

Take the case of the Bishop of Stepney, who preached that Hospital Sermon before King Edward at St. Paul's Cathedral. Having to prove, or thinking he had to prove, that Jesus Christ was the greatest of the human race—just as if a god-man really belonged to the human race at all!—his lordship thought he might improve his argument by dragging in an illustration, and this is what he said: "Some of you may remember the striking witness to His greatness spoken by good and quaint Charles Lamb. He and his friends were discussing one evening how they would receive and know the great dead if they were to appear among them, and Lamb broke in upon their chatter with the words: 'I will tell you. If Shakespeare were to enter this room we should all stand; but if Christ were to enter this room we should all kneel.' The assent which every man among us, whatever his creed may be, makes to that simple witness is the proof that deep down in its heart humanity knows its King." This is "near enough," perhaps, for a Bishop. But we shall see it is far from "near enough" for persons who have even an elementary sense of accuracy.

The Bishop of Stepney was referring, whether he knew it or not—and very likely he was only talking second-hand—to an essay of William Hazlitt's entitled "Of Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen." The essay is the second in the volume called *Winterslow*. Lamb and several of his friends, including Hazlitt, were not, as the Bishop says, discussing how they would receive and know the great dead. This is a melodramatic way of putting it. They were simply discussing what dead persons they would choose to see if they could. The names of Sir Isaac Newton and Locke were started; then Sir Thomas Browne and Fulke Greville, the friend of Sir Philip Sidney; then Donne, Dr. Johnson, Chaucer, Dryden, and Pope. The talk was really profound and interesting, and Lamb took a large share in it. To call it "chatter" is a slanderous absurdity; that is to say, if the Bishop has read the essay, which we very much doubt. Lots of great names followed Pope's, until at last Lamb, who was in great form, said he would like to have seen Judas Iscariot. "I would fain see," he said, "the face of him who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray him." This was reaching a climax. But what Lamb said next was not what the Bishop alleges. What he did say was this:—

"There is only one other person I can ever think of after this. If Shakespeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment."

There is no antithesis here between "stand" and "kneel"—in fact the words do not appear. As far as "greatness" goes, it is really Shakespeare who takes the palm. Rising up to meet him is an act of reverence. Whereas falling down (not *kneeling* down) and trying to kiss the hem of the "other person's" garment was rather a sign of unspeakable affection. Altogether, the Bishop made a sad muddle of the fine conclusion of a fine essay. But it is the way of his kind. After all, it was "near enough" for the pulpit.

One of Mr. Hall Caine's compatriots on the Island of the Three Legs, Mr. H. B. Noble, who began life as a clerk at Douglas at sixteen shillings a week, died some time ago worth half a million. Besides real estate, he left personality sworn at £180,000. Mr. Noble was a very Christian man in everything but practice. He did not take no thought for the morrow, he did labor (or scheme) for the meat that perisheth, he did lay up for himself treasures on earth where moth and rust do corrupt. He did nothing that Jesus told him to do, and much that Jesus told him not to do. Still, he was a very good Christian, and his will proves it. Amongst his legacies is one of £2,500 to Dean Lefroy—another pilgrim who is trying to get to heaven by the poverty route. The British and Foreign Bible Society also gets £2,000, the Religious Tract Society £1,000, and the Church Army £1,000. The sum of £10,000 is to be devoted to providing a new

church and vicarage at Douglas. Who can doubt that the pious testator has gone to glory?

How are the mighty fallen! "Jack Cooke," the "Boy Preacher," has outlived that title. He is now a weedy youth, nearly six feet high, with a thin strained voice. We see he is described as "the youthful preacher." Why not the "corner-boy preacher"? The organ of political Nonconformity is good enough to say of him that "He is very fluent in speech, and without objectionable mannerisms, but there is no more of argument, solidity, or accuracy in his forty minutes' address than would be expected from any similar youth of seventeen." Yet this weedy youth professes to speak by inspiration. He does not study what he has to say, but speaks what the Lord puts into his mouth. This is what he asserts, and a lot of people still believe they are listening to God Almighty when the weedy youth opens his lips. His recent farewell address in East-London was attended by nearly three thousand people—"mostly women." Poor women! What fools they have been made in all ages by religious charlatans!

Apropos of the same individual, a writer in the *Christian Commonwealth*, who notes that the only boyish things about him are his nickname and his intellect, says that his sermons, if delivered from an ordinary pulpit, would empty the Church in a month. He also notes that, even in an ordinary mission hall, the people began to leave before the conclusion of his fifty-minute address. Yet another religious bubble seems on the point of bursting.

One of "The Boy Preacher's" gems is, "You can't trust any earthly friend: one of the truest things David ever said was, that all men are liars." This comes of keeping a youth in churches and chapels for several years on end.

England often boasts of being the most Christian nation in the world—though Scotland also claims to take the cake, and the United States of America considers itself well in the handicap. Yet one-third of the population of this most Christian nation are always on the verge of pauperism; and there are no less than 702,905 actual paupers fed, clothed, and housed out of the rates. If they were all collected together they would fill a city bigger than Birmingham. And the joke is—for everything has a jocular side—that they are all candidates for freehold plots in the New Jerusalem.

Madame Judée, a wealthy French lady, has left her large fortune to be divided among various Catholic institutions. Cardinal Richard, Archbishop of Paris, gets two relics—a chip of the true Cross and a prickle from the Crown of Thorns. This is not a very marketable legacy, we suspect; but the good lady took care to make them worth having, even from a business point of view. Each relic was wrapped in 25 sheets of paper, and each sheet of paper was a £40 Bank of France note. Thus the chip and the prickle were incidentally worth £2,000.

Lord Halsbury, formerly Sir Hardinge Gifford, sits upon the soft woollack and enjoys a salary of £10,000 a year. When he ceases to be Lord Chancellor, as he will have to if the Tory Government gets turned out, he will still draw £5,000 a year as long as he chooses to claim it, which we may be quite sure will be as long as he lives. He is a very pious gentleman, and has even appeared at the annual meeting of the Christian Evidence Society. He won his position by "baiting Bradlaugh" during the famous parliamentary struggle. He did the dirty legal work of the Tories and obtained his reward for it, although he was soundly beaten by Bradlaugh on the final appeal to the House of Lords. He also conducted the prosecution of the editor of the *Freethinker* for "blasphemy," appearing against him both at the Old Bailey and at the Court of Queen's Bench. Lord Halsbury's piety is also exemplified in his strong attachment to his own family. He is careful that his relatives shall not suffer by his connection with the government.

Were any other man than Lord Halsbury the occupant of the Woollack, we should see judges and magistrates called to order for flouting the laws they are appointed to administer. The Oaths Act, which was carried by Charles Bradlaugh, gives every person the right to affirm instead of swearing; not merely as a witness, but in any other capacity whatsoever. Yet this Act has been defied and derided a thousand times, and nothing has ever been done to correct this judicial outrage, although the Lord Chancellor's attention has been called to it again and again. It is just the same with the Vaccination Act. Magistrates make a farce of it in half the courts in England, and the Lord Chancellor allows them to do so without a word of reproach.

Two cases under the Vaccination Act were reported in the London morning newspapers recently. At the Thames Police-court, a man applied for an order of exemption. Mr. Dickinson, the magistrate, asked him whether he sincerely believed that vaccination would be prejudicial to the health of his child. The reply being "Yes," the exemption was immediately granted. At the North London Police-court a man who declared he would rather go to prison than have his child vaccinated was fined twenty shillings and costs. Why on earth should the law be administered with such perplexing variety? Why should Mr. Dickinson give one man an exemption, and Mr. D'Eyncourt inflict a penalty upon another man in the very same circumstances? This chaos in the administration of justice is entirely due to the connivance of the Lord Chancellor. It is *his* duty to remind magistrates of *their* duty, and to remove them if they persist in being negligent or wilful. Lord Halsbury ought to be taken to task on this matter by some member of parliament. Even in the House of Lords there ought to be someone with sufficient decency and public spirit to raise a protest against the Lord Chancellor's inaction. It is a grave scandal when the head of the law helps to make it stink in the nostrils of honest and sensible citizens.

One of the cases before the Norwich Grand Jury was that of a clergyman named Barraclough, who was charged with inviting little girls to tea his lodgings, and then committing improper familiarities. The learned judge (Mr. Justice Wright) told the Grand Jury that as the only girl mentioned in the indictment was over thirteen, and appeared to have been a consenting party, there was no offence at law. Then it is a pity the law is not altered.

Mr. C. E. Bonner, the Spalding Deputy Coroner, on Saturday, June 13, held an inquest at Moulton Marsh, near Spalding, Lincolnshire, touching the death of John Hardy, aged seventy, farm foreman, who was found drowned in a pit on the farm of Mr. Henry Crawley, in whose employ he had been for thirty-three years. The case was a very sad one, the evidence showing that the deceased's horse was found tied to some railings near the pit, his hat and coat were also on the railings, and upon search the deceased was found in the water in a standing position dead, and had apparently been in the water about one hour and a half. He had once been in an asylum—twenty years ago, but for many years he enjoyed the confidence of his employer in a marked degree, and had been a prominent member of the Primitive Methodist body, with whom he was an old-standing local preacher. It was stated in evidence that the deceased was all right in his mind, excepting on religious questions, and the taking of his life was attributed to religious mania. The jury returned a verdict that deceased committed suicide whilst of unsound mind.

The world does move, and one of the signs of the movement is the manner in which certain sections of the Christian world are growing ashamed of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The *Scotsman* calls the Confession that "hoary iniquity," which is not at all bad for a Scotch newspaper. At the Church Assembly Meeting the Rev. Principal Storey denounced the same production as being "full of the deep intolerance of the sixteenth or seventeenth century; a monstrous travesty of divinity, and full of terrific doctrines; for which, and for other, reasons the Church should deliver its servants from the burden of unqualified subscription and adherence to the formula."

All this is very pleasing as a sign of the times, but it is not all. Anyone who has studied the Westminster Confession must have been struck by two things. One is its unadulterated barbarism; the other, given the Bible and Christian theology, its unflinching logic. This last now sits very uneasily upon Christian shoulders, simply because they have ceased to believe in the former in any genuine sense. Presbyterianism is one of the most logical of the Christian creeds, and the men who drew up the Confession were men who meant business. That Christians have now grown ashamed of one of their monumental productions is a tribute to the growth of heresy. If honesty only grew in the same proportion, the way out of the difficulty would be found in people giving up Christianity altogether. To revise the creed is only a temporary device. The twentieth century believer denounces the eighteenth as barbarous, and we have no doubt that the believer of a century hence will say the same of the present generation. A little honesty and a little courage would settle the difficulty once for all.

"Jesus Christ in the chair." This is *not* a newspaper heading, but it might have been, and with justice if Mr. R. F.

Horton is to be trusted. At a convention of Congregational ministers held in this gentleman's church at West Hampstead, Mr. Horton said he would leave the presidential chair vacant "as a sign of their common desire that One unseen should preside over all their meetings." This, we are told, "touched the heart of the assembly." It is a pity it didn't touch the head a little. Really parsons must have a marvellous command of their risibles, or be strangely destitute of a sense of humor to go through such solemn buffoonery with straight faces.

Two clergymen who would have attended the Convention died. A widow of one of them wrote saying that her husband had been much interested in the meeting, and during his illness had every day prayed for its success. Was his death an answer to prayer?

At the same meeting Mr. F. B. Meyer told how a scientific man spoke to him of ether as the invisible ocean in which all things are floating, and, taking him into his laboratory, "and knowing the ether was there, quietly without excitement, by a simple experiment, demonstrated its presence. God was to be dealt with in the same calm, deliberate way." Quite so; and we should only be too pleased to accompany Mr. Meyer anywhere he pleases while he "quietly, without excitement, by a simple experiment," does for God what his scientific friend did for the ether. The Freethinker is, perhaps, the only person who does deal with the conception of God in a calm, deliberate way. And he finds that under his analysis the whole thing disappears. Of course, we don't suppose for a moment that Mr. Meyer meant anything by what he said. Indeed, we believe that when Mr. Meyer was approached some time ago, and requested to discuss this subject in "a calm, deliberate way," he found it convenient to decline.

Apropos of Miss Marie Corelli's crusade against the building of the Carnegie Public Library in Stratford-on-Avon, a member of the Stratford Town Council asserts that, before Mr. Carnegie appeared upon the scene, he was asked to obtain, for Miss Corelli, the price of the land in Henley-street. He did so, but the lady refused to purchase on the grounds that the price asked was too high. The land was then purchased by Mr. Flower, and presented to the Corporation. The Councillor, Mr. F. Winter, asserts that our lady novelist was in favor of a "Corelli" library, but not of one that advertised anybody else. Human nature is a queer compound!

Speaking at a Young Men's Christian Conference at Dumfries, the Rev. Dr. Wells said that in many respects pagan India set Christian Scotland an example to be emulated. The Hindoo was more liberal and sincere in his profession of religion than were Christians. "As to liberality, our own Carnegies could not hold the candle to some of the Carnegies of India, and if the Christians of Britain subscribed as liberally to their faith for the next three years as the Indians did to their abominable idolatries, the Gospel would in that time be carried to every human being on the surface of the globe. In some of the fundamental virtues the Hindoo also excelled us, for by the law, and by family devotion and reverence, there was not a prodigal son amongst them. In concluding, the speaker dealt with their temperance and sacrifices in deciding for Christ, and said that Scotland, in sackcloth and ashes, should sit at the feet of heathen India and make that country her instructress in these respects." Rather a severe comment upon missionary enterprise.

At the same meeting Sheriff Watson distinguished himself—and would have extinguished himself, had he been addressing an audience of any mental standing—by saying "We had now no Voltaires, no Tom Paines, no professed Atheists, and no people who pooh-poohed religion." Great Scott! Is the man blind or more stupid? Someone ought to send him the *Freethinker* regularly; he would soon discover whether Atheists belonged a lost species or not. There are probably more people who "pooh-pooh" religion now than ever there were, and to see Sheriff Watson making an exhibition of himself for the "Lord's sake" is not likely to diminish the number.

Sir William Vernon Harcourt, writing to "My dear Dr. Clifford," admits that "the tyranny of majorities may be as bad as the tyranny of kings." He did not think of this when he had the editor of the *Freethinker* under lock and key in Holloway Gaol for "bringing the Holy Scripture and the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt," and refused to let him out although he was asked to do so by the leading men in science, art, and literature in England. Sir William Harcourt, as Home Secretary, thought the majority could do no wrong then. He thinks differently now. But

his reason in both cases is the same; the self-interest of a professional politician.

The Rev. W. J. Dawson, of Highbury, preaching on Sunday evening, June 7, said that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had said to him that Nonconformists were betrayed in 1870 by the timidity of the fathers. He (Mr. Dawson) did not wholly endorse that view, but it roughly expressed something like what did occur. This is what we have been saying all along. The Nonconformists will catch us up sooner or later. It is only a question of time—and of enlightened self-interest!

It seems almost impossible for a missionary to avoid giving himself away when writing a Report or an Appeal. Dr. Griffith John, of Hankow, has just written a circular letter to a number of clergy at home asking for their help. He asks for money to equip schools in China, and says: "There is in China to-day a great demand for Western Education, and the question we have to face is this: Shall the demands be met by the Christian missionary, and the teaching be made conducive to the interests of the Christian Church, or shall it be met by men who are out of sympathy with Christian Missions?.....The Christian Church in China must have her own schools of learning if Christianity is to become a power in the land."

There are two or three points in this statement worthy of notice. First of all, there is the admission that what the Chinese want, and what they come to the mission for—when they do come—is not Western Religion, but Western Education. If we read the statements so frequently made in missionary reports, about the natives hungering for the Gospel in the light of this admission, we realise what a piece of humbug the whole thing is. Next there is the admission that education, as such, does not create a bias in favor of religion, but the reverse. Religion is only safe when the education is made "conducive to the interests of the Christian Church"—which means that, without the initial bias being created, Christianity stands but a poor chance. And, finally, there is the general admission that the parson's only interest in education is a religious interest. He would do without the schools if he could; but, as he can't, his aim is to see that religion is kept to the front. These last two points are as true of England as of China, and just now should not be without their lesson. What Dr. John *does* say Dr. Clifford *would* say if he were equally straightforward—or simple.

The Bishop of Stepney has formed a new religious body—the League of Our Father. Its object, according to the *Christian World*, is to reach the homeless men of the metropolis, and persuade them once a day to kneel down and repeat the Lord's Prayer. We hope it will do them good. It will be quite touching to see those who are without home or food, and nearly without clothing, pray to "our Father" in heaven. The situation will have a spice of humor in it, not to say sarcasm.

Quite unconscious of the satire on "Providence," a religious paper publishes the following summary: "Following two months of drought, terrible forest fires have occurred in Canada. In Nova Scotia scores of fires were burning simultaneously, and for days Halifax was enveloped in a thick pall of smoke. Many villages and lumber camps were wiped out, and the damage is incalculable. Railway traffic was suspended in some districts, and in others trains rushed through lanes of flame. Montreal was almost cut off from the outside world. Enormous forest fires have also raged in America, and, owing to the darkness occasioned by the smoke, an Atlantic liner ran aground soon after leaving New York. The dense smoke was observed at sea for a distance of six hundred miles. While the drought continued in some of the States, resulting in the devastating forest fires, heavy rains fell in other localities and occasioned enormous damage in the Mississippi Valley. A cloud-burst wrecked a village in South Carolina, causing serious loss of life. Rain eventually extinguished the forest fires in Canada and the States and put an end to the drought."

Canon Aitken believes that "every prayer that wins an answer brings about a manifestation of the supernatural." Well, we agree with him. All Canon Aitken has to do is to produce his prayer that brings an answer. If he demonstrates the first, the second isn't worth discussing.

"Heads I win, tails you lose," is the attitude of the clergy towards Biblical criticism. At any rate, there is no mistaking what the Rev. H. J. R. Marston, of Belgrave-square, means on this matter. He believes, of course, that criticism

can only help the Bible, but we "must approach the New Testament as believing scholars, and with the conviction that, however explained, it is the inspired word of God," "However explained!" This is delicious! This man of God doesn't care how you study the Bible, or what conclusion you come to, so long as you believe it to be the word of God. After all, what he really means, we suppose, is, believe what you like so long as you believe in me. But fancy the value of a criticism that commences by believing, and resolves to take the Bible as the word of God, whichever way the evidence points!

A story is being told in Hamburg which must be meant to satirise the common neglect of the Bible amongst Christians. A business man, in domestic and financial distress, made up his mind to sell the family Bible—which seems to command a better price in Germany than it does in England. Before parting with it he turned over the leaves, and found a sealed letter addressed "to the finder." He opened it and found the following inside: "In the sure knowledge that man does not turn to his Bible to read the word of God until he is in the greatest distress, I have placed £100 in notes between the pages 141 and 142. Hamburg, 1879."

Nobody knows how many chips of the true Cross have been scattered at various times over the whole of Christendom. John Calvin reckoned that there were chips enough in his day, if they could all be put into planks, to build a big ship. But this computation did not frighten or abash the Church; for it was contended that the Cross on which Christ was crucified consisted of miraculous wood that had an unlimited power of self-production, so that the more there was taken from it the more there remained.

The *Daily News* religious census for Holborn places that borough thirteenth in the London list. The population is 58,290, and the aggregate attendance at all places of worship was 13,681. In the morning one person in eight, and in the evening one person in nine, went to church or chapel. The proportions for the men were one in nine in the morning, and one in thirteen in the evening. Here again the Church of England easily triumphs over the combined Nonconformists; the aggregate figures being—Church of England, 4,938; Nonconformist Churches, 3,259; Roman Catholic Church, 4,587; Other Services, 917.

The two smallest sects in Holborn, judging by the census figures, are the Salvation Army and the New and Latter House of Israel. The total attendance of the Boothlites, morning and evening, was only thirty-four; and that of the real Chosen People—as they regard themselves—only sixteen. Why don't they join together, and help to make the beginning of a decent congregation between them?

It appears that if money has to be withdrawn from the Post Office Savings Bank on the death of a husband or wife, the survivor is asked a number of necessary questions, and some questions that are merely impertinent. One is "Whether married in the Church of England or in the Roman Catholic Church?" What on earth has this to do with the Postmaster General? Besides, there are other ways of getting married. The matrimonial knot can be tied in Nonconformist Churches or in Registrars' Offices, just as securely as in the establishments recognised at Saint Martin's-le-Grand.

When the belief in a God ceases, then ceases also every obligation towards God which you would impose upon man, and only the duty of man to man remains. Morality is therefore simplified, in some cases perfectly reversed; theological morality is made human morality—the highest, most valuable prize which the victory over belief will bring to humanity. This human morality will no longer know any other duties than those which one man has to fulfil to others; equal, universal, human rights will be recognised as the source of these; and the appeal or even reference to higher duties will no longer be allowed as the excuse for the non-fulfilment of the former.—*Karl Heinzen*.

What we call moral feeling has its origin in the social instincts or habits which each human (or animal) society develops, and must develop within itself, if it is not to perish by its own incapacity. Morality, therefore, is evolved from sociability, or the faculty for living in a community, and it changes according as the particular idea or necessities of any given society changes.—*Büchner*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(All Engagements suspended for the present.)

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—June 21 and 28, Newcastle-on-Tyne. July 5 and 12, a. and e., Victoria Park; 19, m. Kingsland.
- H. C. HUNTER.—The silly old gentleman who rebuked you in the train for reading the *Freethinker*, although it turned out that he had never read it himself, and even thanked God for not having done so, is typical of myriads of "good Christians." His calling the *Freethinker* "obscene" is not surprising. It was a fair sample of orthodox manners. After all, if God is going to burn "infidels" alive for ever in hell, it cannot be wrong to give them a taste of hell on this side of the grave. It is too late in the day to burn them, or even to imprison them, except occasionally, but calling them names is still a possible luxury.
- M. COHEN.—We have no copies of the *Freidenker* by us, but will send you the next copy we receive.
- G. DAVEY.—You want to know what right the *Daily News* has to speak of the late King Milan, of Servia, as "the licentious Free-thinking King." It has no right that we know of. You might have written to the *D. N.* on the subject; but perhaps you thought your letter would only go into the waste-basket. Religious bigotry of a certain kind must be expected from the *D. N.* under its present management—and proprietorship.
- T. M. M.—We note your hope that there will be a liberal response to our appeal on behalf of the Cohen Presentation. With regard to your query, we are taking as much care of ourselves as possible, and we hope to get set-up during the summer for a good winter's platform work, in addition to our literary labors.
- J. T. JONES wishes Mr. Cohen "long life and happiness."
- MATHEMATICUS.—Acknowledged as desired.
- G. B. H. McCUSKEY.—Glad to hear you say, as an old subscriber, that "the *Freethinker* has never been better reading than it has during the past twelve months." Also that you have specially enjoyed the Emerson articles. Our little book on Shakespeare was delayed by the tumultuous events of 1901, and afterwards by our illness. We hope to have the leisure before long to finish the manuscript with a view to early publication. Pleased you find the *Pioneer* good for propagandist purposes.
- G. LANGRIDGE.—Mr. Cohen passed over your letter. We note your best wishes for the success of the Presentation Fund.
- J. BLUNDELL.—We cannot undertake to write letters to local newspapers all over the country. You will see that we have dealt with the matter in our own columns. You might make sure that the Editor sees what we have written.
- SYDNEY A. GIMSON hopes the Cohen Presentation will be a success.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings and letter. You say there is "something strange" in finding us making a mistake. Of course we must bear the technical responsibility for it. How it happened involves a longer story than we can tell. Obviously the moon's phases depend on the varying part of its illuminated surface turned towards the earth, and on nothing else except during eclipses.
- B. H. FLETCHER.—Your manners are worthy of your faith, and the texts you quote have no relation to the subject.
- E. PURCHES.—Thanks for the cutting. You will see that the matter is dealt with in our leading article. The Paine paragraph seems to have appeared in many papers.
- REGULAR READER.—Thanks for your trouble in the matter.
- E. E. KITCHENER.—We will insert your letter next week.
- A. G. HANN.—We are obliged.
- H. L. WOODS.—We have passed over your order to the proper hands.
- W. SIMONS.—Cuttings are always welcome.
- H. M. RIDGWAY, J. B. WALLIS, and others.—Mr. Foote will reply to your communications next week. It is too late for your letters to reach him in time for this week's issue.
- G. CROOKSON.—Thanks for report of sermon. You will see that Mr. Cohen is dealing with it in this issue. We are much afraid that our prayers for the Rev. R. F. Horton's mental welfare would be about as efficacious as his prayers for Professor Haeckel's conversion.
- H. G. SELLARS.—The "hedging" in the quotation you send us, as you say, "delightful." But a book issued under the auspices of the S.P.C.K. must make some efforts to protect "Holy Writ." More than once public attention has been called to the way in which certain translations of this Society are bowdlerised or edited, and the attempt to minimise the difference between Assyrian and Biblical chronology, by saying that the Assyrians "are not always correct," is only a mild specimen after all.
- D. C. CURRIE.—See "Acid Drops." We hope the pamphlets will do the gentleman good; but he seems a hard case.
- FIRM HAND.—Yes, books have been sent as requested.
- J. F. HAINES.—Received. Rather too lengthy for this week's issue, and we do not care to "cut" your communication.
- R. COX hopes all *Freethinkers* will show their appreciation of Mr. Cohen's work for the cause, and that "a grand amount may be realised."
- M. L. McFARLANE.—Thanks for the Portsea and Southsea subscriptions, which are acknowledged in the general list.

F. BONTE.—*Freethinker* shall be sent as requested, and the rest of your kind letter shall receive attention.

E. J. HIRST.—Shall be seen to on Mr. Foote's return to London. Thanks.

W. C. INGLIS.—Pleased to hear from you. We can assure you that your communication did not go unread into the W.P.B. We are also glad to learn that the *Freethinker* has been of assistance to you in your talks with Christians.

THE COHEN PRESENTATION.—*Fourth List*:—M. Cohen £2 2s., Sydney A. Gimson £1 1s., R. L. Martland 10s., J. W. and A. J. 2s., G. Langridge £1, G. B. H. McCluskey 5s., Mathematicus £1 1s., J. T. Jones £1 1s., M. L. McFarlane 6s., Mrs. G. Casher 5s., A. L. Hockmouth 2s. 6d., H. Vincent 1s., E. Yearke 1s., Mr. Stapley 2s. 6d., Mr. Norman 2s. 6d., Mr. Hore 2s. 6d., Mr. Kindrick 2s. 6d., Mr. Kindrick, jun. 2s., R. Cox 5s., T. M. M. 3s.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote has been away from London for some days. In his absence the *Freethinker* has been seen through the press by Mr. Cohen. Of course the Editor's pen has not been idle, but he has gained some relief through his young colleague's contribution towards the useful weight of "Acid Drops." In consequence of Mr. Foote's letters having to be forwarded to him, the Cohen Presentation acknowledgments do not go beyond Monday morning's receipts this week. Tuesday morning's receipts will be included in next week's list. Subscribers who are concerned will please note.

To-day (June 21) Mr. Cohen holds two meetings in Newcastle-on-Tyne. Race Sunday is a day on which most of the Tyneside propagandist bodies ventilate their opinions, and the Secularist meetings have now become quite an institution. For many reasons it is hoped that there will be a good muster of supporters around the platform. The evening meeting is held near the Military Sports' stand; the morning one at the Moor Edge.

A religious weekly notes that "Mr. G. W. Foote has made a brave attempt to force the slippery Nonconformist conscience to an open and honest declaration of the end and object of its agitations and demonstrations." It adds that "Mr. Foote must be curiously deficient in his rationalist and sceptical intellect if he is sanguine enough to believe that any of the Dissenting agitators will give a 'fair and square' reply to his inquiry." Really, we do not imagine that Mr. Foote ever did believe that the Nonconformist leaders would give a straightforward reply to his questions. Had they attempted it would have exposed their whole game, and have demonstrated what a farce the Dissenting cry is. Still, it is well to put the question, if not for the sake of the Nonconformist leaders, then for that of the public at large. Some of these latter are already beginning to realise that the only real way out of the trouble is complete secular education in State-supported schools, and in all probability the course of political events may yet compel Dissenters to support a policy that at present they do not seem to have either courage or honesty enough to face.

Mr. J. W. de Caux continues the correspondence in the *Yarmouth Mercury* to which we drew attention recently. He is a thoroughly competent and effective champion of Freethought. It is a pity he does not succeed in drawing some representative Christians. Those who reply to him generally belong to the class who are said to rush in where angels fear to tread. Mr. de Caux has too easy a victory over such disputants. We wish him foemen more worthy of his steel.

The Freethought Publishing Company has still a few sets left of the complete and handsome Dresden Edition of the Lectures, Essays, Speeches, etc., of the late Colonel Ingersoll. These ought to find early purchasers. It will be seen by the advertisement on another page of this week's *Freethinker* that they are offered on very easy terms. A payment of ten shillings secures the whole twelve volumes at once, and the remainder of the purchase money is payable in monthly instalments of the same amount. All who have become possessed of this fine edition of Ingersoll have been delighted with it. It has a fine appearance on the bookshelves, and the contents are of the highest interest and value to all friends of reason and humanity.

Some of Voltaire's writings are also advertised in this week's *Freethinker*. They have been imported from America through the "Truthseeker" Company, New York, and are well printed and bound for the library.

The *Leicester Pioneer* gives a good report of Mr. F. J. Gould's lecture in the Secular Hall on John Calvin. Mr. Gould speaks out plainly about the saturnine despot of Geneva, and we are glad to see his criticism printed in a local newspaper. The *Leicester Pioneer* is a very advanced journal, largely devoted to the Labor cause, but not neglecting questions beyond the scope of mere breadwinning.

The Annual Meeting of the South Shields Branch took place last Sunday evening, and the Report considered and pronounced highly satisfactory. Mr. S. M. Peacock was re-elected President, Messrs. White, Middleton, and Hannan Vice-Presidents, Mr. W. Bowie Treasurer, and Mr. Edward Chapman Secretary. Other business having been transacted, the President formally moved that the members of the Branch tender their sincere thanks to all those who had, by their labors or donations towards the expenses, taken part in achieving the success of the recent proceedings in South Shields.

We regret that, owing to an oversight, the name of Mr. C. G. Quinton was omitted from the list of vice-presidents appearing in the report of the National Secular Society's Conference. Mr. Quinton has not ceased to be a vice-president of the Society, nor has the Society any desire to lose one whom it values as highly as it does him. We merely make this announcement in order to remove any misapprehension.

The *Zoophilist and Animals' Defender* reprints, in the current issue, the letters on Vivisection contributed to these columns by Messrs. W. P. Ball and H. S. Salt.

Tennyson's Creed.

GREAT and terrible is the Law of Heredity. Most people go through life in a miserable state of bondage to it. Do what they may, they cannot emancipate themselves from its awful tyranny. Lord Kelvin's faith in God is an inheritance from his ancestors, although he tries to argue that science—even biology—necessitates it. Born in Ireland and brought up in Scotland, it would have been almost a miracle had he not believed in God. Although a deservedly pre-eminent physicist, he cannot be regarded as an authority on biology; and some of the leading biological experts of the day positively affirm that he was not justified in referring to their branch of science, either as necessitating, or even as directly sanctioning, such a belief. But, while the majority of people are the slaves of the past, there are a few in almost every age who succeed, either wholly or partially, in emancipating themselves from its tough trammels. The late Professor Huxley was an example of complete emancipation. He was trained in a pious home, and started in life as a firm believer in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, and in all the orthodox dogmas of the Church; and yet, such were the purity and strength of his perception and logical faculties, that he soon succeeded in cutting himself loose from all traditional and superstitious beliefs to such an extent as to be able to write: "For myself, I am bound to say that Nature covers the sum-total of that which is." As an example of incomplete deliverance, the case of Tennyson may be cited. All know that the great poet was the son of an English

rector, and that his bias was naturally in favor of faith. Most of us know, also, that several times the discoveries of modern science well-nigh robbed him of all his religious convictions. Faith and doubt were in the balances, and doubt more than once turned the scale.

In the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, the genial editor supplies us with a good deal of interesting information about the meetings of the Metaphysical Society, of which he was the chief founder. Among the early members were such illustrious men as Tennyson, Huxley, Manning, and Martineau, all of whom exchanged ideas in the freest and frankest fashion. At one time or another, all the members gave definite expression to their faith, or no-faith. Tennyson's faith, according to Mr. James Knowles, was this:—

"There's a Something that watches over us; and our individuality endures: that's my Faith, and that's all my Faith."

Surely this was a rather slender faith with which to confront a world of doubt; and it would have been much too slender, I fancy, to admit its possessor to the membership of any ordinarily orthodox Evangelical Church of that day. It was the residuum of superstition from which he could not rid himself.

"There's a Something that watches over us." What? When? During the recent Boer war there were Christians on both sides, who confidently appealed for sympathy and support to the God of Battles. The simple-minded farmers of the Transvaal and the old Orange River Free State deafened heaven severaltimes a day with their passionate petitions, fervently believing that Jehovah was on their side. The number of those who prayed was much smaller on the British side; but in the majority of British churches the conviction was firmly cherished that God was undoubtedly on our side. Did God determine the fortunes of the war? *The Boers were beaten by superior numbers.* No angels of the Lord came down at dead of night to slay the wicked by the thousand. How do the Boers explain their defeat? By saying that for their sins the Lord has severely punished them; but their hope is still fixed on him. "And we gathered in our thousands in our historic fanes to give God joyful thanks for having so signally befriended our arms!" Ah, the pity, the mockery, and the tragedy of it all! Even the idea of an omnipotent, all-just, all-loving God watching over wars is unspeakably ludicrous and self-destructive.

"There's a Something that watches over us." Over whom? Over the millionaires who have made their "piles," and are still adding to them, by cruelly grinding the faces of their workmen? Over those who drive about in splendid carriages and fare sumptuously every day, and have apparently no cares or worries? Over large landlords with incomes of from £50,000 to £200,000 a year, who squander £500 in flowers for a single dinner, and who look down with bitter disdain on common people who live in tiny houses? If the parsons are true representatives of the Divine Being, such are the people of whom he loves to take care. He shields and protects and surrounds them in all conceivable ways; and it is easy for such people to believe fervently in his good providence. If a man has a nice, snug nest, which is seldom if ever disturbed, and if he manages to get all he needs, he may sing out with prosperous Tennyson, "There's a Something that watches over us." But what about the poor and needy, of whom, according to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in his great speech at Perth the other day, there are, in the United Kingdom alone, between twelve and thirteen millions living from year to year on the verge of starvation? What about the inhabitants of our reeking slums, who live under such depressing and degrading conditions, being huddled together, often, as many as from three to eight in a single stuffy room? What about the hundreds and thousands in London alone who hunt from morning till night for work, and cannot get it, and the other thousands who work from twelve to fifteen hours

a day for a shilling or less? Is there a Something that watches over these poor, starving, weebegone, miserable members of the human family? Do we know what Christianity says to these wretched outcasts? This: "Do not lose heart, suffering ones, though here you suffer grief and pain; your good time is hastening on. For every pang of pain you shall have a thousand thrills of rapture; for every snub from fortune a million honors in marble halls; and for every twinge of suffering myriads of glowing, triumphant songs—in heaven." That is the mocking, lying Gospel preached from thousands of pulpits in Christendom to-day. The unfortunate classes are exhorted to be happy in sorrow, to rejoice in tribulation, and to be triumphant in defeat, in the blessed assurance that great awards await them in heaven. Does such a message commend itself to any reasonable person as in any possible sense true? One thing is absolutely certain—namely, that no just and merciful Person, who is also omnipotent, can be watching over our world, in which such enormous cruelties, wrongs, injustices, inequalities, and selfish favoritisms prevail. Such a God would have prevented the present state of things, or, finding it, put a speedy end to it.

ANTI-HUMBUG.

Moses and the Pentateuch.—VI.

WE first hear of the existence of one of the "books of Moses" in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, king of Judah (B.C. 621). In that year Josiah, who was one of the few kings who "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord," sent Shaphan the scribe to the temple to inquire of Hilkiah, the chief priest, the amount of money in the sacred treasury, with a view to paying for some necessary repairs of that building (2 Kings xxii.; 2 Chron. xxxiv.). When the king's messenger entered the temple, Hilkiah the priest "said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found *the book of the law* in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan." Returning to the king, the scribe informed that personage of the discovery of the book, and then read out to him certain portions. "And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes," and, when somewhat recovered from the shock, he deputed "Hilkiah the priest" and Shaphan, with three other trusted servants, to go and "inquire of the Lord" respecting "the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

Instead of "inquiring of the Lord," Hilkiah and his four companions "went unto Huldah the prophetess," and "communed" with her. "And she said unto them.....Thus said the Lord, Behold I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even *all the curses that are written in the book.....* because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands." In consideration, however, of Josiah's desire to do whatever he thought might please the Lord, the punishment of the nation was to be deferred until after that king's death.

This "book of the law" which was "found" in the temple by Hilkiah was no other than the book of Deuteronomy, whose title in the original Hebrew is "the Book of the Law." Only in that book, too, do we find a long list of "curses" which are to overtake the Lord's chosen people if at any time they should renounce allegiance to their tribal deity and worship other gods. These curses occupy no less than fifty-four verses (Deut. xxviii.), and comprise about thirty different kinds of punishment which the Lord, who is long-suffering and of great kindness, threatened to inflict on the nation if they failed to observe the commands written in that book. The

following is a sample of the "curses" which Shaphan the scribe read to king Josiah:—

"If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to do all his commandments and his statutesall these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.....Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, the increase of thy kine, and the young of thy flock.....The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land.....The Lord shall smite thee with consumption, and with fever, and with inflammation, and with fiery heat, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew.....The Lord shall smite thee with the boil of Egypt, and with tumors, and with the scurvy, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed," etc.

It is not very surprising, then, that when Shaphan had finished reading the whole string of "curses," the good king Josiah—who implicitly believed them to have emanated from "the Lord"—should have rent his clothes, and exclaimed, "Great is the wrath of Yahveh." The "curses" in this chapter are too terrible for any sane god to have devised, and are, perhaps, paralleled only by those in a certain legend related by R. H. Barham, which commences:—

The Cardinal rose with a dignified look;
He called for his candle, his bell, and his book;
In holy anger and pious grief
He solemnly cursed that rascally thief!

We are to suppose that it was in "holy anger" and "pious grief" that the Lord hurled this chapter of "curses" at the devoted heads of his erring children. In both cases, too, the effect produced by the curses appears to have been the same—"Nobody seemed one penny the worse."

Now, since the book of Deuteronomy was found in the temple in the eighteenth year of Josiah, the question naturally arises, How came it there? The book, as we have seen, was unknown to the Israelites during the early period of the Judges and, later, to the prophet Samuel and to king Solomon. It can further be shown that it was unknown to the Jewish kings who preceded Josiah, though it would take too long to adduce the evidence here. Going back about sixty years prior to the accession of Josiah, we find the kingdom of Judah governed by the good king Hezekiah, who "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord," and served Yahveh all his days. Hezekiah was succeeded by his son Manasseh, who reigned fifty-five years. This king introduced the worship of Baal, and that of the sun, moon, and stars, and went so far as to erect altars for these deities within the temple itself (2 Kings xxi. and xxiii.). Manasseh's son Amon, who reigned only two years, followed in his father's footsteps. Then came Amon's son, the good king Josiah, who was only eight years of age at his accession, and who took no steps to make any changes in the religious services until his twenty-sixth year. Thus, for fifty-seven years before the accession of Josiah (and also during the first seventeen years of that king's reign) the temple was given up to the priests who served Baal and other deities (Yahveh excepted). These priests, it is scarcely necessary to say, would certainly not have allowed to remain in that building a book which contained denunciations against all gods but Yahveh, and which expressly condemned their own forms of worship (Deut. iv. 19, etc.). We may be quite certain, then, that if any of the so-called "books of Moses" had been left in the temple in the time of Hezekiah, these priests would have carefully destroyed them. It has to be noted, further, that the temple was not purified of the altars and images set up by Manasseh until *after* the finding of the book of the law—which book evidently fulfilled the main purpose for which it was written. This is seen by the subsequent acts of Josiah, who, after hearing all the terrible punishments which the Lord threatened to bring upon the nation for disobedience to his laws, "gathered together all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem," and in their presence "made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes,"

as written in the book just found (2 Kings xxiii.). Then commenced the cleansing of the temple. "And they brought out the Asherah from the house of the Lord," and burned it and ground it to powder. They "brake down the houses of the Sodomites that were in the house of the Lord"; and they demolished "the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord." This was followed by a demolition of all the altars and high places throughout the kingdom of Judah. There can thus be little doubt that Josiah and his people were converted to the worship of Yahveh by fear of the awful penalties mentioned in Deuteronomy. Yet, had that king possessed only the sense of a mouse, he might have reflected that, since none of the threatened "curses" came upon the people during the exceptionally long reign of Manasseh, it could not matter the loss of a halfpenny which deity was worshipped.

With regard to the finding of the "book of the law," we are asked to believe that for seventy-four years that mysterious volume lay in the temple undiscovered by any of the idolatrous priests who entered that building daily, and who must, at times, have searched every hole and corner for hidden books or treasure. The inference, then, is clear: the book was placed in the temple by Hilkiah a short time before finding it, and the author (who was certainly not Hilkiah) was someone known to that priest. Now, the only writers mentioned in the reign of Josiah are Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The latter, judging by his book of three short chapters, was incapable of composing such a book as Deuteronomy. There remains, then, only Jeremiah, who is generally admitted to have written a large portion of the book which bears his name. In the first chapter of his book we read:—

"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign" (Jer. i. 1-2).

There can, I think, be little doubt that the Hilkiah named in the forgoing passage was the chief priest who found the code of laws which no one of that, or any preceding, generation had ever seen or heard of before. Jeremiah had set himself up as a prophet of Yahveh five years before the finding of the book, and had therefore ample time in which to write it. We have not, it is true, direct proof that this prophet was the author—nor is the question one of very much consequence; the important point is that the laws in Deuteronomy were unknown to all the prophets, priests, and kings of Israel before the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah. And, it may be added, never after the finding of this book did the nation forsake the worship of Yahveh. The awful "curses" in Deuteronomy, when once known, acted as a powerful deterrent.

Again, when king Josiah ordered Hilkiah, Shaphan, and their three companions to go and "inquire of the Lord" respecting the terrible punishments threatened for disobedience, what did these five leaders of the people do? Instead of putting on the robe of the ephod and the breast-plate (on which were the Urim and Thummin), and going into the building in which the ark was kept, and there asking the will of God, Hilkiah, though called in several places a "high priest," went with the others to consult "Huldah the prophetess"—that is to say, to inquire of a woman who was believed to have a "familiar spirit."

King Saul, who lived in more primitive times, has often been censured for consulting such a person; but there was more excuse for him than for Hilkiah. In the former case, Saul *did* "inquire of the Lord," and it was only when that deity "answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets," that he asked his servants to find him "a woman that hath a familiar spirit" (1 Sam. xxviii. 6-7). In the present case, Hilkiah only did what everyone else did up to the date of the finding of "the book of the law"—which book forbids such practices (Deut. xviii. 10-11), though Hilkiah and his friends do not appear to have known it. Furthermore, neither Hilkiah nor

his four companions, nor anyone else in the kingdom of Judah appear ever to have heard of the following commands—which commands are represented as given by the Lord to Moses, and recorded in a book by the latter individual for the benefit of all succeeding generations:—

"Turn ye not unto them that have familiar spirits, nor unto wizards; seek them not out to be defiled by them.....And the soul that turneth unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto the wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.....A man also or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones" (Lev. xix. 31; xx. 6 and 27).

We are asked to believe that these commands were in existence from the time of Moses to the Exile in Babylon, and that the prophets, priests, and kings, as well as the whole Hebrew nation, openly disregarded them. This, however, could not have been the case; for we find that kings who were faithful to Yahveh took no steps to rid the land of these impostors, who, without belonging to the priesthood, claimed to have power to make known to the people the will of "the Lord." As an example, we are told that Hezekiah, king of Judah, "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done" (2 Kings xviii. 3). Yet we find from Isaiah and Micah, who lived in his reign, that the land was full of these pretenders. Witness the following:—

Isa. viii. 19.—"And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards that chirp and mutter: should not a people seek unto their God?"

Mic. v. 10.—"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that.....I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hands, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers," etc.

After the Exile, from the time when we know that the Jews had the "books of Moses," down to the present day, all these idolatrous practices disappear. The reason, then, why the commands in Leviticus were disregarded is obvious; those commands were then unknown, for that book was at that time unwritten.

ABRACADABRA.

Correspondence.

SUGGESTION FOR EDUCATION REFORM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Without any doubt, despite the schemes in hand for furtherance of education among the young of this country and the execution of similar schemes with a view to bringing about a perfect system, the present condition of educational affairs is certainly not all to be desired. In making the statements here set down I preface my remarks with the assertion that I have weighed all the facts, and, so far as I can see, there would be little wanting if the system of education were carried out as I suggest, and has been suggested by various persons of my acquaintance who are intimately connected with the School Board, and thus are qualified to speak with more or less exactness upon the subject, and with a comprehensive knowledge thereof. I repeat, the present system of education, although better than it has ever been, is a very long way behind its time; and the necessary corollary is that, as no country can maintain its supremacy if it is behind in anything so important as the cultivation of the mind, our fatherland will gradually fall from its lofty position among the nations, and make way for some country that has given more attention to so vital a detail.

If our energies are divided we shall get anything but a good result. Concentration is the order of the day; and, unless we root out all that is superfluous, and direct our thoughts only to the centre object, we shall fail, and it is impossible to say where we shall land.

With this end in view, the first proposition is as follows:—
1. That all sectarian teachings shall be banished entirely from the schools; that theological subjects shall be entirely disregarded in every school supported by rates and taxes.

This is absolutely without prejudice, and my reason for suggesting such a Clause is plain. No Protestant cares to support the teaching of Roman Catholicism, and no Roman Catholic cares to support the teaching of Protestantism. And, whilst we are disputing about the teaching of theological subjects in the schools, whilst the various sects are

jarring and confuting, we are absolutely neglecting that which is of higher importance—namely, the teaching of purely secular studies. It is a most remarkable thing that religious parties should brush aside those things which are of the most importance, in order to quarrel over matters of faith.

We may take the proposition still further. If we are to sweep away superfluities, we must banish the present senseless method (I use the word senseless in a comparative tone) which is at present in vogue. It will be seen that if the scholars are to divide their attention between theological and secular subjects, they cannot become thorough. The second Clause is as follows:—That very young children shall be taught absolutely the same subjects, *until they display some talent or "bent,"* when they shall be immediately transferred to classes set aside for particular studies, and with the object of developing particular ability.

Almost every child has some particular ability, and it is useless to teach such subjects as shorthand, art, and English literature to those whose natural inclination is to the sea or the bench or the engine; or to those who desire to become artists and elocutionists and literateurs, such subjects as carpentry and so forth.

A class is almost always composed of dull and clever children. Whilst the School Board concentrates its attention to training the young in as efficient a manner as possible, and to that only, the scholars in their turn must be allowed to concentrate all their energies on that subject alone in which they are likely to succeed. We do not want a nation of "Jacks-of-all-trades." As it is at present, euclid, grammar, languages, and mathematics are hammered into the heads of bright and dull alike without discrimination; and many never learn these subjects thoroughly, and do not make use of them after they have left school. The scholars learn those things, in a great many cases, which are in opposition to their natural inclinations "under protest," and forget them as soon as it is convenient.

Men and women, let us be thorough. Cease this eternal quarrel for the establishment of individual and sectarian faith. Cease this selfish war of crippling the minds of the coming law-makers and law-keepers by forcing beliefs upon them by means of the schools. Refrain from thrusting aside the substance for the shadow. Abstain from making your children's minds a receptacle for your prejudices. Vote for better education—solid education, that is. Live to see your children established under conditions which will help to make them sound and good men, and respectable citizens, and not installed in hotbeds of sectarian bigotry.

If this be done, see to what heights we shall attain, and how much better equipped your children will be to face the battle of life and maintain England's supremacy (if such an object is desired) for which our forefathers fought and died.

Come, take the cash and let the credit go,
Nor heed the murmur of a distant drum!

A. T. WARRIS.

TOMBSTONE POETRY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In some of the Australian papers are printed, in what may be called the Poets' Corner, brief memorial verses, such as occur on tombstones. The idea of keeping alive the memory of the dead in this way ought not to be an object of ridicule, although the sentiments expressed may at times seem trite and the form of the expression not faultless; but I cannot resist breaking the rule of respectful silence with the enclosed, because it illustrates how Christianity—particularly its English variety—inflates its adherents into an absurdly exaggerated belief of their own importance and value in the scheme of things. It is a flower of religious poetry too bright to be allowed to blush unseen, except by barbarous eyes, for the light it throws upon the estimate of the Christian individual as to the supreme value of his own personality. What wonder, with a creed that inculcates such ideas, if the Western world has become an armed camp of brigands and assassins, bristling like a vast warron full of cowardly hedghogs and porcupines, or that, of all the dreary superstitions with which humanity has been cursed, it has produced more vice, war, and misery than any other of the numerous enemies of humanity. Here is the text on which I have preached the above brief sermon:—

TO A HUSBAND AND FATHER.

'Tis eighteen months that thou art dead;
Ah! let us not complain.
Sad was the parting; * but our loss
Is God and the angels' gain.

—From the "Age" Newspaper.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

68 Cardigan-street, Melbourne.

* Mine is sadder still; for I havent got one!

Gaieties.

WOULD NOT STOP TO PRAY.

All soldiers under fire have invariably experienced a sudden impulse to stoop low as though to avoid the bullets.

The following story is told by a Western colonel whose regiment at the time mentioned was well to the front, acting as reserve and support to the picket line. He found one evening, on returning to his tent, that a new chaplain had just come down from the North.

It being night, and no other place at his disposal, the colonel offered the parson such hospitalities as his limited quarters afforded, at the same time informing him that the position was not without danger.

At early dawn the picket line was driven in with a rush, the first notice being a tornado of bullets crashing through and splintering up things generally in the tent. The colonel involuntarily crawled out, and, as he did so, shouted back to his reverend guest: "Get down on your knees, chaplain."

The clerical gentleman, not understanding that the suggestion had been offered in the interest of his bodily safety, replied, in a quivering voice: "My God, colonel, you don't expect me to pray here, do you?"

The pastor of a darktown congregation was warming up to the climax of his sermon, and his auditors were waxing more and more excited, "I wahns yer, O my congregashun!" exclaimed the exhorter. "I wahns yer against de sin uv crap shootin'! I wahns yer against de sin uv whisky drinkin, an' de sin uv chicken raisin', and I wahns yer, my breddern, against de sin uv melon stealin'!" A devout worshipper in the rear of the church jumped to his feet and snapped his fingers excitedly. "Whuffo' does yer, my brudder, r'ar up an' snap yo' fingers when I speaks uv melon stealin'?" asked the preacher. "Kase yo' jes' 'minds me whar I lef' mah coat," replied the devout worshipper, as he subsided into his seat.

A GOOD BREED.—The Rev. Harry P. Dewey, of Brooklyn, tells the story of a friend of his who once attended a meeting where a Presbyterian minister preached only ten minutes.—a most unusual thing for a Presbyterian minister to do. "Brethren," said the minister, when he stopped suddenly, "I have a dog at home that must be peculiarly fond of paper. He has eaten that part of my sermon that I have not delivered, and I'll have to stop here." After the meeting, a woman met the clergyman at the door, and, after shaking him by the hand, asked: "Doctor, I want to know whether that dog of yours has any pups. If so, I want to get one of them and give it to my minister."

The Rev. Charles Murray, a Presbyterian divine who died recently, was a teacher of renown. One of his favorite pastimes was to address Sunday-schools. Once he described the times and life of Elijah to a class of small boys and girls. They seemed much interested, and at the close he said: "Now, some little boy or girl tell me, why did the prophet pour water on the sacrifice?" "To make gravy," was the quick reply of a little girl in the front seat.

FAVORITE OF PROVIDENCE.—"I declar'," said Brother Dickey, "I got to be mo' keerful in future—I sho' has." "What's the trouble now?" "Well, suh, I whirled in an' prayed fer rain des two hours en a half, an' bless God dey come a regular deluge that come mighty nigh drowin' de bes' mule I has. Providence is so partial ter me.—*Atlanta Constitution.*

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

RELATED.—A young man entered with a dog, and attracted a good deal of friendly interest from an Irishman, who inquired what kind of dog it was. The owner looked the questioner insolently up and down, and then replied, with a drawl: "It is a cross between an ape and an Irishman." "Faith, thin, we're both related to it," was the ready retort.

PUCK'S PHILOSOPHY.—Man is the only object in nature that decreases in size on nearer view.—*Puck.*

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.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. W. Sullivan, "The Ethics of the Moseley Commission."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Ethical Movement for the Masses."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, E. B. Rose.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies; 6.30, F. A. Davies.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, J. Fagan, "What is Sin?"

FINSBURY BRANCH N. S. S. (Clerkenwell-green): 11.30, A Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): A Lecture.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, G. Parsons, "Did Jesus Christ Live and Die for the Benefit of Mankind?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, A Lecture; Hammersmith Broadway, 7.30, A Lecture. Committee meeting Wednesday, June 24, at 8.30 p.m., at "The Grapes," 12 Gerard-street, Soho, W.

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.: H. Percy Ward, 3, Wellington Column; 7, Islington-square. Monday, at 8, Edge Hill Lamp.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Moor Edge, near Recreation-ground): 11.30, C. Cohen, "Why Should People go to Church?"; near Military Sports Stand: 7.0, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?"

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 2.45, Members and Friends meet at corner of General Post Office to go, if fine, by tramcar to Firth Park, etc.

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