

THE Freethinker

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*Let liars fear, let cowards shrink,
Let traitors turn away;
Whatever we have dared to think
That dare we also say.*

—LOWELL.

Ghosts.

MADAME DE STAEL said "I do not believe in ghosts, but I am afraid of them." Probably there are millions who would say the same thing if they had the wit. The belief in ghosts is dying out, but the fear of them survives. Our intellects have not yet impressed their sanity on our nerves. Darkness and mystery still disturb our imaginations, and evoke psychical reminiscences of ancient times. Within the clear light of consciousness we are ourselves, but beyond that we are automatic legacies of the past. Our ancestors, as Emerson said, are potted within us. When we act, they are moving us. It is the inevitable law of mortmain. Our forefathers rule us from their tombs, and many of the wierd thrills we experience, in situations that millenniums ago roused the barbarous terror which is the nurse of superstition, are caused by the charnel breath of their sepulchres sweeping through our sensitive frames.

My personal experience on this subject is worthless. I know that very ignorant people in towns, and bucolic minds in sequestered villages, have a deep-seated faith in ghosts. I have met educated men and women who dislike conversation about them, and others who frankly shared Madame De Stael's sentiment. A few—a very few—I have met who were entirely superior to the superstition. Does not this show how powerful is inheritance? Does it not warn us that the follies of barbaric ages, the delusions of the ages of faith, must be strenuously repudiated by our minds, lest they assert themselves in our blood?

In my tender childhood I listened to ghost stories before the winter fire till it was a horror to leave the room. Frequently I crawled upstairs to bed with my eyes shut tight, fearing that if I opened them I might behold a grisly shade. For years I lived next door to a haunted house. Some persons asserted that the ghost still roamed at midnight, which appears to be the hour when the spirits take exercise, as we further perceive in Shakespeare's "'Tis now the very witching time of night." Other persons, however, asserted that the ghost had been "laid," no one could say exactly when, by a clergyman who encountered it at the critical moment, and drove it underground with a chapter of the Bible. That ghost was the subject of my dreams. Yet I never saw it, nor indeed any other, although I watched for its appearance by the hour with a fearful fascination.

On one occasion, however, I made sure I had felt a ghost. Our family was residing a few miles from Plymouth, and I slept by myself in a room at the top of the house. Several miles beyond us lived my uncle's family. He was a farmer, and his eldest son used to attend the Plymouth market. One evening, as my cousin was returning home, he took supper at our house, and being exceedingly tired, he rested there, intending to proceed home in the morning.

The only available bed was mine, and he was put into it. I was out with other boys that evening, and when I returned at an unconscionable hour for an urchin of eight, I sneaked into the passage, and persuaded one of my sisters to let me scurry off to bed so as to avoid a storm. In the hurry she forgot to tell me of my cousin's visit, and I slipped upstairs in the dark. I undressed myself, and the bed being high, I took my usual running leap upon it. Horror of horrors! Instead of descending on a flat counterpane, I alighted on a living form. Quick as lightning, I jumped off, opened the door, and fled downstairs, followed by the dreadful presence, which I concluded was Old Nick himself. The whole family met me at the bottom of the stairs, where I rushed into my mother's arms shouting "The Devil, the Devil!"

A famous spectre, far more so than the one I lived next door to, was the Cock Lane Ghost. Johnson's credulity as to this supernatural visitor seems to have been an invention of his enemies. Belief in the Cock Lane Ghost was very general in London in 1763, and Churchill satirises Johnson as one of the dupes. But, according to Boswell, the great lexicographer sat on the committee of investigation, which proved the whole thing a fraud. It is obvious, however, that Johnson did believe in the reality of ghosts, although he appears to have been stricter than other superstitionists in his notions of evidence.

That Shakespeare believed in ghosts I think is untenable. The ghosts in his plays are mere "stuff o' the mind." He employs them as accessories to heighten the interest of the drama, but he never lets them affect the natural development of the plot; and, what is more remarkable, he makes them visible or invisible, audible or inaudible, to suit his purpose. The ghost in *Hamlet* is seen by the fated son and his friends, yet in the closet scene, while Hamlet sees and hears it, his mother sees and hears nothing. Similarly, Banquo's ghost is only perceptible to Macbeth. When "the great magician, bold Glendower," boasts that he can "call spirits from the vasty deep," Harry Hotspur answers: "Why, so can I, or so can any man, but will they come when you do call for them?" Shakespeare's philosophy of the subject may be summed up in one of his own phrases—"Such tricks hath strong imagination."

Ghosts are falling out of fashion in the present age. They still appear at Spiritist stances, but if any person has the courage to seize them they turn out to be solid flesh and blood. When superstition is reduced to a trade, it is a miserable mixture of trickery and dupery.

Ghosts never trouble sceptics. Their visits are always confined to believers. Nor do they appear in the daylight. They flit about, like bats, in the dark. A haunted house is sure to be more or less sequestered. Nobody hears of one in a busy thoroughfare. A ghost in the Strand would be a case for the police. Sometimes a ghost proves a rank impostor. There was one of this kind a few years ago in Texas. It used to spring up on the wall of a graveyard and frighten the passers by; indeed, its uncanny presence soon produced a perfect reign of terror. But one night it popped out on the wrong man. He drew his revolver and took a potshot at the obtrusive spirit, who dropped to the earth with a groan, and was presently taken to the hospital.

The belief in ghosts is the beginning of religion;

yes, and the end of it, too, for the first and second childhoods are very similar. The only difference between the savage and the civilisee, in this respect, is that the former expects to see ghosts any night, while the latter only expects to see them after he is dead. The essence of religion, in both cases, is ghostology.

Gods themselves are only ghosts. They are the chiefs, but they cannot survive their tribe. *Ghost* (Anglo-Saxon *gast*, German *geist*) originally meant breath or air, like the Latin *spiritus* or the Greek *pneuma*. The Holy Ghost is literally Holy Wind; in other words, nothing but gas. The true Holy Ghost, therefore, is pure air; in which I believe as devoutly as any Christian. It is life and health and hope and joy. "Come Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire," is a capital prayer when you understand it in the right sense. The Churches have always misunderstood it. They have built grand and costly edifices, devoted them to the service of God, and consecrated them in the name and by the power of the Holy Ghost. These imposing structures have been adorned with stained-glass windows, depicting some incident or episode of the Christian superstition; and millions of worshipers have felt a rapture of devotion as they saw the sunlight streaming through the storied panes, and kindling all their red and purple glories. Yet the splendid houses of God often threw their shadows (and do so still) over squalid hovels or fetid slums. How much better it were, if the choice must be made, to lose the glorious temples and gain the happy homes; to lose the red and purple glories of sunlit storied windows, and gain the crimson of glowing health on the faces of humankind.

G. W. FOOTE.

"Merlin," Horton, and Haeckel.

I MUST confess to not being a regular reader of the *Referee*. I see it occasionally, and that is all. I mention this neither to congratulate nor to condemn myself, but only to explain myself. I cannot, therefore pretend to give an altogether final judgment upon the writings of the gentleman who writes the front page article over the signature of "Merlin," and there is about the one I have before me a certain assumption of ability, a suggestion of cock-sureness which, while certainly not warranted by this particular piece of writing, would lead one to imagine that the articles of his that I have *not* read contain adequate warranty of his ability to deal with the subject upon which he is writing. But at present I can only deal with the article I have—handed to me by a Tyneside friend a week or so ago—and resolve to become better acquainted with "Merlin" in the future.

"Merlin's" article is connected with the same subject as my own article in the *Freethinker* of June 21, namely, Dr. Horton's criticism of Haeckel. "Merlin has a very high opinion of Dr. Horton's ability; I have quite the reverse. I base my opinion upon a rather lengthy and fairly extensive acquaintance with his writings and speeches. "Merlin" rests his opinion upon Dr. Horton having taken a first-class in classics at Oxford, a performance that no one with any knowledge of this class of degree will accept as being any warranty at all of genuine mental ability; of his having been elected Lyman Beecher Lecturer at Yale, U.S.A.—a lectureship that would not be offered to a first-class thinker outside the churches, and if offered, would not be accepted; and also to his being an "eminent historian and critic." One cannot question Dr. Horton's right to the title of "critic"—anyone is that who criticises—and his eminence may also be conceded as being true among nonconformists. But an eminent historian—oh, shades of Buckle and Freeman! I wonder what "Merlin" imagines the qualifications of an "eminent historian" to be?

The subject of Dr. Horton's sermon was Professor Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*. "Merlin" remarks

that Dr. Horton treats his opponent "with all possible respect." Well, bearing in mind that Dr. Horton had referred to Haeckel as being an "unthinking mind" full of "obvious ignorance and weakness and childish credulity," that "In moral and religious matters he is a child, and not a sweet innocent child either, but a crude, ill-mannered, ignorant child," he had reached a stage where only prayer could help him, and ought to be regarded "with the compassion due to every afflicted human being" that his teaching would lead to the degradation of the race; and in a previous sermon he had said that Haeckel was "a subject for apology rather than a subject for admiration" in Germany and England; bearing all these things in mind, one wonders what on earth "Merlin" would regard as discourteous language from an ordinary preacher to a leading European scientist.

Full of delight at Dr. Horton's performance, "Merlin" proceeds to chastise Professor Haeckel on his own account, and in the course of the castigation shows an almost abnormal incapacity of dealing with the subject, and, at times, even of understanding the point at issue. I may put the matter in this frank way, as "Merlin" thinks Dr. Horton's treatment of Haeckel as full of "all possible respect," and is not likely to think this discourteous. His first point is that Haeckel makes the admission that the "innermost character" of nature is just as little understood by us as it was by Anixamander and Empedocles; we do not know the "thing in itself," and Haeckel calls upon us to leave this fruitless brooding over an ideal phantom to the metaphysicians, which, I think, is rather sound advice.

"Merlin" seems to think differently. Here, he says, "is a confession that research is powerless..... but the very next step in this strange argument lies in the statement that we have established the monism of the cosmos..... [and] we have shattered at the same time the three ideals of the personality of God, the immortality of the soul, and the freedom of the will..... As a matter of mere reasoning we have shattered nothing. We have simply failed by thinking to find out God. We have simply failed in the course of our investigations to reach the springs of will or to understand the origin of life. And having arrived at a confession of blank, utter, hopeless ignorance with respect to these things, we have proved that they are not. Haeckel might justify the statement that *if* the cosmos is monistic—if soul and substance are the same—there is no God, no immortality, no freedom of the will. But it is just as effective to affirm that, since there is a God, and since the soul is immortal, the universe is not monistic..... Suppose I have been looking in the wrong places? 'Misguided person,' says the realistic philosopher, 'there are no other places.' There *are* no other places known to Science in the limited sense in which you conceive it, I reply; but you who claim to have shattered a thing because you have not seen it, who boast that you have slain ideals because you cannot find them—you are obviously the last person in the world to whom I will submit such deductive powers as I am blessed with, and I claim the freedom to believe that a broad survey of Science itself is dead against you."

From the philosophic standpoint of "Merlin" this is no doubt very effective. There is an air of grave disapproval about it that would be impressive—if it were not laughable. It may probably surprise him to learn that the question of whether we are, or *can* ever be, better acquainted with the "thing in itself" than was Anixamander or Empedocles, and the scientific conception of monism, are two quite distinct things. When Haeckel says we know of nothing outside or above or beyond the phenomenal universe, he is making a quite indisputable statement. And when he says in addition that we have demonstrated the monism of the known universe, he is again but uttering a commonplace of advanced scientific thinking. There is to-day a practical agreement among competent scientists, particularly chemists, that all the manifestations of force known to us are but mul-

titles of one primitive force. Advanced physics is full of this conception; the scientific principle of parsimony, about which "Merlin" displays a quite cheerful want of knowledge, would absolutely forbid us dragging in two substances where one would serve as an explanation.

I am well aware that it is not necessary to understand a subject in order to write a newspaper article on it; but at the same time I would humbly suggest that a little knowledge may sometimes come in useful. Putting on one side the fact that, once again, the philosophic question of "substance" and the matter of finding the "springs of will" or the "Origin of Life" are quite distinct, one feels inclined to ask whether "Merlin" really thinks that ideals of any kind can rest upon a basis of "blank, utter, hopeless ignorance"? What Haeckel has shown is that in the known universe there is not a single fact that can be cited to justify the belief in God, in a soul or in the freedom of the will. And it can further be shown that every one of the facts or reasons adduced to prove these beliefs are capable of other explanations or interpretations, which will stand the test of verification. The belief in God and a future life did not develop from a belief in "substance" or "noumena," or in any similar metaphysical abstraction, but in guesses at the meaning of certain cosmical phenomena—a fact which a couple of months' study would make "Merlin" fully conversant with. It is in the light of these facts that Haeckel says the belief in God or a soul is without foundation. And as I happen to be of opinion that our beliefs should rest upon something better than "blank, utter, hopeless ignorance," I agree with Haeckel and disagree with "Merlin."

"Merlin" believes that a broad survey of science is dead against the Freethinker. The example he adduces is curious—to use a mild term, and as it would be a pity to curtail this clinching example of his reasoning, I give it in full:—

"There is no mystic faith involved in the study of universal history, and that study leads to the presumption of a Plan, and the existence of a Plan leads to the assumption of One Who Plans. Haeckel insists upon the absolute dominion of a great eternal iron scheme of law throughout the universe. Precisely; but is it not a little illogical to say that because there is a law there cannot be a law-giver? We cannot scientifically postulate the law-giver, but still less can we postulate his non-existence. The stock argument so often cited from Paley was: 'Here is a piece of cunning mechanism. It had a constructor.' Haeckel's argument is: 'Here is a piece of cunning mechanism. It is so complete that we may be sure it had no maker.' The flaw in Paley is obvious, but he has at least the weight of analogy behind him. Haeckel is content with an assertion which nakedly stated would startle the mind even of a child by its grotesque unreason. Yet that is absolutely his position. There is no God because the universe obeys inevitable laws."

This is so amusing that, out of sheer thankfulness, one feels tempted not to criticise. Note the judicial air about the sentence, "The flaw in Paley is obvious, but he has at least the weight of analogy behind him." Why the truth is, as a schoolboy in logic could tell, that the *whole* of the argument against Paley is that the weight of analogy is *not* behind him. If there is the any analogy, the Paleyan argument is sound. The only flaw, obvious or otherwise, is that there is no analogy at all in the two instances. It is a little illogical, says "Merlin," to postulate a law and not a law-giver. Really, the only answer to such an objection in these days of cheap scientific text-books and popular science lectures is to recommend the objector to find out the scientific meaning of "law," and then say whether a *description* of what occurs really implies someone who arranged the cosmos. To say that Haeckel argues, "Here is a piece of cunning mechanism, so complete that we may be sure it had no maker," is a travesty of his argument. It is not the completeness of the mechanism that shuts out the idea of a maker—as a matter of fact, the mechanism is *not* complete in the sense of being perfect—but the consideration that the state of the universe at any moment is the exact result of all the forces that

compose it, and that there is absolutely no warranty for believing that these forces were arranged to produce a specific result, as a mechanic adjusts certain forces to a desired end. "Merlin" is obviously of opinion that the cosmos is one thing and "law" another, and that the latter is imposed upon the former, much as an autocratic ruler imposes unwelcome laws upon his subjects.

History discloses a Plan, we are told; and a capital P helps to make this impressive. What plan? "Merlin" finds this plan is progress, one of the most conspicuous of Nature's laws. "The eternal movement is upward—upward—upward—towards some destiny we know not of"; a pleasing piece of rhetoric, but of no logical value whatever. The progress of the world is upward because it suits "Merlin," because it suits me, because it suits, on the average, all human beings. I admit that this is convenient, perhaps necessary, language for us to use; but eliminate man, and what becomes of progress? The world has not progressed for the many species of animals that were unfitted for its changes, and which have died out in consequence. The world has not progressed even for those races of human beings who have gone under before other and "superior" races. And the cream of the joke is that the same scientific generalisation that tells us how life has grown from "lower" to "higher" forms also tells us that one day or other human and animal life will disappear, and the earth end, as it began, in "nebulous chaos." In strict science there is not progress, but ceaseless change. It is we who create the idea of progress, and then read the conception into nature at large.

I am not quite sure whether, in discussing a *Referee* article, it is permissible to point out that the idea of a "Plan" in history is quite a misreading of events. "Merlin" would, I presume, argue that because a certain course of historic processes have culminated in a particular result, these events were *intended* to produce this end. But cannot "Merlin," cannot anyone, see that this argument would only be of any logical value if certain events only were related in this manner to their antecedents. But as a matter of fact this statement is true of everything. Any series of events combine to produce a special result, and cannot produce any other result. If "Merlin" could show that any result is *not* the sum of its antecedents, but occurs in a more or less arbitrary manner, then he will be able to prove his "Plan." And at the risk of being called by him a "benighted scientific dogmatist," I am bold enough to tell him that this is the only way in which he or anybody else can establish a presumption in favor of a "Plan."

But, I repeat, I do not care to press this point in criticising a *Referee* article. "Merlin" remarks that the columns of that journal is not the place in which to discuss the mysteries of religion, and with all good feeling I venture to add that "Merlin" scarcely appears to possess the qualifications for conducting the discussion.

C. COHEN.

From Christian Pulpit to Secular Platform.

BY RICHARD TREVOR.

II.—CHILD-LIFE IN A PURITAN HOME.

SURELY no man in his senses would ever dream of pronouncing an unqualified and extravagant eulogium on Puritanism. That it possessed several wholly admirable and fascinating qualities cannot be denied; but it is equally clear that, as a scheme and philosophy of human life, it was deplorably one-sided and utterly misleading. Thinking only of its courageous insistence on, and inflexible adherence to, Righteousness, Carlyle and Ruskin deeply loved and loudly praised it, declaring with mournful pride, that they were the last surviving exponents of it in England; but, thinking chiefly of its unlovely and repellent attributes, I am tempted to denounce it in the bitterest and most vehement terms at my command.

My blood boils and rushes furiously through my veins, as I look back upon my childhood and youth, and realise how sadly and completely they were darkened and blighted by the grim, black shadow and cruel tyranny of Puritanism. I thankfully admit, that in my parents were abundantly exemplified the brighter and nobler features of the darksome system. My father and mother were living incarnations of honor, honesty, truth, and righteousness, and their love for their children knew no bounds. In my references to them, I hope I shall not employ a single disrespectful or disloyal word. I am convinced that their affection for me never wavered, and that, to secure what they believed to be my highest good, they would have cheerfully made all necessary sacrifices. But, while fully admitting the integrity and sublimity of their character, as well as the purity and nobleness of their motives, I cannot close my eyes to the mournful fact, that they were the means of utterly spoiling my child-life, and of wofully handicapping my whole future. Their conception of life and character was fundamentally mistaken. They looked upon the world through colored spectacles, and never saw it in its true light and beauty.

The first formative heresy instilled into my impressionable mind was, that life on earth is a series of disciplinary experiences, the sole object of which is to prepare us for the perfect life in heaven. Heaven was an ineffably happy realm, in which the inhabitants incessantly sang psalms and hymns, to the accompaniment of golden harps, while earth was the abode of griefs and groans, with interludes of heart-breaking and spirit-crushing dirges and threnodies. All amusement was said to be of the devil, and should be forcibly suppressed. All music had to be severely in the minor key. Laughter deserved hottest denunciation, while, on Sunday, not even a smile could be tolerated. Pleasure of all kinds was ruthlessly excluded. Once I laughed out over some humorous passage in the Bible, for which I received such an emphatic castigation from my father, that I have not been able to forget it to this day. At this moment, I can still see the old man's grandly wrathful face, and hear his stern rebuke: "Your stupid levity over God's own Book, my boy, is rank blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, for which the Great Judge may, any minute, strike you down dead." I trembled with fear, and repressed my merriment, but failed to understand *why* it was wrong for a little boy to laugh at ludicrous things. People of the world could eat and drink and be merry, singing bright, joyous songs; but they were on the high road to hell, in which they would have to weep and gnash their teeth to all eternity. And yet, I remember that whenever I passed an inn or tavern, and heard light-hearted, merry singing, I would stand still, strangely thrilled and attracted: there was a something in me which, in spite of all my training and strong convictions, irresistibly responded to the stirring strains. But I was quickly brought to my senses by the reflection, that my enjoyment of such things was another proof of the existence of original sin in my soul, and of the fact that as yet I had not been born again.

Because of the same misconception of the nature and meaning of human life, play, even in its mildest forms, was regarded as being of the world worldly, in which only the unregenerate indulged. Even little children played marbles and span tops under severe parental protest. Sometimes a lot of us would steal away into a distant field, in order to have a clandestine turn at football; but one of our number had to act as sentinel, that no one might come upon us unawares. During my childhood, I never saw an adult taking part in any sport whatever. Even as recently as twenty years ago, the Principal of a College, who was an ordained minister, was solemnly reprimanded by his Presbytery for giving encouragement to the sinful sporting spirit of the age, by allowing himself to be elected President of the College Cricket Club; and had some of the pious brethren had their way, he would have been deposed from the ministry. I shall never forget the funereal tones in which chil-

dren were exhorted, at class-meetings, to abstain from all irreverence and frivolity, and give themselves to prayer and Bible-reading. Our parents, too, kept dinning the same lesson in our ears: "Remember, children," they used to say, "that you are always in the presence of holy God, and that in his sight seriousness is the most becoming grace."

And this brings me to the sole cause and root of the whole matter, namely, *the Puritanical conception of God*, which can only be characterised as *pagan, cruel, monstrous*. The Puritan's Deity was a heartless tyrant, who would not permit little children to give free and full vent to the very nature which he himself had bestowed upon them. How persistently I was reminded that God was watching me, and that every lie I told, and every wrong I did, were recorded in his Books, and would be read out against me at the Day of Judgment. To please him, it was necessary to think about him all the time, read the Bible with diligence, pray without ceasing, and go to church three or four times on Sunday, and ever so many times during the week. God's eye was ever upon me, so that there was no possibility of saying or doing anything without his knowing about it.

On one occasion, I joined a number of boys in a nutting expedition, thereby flatly disobeying my mother. O how sweet was that stolen pleasure, while it lasted, and how my whole being was thrilled, to its core, with delight; but it was a short-lived bliss, for on my return I had administered to me a never-to-be forgotten punishment. Moreover, within a few hours after this motherly chastisement, a fierce thunderstorm burst upon the community, which was construed into a visible token of heaven's displeasure at my sinful behavior; and after almost every vivid flash, I was thus comforted: "What a mercy it did not strike you, my boy; how good God is thus to spare you."

God's tyranny cast its black and all-withering shadow upon everything. I deliberately affirm that life was not worth living; but, then, it was infinitely better to live sadly and mournfully for a few years on earth, and after death be endlessly happy in heaven, than to enjoy a sinful life on earth, and afterwards grill and burn forever and forever in hell. Consequently, the better a man became the more miserable he was. Lugubriousness was a sign of superior saintliness. It was openly stated that a well-known and pre-eminent man of God, who was a brilliant scholar, being able to speak with fluency seven different languages, a profound theologian, and an authoritative interpreter of the eternal decrees, had never been known to laugh. He was one of the holiest men that ever lived, being so like him of whom it is recorded that he wept bitterly on several occasions, but not that he laughed even once; and children, especially, were advised to aim at a similarly exalted type of piety.

This unrelieved lugubriousness of temper was always in strong evidence at the public services of the church. At such times everybody looked tremendously solemn, as if the final universal conflagration were about to begin, and every two or three minutes all the best people vigorously sighed, moaned, grunted, groaned, or cried "Amen." I can see them now, those elders and deacons of enviable holiness, with their hair brushed down their foreheads, arrayed in badly-fitted garments of home-made cloth, seated in the Big Pew immediately in front of the Pulpit, and staring with fixed eyes upon the preacher, who was vehemently shouting out God's gracious message in Christ. O what eloquent croakers those superior men of God were, and how some of the children wondered whether they would ever be old and pious enough to be allowed a like high privilege!

In those days, to be a member of the Church was identical with being saved. Every church member held a certificate for heaven. Hence, to be cut off from church membership was the most awful calamity that could befall a person. Outside was the big world, lying under the wrath of the Great Judge because of its sins, and doomed to spend all eternity

in the flames of hell; and to be flung back into such a wretched world was the greatest curse conceivable. Within my recollection, a young woman was so thrust out for allowing a man of the world to fall in love with, and be married to, her. In excommunicating her, the officiating minister brutally assured her that, were she to die before she repented and was re-admitted to membership, she would undoubtedly be committed to the unquenchable flames of Gehenna. Poor soul, she was frightened almost out of her wits; and yet her only crime consisted in marrying a thoroughly honest, upright, and good man, who did not happen to be within the pale of the Church.

Children's meetings were frequently held, at which the youngsters were drilled in Bible history and the catechisms. In all such gatherings, the dominant note was that God sat on his throne, night and day, watching the behavior of children on earth, and that, unless their conduct was in harmony with the teaching of the Church and their parents, he would most certainly cast them into the outer darkness, where they would wail and shudder in infinite torment for ever.

Such was the training of a child in a Puritan home thirty or forty years ago, and naturally the consequences were most disastrous. During all my childhood days I never knew what it was to be spontaneously happy, or genuinely and unreservedly young. I always had an old head, filled with fears and forbodings, on my young shoulders. Of necessity, therefore, my nature was warped, and my character became woefully one-sided. There was a whole realm of delightful and educative experiences to which I was a total stranger, and to this day I have suffered infinite loss in consequence. A friend, similarly trained in childhood, told me the other day that he never knew what it was to be young until he was fifty years of age.

When will parents learn that childhood should be a period of natural, spontaneous, and ebullient happiness, and that any training that robs it of that desirable quality, however well-intentioned, is in the highest degree iniquitous? At the bar of justice and common sense Puritanism stands utterly, absolutely, and eternally condemned.

Jesus and Paine.

(AN ADDRESS IN THE PAINE MEMORIAL HALL, BOSTON, BY
L. K. WASHBURN, EDITOR OF THE *Boston Investigator*.)
(Continued from page 428.)

The gospel-writers put some glorious sentences into the mouth of Jesus, but, when all is said and done, the supreme test is this: Do they make human life happier, and living easier? Take all the beatitudes of Jesus, take his great sermon and add in the "Golden Rule," and all together they do not measure up for the working man or woman against three square meals a day, a good suit of clothes, and a ton of coal. I would not give much for a fruit tree that never bore anything but blossoms.

No angel whispered a lie into the ear of the mother of Thomas Paine. He came into the world with two human parents. No miraculous light shone over his cradle, and no heavenly choir sang songs of praise when he was born. No wise men came from China or India to Thetford looking for his advent, and no star of heaven stood sentinel over his birthplace.

Paine was just an ordinary baby, who grew into an ordinary child and developed into an extraordinary man. What makes one person a genius and another person a fool, no one can say. Heredity accounts for something, environment for something, but nothing that we know accounts for the rest.

Paine's life, up to the time he came to America, is not important to us to-day. What prepared him for the great part he was to play in the revolutionary drama which was enacted on this continent a century and a quarter ago, it is impossible to know. If ever liberty walked the earth in flesh and blood, surely it was in the form of Thomas Paine. He came to our shores like destiny.

The American colonies, while resisting oppression, declared loyalty to their king. Then followed the Nineteenth of April, and quickly afterwards the Seventeenth of June. From that hour rebellion was a fact, and a new nation a prophecy.

One of the first to see that separation from Great Britain was inevitable was Thomas Paine, although he had been but a few months in the country. With the eye of genius he saw the colonies free and independent States, and in the fall of 1775, with the "shot heard round the world" ringing in his ears, he sat down to write the pamphlet from whose inspiration came a new nation, unblessed by priests and cursed by kings. Paine boldly declared that all men are created equal; that no person is the ruler of another, and that every one has the same right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He had witnessed the evils of monarchy, the tyrannies of nobility, and he asserted with Tennyson: "'Tis only noble to be good."

Paine saw the wrongs in the world, and he bravely assailed them—although he had to do it alone. He denounced African slavery in America when the Christian pulpit defended it as a divine institution. He demanded justice for woman when the whole of Christendom robbed her of every jewel of her nature. He asked men to show kindness to animals when Christians were unkind to their fellow-men. He could not be indifferent to human wrongs wherever they existed, and they existed wherever there was a priest or a king.

Jesus said: "Think not that I come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Paine said: "I would gladly agree with all the world to lay aside the use of arms and settle matters by negotiations." One of our foremost senators recently said: "The most hopeful moral force in the world to-day is arbitration. Every moral and educational force in the country should be directed to a universal acceptance of arbitration." Thomas Paine was the first to advocate international arbitration to settle disputes, and not Jesus; in fact, Jesus never considered a national question, never had an idea of political liberty, never comprehended the meaning or the glory of human independence.

Jesus said: "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother."

Paine said: "If this earth is ever to be covered with human happiness, it will be by parents treating their children with affection, and children treating their parents with respect."

Upon whose words could a happy world best be built—upon those of Jesus, or upon those of Paine?

Paine came to abolish the evils, the wrongs, the superstitions which Jesus upheld and helped to perpetuate. Jesus said: "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." For eighteen hundred years the world was divided by Cæsar and God—that is, by the king and the priest. Then came Thomas Paine, and in thunder tones cried: **RENDER UNTO MAN THE THINGS WHICH ARE MAN'S.**

Those words announced the downfall of the crown and the crozier, of the imposition of divine government for mankind.

Between the throne and the altar man had been crushed, robbed, and betrayed. The king owned the body and the priest owned the soul, and what one did not steal from his victim the other did. Millions of slaves toiled to support one despot, and accepted their slavery upon the word of the priest as a condition imposed by divine love. But, with the words of Paine retribution began, and justice became a hope in the hearts of men.

The three mightiest contributions to political and religious freedom which mankind had known came from the brain of Thomas Paine. What he wrote changed the whole civilised world. He helped to establish a republic in America, to secure man his rights in England and to revolutionise France.

He accomplished the Herculean task of making

men think, and upon that most important of all subjects—themselves.

Paine saw that superstition sucked the blood of sense from the brain as the thirsty mouths of the air drink the water from the soil, and that there could be no true liberty where there was priestcraft.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Preach the gospel to every creature." "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Paine said to the world: "To do good is my religion," and he practiced what he preached. Jesus prayed to his "Father in heaven" and got no answers to his prayers. Paine worked for man and saw the glories of religious and political freedom as the result of his labors.

Thomas Paine spoke the greatest words of the eighteenth century. He did more for human liberty than any man who had lived before him. If he did not start the ball of revolution rolling in America, he kept it rolling after it was started.

In writing anything he asked himself only two questions: Is it right? Is it true? That was enough for Paine. He did not ask the Christian question: Will it pay? Thomas Paine stood upon right and truth, and he believed that the world should stand upon them too, and he did all he could to make it do so.

What he did, he did for the people. He was man's friend, and he knew man's enemies. He never sold his voice or pen. What he said, he said straight from his heart. No man ever wrote more earnestly, and no man was ever read more eagerly.

The highest monument of injustice on this earth is America's ingratitude to Thomas Paine. This monument has been built by Christian malice out of Christian falsehoods. I shall be satisfied if I can take one stone from this monument.

Bigot Boardman Cornered!

FREETHINKERS generally, and West Ham Freethinkers in particular, will remember the embittered agitation carried on by Mr. C. O. Boardman and the local clerics against the *Freethinker* being admitted to the public libraries in the same manner as religious journals. In that struggle Mr. Boardman triumphed so far as to effect the removal of the *Freethinker* from the library table and in having it kept behind the counter for those who required it.

Mr. Boardman is now leading the local Passive Resistance Movement and has opened a fund and a committee-room to promote the same. A meeting was held at Stratford Town Hall last week, and on Monday Mr. Boardman and three or four local Bible-bashers commenced an open-air campaign in Stratford-grove. As this was a prelude to a grand advertisement of the local Liberal candidate, Mr. Boardman was desirous of securing as much support as possible for his movement. A large audience turned up, numbering fully fifteen hundred, as Messrs. Terrett, Pankhurst, Parker, and other local Freethinkers had announced they had several awkward questions to put to Mr. Boardman. When Boardman's Heavenly Choir were playing "Onward Christian Soldiers," the following handbill was distributed.

JOE TERRETT'S QUESTIONS

To Messrs. Boardman, The Nonconformist Clergy, and the Passive Resistance Movement:—

In the event of any West Ham Freethinker refusing to pay his Library-rate, and offering Passive Resistance to the payment of the same, on the ground of the unequal treatment accorded to the *Freethinker* in the Free Libraries—are you prepared to publicly support that man in his action?

If not, why not? Are not West Ham Freethinkers compelled to pay Library Rates, which are spent in quite as an inequitable manner as the rate for Denominational Education, viz., by according a privilege to one body of thought for which another is called upon to pay?

On what logical grounds could you justify Passive Resistance in one instance and not in the other?

If you admit the right of the Freethinker to Passive Resistance equally with yourselves, are you prepared to co-operate with Freethinkers for the removal of the abuses under which they labour, and to secure equal treatment in the PUBLIC LIBRARIES for the *Freethinker* as for the *Christian World* and other religious journals?

If not, on what grounds can you appeal to the public to respect your "conscience" while you refuse to respect the "consciences" of others?

Are you prepared to repudiate the West Ham Municipal Alliance which has packed the Education Committee in the

interests of parsons and refused to grant Free Education in the voluntary schools under their control?

If the above questions are answered satisfactorily I will call on all my friends to support your protest against the unjust and inequitable Education Bill.

If not, I am prepared to debate publicly with the best man among you—"Is the Passive Resistance Movement, as conducted in West Ham, worthy of public support." J. J. TERRETT.

This completely damped the enthusiasm of the meeting. Speaker after speaker writhed and wriggled under the questions; no one gave direct answers. There was very little discussion of Passive Resistance; the meeting simply discussed the merits of the *Freethinker*, and little else. Boardman said he would support an Ethical paper being placed on the Library table, but objected to what he called the filthy advertisements contained in the *Freethinker*. When challenged to name one, he could not do so. One parson (the Rev. Hopkins) advanced the sapient argument that, in passively resisting the Education Rate, he was resisting a *positive* wrong; while a Freethinker, who refused to pay his Library Rate, would only be resisting a *negative* wrong. It is regrettable such delicate distinctions are lost on the vulgar minds of a street crowd. The audience gave a splendid reception to Messrs. Terrett and Monk, and there can be no doubt that Boardman and his Nonconformist parsons are mightily sorry that this uncomfortable recollection of the past—this ghost of their former misdeeds—should have arisen to confront them at what they fondly imagined was going to be one of their psychological moments.

A WEST HAM WIDE-AWAKE.

Acid Drops.

Great is the power of advertisement. A few months ago the Rev. R. J. Campbell was living in comparative obscurity at Brighton. Succeeding to Dr. Parker's pulpit at the City Temple, in rather unusual circumstances, and when there was a dearth of stirring events to be reported in the newspapers, he suddenly became the best advertised man in England—after Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. The advertisement spread as far as America, where the reverend gentleman is now being lionised. He has just addressed a meeting of ministers in New York, and the rush of clerics to hear him was suggestive of a popular football crowd. Twelve months ago few of them would have crossed the street to listen to his eloquence.

The *Morning Leader* seems to be trying to follow in the wake of the pious *Daily News*. It positively worships the new oracle of the City Temple. The Rev. J. R. Campbell is on a visit to America, and soon after landing at New York he preached at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, the old home of the late Henry Ward Beecher. There was a large congregation, but we presume that the building was not stretched for the occasion. Yet the *Leader* gravely observes that "Mr. Campbell preached for forty minutes without any apparent strain." Did he now? Just think of it! Why, the late Colonel Ingersoll often lectured to two or three thousand people for a couple of hours. Yes, it may be said, but he was a robust Freethinker. Just so. We know Mr. Campbell is no more like Ingersoll in body than he is in mind. But he had enjoyed a bracing sea voyage before that sermon at Plymouth Church, and ought to have held out for forty minutes without a miracle.

The Catholics in this country have "cheek" enough. They actually asked M. Loubet, the French President, to receive during his visit to London a Catholic deputation with reference to the persecution of the Catholic religion in France, the expulsion of the Religious Orders, and the confiscation of their property. M. Loubet, of course, declined to do anything of the kind. He understands their little game too well.

The *Daily News* religious census for Stepney shows an aggregate attendance of one in five of the population. This is made up, of course, by reckoning all who attended morning and evening service as separate persons. The population of Stepney is 294,524, and the total number of attendants at all religious services was 58,115—including 12,627 Jews in synagogues, counted on Easter Sunday. The denominational figures are:—Church of England 14,891; Nonconformist Churches 20,596; Roman Catholic Church 8,402; Other Services 1,599. In the morning one person in twelve, and in the evening one person in eight, was present at a place of worship. The proportions for the men were one in seven in the morning and one in fifteen at night—when the "pubs" were open!

An American millionaire said how delightful it would be

to come back to the world fifty years after death and see the progress it had made. "Yes," said a listener, "I dare say you would be glad of any pretext to return."

The weather has been more talked about even than usual lately. We had such extraordinarily wretched samples dealt out by the "powers above" during the late spring and early summer, that it was impossible for conversation on the subject to run short. On the part of Christians, of course, it is a settled belief that the weather is fixed up by "Providence." But there was a famous Christian called John Wesley who held this belief with a difference. In his hundred and twenty-fifth sermon "On Faith" he stated his opinion that when the souls of wicked men left their bodies, to await the general resurrection and the day of judgment, they were in some cases employed by Satan to carry out his fell designs. They were probably used in "inflicting death, or evils of various kinds, on the men that knew not God," "For this end," Wesley said, "they may raise storms by sea or by land, they may shoot meteors through the air. They may occasion earthquakes, and in numberless ways afflict those whom they are not suffered to destroy. Where they are not permitted to take life away, they may inflict various diseases: and many of those which we judge to be natural are undoubtedly diabolical."

This opens up a fine field of speculation. The next time they have a bad storm in Essex it might be put down to Dougal. The next lively flight of meteors might be put down to our old friend Jack the Ripper. The next shock of earthquake might be put down to some wicked "infidel" say Charles Bradlaugh or Robert Ingersoll. When you have toothache you might place it to the credit of your deceased mother-in-law. If you suffer from rheumatics you might say it was due to the infernal activity of your drunken good-for-nothing brother who died last month. Every other disorder might be ascribed in the same way to some objectionable inhabitant of the cemetery. John Wesley's theory is extremely interesting. It lends quite a romance to everyday troubles. The prosaic theory of materialism doesn't stand a chance against it.

Wesley was so good a Bible Christian that he fully believed in demoniacal possession. Not only did he teach that many so-called natural diseases are diabolical, but he declared, "I believe this is frequently the case with lunatics." When these poor creatures jabbered filth or nonsense, Wesley heard an evil spirit speaking through their lips. Very unscientific, of course; but still, very Christian—for this idea is plainly taught in the New Testament.

The late Mr. Gladstone was more "fly" than John Wesley. When he got into a debate with Professor Huxley over the Gadarene swine miracle, he spent all his time discussing whom the pigs belonged to. Not a word did he say as to whether the devils were in the porkers. The Grand Old Man was a Christian, but Christians have learnt a thing or two since the days of John Wesley. They have learnt, for one thing, how to equivocate.

The tongue of a bell fell out while being tolled in Yarmouth parish church. It would serve the cause of melody if it kept out. We hope it will do so. When a bell only makes a noise, and cannot even frighten devils away—which was the primitive function of bells—it is simply a nuisance; and a nuisance in the name of God adds insult to injury.

"Merlin" of the *Referee* continues his crusade in favor of his special form of superstition. He is not a Christian, in any honest sense of the word; but he must have some sort of a God, and he cannot give up the belief in a future life. For some time he has been working away, in his peculiar manner, at the God question. Last week he took up the immortality question. The major part of his article was a warming-up of the old fallacies, but in the end he showed his inclination to support a modified Theosophy—at least to the extent of embracing reincarnation. This is one of the safest beliefs imaginable. It cannot be proved, and it cannot be disproved. We thought "Merlin" would anchor in some such waters at last.

The *Referee* philosopher, as we dare say he imagines himself, does not perceive that his talk about a future life is all vanity—in both senses of the word. It is really not a matter of vast importance to anyone but himself, whether he lived before he was born or will live after he is dead. The world got on fairly well without him at one time, and will no doubt get on fairly well without him again. All the rest of the question he discusses is a matter of personality. Still, we

are not quite devoid of benevolence; and, if "Merlin" hopes his career will continue through millions of years and scores of incarnations, we trust he will not be disappointed. But we have no desire to keep him company.

Poor Dan Leno! There does not seem to be any immediate hope of his recovery. We cannot help thinking that the remarkable letter he wrote to the *Freethinker*, rather more than twelve months ago, was the beginning of his present trouble. It will be remembered that he threatened us with "further proceedings" because one of our contributors paid him the compliment of his lifetime.

According to a recent official report the city of Boston, U.S.A., is gradually sinking, and a large part of it will sooner or later be covered by the sea. Christian Scientists, however, have taken time by the forelock, and have been holding a Convention at Boston. Lots of well-to-do people foregathered, and the *Daily Mail* correspondent reports a "preponderance of intellect"—which is rather more doubtful. What we can well believe is that "large sums of money are readily raised." We are sceptical as to the "wonders of healing." One of the Christian Scientists at the Boston Convention declared that he had cured a cancer of fifteen years' standing without seeing the patient, simply by faith. But there are many mistakes made about cancer, and this may be one of them. Besides, a Christian Scientist's report at a Convention is hardly the same thing as a scientific record. The long and the short of the Christian Science movement seems to be simply this, that Prophetess Eddy is doing better business than ever, and growing wealthier day by day.

Mrs. Eddy's followers recently made their annual pilgrimage to her residence at Pleasant View, New Hampshire. Fifteen thousand pilgrims arrived during the day. Mrs. Eddy greeted them from the balcony. She was dressed in royal purple and white silk, and a magnificent cape of white ostrich feathers with black tips that fell almost to her knees. This barbaric gorgeousness seemed to awe her devotees. Afterwards she drove through two lines of them, on either side of the road. They greeted her with reverential silence, some even bowing the knee.

It was of England Carlyle said it contained thirty millions of people, mostly fools; but evidently he might have made the same observation in America, with a slight change of figures.

According to the Bible the span of man's life is seventy years, and if he lives longer his days are but labor and sorrow. Yet old Pope Leo, turned ninety-three, still clings to this earthly life, and prayers are offered up for his recovery. Both he and his friends try hard to keep him out of heaven.

The following Irish statistics, which we cull from a religious paper, are very interesting:—

- 1861, Roman Catholic population of Ireland, 4,505,265.
- 1901, Roman Catholic population of Ireland, 3,308,661; decrease, 26.5 per cent.
- 1861, Roman Catholic "clerical army," 5,693.
- 1901, Roman Catholic "clerical army," 12,901; increase, 126.6 per cent.
- 1861, Roman Catholic priests in Ireland, 3,084.
- 1901, Roman Catholic priests in Ireland, 3,711; increase, 23 per cent.
- 1861, Roman Catholic nuns in Ireland, 2,609.
- 1901, Roman Catholic nuns in Ireland, 8,031; increase, 208 per cent.
- 1861, Roman Catholic monks in Ireland, 70.
- 1901, Roman Catholic monks in Ireland, 1,159; increase, 1,555 per cent.

M. Camillo Jenatzy, says the French motoring journal *L'Auto*, will net about £8,000 for his win in the Gordon-Bennett race. He has already received a letter from a religious community asking for a very liberal donation, so that he may stand a better chance of Paradise. It is not reported that he has snapped at this bait. Still, one appreciates the business enterprise of the religionists.

"Everywhere and by everybody," says the *New York Times*, "the Devil is regarded as a comic personage, save only by persons of austere Puritan temper, who, never having had any fun themselves, are incapable of thinking the Devil funny."

The Lascar crew of a vessel from Marseilles believe they have seen the Devil. They brought him before the magistrate at Grays and charged him as a stowaway. He was

apparently a man of extraordinary height and appearance, but the sailors held he was something worse. While they were dining down below, he literally dropped in upon them, falling through a ventilator right over their heads; and he so frightened them that they fled into hiding in various parts of the ship. The curious feature of the sequel is that none of the interpreters down the Thames could make head or tail of his speech. He was shown an atlas, and he kissed it all over; which made him look something like a Christian; but the sailors still regard him as Old Nick. Not knowing what to do, the magistrate discharged him.

Mrs. Sullivan, postmistress of Corogin, was found dead in a confessional-box in Ennis Roman Catholic Cathedral. Her throat had been cut with a razor, and, according to the medical evidence, the wounds were self-inflicted. Deceased had, however, drawn £250 from a bank the previous day, and the police are trying to trace the missing money.

Birmingham means to go ahead, but not on the old lines. It is now getting up a Bishopric for itself. The Endowment Fund required is £105,000, in addition to the amount necessary to provide a House for the Bishop. The amount already promised is £94,206. No doubt the balance will be forthcoming.

What a change since the days of the poor Carpenter's Son! When the tax-collector called for his half-a-crown, he had to send Peter fishing for it; otherwise he would have found that Roman officials had no sympathy with the Passive Resistance movement. Not so much as two-and-sixpence between the Prophet of Nazareth and his friend in the fish trade! And now it takes more than a hundred thousand pounds to start a single bishop!

The clerical mind is, indeed, a strange quantity, and defies analysis. With the exception of a few earnest men, who rise superior to the prejudices of their class, it is a synonym for blindness, conventionality, and bigotry. On any question which should stir the national conscience: on any question of public morals: it is a rule safe for the man who wants to go right to ascertain the predominant opinion of the clergy and the Episcopal bench, and then go in exactly the opposite direction. One reason of this is probably the very limited education that the majority of the clergy receive. A Pass degree at Oxford and Cambridge really implies no mental exercise, no acquaintance with the problem of the day: many clerics do not even receive that: and what possible germs of mental development there may have been are extinguished by the unwholesome and stifling atmosphere of the theological college. In his country parish, the clergyman generally stagnates: the respect paid to him by his parishioners has an unfavorable influence on his character and ministers to self-conceit: so that his outlook becomes narrower and narrower, and at length any action that is unusual or unconventional bewilders his sluggish brain and fills with horror his narrow soul.—*The Rock* (a religious weekly).

Unless we altogether misread what may be called the signs of the times, there can be no doubt that we are living in a period of serious religious decadence. The outward forms of religion are being neglected. Our churches and chapels are half empty; great masses of the people manifest a spirit of antagonism to every man who wears a white necktie; the priesthood of all Churches is more or less at a discount. These are facts that few people will seriously dispute. But is it true also that there is a decay in public morality? In other words, is the moral tone of the nation lower? Is there less of humanitarianism in our midst, less of brotherhood, less of sympathy, less of kindly feeling, less of private and public charity? It is at this point, it seems to me, that history does not repeat itself. If we look abroad over the country, note carefully the tone and trend of its public life, study the literature and art of the present generation, listen to the public utterances of our greatest men, mark the drift of legislation, notice the way in which law is enforced, take notice of the manner in which criminals, imbeciles, drunkards, and little children are treated, measure the extent of our public charities, the manner in which our hospitals and asylums and orphan homes are supported, pay attention to the tone and temper of our secular press, I think we shall be driven to the conclusion that there is no perceptible decay in public morality; that, on the contrary, during the last fifty years there has been a great advance.—*Rev. Silas K. Hocking, in the "Cheltenham Chronicle."*

Accidents continue to happen on the usual big scale in America. At Oakford Park, a pleasure resort near Pittsburg, on Sunday the lake was flooded by a violent rainstorm and burst the dam, causing a wall of water to sweep down Bush

Creek Valley. There was great loss of life as well as large destruction of property. More than a hundred persons are reported to have perished. It appears that several clergymen have been preaching against Sabbath desecration by visiting Oakford Park, and the calamity is looked upon by many as a "judgment." They might reflect, however, that if the Lord is going to follow up people who enjoy themselves on Sunday, all over the world, he has enough on hand to last him for a good while.

"At one place in the centre of the city last night," said the *Bradford Daily Telegraph* of Monday, June 29, "there were rival gatherings of Christians and Atheists almost cheek by jowl. Atheism was finally vanquished and driven from the field." This looks like a polite way of winking at rowdiness. However, the next day's *Telegraph* contained the following: "'The Old Guard dies; it never surrenders.' We have had a deputation of Bradford Freethinkers this morning to give a denial to a paragraph which suggests they were driven off the field (Morley-street) on Sunday night. 'We are never driven off,' said the spokesmen. 'We only go when we are carried off.' As to Sunday night's meeting the new Truthseekers declare that their meeting was practically over before the Evangelicals began."

Count Tolstoy's pamphlet, *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, has been suppressed in Germany on account of the references which it contains to Emperor William. What a difference there is between the pious Kaiser and the freethinking Frederick the Great. The latter respected the freedom of the press, and never displayed the paltry sensitiveness of little minds. On one occasion he stopped his horse outside a printshop in Berlin, where a crowd of spectators were gazing at a caricature of their sovereign in the window. The grim old King sent his orderly inside to tell the shopman that the picture was too high up, that the people were hurting their necks by looking at it, and that he should place it lower down for the comfort of all concerned. His rule was, Pay your taxes, obey the laws, and say what you please. In religious matters, his view was that his subjects were all entitled to go to heaven or hell in their own way.

Nonconformist men of God have actually been using a schoolroom at Broadmead, Bristol, to conspire against the law of the land. They call their policy Passive Resistance, but it turns out to be pretty active by the time the mob have done with the police and the auctioneers. Three of the aforesaid men of God were the Rev. D. J. Hiley, the Rev. W. F. Price, and the Rev. J. Mann. These gentlemen declared, in the name of civil and religious liberty, that they would never pay a sectarian rate. Well, time will show. Meanwhile, we beg to remind them that for thirty years the Nonconformists have been exacting a sectarian rate from Jews, Freethinkers, Secularists, Atheists, and Agnostics. It may be replied that these unbelievers had the Conscience Clause. Quite true; and so have Nonconformists under the new Education Act.

Vitality, edited by Jonathan Nicholson, prints a letter from Mr. Frank Arnold, physical culture teacher, of Pontypridd, urging the absurdity of relying on the Bible as a guide or an inspiration to real reformers. The editor replies that he regards the Bible as the Word of God, and that it teaches how health can be obtained, namely, by obedience and faith. Moreover, physical culture is not fit to take the place of religion. Perhaps not; but it all depends on the religion. A sound body is infinitely better than an unsound mind—which is what the clergy cultivate in their supporters. Besides, a man who keeps his *physique* in first-rate condition is bound to observe the primary personal virtues. He is bound, for instance, to be continent and temperate.

We publish in another column an account of the cornering of Mr. C. O. Boardman, a West Ham leader of the Passive Resistance movement, who was also a leader of the movement against the *Freethinker* being placed upon the Free Library table with other weekly publications. The local *Mail* reports Mr. Boardman as saying that "He did not oppose the *Freethinker* because it was Freethought literature, but because it was filthy. He opposed it because its advertisements were not fit to appear there. The pictures were indecent." We should only imitate Mr. Boardman's bad manners if we called him a filthy liar. But we won't do it. We will simply say that on some subjects he is quite incapable of telling the truth. No illustrations have appeared in the *Freethinker* for many years; and, as a matter of fact, the *Freethinker* has rejected advertisements that appear in the most "respectable" weekly papers (including some religious journals) that are not turned off from the West Ham Free Library tables.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(All Engagements suspended until September.)

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—July 12, a. and e., Victoria Park; 19, m. Kingsland.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

THOMAS EDWARDS.—Advertisers ought to patronise the *Freethinker*, but they won't. Some are too prejudiced; others are afraid of incurring the suspicion of Atheism. This is one of our greatest difficulties.

J. ROSS.—Thanks.

HACKNEY SAINT.—Always glad to receive cuttings.

H. HOYE.—Pleased to hear you "appreciated the beauty" of Mr. Woodward's article on Lessing, as far as his English was concerned. The passages quoted in German were substantially rendered into English in Mr. Woodward's text. We agree with you that this should generally, if not always, be done. Those who write in English for English readers should avoid introducing foreign words as far as possible. A writer's only object should be to be read—and understood. But in the case of quotations it is sometimes necessary to give the very words of the original.

A. C. HOWARD.—What is the use of *discussing* Spiritualism, or more properly Spiritism? What you have to do first is to satisfy yourself as to the alleged facts—in other words, to investigate. Don't take statements for facts; get the evidence of your own senses; and, above all, beware of deception. It is beyond dispute that a vast deal of trickery has been employed in connexion with Spiritism. For the other matter see "Acid Drops."

J. E. PHILLIPS.—Cuttings are always welcome.

T. HINTON.—Pleased to hear from you as one of Mr. Cohen's converts.

W. D. MACGREGOR.—See "Sugar Plums."

T. KENOE.—We notify that the Liverpool Branch picnic is to take place next Sunday (July 19), and that particulars will be forwarded for next week's *Freethinker*. Please forward them by Monday morning at the latest.

J. THOMSON (Renfrew).—Mr. T. Robertson has written us on your behalf.

C. D. STEPHENS.—We have a reasonable hope of returning to platform work in the autumn with something like the old vigor.

FREETHINKER (Bristol).—Nonconformists appear to overlook the fact that the Passive Resistance game may be played by other parties. See "Acid Drops."

THE COHEN PRESENTATION.—*Seventh List*. George Brady £1. S. H. H. 5s., Horace W. Parsons £2 2s., W. Waymark 2s., T. Hinton 2s. 6d., J. Banden 2s. 6d., S. Edmonds 2s. 6d., F. Schaller, 5s.

RECEIVED.—Morning Leader—Torch of Reason—Public Opinion—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Two Worlds—Bradford Daily Telegraph—Zoophilist—Malthusian—Freidenker—Blue Grass Blade—Haltwhistle Echo—Newtownards Chronicle—Middlesex Times—Truthseeker (New York)—Progressive Thinker—Western Daily Press—New Century Path—Crescent—Humanitarian.

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.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote will be away from London for some time, and his letters will be forwarded to him. It is requested, therefore, that Lecture Notices will *all* be sent in on *postcards* for the present, and that anything addressed to Mr. Foote for use or insertion in the *Freethinker* will be posted so as to reach the office at the latest by the first delivery on Monday.

M. Loubet's visit to England is an event at which all Freethinkers should rejoice. Anything that tends to promote the world's peace and harmony is a cause of satisfaction. But there is more than this in the French President's visit. England and France have much in common, if they only knew it. They are the European homes of free institutions, and each has qualities which are complementary to those of the other. The cooler Englishman and the more vivacious Frenchman ought to make the best of comrades. It is also to be remembered that M. Loubet is in the fullest sense of the word a man of the people, having reached the Presidency from the lowest rung of the social ladder, and in the most honorable manner; which is a Republican lesson to the people in this country. France is likewise the land of intellectual freedom. She is working out the great problems of secularisation; and what she is doing to-day other nations will have to do to-morrow. Freethinkers know this well enough, if others do not; and they stretch out their hands to the land of Voltaire, of Comte, of Hugo, and of Renan.

Our thought goes back to the noble poem written by Mr. George Meredith in December, 1870, when France was writhing and bleeding under the iron heel of victorious Germany. What noble pity he expressed for the great nation that was suffering for her sin. She was prone in the mire, but still she was France.

O that is France!
The brilliant eyes to kindle bliss,
The shrewd quick lips to laugh and kiss,
Breasts that a sighing world inspire,
And laughter-dimpled countenance
Where soul and senses caught desire.

What splendid lines! Yet some doubt if Mr. Meredith is a poet! And how loftily beautiful was the close of that magnificent poem! France was called upon in the name of her myriad dead, to learn the lessons of her calamity; to die to her vanity, to strain her pride, to discard her luxury, and to live to her nobler self. That was what her poor dead sons said from all their scattered graves. And this was the poet's grand apostrophe:—

O Mother! take their counsel, and so shall
The broader world breathe in on this thy home,
Light clear for thee the counter-changing dome,
Strength give thee, like an ocean's vast expanse
Off mountain cliffs, the generations all,
Not whirling in their narrow rings of foam,
But as a river forward. Soaring France!
Now is Humanity on trial in thee:
Now may'st thou gather humankind in fee:
Now prove that Reason is a deathless scroll;
Make of calamity thine aureole,
And bleeding head us thro' the troubles of the sea.

One heart, the greatest in England, will have been beating high during the past week; the heart of the Master at Box Hill. He has lived to see his appeal realised and his prophecy fulfilled.

Alarmist rumors were circulated lately concerning Mr. George Meredith, representing him as in a critical condition. Mr. Meredith corrected the report himself, and added, "I am going on well enough." Which is good news to his many admirers.

"Infidel France," as the Christian Evidence people call the land across the Channel, is able to teach England some lessons. One of them is devotion to mothers. President Loubet's venerable mother is ninety years of age, and he delights in going to his old home and paying her honor. She gave him love and generous help in his youth, and he repays her in her old age. There is something very beautiful in this profound attachment between mothers and sons in France; more profound, we believe, than in any other country in the world. It has been conspicuous in the case of so many great men, such as Flaubert and Renan. The one woman that the great Napoleon always respected was his mother. One of the most pathetic incidents of that awful tragedy of St. Helena was Napoleon's occasional wandering calls on his dead mother to take his aching, throbbing head upon her bosom, and comfort him as she had done when he was a boy. One of the holiest passages in literature is Michelet's reference to his mother at the end of the Preface to the third edition of *Priests, Women, and Families*. "While writing all this," he said, "I have had in my mind a woman, whose strong and serious mind would not have failed to support me in these contentions: I lost her thirty years ago (I was a child then); nevertheless, ever living in my memory, she followed me from age to age. She suffered with me in poverty, and was not allowed to share my better fortune. When young I made her sad, and now I cannot console her. I know not even where her bones are: I was too poor then to buy earth to bury her! And yet I owe her much. I feel deeply that I am the son of woman. Every instant in my ideas and words (not to mention my features and gestures) I

find again my mother in myself. It is my mother's blood which gives me the sympathy I feel for bygone ages, and the tender remembrance of all those who are no more. What return then could I, who am myself advancing towards old age, make her for the many things I owe her? One, for which she would have thanked me—this protest in favor of women and mothers."

We only recollect one great English writer who dedicated his chief book to his mother. That was Buckle, the author of the *History of Civilisation*. And he was a Freethinker, too.

Mr. H. Belloc, our newest scholarly humorist, had an article in the *Daily News* recently headed "The Man and His Burden." Perhaps the editor did not realise its full meaning. It was certainly not written to please the Nonconformist Conscience. Mr. Belloc pictures a young man who finds he has a burden strapped on his back. He forgets it almost, but not quite, when sleeping, drinking, conversing, going to theatre, and enjoying himself generally. One day he is accosted by "an excellent Divine who inhabited a neighboring parish, and was possessed of no less a sum than £29,000." This worthy man of God reproves the young man with the burden for looking so miserable; tells him that burdens are the common lot of humanity, and have to be borne; and informs him that even preachers and squires carry very heavy burdens too, which are really the heavier for being invisible. The excellent divine puts a heavy stone on his back and leaves him. Then his relations gather round him, give him candid advice, and put a number of leaden weights on his back. Then a politician promises him relief and gets upon his back to do it. Then a scientist gets up and joins the politician. Then a philosopher gets up and joins them both. At this point the man went mad. When last seen he was staggering along "bearing not only those original three, but some kings and taxgatherers and schoolmasters, several fortune-tellers, and an old admiral."

The National Secular Society's Executive will organise another seaside excursion from London this year. It will probably take place on the last Sunday in August, before the summer is over, but after the great rush of holidaying. Further particulars will be announced in due course.

The Education Board has just stated a fact of considerable importance. The Rev. Thomas Law, general secretary to the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, raised the question whether under the Conscience Clause a child could be withdrawn entirely from school during religious instruction to which the parent has conscientious objection. The Education Board's reply was that under one of the new model by-laws a child in such a case may be withdrawn from the school altogether, if the parent notifies his intention to the manager. This may be a useful and welcome hint to Freethinkers as well as Nonconformists.

The usual monthly meeting of the Edinburgh Secular Society was held in the Hall, 84 Leith-street, on Sunday evening last, when Mr. James Robertson lectured to a fair audience on the question "Did Christ Ever Live?" Mr. George Berry presided. Discussion followed the lecture. The next meeting will be on the first Sunday in August, when Mr. John Pryde is to lecture on "The Ten Commandments."

During the period of Editor Washburne's visit to Europe, the *Boston Investigator* is under the capable conduct of Mr. Malcolm Dean. Mr. Washburn is to tell the story of his summer vacation when it is over.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S.

THE annual picnic of the Birmingham Branch took place on Sunday, the 5th inst. The party, numbering forty, went by brakes to Kinver. After rambling the hills and viewing the notable objects of the locality, tea was partaken of at the Café Royal, full justice being done to an excellent spread. All were pleased that our veteran member and vice-president of the N.S.S., Mr. J. H. Ridgway, was able to be amongst us. Speaking after tea, he reviewed the work done by the Branch, and spoke of the difficulties it had met and overcome, the need for our labors to go on, and warmly appealed to all to give their full support to the Committee's efforts. As on previous occasions, our treasurer, Mr. W. T. Pitt, constituted himself chief humorist of the party, and fully sustained his reputation. A return was made at seven o'clock, and the arrival home ended one of the most enjoyable outings the Branch has had.

J. PARTRIDGE, Sec.

Moses and the Pentateuch.—IX.

THE next matter to be noticed is the widespread and long-continued idolatry prior to the reign of Josiah. As already stated, the civil laws and the religious practices of the Israelites, in the earliest times, were precisely the same as those of the other inhabitants of Canaan, and differed only in the name of the god worshipped. The same kind of altar was used, and the same kinds of sacrifices were offered, in the worship of Baal, Yahveh, and Chemosh, each god having a house or temple dedicated to his service, and each being a jealous god who despised and hated all others.

The most important of the deities worshipped in Canaan was the sun-god Baal, the supreme "lord," who was invoked in different localities by various distinctive names. In the mountainous country of Moab he was known to his worshippers as Baal-Peor; in Shechem he was Baal-Berith; in Ekron, Baal-Zebub; in Tyre, Baal-Melkarth; besides several other Baalim. Among the Ammonites he was known as Milcom, Malcham, or Moloch—"the king." Two goddesses were also worshipped: Ashtoreth, who was the favorite in northern Palestine; and Asherah, the goddess of birth and growth, who was the more popular in the southern portion of the land. The great sun-god, as god of generation, was symbolised in his temple and elsewhere by upright columns or pillars; the goddesses were represented by cones of wood or stone. In the Hebrew writings both the symbol and the goddesses are spoken of, and denounced, under one and the same name—the images (in the plural) being termed Ashtaroth and Asherim. In the English Authorised Version the last-named images are mistranslated "groves."

As we have seen, the Israelites, in primitive times, "dwelt among the Canaanites.....and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods." Seeing that this was the original state of affairs it is not in the least surprising that the same relations continued during the long period of the Judges and the still longer period of the kings up to the reign of Josiah. The following are a few examples during these periods of Jewish history:—

Judg. ii. 11-13.—"And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baalim.....and they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and the Ashtaroth."

Judg. viii. 33.—"The children of Israel.....went a whoring after the Baalim and made Baal-Berith their god."

1 Sam. vii. 4.—"Then the children of Israel did put away the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only."

1 Kings xiv. 23.—"For they also build them high places, and pillars, and Asherim on every high hill, and under every green tree."

2 Kings xvii. 16.—"And they made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal."

2 Kings xxi. 3.—Manasseh, king of Judah, "reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab king of Israel."

Hosea xiii. 2.—"They have made them molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of the craftsmen." (See also Judg. iii. 7; vi. 25; 1 Sam. xii. 10; 1 Kings xi. 33; 2 Kings xvii. 10, etc.).

According to the compiler of the book of Judges, the Israelites, when they served other gods, "forsook the Lord"; but since the latter god was not their original deity, this statement is somewhat inaccurate. That the great sun-god was worshipped before Yahveh is confirmed by the fact that as late as the time of Hezekiah the last-named deity was addressed as "my Baal" (Hos. ii. 16). It is also to be noted that king Saul named one of his sons Esh-baal ("man of Baal"), and that Saul's son Jonathan had a son named Merib-baal ("Baal contends"). Furthermore, the ark sacred to Yahveh, before removed by David to Jerusalem, was kept in a city called Baal of Judah (2 Sam. vi. 2). As far as can be ascertained, it would

seem that the Israelites, as well as the Canaanites, worshipped the god who was supposed to rule supreme in the locality in which they dwelt. In Canaan there were gods of the hills and gods of the plains, whose power and protection were believed not to extend beyond the limits of certain districts; hence the number of Baalim. The prophet Samuel appears to have been the first who succeeded in getting Yahveh acknowledged as god by all the Hebrew tribes. His successor Saul, however, seems to have lost, after a time, all faith in that deity; otherwise he would never have named one of his sons after Baal. In any case, the Israelites were continually returning to the worship of the older Canaanitish deities, and this it is scarcely conceivable they could have done, had they possessed from the first the three codes of laws now contained in the Pentateuch, as well as a whole tribe of priests and Levites to expound those laws and keep the people firm in their allegiance to Yahveh.

Amongst the laws and regulations which are alleged to have been given to the Israelites by Moses are the following special commands relating to images:—

Deut. xii. 3 (respecting the Canaanites).—"Ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Asherim with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods." (Also Ex. xxxiv. 13).

Deut. xvi. 21, 22.—"Thou shalt not plant thee an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord thy God.....Neither shalt thou set thee up a pillar, which the Lord thy God hateth."

Deut. v. 7-9.—"Thou shalt have none other gods beside me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."

Immediately, upon becoming acquainted with the foregoing commands, the good king Josiah, as we have already seen, ordered the destruction of all the altars, pillars, and Asherim found within his kingdom. The only question, then, which we have to consider is, Were these commands known before this king's time?

In Judges vi. we have an account of a messenger from the Lord who came to a certain man, Gideon, of the tribe of Manasseh, and promised by his instrumentality to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of the Midianites. As a preliminary, Gideon was ordered to "throw down the altar of Baal" which was upon his father's ground, and to "cut down the Asherah" that stood by it. This work that individual performed at night "because he feared his father's household and the men of the city." The latter, as soon as they learnt of the sacrilegious act, desired to put the impious author of it to death, and Gideon's life was with difficulty saved by his father. Shortly afterwards, Gideon and his countrymen fought against, and defeated, the Midianites, and returned home laden with spoils. After this victory, which was ascribed to Yahveh, the men of Israel were desirous of making Gideon king, but that hero declined the honor. He asked, however, for some of the gold ornaments taken from the enemy—enough to make an "ephod" for Yahveh. With this request they cheerfully complied. "And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah; and all Israel went a-whoring after it there; and it became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house" (Judges viii. 27).

Here it becomes necessary to discriminate between the added comments of the compiler of the book and the more ancient narrative. There cannot be the slightest doubt that neither Gideon, nor any of the Israelites of his day, had the smallest idea that in making an image in honor of Yahveh they were violating any of the commands of that deity. Neither, indeed, did "the Lord" himself; for he gave no sign of disapprobation, and he granted the nation a period of peace extending over forty years. As to the exact form of this "ephod" we are left entirely in

the dark; but I think it highly probable that it was the representation of a calf.

In Judges xvii. we have another scrap of ancient Jewish history. According to the story, a certain man of the hill country of Ephraim, named Micah, stole 1,100 pieces of silver from his mother, and after hearing the thief often cursed by that parent, summoned sufficient resolution to restore them. The pious mother then informed her son that she had dedicated a portion of the money unto Yahveh "to make a graven image and a molten image" for the better worship of that deity. Accordingly, the good woman "took two hundred pieces of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image," which Micah set up in his house. We are further told that "the man Micah had an house of gods, and he made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons who became his priest." It is scarcely necessary to ask whether this man Micah, or the very pious woman his mother, or any of the people of his city, had ever heard of the Lord's commands in "the books of Moses" respecting the making of images, or, of the same deity's regulations concerning priests. As in the last case, there cannot be the smallest doubt that these laws were then unknown.

In 1 Sam. xix. we have a chapter in the early history of David, before that personage had become king. From this we learn that the "man after God's own heart" kept a "teraphim" in his house. We are told that when king Saul, upon one occasion, sent men to David's house to arrest him, David's wife Michal "took the teraphim, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goat's hair at the head thereof, and covered it with the clothes." From this account it becomes clearly evident that David's household god—which was probably an image of "the Lord"—was nearly as large as David himself, and that such images were common among the Israelites of those times. In this case also we need scarcely ask whether the commands relating to images in Leviticus and Deuteronomy were known to this devoted follower of Yahveh.

Some half a century later we have an account of the building of a temple for Yahveh by another devoted servant of that God—king Solomon. Now, within this temple, in its inner and most secret compartment, that pious king caused to be placed two gigantic images of an animal called a cherub, each being 17 feet 6 inches in height, and having wings measuring 8 feet 9 inches in length (1 Kings vi. 23-29). The form of these two cherubim is not mentioned; but there can be little doubt of their nature. They were simply a pair of colossal winged bulls, the same as we find depicted on the ancient monuments of Assyria and Babylonia. It is again needless to ask whether Solomon was acquainted with the Lord's commands in the Pentateuch with respect to the making of images, or, for that matter, whether the Lord himself, who had seen and approved everything connected with the house built for his service, had ever heard of those commands.

Shortly after the death of Solomon Jeroboam, who had been elected king by ten of the tribes, set up two calves, one at Dan and the other at Bethel, each beside an altar dedicated to Yahveh. This king is repeatedly denounced by the compiler of the Kings as the man who "made Israel to sin"; but, as a matter of fact, he was more faithful to Yahveh than the majority of the kings of the kingdom of Judah. Moreover, had it not been the custom for ages to set images of calves or bullocks near the altars of Yahveh, public opinion and the superstition of the times would not have permitted Jeroboam to act as he is recorded to have done. The form of the cherubim in the temple at Jerusalem was well known; Jeroboam merely set up images of a similar figure, if not of precisely the same.

In the case of the altar at Dan, it would seem that that king only replaced a silver image by one of gold; for the "ephod" and "teraphim" made by Micah had been carried away by a band of Danites

and set up in their new city, Dan, where they remained until the time of Jeroboam. It is very unlikely, then, that the act of this king which the later editors so often denounce was in any sense an innovation, or that the commands relating to images in the "books of Moses" were known to him or to the people of his day.

Coming, next, to within two or three generations of the reign of Josiah, we find from the prophets Hosea, Amos, and Micah that all kinds of images—pillars, Asherim, ephods, and teraphim—were regular institutions in the land. These prophets have nothing to say against such images; on the contrary, they appear to regard them as legitimate objects in the worship of Yahveh. All three are concerned only with the gross immorality of the times—lying, oppression, deceit, bribery, theft, adultery, and murder—and, not knowing anything of the laws in the Pentateuch, they exalt works of mercy, justice, and humanity above sacrifice and offerings. To punish the nation for all the evil practices denounced by these prophets the Lord decided to sweep away all the ancient institutions of the land, including images.

Micah v. 12-14.—"I will cut off the witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers; and I will cut off thy graven images and thy pillars out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hand. And I will pluck up thine Asherim out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy cities."

Hosea iii. 4.—"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim."

These were terrible punishments. Deprived of their cherished images and of all that they held dear, the Israelites of those times would find life not worth living. They might say with the man Micah, when robbed by the Danites, "Ye have taken away my gods.....and what have I more?" The Lord had nothing to say against the use of images in his worship; they were objects with which he did not concern himself. What he required was good moral conduct. "Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgments roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos v. 21-24). He also says: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." These statements prove that the Lord was at this time unacquainted with the Mosaic ritual.

After the Exile—that is to say in the Priestly Code—the Lord *did* desire sacrifice, and was most particular that each kind should be offered exactly as prescribed.

ABRACADABRA.

Boston's Prize Preacher.

In a good-sized and somewhat cosmopolitan city like Boston, one finds nearly every grade and shade of religious belief and unbelief, from the man who enthusiastically believes in no-God and loudly worships him, to the Trinitarian who has three and the Pagan who may own up to three hundred.

And they all have to be ministered to, just as much, and almost as surely, as do the fish, flesh, and cereal tastes of these modern Athenians, and our Puritan Rip Van Winkles, those who have been theologically dormant and religiously blind since a century or so before their birth, now notably congregate in what was once commonly known as Brimstone Corner, but what is now generally designated as Park Street Church, and whose so-called sacred performances are far more amusing than those usually occurring at our theatre of that name. These performances are presided over by an intellectually antiquated survival, whose only apparent touch with modern life is when he touches his salary.

Now it is one of the richest possible of treats to hear this apparent antediluvian officially unfold himself, and would be one of the most unalloyed of all Boston's pleasures if only the listener could give vent to his feelings as at the circus' clown or the theatre's comedian. For this is the man who, without turning a hair, smiling a smile, or winking a wink, enthusiastically told the sober-faced dummies who drowse in his pews that if there had only been prayer enough President McKinley would not have died. He is the profound and

eminent sociological light and leader who, the other day, threw this luminous fire-cracker into the dozy assembly which furnishes his economic pabulum: "The wickedest thing mankind can do is to refuse to believe in Christ." Now Stuart Robson in his palmiest days, and Billy Crane in his brightest, never equalled that. And, only think of it! our Park Street brother is doing this kind of stunt for probably less than \$6,000 a year. Where is Phineas Taylor B.?

Last Sunday he did another, and it came about in this way. We have been long on drought and short on rain here for about seven weeks now, while the good and ever-watchful Lord has been super-flooding Kansas, overflowing the Mississippi, and deluging unto death and destruction elsewhere. More than that, we are just entering on our "silly season," so one of Boston's enterprising newspapers sent round an attache last week to ask our clergy why in h— they did not pray for rain, seeing that we so much needed it. Now, most of them dodged, or said they had not thought about it. Not so John of Brimstone Corner, who last Sunday did one of the finest stunts in reply. For this brother is not troubled with any lack of confidence, even in himself. He is not in the least backward about coming forward, even when coming forward means giving either private or public hints to the Eternal as to what he, the Eternal, had better do. He at once, and apparently without hesitation—thought he seems incapable of—without hesitation, I say, he advised the praying for rain. Nay, more; he positively said that if we would do our part in this sorry business God would certainly do his. That is, of course, if we would pray and repent, God would repent and rain. It may be possible for imbecility or insincerity to cap this, but it really would be difficult. The pulpit has long been the paradise of fools, but it is not every day that they thus loudly jangle their bells.

—Boston Investigator.

J. P. B.

Correspondence.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM A CHINAMAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is very gratifying to me, indeed, to learn that the letters which I wrote to the *Freethinker* have been published in pamphlet form. These letters were written more with a view of obtaining information which might be useful to himself and my country rather than to instruct and amuse the English people. However, it appears that they are sufficiently amusing to appear in pamphlet form.

Like a good many other Chinese scholars, I am engaged at the present moment in the study of English publications with a view to make myself familiar with the trend of scientific thought, not only in England, but on the Continent of Europe and in the United States of America. But, of course, it cannot be expected that I should be as familiar with your literature as you are yourselves. I often feel that I am not properly qualified to judge of the true value of scientific and philosophical works, although I understand and write the English language fairly well. It has therefore been necessary from time to time for me to seek advice from your leading scientific men as to what works published in England are most suitable for translations into the Chinese language, what works would be most valuable to our people.

I would say that my investigations since I have been in England have extended beyond the realm of the pure concrete sciences. I have gone rather deeply into the abstract sciences, and also into religious questions. It occurred to me that there might be errors in a good many of the works published in England, and that if I should get the advice of some thoroughly competent and up-to-date scientist that he might assist me in eliminating such parts of publications as might be of questionable merit or doubtful as regards fact. This was advisable, because, in the very nature of things, the translations which I am making will have to be very much abridged. I therefore wished to know what might be left out with the least damage to the work. The report on this subject by my impartial scientific adviser may be of interest to your readers. He told me that I could rely upon it that all of the scientific works were quite reliable. He told me that if we Chinese wish to make a Geography of our own as good as one can purchase in England for 2s. 6d. that it would cost us more than a hundred millions of pounds sterling to make the necessary surveys and measurements; that in making geographies there were no exaggerations—each country was shown in its true position and its proper size. The possessions of England had not been magnified or the size of China reduced in the least, as some Chinese people had been led to believe. Then, again, we could rely upon it that all of the English and American technical works were absolutely correct, and could be implicitly relied upon.

Upon giving him some religious books, and asking him to go over them and eliminate such parts as were not strictly true, he reported:—

"Upon an examination of the theological works which you left for my perusal and revisal, I would say that if you wish to have all the passages which are not strictly true marked out in black after the manner of treating English newspapers in Russia, that I would recommend that you put the whole lot into a large pot of the blackest kind of ink and boil them for twenty-four hours. You can rely upon it that all our scientific works are strictly and absolutely true in every particular, and that all our religious books, so far as they relate to miracles, supernatural agencies, and improbable historical events, are absolute falsehoods."

I was not altogether satisfied with this reply. I thought there might be some mistake. But upon consulting a considerable number of learned and scientific men, I found all practically agreed that all scientific books are true, and all religious books are false. Now, this being the case with everyone whose opinion is worth anything, why is it that your missionary societies still persist in wasting money and causing an infinite amount of suffering and bloodshed in a fruitless attempt to force your religion upon the Chinese people? It is admitted even in England to be false in every particular—not a word of truth in it. Therefore once more I implore you to save your money and keep your missionaries at home.

Every learned man living in China knows that the existence of devils is impossible. There never was and never will be a Devil in the whole world, consequently we have absolutely no use for professional Devil Dodgers.

We implore you to recall them,

AH SIN.

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Amongst this morning's batch of letters I received quite a heap of beautiful literature; and, with your kind permission, I should like to briefly acquaint your readers of the more precise nature of my good fortune.

First, there was the "Word of Life"—not the old original, be it known, but a periodical having that plagiarised title. From this I gather that the Gospel is making immense progress. On race-courses, and places where they bet, thousands of little booklets has been distributed. The glad news is reaching Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Brazil, and even St. Vincent—where Providence was so busy a little over a year ago. One of the missionaries describes his peregrinations as a holiday tour. He must be careful, simple soul, for it is a wicked world, and there are unscrupulous folk who will say directly that all missionary enterprises are holiday tours.

Two pages of the "Word" are taken up with statements of the Mission's finances, banked, presumably, in heaven, though the name of that place does not appear.

The sender of this pretty stuff does not give his name (no wonder!), but has scribbled a few remarks at the foot of the contribution list.

Finer drivel—as drivel—I never read. I cannot understand much of it, of course—it's so spiritual—but from what I can make out, the writer is anxious that I should allow the whole world to be filled with my glory. I should so like to oblige, but I really feel too modest, and besides, I fear the glory wouldn't hold out.

Another sentence has something to say about the "children of the wicked one." What is required I cannot quite determine, but if it is money, I must gently but firmly decline. Of course, it is very hard for the "children of the wicked one," and they have my sympathy; but one must be just before one is generous, and charity begins at home. It was really most invidious of the "wicked one" to have children before he could maintain them; don't you think so?

I was turning the leaves of the "Word" when a fragment of faded pink paper fell out, on which was written some dreadful language about the "Devil," and about some absurd people who will persist in dying and returning to their dust. "What is all this?" thought I, and then, turning the paper, the mystery became clear, for there was printed, in letters a quarter of an inch long, "Claret" and "Port."

In the bundle was a booklet, entitled *God at Work*—"God," in this case, meaning the missionaries. In the course of this treatise the reader is recommended to study a weighty work on *How to Pray*, by Torrey, price 1s. 6d. How small a sum for instruction in so tremendous an accomplishment!

Another little volume tells us all about Susan Manners and her naughty, drinking husband. She didn't think much at first about God and the parsons, contributions to missions, and other sacred things: but one day Providence sent a friendly cab, which ran over her, killed her child, and left herself a cripple. Providence had no more trouble with her after that. Its "loving correction" did the trick.

I have written thus far banteringly, but withal bitterly; for, seriously, the sight of men calling themselves reasonable

beings flooding the land with pernicious rubbish of this sort well-nigh makes one despair. All honor to you, Sir, and the many noble men like you, who are battling with these deadly battalions of organised folly and ignorance. J. B. W.

Correspondence.

MUNICIPAL HOSPITALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was greatly interested in your article on the Hospitals, and agree with much of your criticism of the High Priest attitude of the Medical Profession. At the same time, I doubt the wisdom of at present municipalising the hospitals. This will perhaps seem extraordinary when I say that I am a Socialist, although my conversion to that creed is only recent. Firstly, it seems to me that while the bulk of the wealth of the country is in individual hands, while land is a private monopoly and the instruments of production are owned by the capitalist class, the municipality should not be called upon to supply hospital aid out of the rates. Assuming that the hospitals are mainly supported by the weakly, would it not be just as well to let them continue so to support them, till such times as land and capital become socialised either by the municipalities or the State? My second point is, that until the municipal governing bodies cease to be run mainly in the interests of the upper classes, the present abuses of our hospital system would most likely be perpetuated under municipal control. I will make my point clear by an illustration. There has recently been a railway strike for better conditions of labor in one of our Australian colonies. The railway was owned by the colony—was, in fact, a State railway. But, although the railway was thus socialised, it was really in the interests of the upper crust. Consequently a special law was pushed through the Colonial Assembly, making the act of striking a criminal offence. The strike was thus crushed, and the workers on the railway were in a worse and more helpless case than they would have been in a similar case in England.

Then as regards medical tyranny, should we not be running a worse danger in municipalising the hospitals, while governing power is practically in the hands of the upper classes? State interference in medicine we know by the vaccination laws to have resulted in medical tyranny. Would not the municipalisation of the hospitals result in an extension of that and similar tyrannies? Already it is almost a crime for a man or woman to practice the art of healing unless certified by the Allopath School (State sanctioned). Would not the disabilities of medical heterodoxy become greater under the suggested alteration? One objection to my argument may be urged. It is that if the municipal powers are in the hands of the rich, it is the fault of the workers for not electing workers to represent them. That is perfectly true, but till they do seize the powers that are theirs, is it wise to put greater powers in the hands of the rich at the public expense, by giving to the wealthy members of municipal bodies control of the hospitals?

FREDERICK ROCKELL.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of Monthly Executive Meeting held at the Society's Office on Thursday, July 2. The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, T. How, W. Leat, J. Neate, Dr. R. T. Nichols, E. Parker, C. Quinton, S. Samuels, and E. M. Vance (secretary).

This being the first meeting after the Annual Conference, the following officers were elected for the year: General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance; Monthly Auditors, Messrs. W. Leat and S. Samuels; Benevolent Fund Committee, Messrs. E. Bater, E. W. Quay, W. Leat, V. Roger, S. Samuels.

The Secretary placed the communications she had received from the several Railway Companies, re the Annual Excursion, before the meeting, and, after some consideration, it was resolved that the excursion be to Southend-on-Sea on Sunday, August 30, the price of the ticket to be 2s. 6d. for the return fare.

A letter was received from a member of the Society suggesting that arrangements should be made for an excursion party to Rome, at special fares, for those intending to be present at the International Freethought Congress to be held in 1904. A Committee was appointed to further inquire in the matter, and report.

The meeting then closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.
OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15 C. Cohen, "Christianity and Evolution"; 6.15, C. Cohen, "Christianity and the Jews."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, R. P. Edwards; Brockwell Park: 3, Debate, Mr. Brunner v. E. B. Rose: "Atheism or Christianity: which is of greatest benefit to mankind."

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, J. Toope, a Lecture.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, G. Parsons, "Christianity versus Common Sense."

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, W. Ramsey.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies; Hammersmith Broadway, 7.30, F. A. Davies. Thursday, July 23, 8.30, Annual Meeting, "The Grapes," Gerrard-street, Soho.

COUNTRY.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Quarterly Meeting; 7, Musical and other Recitals, etc.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Business meeting; Lecture and Picnic.

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