

# THE Freethinker

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*To think ill of mankind, and not wish ill to them, is perhaps the highest wisdom and virtue.—HAZLITT.*

## Not of this World.

JESUS CHRIST, when before Pontius Pilate, is reported to have said that his kingdom was not of this world. The priests of his religion have taken care that this should not be true in point of fact. They have made his kingdom very much of this world, and have always tried to get hold of the best places in it. Nevertheless this saying of Jesus, whether he really uttered it or not, is one of profound significance. All religion, just as far as it is religion, and nothing else, is not of this world, but of the next, and is rightly called other-worldliness. If we are candidates for heaven we cannot be good citizens of earth, and if we are citizens of earth we cannot be good candidates for heaven. When a man talks of making the best of both worlds he is simply finding an excuse for enjoying this one, and to that extent he is sceptical as to the other. If there be a heaven and a hell, in one of which we must all spend eternity, the question whether we are happy or unhappy in this life is of infinitesimal importance. It is only as people begin to doubt the reality of this tremendous alternative of heaven or hell for ever, that they attach a definite value to the present existence.

This worldly life has always been nothing, or next to nothing, to sincere and earnest Christians. In the language of the Methodist hymn they have realised that—

Nothing is worth a thought beneath  
But how we may escape the death  
That never, never dies:  
How make our own salvation sure  
And, when we fail on earth, secure  
A mansion in the skies.

Read the writings of the first Quakers, read the writings of the first Methodists, read the writings of any of the Christian mystics—such as our own Edward Law, read the records of any movement which is a return to the original impulse of Christianity, and you will invariably find this despair of or contempt for the life that now is, and this mingled dread of and yearning for the life that is to come. You will find it even now, to all intents and purposes, in the teachings of Count Tolstoy and in the doctrine and discipline of General Booth.

Quite recently the Chief of the Salvation Army has reminded the world that he and his followers have nothing to do with politics. This has been the principle of the Salvation Army from the beginning. In quite orthodox language, which they have merely adopted, they have always said, We are *in* this world but not *of* it. Here they are only pilgrims; they look for their home elsewhere.

Some people seem to be in the world, but not of it, in a different sense of the words. They pay so little attention to the obvious that they are capable of being suddenly astonished at the rising and setting of the sun. To this description of persons belong two correspondents of the *Daily News*, who are astonished at General Booth's utterance. Their astonishment seems to be shared by that journal, which gives editorial prominence to their letters.

One of them represents himself as a regular subscriber to the Salvation Army, and says he must cease to support a system that "does not recognise the duties of the Christian in regard to national affairs." This gentleman has "yet to learn (good old tag!) that a Christian ceases to be a citizen." What he really has to learn is that a citizen ceases to be a Christian. The other gentleman rather pompously asks General Booth "thus openly"—as if there were any secret about it!—whether it is true that "the members of the Salvation Army are not allowed to take any interest or part in social or political matters in this country, and, if so, why?" Perhaps this gentleman will presently ask, with the same openness and solemnity, whether it is true that the earth goes round the sun, and, if so, why? And we daresay General Booth will trouble as much about the one question as the earth (or the sun) would about the other.

How few Christians understand Christianity! What passes for Christianity in modern churches and chapels is not a bit like the real article. The Peculiar People *are* Christians—and pretended Christians send them to prison. Salvationists are something like Christians, and the same may be said of a few Primitive Methodists. But you may look a long while without finding Christians in any other denomination. Emerson noted this in his own way in one of his bracing Essays. Stoicism, he said, made every man a stoic; but in all Christendom, he asked, where are the Christians?

If you want to see what real Christianity is, you should go back to the primitive Christians. They did not palter, trim, and allegorise; they took words in their natural meanings, and thought belief should control practice; or, rather, they did not think of it at all, but acted with honest instinct. They may have been ignorant and foolish, but they had the saving grace of sincerity. Jesus said "Take no thought for the morrow," and they took none. Jesus said "Resist not evil," and they refused to fight in the imperial army. Jesus said "Blessed be ye poor," and they accepted the blessing. Jesus said he would come again, and they expected him. Jesus said his kingdom was not of this world, and they looked forward to living under him in the New Jerusalem. At every point they were, or they tried to be, his true disciples. They did not suppose they could cheat him with lip-service, or throw dust in his eyes at the day of judgment. He was God, and they were but men; it was for him to teach, and their part was to learn and obey.

What was the result of this real Christianity? A total neglect of the conditions of earthly welfare. It was not in this world (as Gibbon sneers) that the primitive Christians expected to be either happy or useful.

When the real Christianity of the primitive Church reappears on the modern stage, all the mock Christians are amazed and horrified, and are nearly on the point of calling for the constable. It is precisely because the Salvation Army is truly Christian that it keeps out of politics and all the rest of the mundane movement. For the same reason it sticks to its motto of "Blood and Fire." Man's one object is to be saved from everlasting fire, and the only way of escape is through the blood of Christ. This is Christianity in a nutshell.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Canon Henson on Atheism and Religion.

MAN is often described as a religious animal. As a mere description, expressing the fact that mankind in the mass has always held some religious beliefs, the statement may be allowed to pass. In any other light it is untrue and misleading. The bald fact that the majority of people—a number decreasing, however, with the development of civilisation—have always held, more or less tenaciously, a belief in some sort of supernatural beings, can hardly tell us whether this belief is intellectually justifiable, socially useful, or likely to be permanent in its persistence. The existence of these beliefs no one disputes; it is the conclusion drawn from their existence that gives rise to discussion.

The religious conclusion is, practically, what has been will be. Religious beliefs have always existed hitherto, therefore they will continue to exist. A delightfully simple conclusion, which requires the further proof that they are intellectually and socially indispensable. In the absence of this proof it is more than likely that these beliefs that have persisted so long, but which are certainly growing weaker, will one day disappear altogether—a presumption that is strengthened if one can show that the so-called "religious faculty" of man is nothing more than a misdirection of normal reasoning power.

This aspect of the case is so simple, that one might be excused for expecting that when a preacher of the standing of the Rev. H. Hensley Henson, Canon of Westminster, took up the subject, he would have devoted some little attention to this view of the matter. One is disappointed. All that one gets is a dreary repetition of the perfectly valueless statement that man has a "religious faculty," accompanied by more or less veiled insolence against all who have the temerity to describe themselves as "Atheist." The very text on which the sermon is preached—"The fool hath said in his heart there is no God"—is an impertinence. Of course no responsible person does state his Atheism in this way, but the Canon takes this as a fit exposition of the Atheist position, and a fit retort to such a text would be that another fool said with his lips "There is a God." The two would at least be in congenial company.

But evidently Canon Henson takes the profession of Atheism as a mark of mental backwardness in some form. He speaks of "vulgar minds, undisciplined by genuine mental effort, unilluminated by any adequate scientific knowledge, in some cases at least biassed by the disastrous prejudice of unworthy living.....induce the bold hypothesis, as arrogant as it is unproved, of Atheism." We can pass the glaring absurdity of "unworthy living" leading anyone to embrace Atheism. A man cannot pretend to himself that he is an Atheist if he is not, and, as for others, it is indisputably easier for anyone to pursue a course of villainy under the cloak of religion than under that of unbelief. And a little reflection might have convinced Mr. Henson that the men who have called themselves Atheists, to say nothing of those scientists who have preferred to call their Atheism Agnosticism, the last thing that could be charged against them is want of mental effort. It is not the fools who give up traditional beliefs, but the few whose minds are of a sterner and stronger type. Wrong they may be, but upon the face of it to question a belief accepted by the majority is evidence of far stronger mental power than accepting it. It is far nearer the truth that the mentally weak and indolent accept the belief in God. Canon Henson might search the lunatic asylums of the country, from one end to the other, without finding an insane Atheist. Whatever they were before they became insane, they are staunch believers afterwards. The average church or chapel attendant, the average Salvation Army or Dissenting preacher, is hardly a picture of genuine mental discipline or effort. The weak-minded, as a late Bishop of Exeter remarked as a defence for administering the communion to

the inmates of the Western Counties Asylum, have a natural leaning towards religion.

Canon Henson himself remarks that the whole tendency of the age is towards science, not religion; and he asserts that the modern devotion to science breeds "in its true votaries a temper of intellectual caution," from which emerges Agnosticism and Secularism, and which "indispose us for the thought about God." Well, if Canon Henson believes in his impertinent text, does he also believe that the whole age is becoming foolish and weak minded? Surely this phenomenon might have suggested an inquiry as to the reason for this development of anti-theistic thought in an age unexampled for its scientific activity. Leaders of science, the majority of whom Mr. Henson says would profess themselves to be Agnostics, cannot be justly said to be wanting in scientific knowledge or mental discipline. Yet these men are not only drifting away from religion themselves, but the age is so permeated with scientific thought, that the Canon declares "we are all Secularists now."

Here is a further proof of the absurdity of the Canon's text, and from his own lips. "Science," he says, "seems to hold among us the place of a new religion. Here are all the familiar tokens and consequences of ardent faith—zeal, sacrifice, immense courage, passionate conviction, and not less, the shadows of all these, intolerance, vanity, fanaticism." The admission is important. All the qualities associated with religion exist, according to Mr. Henson, apart from religion. There could hardly be a plainer admission that religion is not a faculty in itself, as the Canon afterwards says, but a misdirection of other faculties.

One more word on Canon Henson's description of Atheism. Science, he says, has "nothing but rebuke for the coarse and violent creed of vulgar Atheism." Coarse! violent! vulgar! What on earth does the man mean? Atheism is either right or wrong. If I say that 3 multiplied by 3 equals 10, I am saying what is either true or false. But it is not violent or coarse or vulgar; it is none of these for the reason that it simply cannot be any of these. Similarly, if I say that the Christian deity does not exist, or that I see no evidence for believing that he does exist, this statement is either right or wrong, but it cannot be violent or coarse or vulgar. Such epithets have simply no legitimate application to an opinion of this character. Their introduction is insolent and unwarrantable. The only reason for their introduction is the desire to discredit by abuse an opinion which Canon Henson evidently has not the courage to face in any other manner, and which so far serves its purpose in inducing many who care for the opinion of the religious world to shroud their Atheism under a less obnoxious title. For my own part, abuse from such quarters is only another reason for maintaining a word the sanity of which is evidenced by the quality of its detractors.

Canon Henson supports his statement that science gives no support to Atheism by quoting Lord Kelvin's assertion that "science is compelled to adopt the idea of a creative Power"; which is, after all, only Lord Kelvin's *personal* opinion, and one that is certainly indefensible, since an *idea* of "creative Power" is simply impossible. No man ever had, or ever will have, any idea answering to the words. This is followed by the report of a conversation with Liebig, forty years ago. He asked Liebig if he believed that the grass and flowers "grew by more chemical forces." And, as no one ever believed that grass and flowers grew by mere *chemical* forces, Liebig answered this very unscientific question in the negative; although how, even if the question had been put in a better manner, Liebig's personal opinion could determine the question is more than one can see. And this is capped by a reference to Charles Darwin, whom, says the Canon, with an air of candor, "in his later years we are assured attained to the condition of Agnosticism," but to whose "cautious and reverent mind.....the crude dogmatism of Atheism was repulsive."

"We are assured"—as though it was merely a case of someone speaking about Darwin. Canon Henson knows full well that it was Darwin himself who described his condition as that of an Agnostic; and this not in his "later years" at all, but in the full maturity of his intellect; and found this opinion growing stronger with his years. And Canon Henson must also be aware that Darwin took every one of the supposed proofs of the existence of God and showed how utterly worthless they were. Charles Darwin did not call himself an Atheist for the reason that he misunderstood the meaning of the word. He called himself an Agnostic; and his Agnosticism, which excluded the belief in any creative force or providential government, was substantially Atheism. And this is the kind of foundation on which Canon Henson bases the statement that science lends no support to Atheism!

But, apart from the Canon's peculiar method of proving that science gives no support to Atheism, is there any truth in the statement? It is often said that science supports neither Atheism nor Theism; and this not only by Christians, but by others. How far is this statement sound? In my opinion only to the extent that Atheism *per se* is considered as an affirmation. But, then, I deny that Atheism *per se* is an affirmation. Its function is that of a negation, and the whole question is whether that negation is justifiable or not. On the one side there is the Theist, who affirms that he has sufficient evidence, derived from various sources, to justify the belief in Deity. Remove this assertion, banish altogether the conception of Deity, and Atheism is meaningless; it has no reason for existing at all. The Atheistic position is really involved in the denial of the relevancy or soundness of the evidence upon which Theism rests. If the Atheist can show that the evidence produced by the Theist is not only not conclusive, but absolutely incapable of proving the existence of God, the Atheist has made out his case. And from this point science has a great deal to say upon the matter; and what it does say is altogether upon the side of Atheism. One or two simple illustrations will prove this.

All assumed proofs of the existence of God fall into one of two classes: either they are subjective—certain cravings or emotions, or they are objective—conclusions drawn from the combination and interplay of natural forces. Upon both classes of evidence the testimony of science is legitimate, and, I believe, conclusive. So far as the subjective evidence is concerned, as will be seen when we come to examine Mr. Henson's treatment of the "Religious Instinct," the testimony of science is that all the feelings that accompany religion in its lower and higher stages are also found in conjunction with other sentiments to which the term "religion" cannot be applied. Fear, wonder, love, awe, admiration, reverence, are by no means peculiar to religion; and, that being so, and added to the knowledge we possess of the origin and growth of religion, it becomes highly probable that the accidental association of these feelings with supernaturalism, itself admitting of easy explanation, is but a misreading by man of his own feelings.

And when we turn to the objective evidence the testimony of science is absolutely conclusive. Design in nature is here the pivot of religious belief. Whether this be the crude, unscientific design of the school of Paley, or the more subtle, but quite as unscientific, design of a later generation of apologists, all are agreed on the general assertion that the adaptations of the animal and physical world argue the existence of a pre-ordering intelligence. And to this position the reply of the whole of modern science—apart from the personal opinions of certain scientists who are really no greater authority as to the inferences justified by their discoveries than any one of well-balanced brain—is that all of the organic and inorganic adaptations are the necessary expression of the properties of forces, the sum total of which constitute the universe. The animal adaptations, upon which religion built for so long, have been shown to be the outcome of an insensible evolution.

The animal, instead of being fashioned to fit its environment, is the product of its environment. The religionist was all the time reading nature backward. And what is true of the organic is equally true of the inorganic world. Purely mechanical, non-conscious forces are the only things science is cognisant of. Wherever the attempt has been made to show that at any particular point intelligence was controlling or guiding, science has stepped in, not with an "I don't know," but with a flat negation. And if this is not testimony in favor of Atheism, what is it?

In my next article I will deal with Canon Henson's treatment of "the religious instinct."

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

### Lessing's Masterpiece.

To pass an opinion on the literary value of foreign literature is generally an impertinence. For, however thoroughly a language may be understood in a *grammatical* sense, it is seldom or never possible to know it as the native knows it. There are elusive shades of meaning attaching to even common words and phrases, the significance of which the foreigner can rarely appreciate. How much more difficult, then, to gauge with nice discrimination the eminence of a writer possessing the vocabulary of a Voltaire, a Goethe, or a Dante!

But this obvious limitation is seldom or never recognised. Few Englishmen can conceive that Shakespeare has his equals in foreign tongues; and in the same way the average German will swear by his beloved Goethe, and the Italian by Dante. In the majority of cases critics of foreign writers could scarcely compose a decent essay in any language but their own; and there are even those who presume to weigh the merits of authors with whose language they are wholly unacquainted, and who submit the work of the translator to a careful analysis, in the full conviction that they are considering the merits of the original!

Of course, I do not deny that a good translation reproduces much of the matter and even, in a loose sense, some of the beauty of the piece translated. Some people assert that Fitzgerald improved upon Omar; but before such a statement can be authoritatively made, both languages in question must be *equally* understood, which is a very rare occurrence indeed. But, whether the translator improves the original or spoils it, one thing is certain: a process of modification must always take place; and there is always a difference of idea, corresponding to the difference of expression.

In presuming adequately to indicate the beauties of the great German Freethought drama, *Nathan der Weise*, I should be illustrating the justice of my own strictures. All I can hope to achieve is to communicate *something* of its contents.

The scene of the story is in Jerusalem, at the time of the Crusades. A rich Jew named Nathan (surnamed "the Wise") has adopted a Christian love-child, having lost wife and children in a massacre of Jews by Christians. The child, Racha, has grown to womanhood without knowing the story of her parentage. She regards Nathan as her actual father, and loves him with a deep affection. During his absence she is rescued from fire by a Knight-Templar; and, on Nathan's return, the Jew and the Christian become warmly attached to each other. Subordinate parts in the play are filled by Saladin, the historic opponent of the Crusaders, pictured by Lessing as a magnanimous and thoughtful Mussulman, and the Patriarch, an exemplary Christian bigot—the villain of the piece.

Throughout the work stress is laid upon the ethical and permanent instincts of humanity, as opposed to the passing hubbub of the creeds. In one scene Saladin's sister reminds him of the radical hero-worship of Christianity, whose devotees love to be

Christians rather than men, and, when by chance they do good, do it, not because it is humane, but because their Christ taught it.

Du kennst die Christen nicht, willst sie nicht kennen.  
Ihr Stoltz ist: Christen sein; nicht Menschen. Denn  
Selbst das, was, noch von ihrem Stifter her,  
Mit Menschlichkeit den Aberglauben würtzt,  
Das lieben sie, nicht weil es menschlich ist:  
Weil's Christus lehrt; weil's Christus hat gethan.

Saladin's attitude towards the Christians is one of the broadest tolerance. He wonders at their follies and pities them, but shows no semblance of irritation. "I have never desired," he humorously observes, "that all trees should produce the same bark."

Ich habe nie verlangt,  
Dass allen Bäumen eine Rinde wachse!

This playful mood is characteristic of Saladin's Freethought. When the Knight Templar discovers the true relationship between Nathan and Racha, he leads the Sultan to suppose that the Jew has taken advantage of his position to educate her in his ancestral faith. Saladin promises to investigate the matter, declaring (with an affectation of wrath which adds zest to the irony) that the Jew shall be taught the heinousness of his offence, in daring to bring up a Christian child without pork!

Auch soll es Nathan schon empfinden, dass  
Er ohne Schweinefleisch ein Christenkind  
Erziehen dürfen!

The bigoted Patriarch receives the same information in a far different manner. He will appeal to the authorities to have the Jew arrested, and forthwith burnt. With the contemptible hypocrisy of his class and creed, he tries to disguise his malignity against the Jew by a pretence of consideration for the child. He lays stress upon the meanness of imposing belief upon the infant mind, and tearing the Christian babe by force from the bond of baptism. "Is not all that one does to a child," he asks, "achieved by force?" Then seeing the logical application of his argument to his own position, he hastily adds: "excepting what is done by the Church."

Denn ist  
Nicht alles, was man Kindern thut, Gewalt?  
Zu sagen:—ausgenommen, was die Kirch'  
An Kindern thut.

This is probably the unanimous opinion of both sides in the present education controversy.

It is not denied that the Jew has surrounded the girl Racha with every comfort and luxury. It is not denied that there was no one else to act towards her in the relation of parent. Nathan has poured out all his love; he has spared nothing that could contribute to her happiness. One of the Christian brothers defends Nathan on these grounds. Admitted that the Jew has deprived the child of Christian teaching—has he not given his love? "Children at such an age," he says, "need love—even though it be but a wild beast's affection—more than Christianity!"

Kinder brauchen Liebe,  
Wär's eines wilden Thieres Lieb' auch nur,  
In solchen Jahren mehr, als Christenthum.

This is the consistent message of Lessing. His ethical judgment is too sound to admit the primary mistake of the creeds—to permit the aggrandisement of belief at the expense of conduct.

The Christian brother who is so alien to the spirit of his religion as to utter the above-quoted words, comes into personal contact with Nathan, and is astounded to find a Jew with so elevated a mind. Nathan relates how he received the infant and nourished it—and that after his wife and children had been murdered by Christian hands. At this the good brother cannot contain himself. "Nathan," he cries, "you are a Christian! A better Christian never lived!" The Jew's acute perception is not slow to appreciate the *reductio ad absurdum*. He immediately retorts: "What makes me a Christian in your eyes, makes you a Jew in mine!"

Was  
Mich Euch zum Christen macht, das macht Euch mir  
Zum Juden!

That a play like this should be so constantly

demanded by the German people is a fine compliment to their intelligence. In spite of the *régime* of the too-pious Kaiser—in spite of the fetters on public freedom—the cause of Freethought is more advanced in Germany, because the bulk of the people is more thoughtful and better educated. If *Nathan der Weise* could be produced here without abridgement it would do immense good; but the thing is hardly conceivable. Actors as a body are too religious, too ignorant, to perform such a work with adequate enthusiasm, and managers are much too timid to fling the glove in the face of Mrs. Grundy. Meanwhile we must content ourselves with the attainable, and study to acquaint ourselves with such masterpieces as Lessing's—without placing ourselves at the mercies of the translator.

E. R. WOODWARD.

## The Temptations of Abimelech.—II.

### A STUDY IN HEREDITY.

SOME fifty years pass, during which time little happens to Abraham and Sarah having any direct bearing on our study, excepting the advance in years of the fair Sarah to the ripe age of ninety, and of her husband to that of ninety-nine. But Abraham and Sarah had long memories, and the spoiling of Pharaoh was not forgotten. These two young people were longing to repeat their Egyptian *coup*—but when? and where? Egypt, with Pharaoh still living, was clearly too hot for them; Sarah, too well known, and no longer in her fifties. Suddenly Abraham hears of a certain Abimelech, King of the Gerites, a people, like the Egyptians, spontaneously generated after the Flood, and decides to try his luck with Sarah on the sister racket once more, and *Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre, mais avec sa femme*. The couple make precisely the same arrangements as in the case of Pharaoh, and Sarah again agrees to play the sister and obtain, if possible, the post of concubine to Abimelech, Abraham acting as her agent or manager. Sarah is again introduced as "Miss" Abraham, and arrangements are at once made with Abimelech that she shall (again) enter into a life of concubinage, no doubt on liberal terms ably fixed by Abraham with the worthy king, whose amorous inclinations for a giddy young thing of over ninety years of age evidence his possessing bumps of philoprogenitiveness of remarkable size. But "'tween the cup and the lip there's often a slip," and perhaps a glimpse of Sarah's beauty by daylight somewhat chilled Abimelech's amatory ardor for a ninety-years-old concubine; for, before the concubining was consummated, Abimelech "smoked" the little plot and accused Abraham of passing off his wife upon him (Abimelech) as his (Abraham's) sister, and upbraided Abraham for his wickedness. For Abimelech, like Pharaoh, was a man of more prejudices than Abraham, and was like unto Pharaoh also in this, that he objected on principle to admitting a married woman, even so ravishingly beautiful and patriarchally young as Sarah, to the position of one of his concubines. Abraham, as usual, admitted the cheat, and, as in the old Egyptian episode, managed to get the wages of his and his wife's projected shame, and the two went marching home again with a drove of Abimelech's asses, sheep, goats, and camels, to say nothing of slaves and hard cash. Apparently, as Pharaoh paid liberally for enjoying Sarah, so Abimelech was glad to pay liberally to get rid of her; at any rate, he did pay, and no doubt his reasons for so doing were as good as, though very different from, Pharaoh's.

We may pause here to reflect a little on Abraham's probable course of life, and ask ourselves a question or two. First, How long had Abraham and Sarah been working the sister lay before they tried it so successfully on Pharaoh, and between that time, and the date of their playing it off on Abimelech, how often had they carried it to a profitable conclusion elsewhere? Abraham was not a man to miss even

local opportunities, as is shown by his energy in emigrating with Sarah to Egypt, and, after fifty years had elapsed, he was energetic enough to start off again *sur la chasse* of royal game with his co-huntress, the "divine Sarah," number one. That a man and woman should be deliberately doing at ninety-nine and ninety what they did with aforethought at (say) fifty and fifty-nine, suggests the inference that they were acting from habit, and probably that was Abraham's and Sarah's case, as we shall see. We will not judge them by the Codex of Justinian, nor even by the Code Napoleon. In their day, the tribal laws were few, and not embarrassing. This profound and diligent study of Genesis discovers but three positive rules of conduct:—(a) To kill the shedders of man's blood; (b) To circumcise the flesh of the foreskin; (c) To increase and multiply; the third being seemingly the most important, and therefore emphasised by reiteration continuously reiterated. Apparently it was much the oldest and certainly much the most strictly kept of the three. Rule (b) was of a comparatively late date, originating in the time of Abraham, about the year 2100; and was a wrinkle learnt, presumably, by Abraham whilst exploiting "Miss" Abraham at the court of Pharaoh. It was reserved, however, for Jacob Noah to make an original and successful application of the circumcising scissors as we shall later on have reason reluctantly to show. When it will be seen that this operation, like that of docking horses and sheep or cropping dogs, cannot with safety be deferred to years of maturity. But we will not further anticipate on this point.

The negative rules of conduct were few and vague and to be gathered inferentially rather than from any direct commands.

And this experimental and rudimentary ethical code was the sole guide of Isaac and Jacob, Abraham's son and grandson. Nor were any of the three enabled to distinguish their particular God from the other Gods of that time, for he had not yet vouchsafed to make his name known to them, preferring for some twenty-two centuries to remain anonymous; although intimate, at least, with Jacob, with whom he is alleged to have wrestled for twelve hours at a stretch, but with an open disregard for the Rules of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Wrestling Association.

(To be continued.)

SIRIUS.

### Ingersoll on the Devil.

FEAR is an artist—a sculptor—a painter. All tribes and nations, having suffered, having been the sport and prey of natural phenomena, having been struck by lightning, poisoned by weeds, overwhelmed by volcanoes, destroyed by earthquakes, believed in the existence of a Devil, who was the king—the ruler—of innumerable smaller devils, and all these devils have been from time immemorial regarded as the enemies of men.

It was believed that demons and sorcerers frequently came together and held what were called "Sabbats"; that is to say, orgies. It was also known that sorcerers and witches had marks on their bodies that had been imprinted by the Devil.

Of course these devils were all made by the people, and in these devils we find the prejudices of their makers. The Europeans always represent their devils as black, while the African believed that theirs were white.

So it was believed that people by the aid of the Devil could assume any shape that they wished. Witches and wizards were changed into wolves, dogs, cats, and serpents. This change to animal form was exceedingly common.

There is no time to give the history of this belief in devils. It has been universal. The consequences have been terrible beyond the imagination. Millions and millions of men, women, and children, of fathers

and mothers, have been sacrificed upon the altar of this ignorant and idiotic belief.

Of course, the Christians of to-day do not believe that the devils of the Hindus, Egyptians, Persians, or Babylonians existed. They think that those nations created their own devils, precisely the same as they did their own gods. But the Christians of to-day admit that for many centuries Christians did believe in the existence of countless devils; that the Fathers of the Church believed as sincerely in the Devil and his demons as in God and his angels; and they were just as sure about hell as heaven.

I admit that people did the best they could to account for what they saw, for what they experienced. I admit that the devils as well as the gods were naturally produced—the effect of nature upon the human brain. The cause of phenomena filled our ancestors not only with wonder, but with terror. The miraculous, the supernatural, was not only believed in, but was always expected.

A man walking in the woods at night—just a glimmering of the moon—everything uncertain and shadowy—sees a monstrous form. One arm is raised. His blood grows cold, his hair lifts. In the gloom he sees the eyes of an ogre—eyes that flame with malice. He feels that the something is approaching. He turns, and, with a cry of horror, takes to his heels. He is afraid to look back. Spent, out of breath, shaking with fear, he reaches his hut and falls at the door. When he regains consciousness, he tells his story, and, of course, the children believe. When they become men and women they tell father's story of having seen the Devil to their children, and so the children and grandchildren not only believe, but think they know, that their father—their grandfather—actually saw a devil.

An old woman sitting by the fire at night—a storm raging without—hears the mournful sough of the wind. To her it becomes a voice. Her imagination is touched, and the voice seems to utter words. Out of these words she constructs a message or a warning from the unseen world. If the words are good, she has heard an angel; if they are threatening and malicious, she has heard a devil. She tells this to her children, and they believe. They say that mother's religion is good enough for them. A girl suffering from hysteria falls into a trance—has visions of the infernal world. The priest sprinkles holy water on her pallid face, saying: "She hath a devil." A man utters a terrible cry; falls to the ground; foam and blood issue from his mouth; his limbs are convulsed. The spectators say: "This is the Devil's work."

Through all the ages people have mistaken dreams and visions of fear for realities. To them the insane were inspired; epileptics were possessed by devils; apoplexy was the work of an unclean spirit. For many centuries people believed that they had actually seen the malicious phantoms of the night, and so thorough was this belief—so vivid—that they made pictures of them. They knew how they looked. They drew and chiselled their hoofs, their horns—all their malicious deformities.

Now, I admit that all these monsters were naturally produced. The people believed that hell was their native land; that the Devil was a king, and that he and his imps waged war against the children of men. Curiously enough, some of these devils were made out of degraded gods, and, naturally enough, many devils were made out of the gods of other nations. So that, frequently, the gods of one people were the devils of another.

In nature these are opposing forces. Some of the forces work for what man calls good; some for what he calls evil. Back of these forces our ancestors put will, intelligence, and design. They could not believe that the good and evil came from the same being. So back of the good they put God; back of the evil, the Devil.

There are many echoes in the world, but few voices.--  
Montaigne.

## Acid Drops.

The death of Cardinal Vaughan is not a matter of much interest to Freethinkers. He was not a thinker, like Newman, nor a popular figure, like Manning; but simply an ecclesiastic. He is said to have been an able organiser, but this concerns his own Church exclusively. Freethinkers will remember him as the Cardinal Archbishop who tried to frighten Professor St. George Mivart and failed. The man of Science, although a professed Catholic, took his courage in his hands and refused to recant what he had written about the Bible, and in particular about the miraculous features of the New Testament. He declined to put his name to a profession of faith drawn up for him by Cardinal Vaughan, and was thereupon excommunicated. He died a few months afterwards in the ordinary course of nature, and was buried without the rites of the Catholic Church. But it is probable that the Professor and the Cardinal now sleep soundly together.

"Providence" has been in a frightful muddle with the weather lately. During most of June the celestial powers seem to have had water on the brain. We have suffered enough from it in England, but they have suffered still worse in America, where floods have destroyed thousands of lives and millions of dollars' worth of property. Five hundred people were swept out of existence in the single town of Hoppner. "His tender mercies are over all his works."

Dr. Max Nordau cabled a fiery message to the meeting of American Zionists at Pittsburg. "We are still," he said, "in the fearful period of the Crusades, when the pious warriors of the Cross trained themselves to heroic work by the wholesale slaughter of Jews and the looting of defenceless ghettos. I would despair of Judaism and humanity if the free and happy Jews of America were to turn a deaf ear to the blood-curdling tale of Kischineff."

It is quite right that journalists and public speakers throughout the civilised world should express a strong opinion as to the massacre of the Jews at Kischineff, but it is very doubtful if any good can accrue from official representations. The United States government, for instance, is in a serious difficulty with regard to this matter. Popular indignation is running very high in the States, and the Jews are an important factor in politics there. But if representations were made to Russia, as so many Americans desire, it would give Russia, and perhaps other Powers, an opportunity of making representations to the United States government with respect to the terrible lynching of negroes. After all, there does not seem any particular moral difference between torturing a Jew and torturing a negro. Both must feel pretty much the same when they are mutilated or murdered. Allowance must be made, however, for the instinct of vicarious virtue. It is so much easier to denounce the faults of other countries than it is to correct the faults of your own; so much easier to insist on virtue at a distance than to practise it near at hand.

The Jewish demonstration in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon was not very numerously attended, and Prince Kropotkin was the only man of mark on the platform. Mr. G. W. Foote had been invited to be one of the speakers, but the gentleman who sent the invitation regretted that they had not been able to invite him earlier—which was enough to excite suspicion. Moreover, Mr. Foote was away from London just then, and did not know whether he would return in time for the demonstration. He was therefore unable to give a definite reply. And it was just as well he could not, for the resolution that was proposed and carried was simply Socialist. Mr. Foote could not have supported it. Massacre ought not to be denounced in the name of Socialism, but in the name of Humanity.

Father John of Kronstadt, who is worshipped by the credulous Christians in Russia, and is even believed to be able to work miracles, has started a new theory of the Kischineff massacre. He has come to the conclusion that the blame rests upon the Jews themselves, and that they incited the Christians to disorder and violence. This reminds us of the story of the man who was found carrying off a dead sheep. Being asked by the owner of the pasturage what he was doing with that bleater, he explained that the animal had assaulted him most viciously, and he had killed it in self-defence.

The Italian parliament voted that Signor Crispi's remains should be buried in the church of San Domenico, Palermo, the Pantheon of illustrious Sicilians; but the clergy of the town refused to allow this, declaring that if his body were

put inside the church the building would be desecrated. Rather than have a row, the burial committee had the remains buried in the church portico, which is not consecrated ground. Of course the Church hates the very name of Crispi; first, because he was a Freethinker; secondly, because he stood by the Italian government in its fight with the Vatican.

It appears that the Belgrade battue was rather extensive. Not only King Alexander and Queen Draga were assassinated, but about two hundred other persons were killed, including the Court officials and numerous adherents of the King and Queen who were massacred in their houses. No wonder the *Daily Telegraph* begins to speculate "as between the tyrannical Turk and these interesting Christians, which are the more Turkish of the two!"

The assassins of the late King and Queen of Servia attended a great Thanksgiving Service in the Belgrade Cathedral, where the Metropolitan, gorgeously arrayed in all his ecclesiastical finery, congratulated the nation upon the restoration of the Karageorgevics dynasty, while "deploring the necessity for the recent events." Was ever murder blessed more euphemistically? The truth is that the Christian Church is always on the side of successful power, no matter how achieved or how upheld. When the French Republic of 1848 was destroyed by Napoleon the Little, in violation of his oath to God and man, and with brutal violence and bloodshed, the crowned ruffian had no difficulty in going to Notre Dame and finding a cordial welcome. The Archbishop of Paris welcomed him at the cathedral doors, and cried "God bless Louis Napoleon."

We do not wish to take sides between the late King Alexander of Servia and his assassins. It may be that they only anticipated his amiable intentions, and murdered him to escape being murdered themselves. But the bloody hand decided the question, and it is nauseous to hear the new King Peter talking about his being called to the throne by "the favor of God." He was called to the throne by the men who killed King Alexander.

Shelley's *Queen Mab* is not a great poem, for the simple reason that great poems are not written by boys. But it is full of striking and important truths. One of these is the statement that "The name of God has fenced about all crime with holiness." One thinks of this line when one hears King Peter talking about "the favor of God."

William Thomas Moon, one of the Peculiar People, living at Barking, stands committed for trial on the charge of manslaughter, through not having called in a doctor to attend to his sick daughter Emily. According to the *Daily Telegraph* report, the prisoner asked no questions but made an irrelevant statement. We are glad to hear that a quotation from the Bible is now considered an irrelevant statement; only we suggest that the farce of swearing upon the Book thus irrelevantly quoted should be put an end to in all courts of justice. If the contents of the Bible are irrelevant, the covers can hardly be to the purpose.

Sarah Robinson, charged at the West London police-court with professing to tell fortunes by means of palmistry, has been sent to prison for a month with hard labor. She appears to have obliged her clients at the rate of a shilling a head. Had she charged them a guinea she might have escaped prosecution and imprisonment. She does not seem to understand that the net of the law lets big offenders through and captures little ones.

Will someone solve the following problem? If a palmist who charges her customers a shilling gets a month's "hard," how much ought the priests to get who take large sums for hurrying souls through purgatory?

The Archbishop of Canterbury presided the other day at the annual meeting of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the principles of the Established Church. Why not start a similar Society for the Education of the Rich in those principles? Because the rich would laugh at it as a silly impertinence. Parsons are always nagging at the poor. Yet it is the poor who, according to Jesus Christ, are the most certain of going to heaven, while the rich have a very poor chance of reaching it at all.

The vicar of Thornton Church, Bradford, went off to Switzerland for a holiday and left the marriage register locked up in the safe. The result was that the curate could not perform the marriage ceremony for a Rochdale gentleman and a Thornton lady, although many friends had travelled from Lancashire to be present at the wedding. The marriage had therefore to be postponed for two days.

during which time the safe was forced and the register extracted. Evidently the vicar of Thornton Church is a first-rate man of business, and very considerate of his parishioners.

Sir Richard Taigye, in *Chambers's Journal*, tells a story of a little Cornish village rounded off by two hills. On one side stood the Ritualistic parish church; on the other the Catholic chapel; and the difference between them was explained by the Catholic priest, who said: "They call us Papists, and we call them Apists." How they love one another!

Nearly a thousand local preachers held a conference recently at Leeds. Their last resolution dealt with the drink question and the granting and renewal of licences. After which, we read, the "proceedings were hurried to a close to make way for a wedding." This reminds us that it was at a wedding that Jesus Christ made his contribution to the drink question. He turned a vast quantity of water—variously estimated at from seventy-five to a hundred and fifty gallons—into wine to keep the wedding feast going when the liquor provided by the bridegroom had all run out. Surely the Christian gentlemen who meet to discuss how to put down or restrict the liquor trade are not "following Jesus"—whatever else they are doing.

The Bishop of Islington says there ought to be at least two clergymen in each district with a population of 4,000. At this rate there would be 3,000 clergymen, or more, in Greater London. If we reckon another 3,000 Dissenting ministers and preachers of various kinds, the total would amount to nearly half the London police force. With 6,000 men in black, and 13,000 men in blue, London ought to be a model city of all the virtues, instead of being—well, what it is.

"There is a great danger," General Booth says, "that the battle in the name of education may disgust the children with all Christians alike." We hope so.

Reverend Dr. Townsend, at the Methodist New Connexion Conference, claimed that the *Daily News* religious census for London had proved over and over again that the Nonconformist churches had larger attendances than the churches of the Establishment. Well, it all depends on what Dr. Townsend means. There are individual Nonconformist churches with larger congregations, but it is the grand totals in every borough that tell the tale, at least for outsiders. In some boroughs the Nonconformist aggregate attendance exceeds that of the Church of England; but in other boroughs, and these we believe the most numerous, the Church of England aggregate exceeds that of the combined Nonconformists. There is the Catholic Church, of course, standing apart from both; and, as we have before observed, on all questions between the Nonconformists and the Establishment the Catholic may be reckoned on the side of the latter.

London boasts a pauper army of 96,720, exclusive of insane and vagrants. This is also the number of the actual or approximate Christians in London. The noble 96,720 do not take too much thought for the morrow, and they certainly come under the heading of "Blessed be ye poor." This is the real religious census for London.

The *Daily News* religious census for Hammersmith is not calculated to make Christians shed tears of joy. The population is 110,682, and the total attendance, both morning and evening, at all the places of worship in the borough, is only 17,453. Perhaps the number of separate persons who went to church or chapel was no more than the odd 10,682, leaving the round 100,000 all outside.

The numerical relation of the Churches was as follows:—Established Church, 7,446; Nonconformist Churches, 6,925; Roman Catholic Church, 2,263; Other Services, 819. Here again the Church of England comes out an easy first in the competition.

Including the Hammersmith returns, the figures for London so far are: Church of England, 412,819; Nonconformist Churches, 396,300; Roman Catholic Church, 82,081; Other Services, 48,809. It seems pretty certain that the Church of England beats the combined Nonconformist Churches in the metropolis. And behind the Church of England, if it comes to a stand-up fight for life, is the army of 82,081 Catholics. Perhaps the Nonconformists will explain how they hope to win. Their only chance, we believe, lies in their reverting to their old principles. If they stand up for the complete separation of Religion from the State they will gain support from the huge multitude of non-church-goers; and may thus be enabled to beat the Church of England and

the Catholic Church together. To this complexion they must come at last.

The Church Congress is to meet this year at Bristol, and the Bishop of that diocese is apparently prepared to welcome his brother clergymen in the name of Science. It is a strange sort of world we are living in now that Christianity is breaking up.

What is the "New Church" which has been holding its Conference at Radcliffe? One of the members referred to Mr. Andrew Carnegie, and said that much of his good work was owing to the influence of the New Church teaching under which he had come years ago in America. There must be some mistake about this. Mr. Carnegie is well-known to be an Agnostic. A few weeks ago he told an interviewer that Shakespeare's birthplace was more to him than the Holy Sepulchre of Jesus Christ.

Henry Samuel Caley, aged fifty-eight, of 8 Victoria-road, Fulham, is committed for trial on the charge of assaulting Ada Constance Warren, aged fourteen. He was a Bible-reader at a mission hall in the district, and held prayer-meetings and Bible classes at his house, which the girl attended. On being arrested he said, "I was mad and a fool. I tried to resist, but got further away."

We do not mention this case merely to expose the man, nor for the sake of cataloguing another Christian gone wrong. But so many such cases occur from time to time that the point involved in them deserves some attention. History and psychology both show that religious fervor and sexual excitement lie very close together. Parents should bear this in mind, and carefully keep their young daughters away from pious gentlemen who are deeply anxious about the welfare of their immortal souls. It is so easy for that sentiment to pass over into a profound interest in something else. To a girl of fourteen, a middle-aged man with a Bible in his hand is often more dangerous than a professed Don Juan. Beware of him!

Mariolatry still flourishes in England, and in a way that would make some of the old "Reformers" simply mad. The shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham has recently been repaired, and of course Our Lady had to be removed while the job was being done. When it was completed Our Lady was put back again. There was a regular march of "pilgrims" from King's Lynn, and Our Lady was carried shoulder-high in the procession by four girls. Our Lady, of course, was a carved and bedizened block of wood. We hope Our Lady—to wit, the said block of wood—is quite comfortable in her (or its) new quarters.

The Dissenting minister who sued the *Christian World* for sneering at his American degrees is probably sorry he started the action. The evidence in the case was such as to satisfy the jury that a prompt verdict ought to be given for the defendant. When the professor of astronomy at a supposed University happens to be a practising dentist we know what to think of the rest of the establishment. The *Christian World* deserves the thanks of all honest people for exposing the pretensions of Christian ministers who flaunt what are really bogus degrees. We could never see that initials after his name gave a preacher any fresh strength or grace. The Rev. R. J. Campbell always has "M.A." printed after his name on the City Temple announcements. But "M.A." only means that he has passed a certain examination. It does not testify to his power; it may not even testify to his knowledge; for many a man forgets nine-tenths of what he know (after a fashion) when he faced his examination successfully. And indeed it is a great mercy that men are able to forget a lot of useless information.

In the course of this "bogus degrees" case, the plaintiff, the Rev. Charles Garnett, minister of the Arundel-street Congregational Church, Barnsbury, made the following statement in cross-examination: "I say that nearly all theological degrees borne by Congregational and Nonconformist ministers are honorary American degrees." Mr. Garnett admitted in court that his own "D.D." degree cost him fifty dollars.

Mr. Harrold Johnson, of the Moral Instruction League, denies the Archbishop of Canterbury's statement that the League is the common foe of Church and Nonconformity in the matter of education. Mr. Johnson says that the League is not necessarily anti-theological, but simply non-theological. It holds that virtue can be taught to children without theological sanctions, and it favors the use of the Bible as a moral text-book. This is what Mr. Johnson writes to the *Daily Chronicle*, unless that journal misrepresents him, which we do not suppose is the case.

We quite agree with Mr. Johnson and the Moral Instruction League that virtue can be taught to children without theological sanctions; that is, if virtue can be taught at all, except by example. But it seems to us that Mr. Johnson and the Moral Instruction League must be particularly roft to expect the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Rev. Dr. Clifford to believe it. The meat and drink of these men depends upon the theory that virtue *cannot* be taught without theological sanctions. If they abandon that theory they admit there is no necessity for their profession or their religion. It is simply foolish to overlook the fact that supernatural belief goes hand in hand with a supernatural basis of morality. The clergy of all denominations see this clearly enough, and so far they are wiser than Mr. Johnson and the Moral Instruction League.

As for the distinction between anti-theological and non-theological, we are bound to say it is for the most part purely fantastic. Some people seem to think that you can be either anti-theological or non-theological as you choose to call yourself. But this is nonsense. If your position is logically opposed to that of the theologians, you are anti-theological, whether you like the expression or not; and it is difficult to see how two positions could be more logically opposed than those of the theologians and the non-theologians in regard to this point of moral instruction. To teach a child that his moral duties relate only to his fellow human beings, and to affirm that this does not conflict with the theory that they relate to God, is merely childish.

Admitting the use of the Bible as a moral text-book is conceding all that the Nonconformists want. Men like Dr. Clifford know very well that the Bible was never really introduced as a moral text-book, but as a book of religion; and if rationalists agree to the Bible being kept in the public schools as a moral text-book, men like Dr. Clifford will wink the other eye and take good care to use the Bible as a book of religion. How, indeed, could they do otherwise? The teachers are Christians, and to expect them to teach from the Bible in utter disregard of what they consider its divine origin and character, is to expect what every person with a grain of common sense must see to be impossible and absurd.

The Bible never was a moral text-book; it never will be, and it never can be. It is practically ignored in every system of Christian ethics. Founding anything on the Bible is building on a quicksand. This is perceived by the Catholic theologians, and it is proved by the multiplying diversity of Protestant sects. There is hardly a precept or a parable, any more than there is a doctrinal text, in the Bible which has not been the subject of more or less bitter controversy. To bring such a volume into schools as a moral text-book for children is a worse act than burglary. The excuse of the clergy is that they do it for a living. The only excuse of the Moral Instruction League is that it wants to win a cheap victory. All it stands to gain is the prosperity of a catchword, while the superstitionists walk off with the substantial part of the matter in dispute.

Mrs. C. B. Rowe, of New York, has hit upon a peculiar method of keeping green the memory of her deceased son. She has started the publication of Bible texts on advertising cards in the Elevated Railway cars. One of her favorite texts is "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." We dare say, however, that the lady, like most of her card-readers, does not include black men amongst the "Hims." Theoretically, of course, Christ died to save blacks as well as whites; but this does not induce Young Men's Christian Associations in America to admit a colored member; nor does it stop lynching, which still goes on merrily in several States. Perhaps, after all, there are racial departments in heaven, and the saved are carefully classified. It would be too much to expect the same considerate treatment of the lost. No doubt black and white are cooked together.

Religious assemblies seem to have their little weaknesses even in Japan. We read in the papers that at the burial there of a Buddhist dignitary 374 pickpockets were captured, and 1,021 articles lost. Of course we don't vouch for the figures. We give them as we found them.

A terrible act of sacrilege has been committed by a pack of dogs in the land of the Eskimos. The animals have actually eaten a church. It was made of sealskins stretched over a whalebone framework. Being half famished, they went for the sacred edifice, and devoured it all but the whalebone. The latter was difficult to swallow—like the doctrines preached under it.

Dr. Price, an old Margate man (according to the late Sir George Grove's note-book), used to say that he had heard

the old incumbent of Margate Church preaching on the future delights of the blessed in heaven, and on the certainty that everyone would have what he could best appreciate, winding up with the remark, "And for those who prefer light refreshment, there will be light refreshment."

A service was proceeding in Bangor Cathedral when the recent shock of earthquake came along. The congregation rapidly dispersed. They were anxious to postpone emigrating to heaven.

How men will cling to the idea of divine justice! One of the many tragedies of the new Russian despotism in Finland is the suicide of Professor Lyly. Being banished from Finland, he was engaged in scientific research in Berlin; but a decree was issued by the Dictator, General Bobrikoff, sentencing him to perpetual exile on account of supposed political activity. Thereupon he went to the Thiergarten Park and blew his brains out with a revolver. In his pocket was a scrap of paper, on which he had written, "I cannot live without seeing my beloved Fatherland. Curse Bobrikoff. God will surely avenge Finland." Alas, thou poor homesick Finlander! Surely, if there were a God who meddled with human affairs, he would not wait to avenge Finland, but would prevent the Russian despot from trampling down her ancient freedom.

Sheriff Watson, of Dumfries, may be a great man in his own district, but his fame has not extended to London. We never knew of his existence until we saw his name in a report in the local *Standard* of the annual conference of the local Young Men's Christian Associations. Judging from this report, Sheriff Watson, great man as we daresay he is, has still something to learn—much as he may be surprised to learn it. Speaking at the aforesaid conference, he said that religion was getting on wonderfully well nowadays, and that "we had now no Voltaires, no Tom Paines, no professed atheists, and no people who pooh-pooched religion." We don't think Sheriff Watson reads the signs of the times correctly, and we are quite sure that he never read the writings of Voltaire and "Tom" Paine. They were not Atheists, and they did not pooh-pooch religion. Both believed in the existence of God, and both recognised the value of religion. But not the religion of Sheriff Watson. They pooh-pooched *that*. What was worse, they riddled it with the Maxims of common sense; and it has been in a bad way ever since.

The oddest thing at this Dumfries conference was the address by the Rev. Dr. Wells, of Glasgow. This gentleman said that Scotland had much to learn from India. The Hindoos were very liberal; our Carnegies would not hold the candle to some of their Carnegies. If Christians gave as much money to their faith as those idolators did for the next three years, the Gospel would in that time be carried to every human being on the face of the globe. In some of the fundamental virtues the Hindoos also excelled us (that is, the Scotch), for by the law, and by family devotion and reverence, there was not a prodigal son amongst them. Dr. Wells also dwelt upon their temperance—which was touching the Scotch Christians on a very tender point. In short, he went on like the Prophet Balaam; he was brought out to curse, but lo he could do nothing but bless, the heathen Hindoos; and it must have been very distressing to a lot of his hearers. Fancy a heathen Hindoo being a hotter man than the average Christian Scotchman you meet (say) in Argyle-street, Glasgow, about eleven o'clock on Saturday night! What a blow to orthodox—yea, and patriotic—pride! Surely something ought to be done to stop Dr. Wells from harrowing up Scotch feelings in this cruel manner. Did the brave Wallace fight and die in order that Sandy Macpherson should doff his bonnet to a dusky, lean-shanked Hindoo? Perish the thought!

The *New York Bookman*, in a sketch of Mr. Henry Labouchere, M.P., prints the following:—" 'Father,' said a child, when Labouchere was standing for Northampton, 'did God make Labby?' 'Yes, my dear,' answered the smiling parent. 'What for, father?' The question was not and probably never will be answered." There is nothing peculiar in this story except its insolence. It is a puzzle why God made most of the people in the world. We daresay "Labby" wonders what infinite wisdom was about when it made the writer of this *Bookman* article.

One of the islands under Mr. Chamberlain's department is Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic. It is occasionally visited by a gunboat to keep the British flag flying. It contains about seventy inhabitants. The headman when the island was last visited was Peter Green, who was over ninety years of age. In a letter to the Colonial Office he stated the wants of the little community. The two things they most needed were rat poison and a clergyman.



## Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(All Engagements suspended until September.)

### To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—June 28, Newcastle-on-Tyne. July 5 and 12, a. and e., Victoria Park; 19, m. Kingsland.
- T. EVANS.—If all gave what you call "a little" to the Cohen Presentation the fund would reach very respectable proportions.
- J. E. PHILLIPS.—Cuttings on which we can find a paragraph are always welcome.
- F. HILLAR.—The subscription is acknowledged as from the Branch. If this is not correct please advise us. We are glad to hear that the Kingsland Branch is progressing favorably, and that much of its success is due to Mr. Cohen's open-air lectures at Ridley-road last season.
- RIGHT SIDE.—You will find what you require in our pamphlet entitled *John Morley as a Freethinker*. It will be sent you post-free from our publishing office for 2½d.
- H. G. SELLARS.—Interesting in its way, and characteristic of the orthodox requirements of the S. P. C. K. But Assyriology has advanced so much since the date of George Smith's book that it is hardly worth while bothering about his, or the Society's, views on the chronology of the subject.
- J. KEMPSTER.—Thanks for your letter. But do you mean "superstitious ignorant worms" as a sample of the "more gentlemanly" way of writing about Christians than Max Otho's in the *Pioneer*.
- B. WESTON.—We hope to resume "Book Chat" shortly.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks once more for your welcome cuttings.
- J. W.—The nearest text we can think of is Ecclesiastes vii. 1-4.
- J. HUGHES, sending a donation to the fund, calls Mr. Cohen "a worthy pioneer."
- M. SILVERSTONE.—Always glad to receive cuttings.
- E. SMEDLEY.—Thanks for the paper. The article on Byron is hardly worth dealing with at any length in our columns. What the poet may, or may not, have said to Dr. Kennedy cannot be as important, at this time of day and to other people, as what he undoubtedly wrote with his own pen, and for the most part published during his lifetime.
- UNKNOWN.—Thanks for copy of the *Referee*. "Merlin" is still doing his best for God, we see; and it is to be hoped that personage is properly grateful. "Merlin's" praise of the Rev. Dr. Horton shows his real mental calibre.
- W. CROMACK.—Our readers do us a service—and themselves too, indirectly—by sending us cuttings or marked newspapers that furnish material for our "Acid Drops."
- G. CRUDDAS.—Mr. Foote is not exactly "enjoying the best of health," although he is much better than he was.
- T. ROBERTSON.—The further subscriptions from Glasgow to the Cohen Presentation are acknowledged in this week's general list.
- J. PRESTON.—You may have "the pleasure" of hearing Mr. Foote again in the West of England. He hopes to be in good condition by the fall of the year for a fresh lecturing campaign, and it has long been his intention to pay another visit to Bristol, Plymouth, and other western towns. Exeter might be included.
- E. KIRCHNER.—Your letter has to stand over till next week in consequence of pressure on our space.
- W. T. PITT.—Miss Vance has handed us your letter, list, and cheque, which should have been sent to us direct. The Birmingham Branch's subscriptions (£3 10s. in all) are acknowledged in this week's general list. Pleased to hear you hope to send another list before the Cohen Presentation Fund closes.
- THE COHEN PRESENTATION.—*Fifth List*:—Kingsland Branch 10s., S. Burgon 10s., D. R. Bow 10s., H. M. Ridgway £1, F. W. Donaldson 2s. 6d., C. J. Quinton 5s., Thomas Evans 2s. 6d., W. Thomas 2s. 6d., R. S. (Dundee) 2s. 6d., J. W. de Caux £1 1s., Edwin Wilson £1 1s., J. Hughes 10s. 6d., J. Bullock 2s. Henry Spence £1, J. Preston 1s., D. Johnston 5s., Mrs. Muir 2s. 6d., J. P. Browne, 2s., W. R. Potter 2s. 6d., T. Turnbull 1s., G. Cruddas 1s., Paul Rowland 5s., W. Palmer 1s., W. Stewart 2s. 6d., R. Childs 2s. 6d., M. D. R. 5s., R. Lloyd 2s. 6d.; Birmingham Branch: M. Ridley 2s. 6d., J. H. R. 2s. 6d., J. Terry 1s., J. C. Whitwell 1s., G. Shaw 1s., J. Sumner, jun. 5s., L. E. Mabbett 2s. 6d., L. Kuphel 1s., A. B. 1s. 6d., J. P. 5s., W. H. Wood 1s. 6d., R. G. F. 2s., H. Hyman 1s., Miss M. 2s., W. Waters 1s., M. and B. Fisher £1 1s. 6d., W. T. Pitt 5s., R. J. Taylor 2s. 6d.
- RECEIVED.—Open Court—Truthseeker (New York)—Boston Investigator—Crescent—Two Worlds—Torch of Reason—Public Opinion (New York)—Blue Grass Blade—Lucifer—Sun (Kalgoorlie)—Buddhist—Morning Advertiser—Progressive Thinker—La Raison—Free Society.
- 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.

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

## The Cohen Presentation.

I BEG to call the attention of Freethinkers to this matter again—and quite pointedly. I should like to see the subscriptions flowing in more promptly. There must be many who intend to subscribe. I ask them to do so as soon as possible. Unfortunately this is far from the best time of the year for financial appeals, and it might be better to let the Fund lie in abeyance during what we call "the summer" in this country—namely, during July and August, and revive it in September. And this is what I may decide to do, at least as far as the *Freethinker* is concerned. But I would rather the project were carried to a successful issue immediately.

With regard to the Presentation itself, what can I say more than I have said? Those who have read Mr. Cohen's articles, those who have heard his lectures, those who have followed his work for the Freethought cause, do not really need me to keep on telling them what are his claims to the most generous consideration. Mr. Cohen has persisted in a very uphill struggle hitherto. That, indeed, was inevitable; and it may be inevitable still. But it would give him a little breathing-time, and a little encouragement for further exertion, if we let him see that his ability and devotion are appreciated. To *say* that they are appreciated is easy enough; indeed, it is *too* easy; what is wanted is a more substantial demonstration.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Lemuel K. Washburn, editor of the *Boston Investigator*, the oldest Freethought paper in America, has recently been in London, accompanied by Mr. R. W. Chainey, who visited England some six years ago. Both gentlemen called at the *Freethinker* office twice, hoping to see Mr. Foote, who was absent from London, as announced in last week's *Freethinker*. Mr. Foote, on returning, was very sorry to learn that he had missed seeing these representative American Freethinkers. He hopes, however, that the pleasure is only deferred. They have gone off (like good Americans) to Paris, and have promised to try to see Mr. Foote when they come back to London.

The weather was fine at Newcastle-on-Tyne on Sunday, and Mr. Cohen's meetings on the Town Moor were highly successful. The morning meeting was a new departure, but the experiment is likely to be repeated. There was a very large audience in the evening, and the lecturer's voice was taxed to the utmost to make all the crowd hear him. His address was very much appreciated and very warmly applauded. Mr. Cohen lectures on the Town Moor again to-day (June 28), morning and evening, and will doubtless have two more successful meetings.

M. Clémenceau has been compelled to postpone his visit to London, where he was to have been "dined" by the Eighty Club. M. Clémenceau is coming very much to the front again in French politics, and is wanted in the approaching debate on the Secularisation Laws. He has always been a pronounced Freethinker as well as a sound and faithful Republican. The new turn of affairs may bring him to the Premiership.

It is worthy of note that M. Victor Charbonnel, editor of *La Raison* and *L'Action*, as well as an extremely eloquent Freethought orator, and M. Combes, the French Prime

Minister, are both ex-priests of the Catholic Church. M. Combes is also an ardent Freethinker.

We are glad to see that *La Raison*, the organ of the International Freethought movement, speaks with disgust of the butchery at Belgrade, and with horror of the sort of Sadism displayed in the two revolver shots and sixty-three sabre cuts on the body of the murdered Queen. Our contemporary calls it the work of pretorians, and wonders what sort of a throne will be erected on the slippery foundation of blood. It also asks whether the new King may not be disposed of by the Army in the same way when his time comes.

The *Open Court*, Chicago, opens its June number with a very striking portrait of Pericles, the great Athenian statesman, from the bust in the British Museum. What a noble face and head! Such was the "uncrowned king, the democratic monarch" of Athens, whose power was not based upon the sword, but upon wisdom, courage, amiability, honesty, and eloquence. More than two thousand years have rolled by since his day; Christianity has appeared and occupied the stage; and hereditary monarchs are still murdered by their own soldiers, and the Church stands by to bless the deed. One has only to look at the face of Pericles and sigh for a return of the "heathen" spirit of antiquity. If it produced poor gods, it produced magnificent men.

The address of the new secretary of the Liverpool Branch is—Mr. T. Kehoc, 63 July-road. The president for the present year is the stalwart veteran, Mr. John Ross. Mr. John Hammond is vice-president, and Mr. T. E. Rhodes treasurer. The Branch has sent out a circular to the local friends on behalf of the Cohen Presentation Fund, and hope the "members and friends will show their appreciation of Mr. Cohen's valuable work by giving as liberally as their means will permit." The Branch also appeals for the financial support which is urgently needed to keep its open-air propaganda going. Mr. Percy Ward speaks out of doors three times weekly during the summer. The treasurer's address is 12 Chiswell-street.

We see by the handbills that Mr. Percy Ward is to debate Spiritualism at the Alexandra Hall, Liverpool, on July 2 and 3, with Mr. Ernest Marklew, of Preston.

Mr. Robert Blatchford's indictment of Jehovah is reproduced from the *Clarion* in the *New York Truthseeker*.

## Moses and the Pentateuch.—VII.

DURING the period of the early kings the Israelites had a code of laws called the "Book of the Covenant" (Exod. xx. 22—xxiii. 33). This code, which has to do chiefly with general morality and affairs of civil life, has been incorporated with the later laws; but it can easily be seen to be a complete code in itself. The little ritual it contains is, as might be expected, in direct conflict with the Deuteronomic code and with the still later Levitical or Priestly code. The early history of the Jewish nation, as recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings, is not inconsistent with the existence of the Book of the Covenant; but this history is quite conclusive as to the fact of the two later codes being unknown.

In the Book of the Covenant sacrifice was permitted in any part of the land, provided only that the altars used for that purpose were made of earth or unhewn stone. In that primitive code the poor old Hebrew god is in no way exacting, and even seems thankful to receive any worship at all. He plaintively says, for instance:—

"An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in every place where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stones; for if thou lift up the tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Exod. xx. 24, 25).

The god Yahveh "recorded his name" in every city where he was worshipped or in which an altar had been reared to him. The worshipper might please himself both as to the locality selected and as to whether he erected an altar of earth or of stone; and we find that during the long periods of the

Judges and kings, up to the reign of Josiah, he made full use of this freedom—sacrifices being offered to Yahveh, as well as to other gods, on "high places" in all parts of the kingdom. In the eighteenth year of Josiah, however, when the book of Deuteronomy was "found" in the temple, it was discovered that the people had all along been acting in direct opposition to the Lord's express commands. That deity, it was then ascertained, required *all* sacrifices to be offered in one place only—on the brazen altar of the temple at Jerusalem. In that book the author represents the Lord as saying to Moses:—

"But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God causeth you to inherit..... Then it shall come to pass that the place which the Lord your God shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there, thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand..... Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest..... But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come" (Deut. xii. 10-15).

That this place "which the Lord should choose" referred to the temple at Jerusalem, and to that only, has already been shown. The author of Deuteronomy knew nothing of the mythical tabernacle, so minutely described in Exodus. That imaginary building is the creation of a later writer, the author of the Levitical code, who conceived the idea of a grand movable tent or tabernacle, whose interior and furniture was an exact model of the temple at Jerusalem. This he fraudulently represented as made under God's directions by Moses, and as set up first in the wilderness and afterwards in Canaan, where it is assumed to have remained until superseded by the permanent building—Solomon's temple.

According to the Levitical code of laws, sacrifice could only be offered in one place—upon the altar at "the door of the tabernacle."

"Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle, to sacrifice it unto the Lord; even that man shall be cut off from his people" (Lev. xvii. 8, 9).

It is, of course, quite conceivable that this command (supposing it were ever given) was intended to apply only to the period prior to the building of the temple. Assuming this to have been the case, then every man of the nation should have been "cut off from his people"; for no one that we hear of (except in one interpolated passage) ever offered sacrifice at "the door of the tabernacle," nor was the altar at the temple regularly used for sacrifice until the finding of the "book" in the eighteenth year of Josiah. In the latter year, sacrifices were offered at the feast of passover.

Prior to this date we find, as a matter of history, that altars were built, and sacrifices were offered, in any locality the Israelites chose. It is recorded, for instance, that some of the people offered sacrifices to Yahveh in Bochim (Judges ii. 5); that Gideon built an altar and offered a burnt offering to the Jewish god in Ophrah (Judges vi. 23); that Manoah offered a burnt offering and a meal offering to the same god in Zorah (Judges xiii. 9); that the assembled Israelites upon two occasions offered "burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord" in Bethel (Judges xx. 26; xxi. 4). Again, the great prophet Samuel, who ought to have known the Lord's commands, if any like those in Leviticus and Deuteronomy existed in his day, offered sacrifices to Yahveh upon altars erected at Bethshemesh (1 Sam. vi. 14), at Mizpah (vii. 9), at Ramah (vii. 17), at a certain city in "the land of Zuph" (ix. 12-25), at Gilgal (xi. 15), and at Bethlehem (xvi. 5). King Saul offered a sacrifice to the Hebrew deity at Gilgal (xiii. 9). King David, when removing the ark to Jerusalem, stopped the procession to offer sacrifices to Yahveh on the way (2 Sam. vi. 13); he also offered burnt offerings at the end of the journey (vi. 17). Solomon offered sacrifices to the Jewish

god upon an altar at Gibeon. Jeroboam I., king of Israel, who is repeatedly denounced by the later editors as the man who "made Israel to sin," erected two grand altars, one in Dan and the other in Bethel, both dedicated to the service of Yahveh. Later, in the reign of Hezekiah—who was one of the kings who "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord"—we learn from the prophet Amos that "in Gilgal they sacrifice bullocks; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field" (xii. 11). In fact, as a matter of history, no one in Israel appears ever to have heard of the commands in Leviticus or Deuteronomy, the reason of which is plain—neither of those books had yet been written.

There is, however, another very important matter connected with the offering of animal sacrifice which has yet to be noticed. In the earliest code of laws—the Book of the Covenant—nothing is said about priests and Levites: any man who felt so disposed might, according to this code, offer the sacrifice himself. And, as we have seen, this was done for several centuries by all sorts and conditions of men. In the two later codes, however, sacrifices could only be offered by persons specially selected by the Jewish deity for that purpose. These persons, according to Deuteronomy, were "the priests the Levites," or "the priests the sons of Levi" (xvii. 9; xviii. 1; xxi. 5; xxxi. 9, etc.); while, according to Leviticus, the only persons appointed to offer sacrifices were "Aaron's sons, the priests," or the lineal descendants of Aaron. Any man who desired to offer a sacrifice was allowed only to kill the animal; this done, he handed it over to the priests, who cut it up, and offered it on the brazen altar in the manner prescribed by Yahveh.

"When any man of you offereth an oblation unto the Lord, ye shall offer your oblation of the cattle, even of the herd and of the flock.....he shall offer it at the door of the tabernacle, that he may be accepted before the Lord.....and he shall kill the bullock before the Lord; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall present the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is at the door of the tabernacle.....And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall put fire upon the altar, and lay wood in order upon the fire; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall lay the pieces, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar," etc. (Lev. i. 2-8).

Now, as already stated, sacrifices were offered to "the Lord"—and apparently with that deity's full approbation—by Samuel (who was of the tribe of Ephraim), by king Saul (of the tribe of Benjamin), by king David (of the tribe of Judah), by Solomon (tribe of Judah), by Gideon (tribe of Manasseh), by Manoah (tribe of Dan), and others—not one of whom was either a priest, a descendant of Aaron, or even of the tribe of Levi. The vow made by Jephthah (who was neither a priest nor a Levite) proves conclusively that the Israelites, in early times, were bound by no restrictions either as to the person offering the sacrifice, or the locality in which it was offered.

"And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into mine hand, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judg. xi. 30-31).

The Lord heard this vow and gave Jephthah the victory, and Jephthah was compelled by the public opinion of the times to keep the solemn promise made to Yahveh. In fulfilment of his vow he offered his daughter as a burnt offering to that God at Mizpah, and the Lord made no attempt to stop the sacrifice, as he is said to have done in the case of the son of a legendary ancestor, Abraham.

With regard to the offering of sacrifices by men who were not priests, we have merely to ask ourselves which of the two alternatives is the more probable: that all the persons named above deliberately disregarded the known commands of the Lord in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the Lord himself being apparently perfectly satisfied at their so-doing, and accepting the offerings without any

sign of disapprobation; or, that the commands and regulations ascribed in those books to the Jewish deity were unknown to the worshippers named? The answer must, of course, be the latter, and we thus arrive once more at the only possible conclusion—the books named were among those that had yet to be written.

It will, no doubt, have been noticed that between the most primitive code of laws and the two later codes there are the usual Bible contradictions. Besides those relating to the place where sacrifices were to be offered, and to the persons offering them, we find contradictory commands as to the kind of altar to be used. In the first code the Lord tells his worshippers in the very plainest terms that all altars upon which sacrifices were to be offered to him must be constructed either of earth only or of rough unhewn stones—"For if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it."

In the later codes this command is treated as non-existent, and the adorers of Yahveh are informed that all sacrifices must be offered upon one particular altar in one particular place, this altar being one constructed of brass upon a strong framework of acacia wood, the top (which in one case was to be nine feet square) having a large cavity in the centre, and furnished with a stout brazen grating—an altar, in fact, which could not have been made without tools being "lifted up upon it." We are asked to believe that the commands respecting altars and sacrifices in all these codes were given at the same time, and by the same deity—the Lord, who changeth not—to Moses; and that the god who at the beginning of his instructions declared that an altar made with tools was polluted and unfitted for sacrifice, a few days afterwards changed his mind, and gave orders for the construction of one which he knew could not be made without many tools being employed upon it. Of course, when we know that the three codes were written independently of each other, at different periods of history, and by different authors, all contradictions are explained—as are also the untrustworthy character and fraudulent nature of the documents which profess to record what "the Lord spake unto Moses" upon Mount Sinai.

ABRACADABRA.

## Jesus and Paine.

(AN ADDRESS IN THE PAINE MEMORIAL HALL, BOSTON, BY L. K. WASHBURN, EDITOR OF THE *Boston Investigator*.)

WE are met here to-day to honor the life and services of Thomas Paine. We could not be in better business if we tried.

A month ago, over all the earth where the spires of Christianity pierce the sky, Christians gathered together to celebrate the birth of a person whom they cannot prove was ever born. Christians could be in better business without half trying.

We have to assume that Jesus lived. We *know* that Paine lived.

The name of Jesus belongs to an age when men were deified; when the divine was not as high as the human is now.

The name of Jesus has influenced the world far more than have his deeds. I hold that his name does not belong to our civilisation. Civilization does not depend upon gods, but upon men. Human brains have discovered every path of progress, and human hands have erected every monument of achievement. Men have done everything for gods; gods have done nothing for men. Men have not only supported their gods; they have made them. It is far truer to say that man made the first god from the dust of the ground than to say that God made the first man in this way.

Jesus is a myth, who has been accepted by some as a god and by others as a man. I have read somewhat about divinities, but I know nothing about them. The biography of Jesus, as we have it in the

New Testament, shows that it is a wise "divine child" that knows its own father.

If Jesus lived on earth and was not a man, then I cannot guess what he was.

I shall deal with the character of Jesus as painted by the gospel-writers, but most of it to me is paint.

I wish to say right here that I do not believe that such a person as the Jesus of the four gospels ever existed. It is against him the way he came into the world. A miracle was added to his birth before he went to sleep in his mother's arms. It is singular that ghosts can be fathers and not mothers.

Then I do not like the accounts of marvellous things which he is said to have done. Miracles are always dead and buried. No one living ever saw a live one. Like angels, we hear of them but we never see them. No hand ever touched the white lilies of death and turned them to the red roses of life.

Neither do I believe that Nature displayed any particular emotion when Jesus died. The earth does not shake with grief, the rocks do not rend themselves with sobs, nor do graves open their doors when gods die. When Jupiter fell from his heavenly throne Olympus did not so much as heave a sigh. When Serapis was beheaded by a Christian battleaxe the mighty pyramids did not topple over, nor the Sphinx cry aloud. Nor did the earth give any sign that it knew when the heart of Jesus ceased to beat. Thousands of gods have died and not a cloud of heaven has shed tears of sorrow upon the ground.

Let the truth be told! No man ever saw a god die and no man saw such phenomena of grief as reported in the New Testament when the son of Mary "gave up the ghost."

Sacred histories sometimes contain sacred falsehoods; but science cannot kneel to superstition. If Jesus lived, and if his life went out on the cross, it went out with no more notice from the earth than when a bird's song dies in the air.

Nothing has polluted the intellectual and moral atmosphere more than the pictured cross and its ghastly burden. It has served only to illustrate the cruelty of the past. Let us rather have emblems of joy in our homes. Happiness here makes salvation unnecessary for the hereafter.

When men die for their brother-men, as did rugged old John Brown, at Harper's Ferry, they glorify their deeds, not the gallows upon which they expire. And when they meet death like Socrates, who tried to destroy the gods that he might save men, they add a new lustre to heroism, not to the poison they drink.

The path to the cross is not clear to my mind. I see no logical connection between a pair of innocent idiots eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and the Son of God dying on a tree in Golgotha four thousand years afterwards. But I am not going to undertake to solve that old theological puzzle. It is too much like playing "cat's cradle." The cross is not a mental or a moral guide-post. It stands for nothing and points nowhere.

I have said that Jesus was a god to some, a man to others, and a myth to me. If Jesus was a sublime peasant of Galilee, a mighty reformer among his people, a large and tender-hearted lover of his race, who could grandly give the wealth of his life, and, if need be, the red river of his veins, to save the world, then I blame the writers of the Gospels for not saying so. I honor every human being who has reached out a hand to a fellow-traveller on the road of life, or who has put a lamp in his window for the stumbling feet of men, and I say now, if a man lived in Palestine two thousand years ago, great enough and good enough to work and die for humankind, that man has my respect and my reverence.

But I have no respect for the mythological creature of the Gospels. I do not know whether a god who goes about on man's legs can walk on the sea as well as on the land; whether he can add the blush of wine to the pallid face of water; whether he can drive disease away with a word or a touch and prove death to be a lie; whether he can cheat earth of his body and be received up into heaven, but I *do* know that a man cannot do such things.

I believe that man is the biggest thing and the best thing that ever walked over this old earth. I believe that everything that has been told about gods and what gods have done in this world has been told to sell the stock in some pious corporation.

If Jesus was a man, we have got to rub out almost all of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. If Jesus was a man, Christianity is a fraud.

What was Jesus, in the light of reason, in the light of common sense, in the light of science, and in the light of facts?

He was not the son of God. He was not the son of the Holy Ghost. He was not the son of David. He was not the Messiah, the Christ. He was not the King of the Jews. He was not the Savior of mankind. He was not divine. He was not the Master of men. He was not what he has been cracked up to be.

What did Jesus do, in the light of reason, in the light of common sense, in the light of science, and in the light of facts?

He did not see "the spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him." He did not hear "a voice from heaven, saying: This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." He did not fight that disputatious duel in the wilderness with the Devil. He did not heal a leper. He did not drive fever from Peter's wife's mother by touching her hand. He did not scare devils out of men and women. He did not make the blind see nor the dumb talk. He did not walk on water, unless it was frozen. He did not feed twelve thousand people on nothing and have something left. He did not raise Lazarus from the grave after he had been dead four days. He did not change water into wine. He did not go up into heaven with his flesh and bones on. He did not do one single miracle.

That is what Jesus did *not* do. What he *did* do is hard to tell. He didn't do much. He didn't, really.

Take away from the Gospel story all that is mythical and miraculous—that is, all that is false—and you could not build a Christian church a foot high on what is left. Any institution that stands upon myths and miracles is not in harmony with the genius of this age, and is no help to an honest mind.

Even though Jesus wrought the wonders related in the Gospels, not one of them is worth two cents to the men and women of this age. They are merely wax-figure performances. You could not get them patented. The miracle of the loaves and fishes does not feed the starving millions of to-day. The miracle at the marriage in Cana does not put a bottle of wine in the hands of the sick and feeble. The miracle of walking on the sea does not help our brave sailors when their ship goes down. The miracles of healing have not driven a disease from earth. The miracle of restoring Lazarus to life has not kept death away from our doors. Nor did the miracle of ascending bodily into heaven give to others the power to "go and do likewise."

(To be continued.)

#### THE LEADING QUESTION.

Dis is de way de roun' worl' run—  
Some got money, en some got none;  
But which er de lot is de happy one?—  
Answer now, believers!

Dis man live in de mansion high  
Dat man—yander, in de desert dry;  
But which er de two gwine ter shout bimeby?—  
Answer now, believers!

Trouble knockin' at de big house do'  
Same ez de cabin, whar de wil' grass grow;  
Who is de rich man, en who is de po' ?—  
Answer now, believers!

—Atlanta Constitution.

A little boy, the son of a Christian Scientist, had the toothache. "If you had my faith," the mother said, "you would have no toothache." "Yes," the boy replied, "and if you had my toothache, you wouldn't have your faith."

## The Tree of Knowledge.

### THE ORIGIN OF THE FABLE.

WHEN first the old Jew priesthood found  
The laymen in debate,  
Why they should bow the head in awe  
To dogmas out of date,  
And yield the priests their first-fruits—  
They trembled for their state.

In holy council met, they sat  
In sapient contemplation;  
Cries Blobnose, Father-in-God: "This comes  
Of too much education;  
It's clear to me, if this goes on,  
It means our extirpation.

"The cowboy Adam waxes  
Most impudently pert;  
There's Eve, our slavey, wags her tail,  
As brazen as a flirt;  
And even Becky Dumpkins knows  
A fig-leaf from a skirt.

"The clods bow not so low to us;  
They've lost the accents humble;  
'Why should the priests take all the best?'  
Is now the common grumble:  
Sirs, let them go on at this pace,  
Our holy state will tumble."

Reproachful looks were cast about,  
With words like "Didn't I tell ye?"  
And many a black-coat groaned, and thought  
On his diminished belly;  
Till rose Saint Nick—the archetype  
Of rascal Macchiavelli.\*

With cynic smirk and gleaming eye  
Nick stood before his chair:  
"Brethren," he said, "the case is grave;  
But flinch we not a hair:  
To doubt this rebel flame forthwith,  
A fable I'll prepare.

"Before tomorrow vespers  
You'll have the thing to hand;  
Next Sabbath, loud, with unction,  
Proclaim it through the land!  
And, Brothers, if my name's Old Nick,  
Our holy state will stand."

One only in the council,  
Joseph, had fain said "No;"  
But, ah! that virgin coat of his  
He could not strip, so Joe  
Sent one more good old principle  
To the good old long ago.

Next Sabbath through the Holy Land  
The wondrous fable ran,  
How, while the Tree of Knowledge grew,  
It was forbid to man;  
How Eve, then Adam, ate the fruit,  
And woe and death began.

A fear fell on the people;  
Their speech grew hush'd and thick;  
The priests regain'd their prestige,  
And rebels felt the stick.  
When next in holy council,  
The priests gave "Health to Nick!"

Since Nicholas hatch'd that fable  
Three thousand years or so,  
The priests have look'd on knowledge  
As an undying foe;  
And still they play the same old card  
They play'd that long ago.

"Behold! as knowledge waxes,  
Religion wanes!" they cry:  
"The Bible, and our Order,  
By these we stand or die!"  
And every holy humbug  
Turns up a full white eye.

Yes, in the press of nations,  
England may go behind;  
But preach the sacred fables  
To the believing blind!  
So ye, ye parsons, grow as sleek  
As pigs, in peace of mind.

H. BARBER.

\* Niccolo di Macchiavelli, the Italian Court-Statesman, who enriched the ethics of government with the principles of knavery.

## Correspondence.

### HOSPITALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Permit me to supplement your very able and outspoken article, "The King at St. Paul's," in a recent number of the *Freethinker*. Not only is the King used to exploit the public, but every school child is trained to beg to raise funds for the purpose of building and endowing these huge doctors' workshops. As you say, this system of exploiting "has reached the proportions of a grave public scandal," and I will add, of danger. I use this term danger advisedly. For these hospitals, originally founded and endowed for the relief and cure of the poor who are suffering from disease, are now largely used for the cultivation of disease. And the poor patients are the "clinical material" to be experimented upon in the trial of every new cultivation of disease (yclept serum). For it appears to be considered necessary nowadays for the experimenters to know exactly how soon they can produce disease, and also how soon they can check it after having produced it. It is well to point out the absolute danger to the public, particularly the richer portion, these experiments place in the hands of unscrupulous men. Your mention of vaccination is a reminder that the profession as a whole can become unscrupulous when occasion serves. For what are some of the incidents of vaccination? In 1840 the medical profession induced the Legislature to pass an Act, rendering it penal for anyone to inoculate with smallpox matter. In 1898 the profession induced the Legislature to pass an Act compelling every child to be vaccinated with aqua-glycinerated calf-lymph, the active portion of which is *smallpox*. The same fraternity are now working "might and main," through the Imperial Vaccination League, to extend the legislation to adults. This is sowing disease to satiety. Aye! but it brings millions of pounds to the doctors.

Public control might bring about a greater regard for the unfortunates who are compelled to enter these institutions. Public control could also advance medicine, by permitting other systems besides State medicine (allopathic) to be tried. For instance, during the Gloucester epidemic of small-pox (1895-6), State medicine allowed the patients to die at the rate 54 per cent. to cases, and their system involved immense expense in hospital building and furnishing, for isolation, and for disinfectants. But the late John Pickering, with his system of baths, could treat small-pox cases with a loss of only 8 per cent.; and Captain Feilden, of Derby, with his system of ointment cure, could treat small-pox with a loss of 2 per cent. In neither of these systems is isolation or disinfectants considered necessary. Cleanliness is the only precaution. Again, the late Dr. Coffin revived interest in the old herbal treatment of our grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and has left his mark in most, if not all, of our large towns. Now his agents and their successors claim to have cured in many instances, after the allopath has failed, why should not wards be set apart to try these different systems on the same class of people and the same diseases, as the allopath? By this method medicine would advance, and the public gain thereby. It is only by public control that this will be done. We may just as well expect the Church to reform itself as State medicine.

There is another danger arising from this State medicine monopoly. The "*liberty of the Press*." For many years it has been the aim of this monopoly to make it penal for anyone to discuss, either orally or through the press, their failures. Ernest Hart, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Bills Committee of the British Medical Associations, in 1880 said it was absolutely necessary to prosecute people who went about saying vaccination did an injury. In 1894 he reprinted this, and since his death other leaders have taken up the cry. In short, the State medical professor is fast treading in the steps of the State Church of the sixteenth century, and requires the strictest watching.

J. F. HAINES.

A SUSPICIOUS SIGN.—"You better hurry up en collect de rent from Br'er Williams." "How come?" "Well, fer de las' six meetin' nights he been singin' 'Jerusalem, my Happy Home,' an' it's my opinion he's fixin' ter move."—*Atlanta Constitution*.

CHEERFUL GIVING.—The Minister's Wife: "I am afraid Mr. Skinfint does not realise that the Lord loves a cheerful giver." The Minister: "Oh, I don't know. The less he gives, the more cheerfully he gives it."—*Calcutta Statesman*.

It may have been the purpose of the Mississippi clergyman who has eight wives to keep himself provided with a congregation.—*Kansas City Star*.

**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.

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UNION OF ETHICAL SOCIETIES (Small Queen's Hall, Langham-place, W.): 7, Dr. Stanton Coit "Crying in the Wilderness."

**OUTDOOR**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15, Mr. Edwards; 6.15, Mr. Green.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, G. Green; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.30, E. B. Rose.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, R. Rosetti, "Is Easter a Christian Festival?"

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

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

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, R. P. Edwards.

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