

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

God himself is nothing more than the principal mover, the occult power diffused through everything that has being, the sum of its laws and its properties, the animating principle, in a word, the soul of the universe.
—VOLNEY.

The Novelist's Handbook

WE have been favored with a copy of *Mona's Herald* containing a report of some remarks by Mr. Hall Caine on the Bible. The occasion was a lecture by the Rev. Frank Ballard on the Revised Version of that work. About a thousand people crowded into the Victoria-street Wesleyan Chapel, Douglas, partly to hear the lecture, but more perhaps to see and hear the successful novelist, whose play "The Eternal City" was running that week at the Grand Theatre. *Mona's Herald*, at any rate, gave the best part of two columns to Mr. Hall Caine's speech as chairman, and only a few lines to the Rev. Frank Ballard as lecturer.

Mr. Caine, who introduced Mr. Ballard, was himself introduced by the Rev. W. H. Heap, who thought his presence promised well for the success of the much-needed collection. Incidentally, he observed that Mr. Caine's name was "a household word," but he failed to state whether he meant in the Isle of Man or in the adjacent islands of Great Britain and Ireland. Finally, he asked the congregation—we mean the audience—to give Mr. Caine a hearty welcome on taking the chair, and there seems to have been a very liberal response to this invitation, which was doubtless thrown out with at least one eye to the prosperity of the collection-boxes in their circumnavigation of charity.

The opening sentences of the novelist whose name is a household word (somewhere) may be described as extremely judicious. Mr. Caine showed that he possessed one art of successful oratory: he knew how to flatter his audience, and started off by putting them in a good temper with themselves, and therefore with him. He said it was his first appearance on a Free Church platform, but apparently it was better late than never, and there was a subtle compliment in his cultivating the friendship of Nonconformists when he stood at the full maturity of his genius. Moreover, as a matter of fact, he owed much to Nonconformity. He remembered the Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown, of Liverpool, who influenced his early manhood; he owed still more to his friendship with "that veritable torpedo of Nonconformity," the Rev. Dr. Parker; and he was "proud and happy in the acquaintance of one who was the life-blood of advanced Methodism," the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. All this was excellent. It established the best of relations between the speaker and his auditors. And this happy state of things was perfectly secured when Mr. Caine stated his clear and firm conviction that "Nonconformity is the backbone of Great Britain at this hour." Every single Free Churchman present on that auspicious and memorable occasion must have felt himself (or herself) a bit of the vertebral column—yea, and a bit of the spinal marrow—of the mighty centre of the most colossal Empire the world has ever seen, etc., etc.

Mr. Caine should have stopped there. Nothing was possible after that but an anti-climax—for not even Mr. Caine could pretend that Nonconformity is the brains of Great Britain. Very foolishly he went on to refer to the struggle over the Education Act, which he said ought not to be obeyed "because it was framed in defiance of the consciences of a part of the people." The majority, he declared, had a right to control the minority in affairs of material policy and interest, but their right "stopped with the affairs of conscience." Now this would be very noble and affecting if Mr. Caine really meant it. But he does not mean it, and the Nonconformists do not mean it. If they meant it they would never have connived at the old Education Act, which did the very same wrong to the conscience of all Non-Christians that the new Education Act is supposed to do to the conscience of all Nonconformists. Mr. Caine was really not applying a great principle to a special interest; he was simply attempting a rhetorical transformation of a special interest into a great principle.

Before coming to the subject of the Bible this new-found friend of Nonconformity proceeded to eulogise the great John Wesley. Well, we admit that John Wesley was a great man: not a great *thinker*, observe, but a great *man*. But we have this to add—that if John Wesley was a Christian it is certain that Mr. Hall Caine is not. John Wesley accepted the teaching of Jesus Christ. He did not interpret away unpalatable maxims as allegorical. He was honest enough to say that, unless a text was obviously metaphorical, it should be taken to mean exactly what it says. He therefore followed the teaching of Jesus with regard to riches and poverty. All he possessed beyond the cost of plain meat and drink, and plain clothes and shelter, for himself and those dependent upon him, he "gave to the Lord" by giving it to his poor fellow Christians; nor would he, we believe, have excluded Turks, Jews, and Infidels from his benevolence. At any rate, he did what Jesus Christ ordered his followers to do; and when Mr. Caine acts in the same way we shall consider him a Christian too. In the meanwhile we are bound to say that we feel nothing but contempt for his posturing. He makes thousands of pounds by the hypocritical exploitation of the gospel of poverty and renunciation; and the fact that he gains the applause of the professed disciples of Jesus Christ only proves that modern Christianity is an organised hypocrisy.

When at length Mr. Caine came to deal with the Bible he had little to say worth listening to. He started by stating his ignorance of the "relative merits of the old and new Versions of the Bible" except so far as he saw "that the old Version had the grand style—the style of the great English writers of centuries ago, of Sir Thomas Browne and others." Such is literary criticism in the twentieth century in the hands of a "distinguished" writer whose name is a "household word"! It is absolutely stupid. The style of the Bible is utterly different from the style of Sir Thomas Browne. Not to waste time, indeed, it is as well to say at once that the style of the Bible has no sort of resemblance to that of any masterpiece of English literature except the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was founded upon it consciously and deliberately. It is nonsense for Mr. Caine to "recognise in the Bible the origin of the noblest part

of our common speech." Setting aside Bunyan's masterpiece, it is safe to say that the language of the Bible corresponds to nothing that was ever written or spoken in England. It is no more like the English of Wicklif than it is like the English of Jeremy Taylor, and no more like the English of Milton than it is like (to compare great things with small) the English of say the Bishop of London or the Rev. John Clifford. The English of the Bible is a special dialect built up by the translators and devoted exclusively to that purpose. Mr. Caine appears not to know this; and, until he does know it, he is ignorant of the most elementary principle of the subject upon which he ventured to speak at that Douglas meeting.

Speaking of the Bible "as it appears to the novelist," and therefore with *some* measure of authority, Mr. Caine paid it a very high compliment. "It contains all the great stories," he said, and they are all greatly told." "I have found it," he added "an unfailing source of inspiration to me as an imaginative writer." To which the audience might have responded with "Good Lord deliver us."

We agree with Mr. Caine, whether in the same sense or not, that the Bible does tell great stories and tell them greatly. It never minces matters. It was written by men of robust faith for readers of still more robust faith. Adam, for instance, did not give names to his cat and dog, but to all the animals in the Eden menagerie. He dictated the contents of a zoological dictionary on the spot. The Deluge was not a paltry local affair, but all the highest hills under heaven were covered. Three millions of people—men, women, and children, old and young, active and bedridden—tramped out of Egypt in one night. These three millions of people, settled down in Palestine, sent out armies of six hundred thousand men to battle. King David, who was much on a level with the late King Cetewayo, saved up more gold and silver to decorate a single temple than exists in the whole of the rich United Kingdom. At the crucifixion of Jesus Christ there was darkness over all the land for the space of three hours. That was the stroke of a good novelist, but it was bettered by another New Testament novelist who spread the darkness over all the earth. The adventures of the great Jerusalem Ghost are decidedly vivid and entertaining. It appears to a woman here and a man there, and finally to eleven men at once. But a greater novelist came along, who is said to have borne the name of Paul, and he took his pen and dashed in three hundred and eighty nine more. That was really splendid. Yes, Mr. Caine is right. The Bible does tell great stories, and tell them greatly. We cannot withhold our own admiration from such a magnificent achievement. We admit the right of the Bible to be called the novelist's handbook. And after reading some of Mr. Caine's most famous and triumphant efforts we can quite understand its being the source of his own inspiration.

Mr. Caine was not amusing, but distinctly dull, when he went on to laud the Bible as "the greatest of all forces in the progress of humanity." What he had to say about its liberating the slave and enfranchising the people was merely the echo of tedious pulpit platitudes; while his prophecy that it will "some day destroy war and establish the universal brotherhood of man" may be answered by the statement that it has not made a beginning yet after nearly two thousand years' opportunity. Of course the Bible may be "a guide to the world to come," as Mr. Caine alleges; but we should have more confidence in his opinion if he died to make sure of it. As the matter now stands, there are *so many* guides to the life to come that life is not long enough to decide their merits. The only unquestionably wise sentence in Mr. Caine's entire address is the statement that "we"—meaning the Christians—"are surrounded by the waters of materialism and unbelief." Yes, and "we" stand a very bad chance of drowning. And "we" must think so when "we" put up a novelist to play the part of Mrs. Partington.

G. W. FOOTE.

Where's Yer 'Orsepitals?

TWO or three weeks ago I devoted an article to a good-humored criticism of Mr. John Lobb's weekly performance in the *Sun* newspaper. I did not, perhaps, treat the subject as seriously as I might have done had my sense of humor been less keen than it is; but the air of profundity with which Mr. Lobb turned off his very jejune reflections was too much for my gravity—and I wrote. Unfortunately, Mr. Lobb seemed to think that he had not received the treatment due to a philosopher, and, from what I can gather, was annoyed thereat. Any way, his friends announced that he would be in Victoria Park to question me when I made my next appearance, and in the columns of the *Sun* Mr. Lobb also announced his intention of being present.

I went to the Park, therefore, with a certain amount of apprehension. I did not know Mr. Lobb personally from Adam, and in other directions my knowledge concerning his abilities and performances was anything but precise. True to his promise, Mr. Lobb came; but, instead of questioning me, as his friends declared was his intention, and instead of being present at *my* meeting, as he had promised the *Sun* readers, he marched straight over to the Christian Evidence platform, from whence he harangued the audience on the shortcomings of Secularism generally, and myself in particular. Perhaps I ought to be thankful that Mr. Lobb let me off in this merciful manner; but, all the same, I feel that it would have been on the whole more satisfactory had he availed himself of his opportunity, and discoursed on the iniquities of Secularism *from the Secular platform*. Of course, I should have had the right of reply, and it is just possible that this may have influenced Mr. Lobb and his advisers.

From a recent issue of the *Sun* I see that Mr. Lobb is of opinion that I ought to have come to the Christian Evidence platform, and there answered all the questions he cared to put to me. But it was Mr. Lobb who announced, through his friends and through the paper, that he would be there, and at *my* meeting. I did not make any appointment, and was certainly not called upon to keep one made by someone else. Mr. Lobb said: "Mr. C. Cohen is announced to give an address.....I hope to be present on that occasion." And he was present, but at a safe distance; and now complains that I did not run after him! Really Mr. Lobb's methods are as peculiar as his reasoning, and how curious that is readers of my article will already have noted.

Here, however, is a specimen. Mr. Lobb says I am "troubled" about his paragraph on the influence of Jesus. I was not at all troubled—only amused. What I asked was this: Our paragraphic philosopher had asserted that the all-quickenning influence of Jesus would remain though civilisation perished and the Dark Ages came upon us; and I asked what was the value of this influence if civilisation did perish; or if this influence was worth anything, how could civilisation perish? This seems a very simple question; and Mr. Lobb's reply is to yell out the hoary query, "Where's yer 'orsepitals?" and repeat three verses of one of Dr. Watts's hymns. As Mr. Lobb thinks the reiteration of a nonsensical paragraph constitutes a reply, one's wonder at his other remarks diminishes considerably.

One thing is worth noting. Since my article in the *Freethinker* of August 16, Mr. Lobb's sermonettes in the *Sun* have been conspicuous by their absence.

But although Mr. Lobb kept himself at a safe distance, instead of being present, as promised, he was not quite out of hearing. And, beside the very frequent use of my name, I caught several challenges to give the name of the charitable institutions ("institootions," he called them) that were founded and maintained by Secularists. Desirous, apparently, of not overstraining the intellect of his audience, and perhaps also his own, this was repeated over and over again, very much to everybody's delight and amusement, until at the end Mr. Lobb stood a perfect

statue of philanthropy—at somebody else's expense. So delighted is Mr. Lobb with this very original dialectic that he has repeated it twice in the columns of the *Sun*, in addition to airing it in Victoria Park.

Now, to treat Mr. Lobb seriously for a moment—a rather difficult matter, I admit—will he or anybody else explain how the questions at issue between the Freethinker and the Christian are to be decided by pointing to charitable “institootions.” The Atheist disbelieves in a God and a future life. Mr. Lobb proves both by building a lunatic asylum. The Freethinker does not believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he worked miracles, or that he rose from the dead. Mr. Lobb says: I will prove all these things to be true by building a hospital, an orphan asylum, or a home for idiots. In the name of all that is reasonable, how can the one thing prove the other? Mr. Lobb might reply that this shows how Christians are influenced by their beliefs. Well, no one denies that Christians are influenced by their beliefs—not all in one direction, though; but this only shows that they believe religious doctrines to be true. It does not prove they are true; and this is the essential point in dispute.

Besides, if Mr. Lobb were a different kind of individual, he might be able to appreciate a very complete reply that is open to every Freethinker. And this is that *all* genuinely charitable institutions and helpful work is due to Secularism and not to Christianity. For Mr. Lobb's benefit I will put this as simply as I can. The position of the Secularist is that all virtues, and all vices, too, for that matter, are simply and entirely human in origin and application. Religious people have, of course, their share of both just as in common with non-religious mortals they share the atmosphere and walk on two legs. In this way morality becomes associated with religion, and religious people of an unreflective type, because of the association, mistake the two as inseparable. Consequently, the Secularist claims that all moral qualities are the common possession of the race, and that one may as reasonably talk of gravitation or chemical affinity as being the result of Christianity as speak of benevolence or helpfulness as due to a belief in “the Christ of the Cross.”

Mr. Lobb calls hospitals, etc., “Christian institutions.” They are nothing of the kind. What would a genuine Christian hospital be like? It would be a place where they physicked with faith and poulticed with prayer. It would be a place where the “Peculiar People” elders would form the medical staff. At present *other Christians* send them to prison being silly enough to practice what they all profess to believe. And what would a Christian lunatic asylum be like? There is only one method of curing insanity countenanced by “the Christ of Cross,” and that is the casting out of devils. If we ran our lunatic asylums on truly Christian grounds we should discharge the staff and engage a number of professional exorcists, something of the nature of the early Christians who went from city to city challenging the pagan priests to devil-throwing contests. And what right has a Christian to found orphan asylums? These are all so many expressions of distrust in the providence of God. The man who genuinely believes in Providence would not go about suggesting distrust by setting things right on his own account. The fact that Christians are, and always have been, so far rationalised as to take some steps for social improvement and mutual helpfulness independent of Providence is a proof that even religious beliefs have to bow before the common exigencies of ordinary life.

Is it simply thoughtlessness, or is it impudence that leads Mr. Lobb to speak of the hospitals, etc., of the country as being founded and maintained by Christians? Appeals for money to maintain these institutions are made to the public at large, not to Christians alone, and the public respond irrespective of creed. Surely not even Mr. Lobb would be absurd enough to say that Secularists, Positivists, Agnostics, and Jews, do not give their quota for the maintenance

of the country's institutions. Everyone knows the facts of the case. And yet when money has been asked from all classes and taken from all classes, with characteristic Christian dishonesty Mr. Lobb calls them *Christian* institutions.

Of course there are charities attached to churches and chapels. Quite so, but for what purpose? There are doubtless a large number of the subscribers who give with the best of motives, but if Mr. Lobb will take the trouble to read Mr. Charles Booth he will discover what a great many already knew, that in the main these charities are to church and chapel what the present is to the pound of tea with which it is given away. The churches and chapels are scrambling for customers as eagerly as a struggling commercial traveller hunts up orders. The charities are there principally as a means of getting people to come to church. They are the bait with which the parson fishes for souls. And, when they are not attached to churches, they are often enough promoted for the sake of the living which their promoters get out of the concern. Let Mr. Lobb set to work and trace the history of many of these philanthropic religious missions, find out the income of their managers before and after these societies were started, and he will discover that there are few trades in England that pay so well as successful religious philanthropy.

But the Secular Society does not found charitable institutions for three reasons. First, because it does not believe in sectarianism in morals any more than in religion. The Christian who is a sectarian before everything finds it necessary to label everything he can with his sectarian ticket. The Secularist who is not trying to found a sect is content to take his part as one of the public in any good work he feels interested in. And, while no Secularist is deterred giving to a hospital because Christians are silly enough to put their label on it, I venture to think that not one Christian out of a hundred would give to any institution that bore the brand of Secularism.

Secondly, there is a far better work than building homes for the destitute. And this is, to abolish the destitute altogether. Had Christianity worked at this second task, the first would now be unnecessary. Not all the charitable efforts of the whole Christian world has ever done as much to really destroy poverty and distress as the labors of a single man like Robert Owen, who believed that all the religions of the world were only so many forms of geographical insanity. And one feels, in addition, that the charity of Christian employers, who fight with all their strength against the smallest increase of wages, is, after all, dictated more by the desire to keep people *quiet* than by any really benevolent feeling.

And, finally, what on earth has the National Secular Society to do with building charitable institutions? This is not part of its work. It was not formed for this purpose, nor does it continue to exist for this object. One might as reasonably ask the Liberal Party, or the Conservative Party, or the London Trades' Council, how many hospitals or lunatic asylums, or homes for dogs, have they built. The National Secular Society was founded, and has been carried on, for purely propagandist purposes. And, consequently, the only real test—the only honest test—to apply is that of whether its propaganda has been successful or not. And if Mr. Lobb, instead of chronicling the small beer of church gossip, takes a “look round the churches” from this point of view, I fancy he will discover that few, if any, societies in English history so limited in funds, social influence, and numbers, have ever been so successful in its work. The form of theology against which it began its fight is now practically extinct. And not only have thousands been brought over from Christianity, but even those within the churches do not escape its influence. It is this work that forms the occupation of the N. S. S., not distributing charity. Our object is to awaken human nature to a sense of its own possibilities, and, in so doing, destroy religious, social, and philanthropic charlatanism at one blow.

C. COHEN.

From Christian Pulpit to Secular Platform.

BY RICHARD TREVOR.

X.—THE EMANCIPATION OF THE INTELLECT.

EVERYBODY knows that play-acting is a species of hypocrisy, this Greek word being the term originally employed to describe the theatrical profession; and it would be equally a truism to say that play-acting, however acceptable and successful on the stage, always destroys the legitimate power of the pulpit. Above everything else the preacher needs sincerity. At all costs he must say what he means, and, to the deepest roots of his being, mean what he says. If he speaks hesitatingly, falteringly, apologetically, or with numerous reservations, explanations, and comments, he thereby robs himself of more than half his natural power, and completely cripples the influence of his ministry. He occupies a lower platform than Samson did when he made sport for the people. Besides, although the intellect may not be the strongest and noblest of our mental faculties, it is anything but safe and wise to permanently ignore and snub it. Sooner or later the day of its revenge will come, which to the play-acting preacher will be a dreadful day of swift judgment. In my case the terrible day arrived much later than it would have done had I been of a cooler, calmer, and more reflective temperament.

Let me now set down in order some of the causes that led up to my emancipation, or indicate a few of the stages in my journey from Supernaturalism to Secularism. They are these:—

1. Loss of faith in the infallibility and Divine authority of the Bible.
2. The consequent relegation of Religion to the sphere of faith, feeling, and individual experience.
3. Realisation of the forced nature of all devotional exercises, in the cultivation of which the Closet and the Church are but forcing-pits.

1. In connection with the passing of the Bible it is a highly significant fact that the most effective agents in the process have been professional theologians, trained exegetes, accredited representatives of the Church. The Bible has been mortally wounded in the house of its nominal friends. The Faith has been stabbed to the heart by its own official champions. Prominent among these, at the present time, are Canons Driver and Cheyne, of the Established Church of England, and Professor George Adam Smith, of the United Free Church of Scotland. I utterly fail to see how any honest, unbiassed person can carefully study and understand Canon Driver's famous *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, and his lucid *Commentaries* on several Old Testament Books; Canon Cheyne's *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah*, together with his numerous *Commentaries*, critical articles in theological and expository magazines, and the great and scholastic *Encyclopædia Biblica*, of which he is chief editor; and, in particular, Professor George Adam Smith's startling book entitled *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, without being unavoidably driven to the conclusion that the Bible is not, in any superior or special sense, the Word of God, and must be subjected to the same canons of criticism as all other books. At any rate, that was the inevitable effect the study of such works had upon me.

2. But how can Supernaturalism stand without the support of a specially inspired and infallible Book? There are still a few simple-minded and honest-hearted people who, in spite of all the discoveries of modern criticism, dogmatically maintain that, if the Bible is fallible and bristles with blunders, there can be no escape from the hateful inference that Christianity is overthrown. Such people are the only consistent Christians extant. But the bulk of present day apologists refer for authority, not to the Bible, but to the experience of living believers. They eloquently exclaim: "Religion does not live in a

book, but in the hearts and lives of its devotees. As plants and flowers are grandly independent of the very best Botanical text-books, so is Christianity of the Bible." The first great divine that formulated this argument in England was the late Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, in a book of immense interest, entitled *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*. He firmly believed in the authenticity and inspiration of these documents; but his argument was that as Christianity came into healthy and vigorous existence before a single line of the Four Gospels was written, so it could likewise survive their utter destruction. According to this argument, in its latest development, the Christian Religion, in its present sublimated and etherealised form, is not vitally associated with the miraculous birth, benevolent life, peerless teaching, redemptive work, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection of a historical Christ, but roots itself, rather, in the personal experience of every genuine Christian, and refers to the same source for its supreme and final evidence. Consequently, Christ is not so much a historical *person* as a spiritual *force* in the souls of believers;—that is to say, he is an unseen and omnipotent Being, who in some mystic, inexplicable sense really dwells, as a seed or germ, in every human soul; in that of the Mohammedan, the Confucian, or the Buddhist no less than in that of the professing believer in Christendom. Now, if this universally indwelling spiritual Christ gets fair play, whether the gospel be heard and accepted or not, he will certainly grow and develop into the ideal stature. In those who make a spontaneous surrender to him, he soon comes to conscious life; and they worship him with glowing devotion. They enjoy full communion with him, *as if* he still actually existed somewhere, or *as if* he were a person with a unique history lying behind him. And yet, in spite of all this, they coolly assure us that "Christianity is not a system of intellectual truths, but a practical and vital experience of the heart," and that "Christ is not a fiction of the theologians, not a prophet of Galilee, but an indwelling power whereby we are evolved upward to the perfect spiritual stature of man." Quite recently, I heard the Rev. R. J. Campbell at the City Temple when he affirmed, with his own peculiarly quiet and infectious fervor, that this spiritual Christ is now germinally present in the lowest and worst character on earth. To those who venture to cast suspicion on such an assertion, these modern apologists say:—"You are blind, and there are whole regions of spiritual apprehension of which you know nothing. *Intellectually* you may, perhaps, be our equals or superiors; but *spiritually* we are immeasurably above you, and possess a faculty which enables and entitles us to judge you, although you cannot judge us. We have allowed the indwelling spiritual Christ to have his way with us to such an extent that we already know all things." They affect a sublime indifference to all historical, critical, and theological problems, saying: "You may smash up the historical and intellectual setting to smithereens; but when you have done that, you have not yet touched real Christianity." What, then, in the name of all the wonders, is real Christianity? Is it only the creation of the sanctified imagination of a few duly ordained clergymen? And is the same thing true of Christ himself? The late Professor Bruce, who wielded such an enormous influence in his day, regarded the *historicity* of the Four Gospels as absolutely essential. All the Epistles might utterly disappear, without our suffering any radical loss, for at best they were but human interpretations and commentaries; but the moment we abandoned the Gospels, Christianity would be entirely undermined. And is it not true that Professor Bruce was literally and profoundly right? If it is or can be proved that Christ never lived at all, or never lived as reported in the documents, does not his spiritual existence in the souls of believers become an empty dream? Surely a non-historic Jesus cannot be in any sense a real person, nor can a religion founded on an imaginary being possess any objective reality, whatever the experience of its devotees may say. The moment we give up our faith in the

inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the moment we admit that miracles do not happen, and have not happened, that same moment we strip Christianity of all its distinctive features as a Revealed Religion, and bring it down to the level of all the great ethnic religions. With this discovery came my emancipation from all superstitious slavery, and the full redemption of my soul. A necessity was laid upon me to renounce the Supernatural, and to find all I needed within the limits of the natural. I substituted conscience for God, reason for faith, common sense for prayer; and for the first time in my life I found mental rest and joy.

8. But there was a third element that contributed to my deliverance, namely, the conviction that all religious exercises are *artificially forced*. Let us take prayer as an example. As a child, I was systematically taught to regard praying as an imperative duty, which everyone should piously endeavor to discharge. I was also continually reminded of the sorrowful fact that, ever since the Fall in Eden, mankind had been sinfully disinclined to bend their knees before the God of heaven. Hence, even to those who were born again through faith in Christ, prayer did not come naturally. There was an old man within them still who violently rebelled against it; so that, in order to become proficient and find enjoyment in it, a necessity was laid upon them to crucify the indwelling villain, and extend to his rightful successor, created within them by the Holy Ghost, a firmer and more welcome lodgment. But, in spite of all my desperate efforts to bring about the death and ejection of the ancient Adam, in spite of all my passionate appeals to God to come to my assistance in the matter, prayer was never a joyous and strengthening exercise to me. It continued to the end to be a hard, difficult, and unillumined duty, which only my sense of loyalty to Christ enabled me to perform at all. This constitutional disinclination to pray I then attributed to a fundamental lack of spirituality, to some incompleteness of surrender to God in Christ, or to some abnormal activity of the persistent old scamp in my heart; and I tried to pray all the more. After a while, I noticed that there was nothing extraordinary or peculiar about my experience, but that the experience of all other children and adults was practically the same. Of course, as long as I believed in the Edenic Catastrophe and the consequent imputation of guilt and transmission of depravity to the whole race, it was easy enough to account for the innate disinclination to pray: it was a sign, proof, and direct consequence of that hideous and hell-creating event. But as soon as it became imperative to repudiate that damnable dogma, because it flatly contradicted both reason and history, there was no possibility of avoiding the atheistic conclusion that religion, in the form of belief in and communion with an infinite and eternal Person, is unnatural, irrational, and injurious, and that for Christ, with the whole paraphernalia of Atonement, Sacrifice, and Salvation from hell, there is absolutely no need. This is why adults are never religious unless they have had religion forced down their throats in their youth. This is why ministers and their assistants have to be so busy attending to the religious education of the children; and it is to this incontrovertible fact that we owe Sunday-Schools, Bands of Hope, Societies of Christian Endeavor, and even the regular services of the churches. The idea that underlies all ecclesiastical institutions, consciously or unconsciously, is that man is not by nature a religious being, and that all religious convictions, beliefs, and practices must be drilled into him by a long and most laborious course of teaching. All religion originates in superstition; and it is a statement capable of amplest verification that in proportion as superstition loses its hold upon the common people, religion becomes a dead letter. If the churches were to suspend operations from next Sunday, in less than a hundred years Christianity would be a thing of the past. We know that during the last fifty or sixty years theology has been steadily

abandoning, one by one, positions that used to be regarded as vitally essential. The renaissance of physical science in the nineteenth century was accompanied by a corresponding decadence of religion. The acceptance of Evolution meant the consequent rejection of the Bible and Christianity.

Mr. Engström at Finsbury Park.

ON Sunday, August 16, "Our Worthy Honorary Secretary, the Reverend Mr. Hengström, Hem A.," as the Chairman repeatedly announced him, visited Finsbury Park. He appeared to be a very fair, good, gentle, and kind-hearted gentleman. He was extremely meek, modest, and humble. He was, in fact, "awfully nice," and the rarity of such a phenomenon on a Christian Evidence platform caused one at times (perhaps wrongly) to doubt the sincerity of it all. Mr. Foote was a *very* able man. Mr. Cohen he regarded as a very able man. From a literary point of view, Mr. J. M. Robertson was perhaps the greatest. Mr. Huxley was *one* of the greatest of scientists. The most violent Atheist—not violent in expression, but in his views—might be as full of the Holy Ghost as the best Christian, even though he might attribute it to other causes. He (the lecturer) never preached a sermon without keenly feeling his own unworthiness, and so forth. Now, is it unfair to ask just this question: If this is all intended as it is said, why is it that Mr. Engström does not take the slightest notice of complaints regarding the personalities, vilification, and vituperation emanating from certain Christian Evidence lecturers, whose superior (in a certain sense) he was until last autumn? Nay, not only did he not do anything to alter this, but pretended to disbelieve the reports in question. Perhaps it was only weakness on his part. Anyhow, however that may be, I have no desire to cast aspersions upon his good faith. But one thing I must certainly say: As it was the fairest and the most good-humored lecture I have ever heard, so—and I have no hesitation in saying this—it was also the most stupid and miserable stuff I have ever heard even from a Christian Evidence platform. It ought not to be dignified by the name of a lecture; it should really be called a sermon; and I almost suspect it was the "Hem A.," of which the Chairman is so proud, that got "Mr. Hengström" his position as secretary to the C.E.S. It should be said in fairness that the opposition, in the person of a mealy-mouthed "Don't-know"-ist, was quite as stupid, if not more so, than "the lecture." This gentleman missed the only point which the "lecture" or sermon really contained. This point, the lecturer cheerily acknowledged, was sent in to the C.E.S. headquarters, in the shape of an MSS. by a *young curate*, whom he named. He (Mr. Engström) expected to find it "balderdash," but, on reading it, was so struck by (or *with*) the force of it, that he now lectures upon it, and is going to publish it in pamphlet form.

This brilliant and original point is so thin that, in the language of one of Mr. Engström's lecturers, "he ought to be able to sit on it." Here it is: There are now ten million people in the world, and there have been at all times that number, who BELIEVE that their redemption from vice and wickedness is directly due to the influence of Jesus Christ. If Jesus can do that he must himself have been free from sin; therefore his birth could not have been brought about in the ordinary way, but can only be explained by the Holy Ghost being his father. *Ergo*: He was born of a virgin. Stripped of its verbiage this would simply read: ten millions of people believe that Jesus has cured them of their sins. *Ergo*: Jesus is born of a virgin. We need not go to the great "Mr. Hengström, Hem A." for this argument. One can hear *that* at any time from ordinary street corner preachers. One expects something more when one goes to hear an "M.A." The argument itself is

really beneath criticism, inasmuch as each sentence thereof implies a bold assumption. I will only comment briefly upon it in view of the position the lecturer occupies in the estimation of a good many people.

First of all, Christianity was forced upon the world by blood, fire, and torture. Second, it was preached into people from childhood. Thirdly, it was bred into them through a thousand years of persecution, the result of which has been that an imaginary character not warranted by the Scriptures, was imparted to Jesus, who, according to the book in which Mr. Engström himself believes, was *not* perfect, in that he shared the superstitions of his time, such as witchcraft, possession of devils, exorcism, and the like; lost his temper and called his adversaries bad names; used physical force once; manufactured wine for people who were "already well drunk;" and before breathing his last shouted out in despair: "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me!" Fourthly, I have not known one of those who proclaim that they are "saved" to be faultless; and fifthly, my experience of conversions is, that it is the dramatic way in which prayer-meetings are conducted, which brings a person to his knees, and the influence of his new friends that keeps him there, and *not* Jesus Christ, in spite of what they themselves may "BELIEVE."

I can only say that it is pitiable to see a man, who, judging from the education which he must have enjoyed, ought to be endowed with some intelligence, standing up at this time of day before a public audience, though it be a little one, as it was on the day in question, and pretend that this kind of thing is argument. The only conclusion I can come to is, that Mr. Engström is of an emotional and religious temperament, and, being born and educated in a Christian country, embraces for no other reason than that, the religion in vogue in that country, and that it is his emotions that prompt his intellect to find some kind of apology for the faith that is in him.

J. K. MAAGAARD.

French Military Scandal.

AN ABBE SENT TO PRISON.

A SCANDAL which has been smouldering for twenty years at Orleans has come to light. The chaplain of the Fifth Army Corps, Abbé Lefranc, tried before the Tribunal Correctional of that city, was early yesterday morning sentenced to six months' imprisonment for criminal abuse of authority over young soldiers (110 victims in twenty years!) committed to his spiritual care. Fifty-two witnesses were called, and the trial, which took place *in camera*, lasted from early morning till after midnight.

In 1884 Abbé Lefranc opened at Orleans a soldiers' club, under the protection of the Bishop and of the General in command of the Army Corps. This club soon earned an ugly reputation in town and among the troops, but it was well attended, nevertheless, soldiers being aware that to be on good terms with the chaplain was the shortest way to promotion.

The "club" might have flourished many years more but for an unforeseen circumstance. A new Chief of Police was appointed who was one of the most energetic men in the whole service, to wit, M. Toms, who played a memorable part in the Dreyfus case. He spent some months collecting evidence. He was well aware that it would never do to give the Abbé a loophole, and that if he committed the slightest imprudence the Clericals would ruin him as they almost succeeded in doing five years ago. The conduct of the Abbé was a matter of public knowledge. I remember reading transparent allusions to it in the anti-Clerical papers in Paris, who challenged the priest to prosecute them for libel. But still the blind and bigoted officers supported him, just as they had formerly championed Esterhazy.

M. Toms had just begun his inquiry when he learned that the military authorities had opened a counter-inquiry. This was entrusted to an officer of the Paty du Clam school, a Colonel with the high-sounding name of Rapine du Nozé de Sainte-Marie. This Nationalist and Clerical officer was formerly one of Esterhazy's seconds, and challenged Colonel Picquart to a duel. Colonel Rapine tried to hush up the affair, but it was too late.

—Paris Correspondent, "Daily News."

Acid Drops.

As we were going to the British Museum one day last week, we noticed a cheap, shilling book among the highly-respectable works in Messrs. F. E. Robertson & Co.'s window. It is *Twenty-five Years in Seventeen Prisons*. We bought it, and read it through; and the chief thing which we noticed is that the singular rhapsodical panegyric of the chaplain, which appeared in the first and dearer edition, is omitted; and from end to end of the book the chaplain is not mentioned. The description given of the clerical work is a burlesque, and reads like the plot of a Gilbert-Sullivan opera. According to the author: "No. 7," it is the governor who visits the prisoners in their cells for religious exhortation, and a convict—a swindling lawyer of world-wide notoriety—who has the practical management of the chaplain's department in so far as it affects the prisoners' letters.

That the Parkhurst chaplain draws his £400 a year, and that he lives house, coals, water, and portage free, while he is put aside in the execution of his most professional duties by a fanatical governor, is possible enough. A prison governor who had been a sea-captain might be conceived taking the religious business entirely into his province; and preaching revival sermons while the chaplain took duty at half-a-guinea a service at a neighboring church—no one but the ratepayers would be affected; but the statement that a convict, and that convict Mr. Jabez Balfour's lawyer, Mr. Granville Wright, has, or had recently, the practical management of the letters of the notoriety of Parkhurst Convict Prison is one that demands attention. To be exact, this statement is that the chaplain, whose duty it is to read the convicts' letters and control the writing of them, has allowed those letters to be managed by, and to pass through the hands of, a convict lawyer-swindler.

If this be true, it is the revelation of the imbecility into which Alleluia Army-men can reduce affairs entrusted to them. Whether true or false, here it is on pages 168, 169, and 170 of this book, which is sold at a shilling by a high-class publisher, and is, for this reason, as well as of itself, one which demands the immediate action of the Home Office. We call the attention of The Howard Society to it, and more particularly we ask the Jewish Board of Guardians to inquire into it—as, there being a synagogue at Parkhurst, educated Jewish prisoners are sent there—the last men on earth whose inner life should be known to a Granville Wright.

But we have the opinion of one who, for a short while, had the office Wright holds, or has occupied. He says he regards No. 7 as merely a sycophant who wishes to flatter Granville Wright for the sake of benefiting by his acquaintance on Wright's release. Nevertheless, our friend tells us as a fact, that a few years since the whole of the Chaplain's department at Parkhurst was in chaos. The chaplain sat in his room reading the new books; the scripture-reader sat gaping and, in an idle perfunctory way, cleaning the seeds he had brought from his garden to present to the Governor; while the first schoolmaster was struggling with the work they should have performed, added to his own already too onerous duties; and the other schoolmasters were employed in pulling up the arrears of the clerks' work of other departments—work with which they had no business whatever to meddle with—leaving them to do their own routine work in the time that should have been occupied by their proper duties in relation to the prisoners. He tells us that this produced a state of things in which, although the librarian started working ten minutes before his time, he had only the third of a minute in which to select a book for each prisoner and register it on two documents; while, by reason of delays in trying to consider the wishes of some prisoners, the greater part of the distribution was done at a much quicker rate!

Necessarily this confusion allowed him to influence the distribution of the Library books, but to imagine that he had "the practical management of anything, such as is attributed to Granville Wright, is farcical. So far from popping about the prisoner's cells about their letters, he was not allowed even to look in the direction of the table on which they lay! Of course, it is to be understood this was *not* under an Alleluia governor, but a reasonable man with a rational head on his shoulders, who when the maniacal "Mucklewrath," who was then chaplain, turned our informant out of his poor little berth because he discovered he was an Atheist, remonstrated with him energetically, but unhappily, ineffectually. Now if this state of affairs, and this conception

of the purposes of the clerical department can exist under a reasonable and practical governor, it is quite conceivable that this astute lawyer, who attends communion regularly, takes energetic interest in the choir, and is whispered to compose the anthems, has, under a fanatic, contrived to obtain a very different status from his predecessors. But whatever may be the degree of power he has obtained, it is obvious, that to put such a person behind the scenes of the lives of the *crème de la crème* of criminal society is at least idiotcy, and is incredible.

The Bishop of Norwich, in a pastoral letter to his clergy, asks them to remind their congregations that it is time they gave God Almighty a hint about the state of the weather. He suggests a morning and evening prayer for "fair weather" now that the harvest is approaching. What a piece of humbug this is! If God is responsible for the weather we have been having he must have known what he was about, and it is almost an impertinence to tell him now that he has been making a mistake, and the Bishop of Norwich requests that he will alter his conduct. And if he has not been responsible for the weather, what on earth is the use of praying to him about it? One might just as well pray to his Lordship's coachman. Added to which, best part of those who do pray know as well as we do that their prayers have no more influence on the state of the weather than they have on the revolution of the earth round the sun. Still, if the congregations did not pretend to believe in the Bishop, what would be the use of the Bishop pretending to believe that they believed him?

The Bishop of Norwich is apparently afraid to *order* his clergy to pray for "fair weather." He has *suggested* that they should do so. But, if there is any sort of efficacy in prayer, why on earth did he wait so long? The end of August is a most preposterous time to begin supplicating for some decency in our meteorological arrangements. So much ruin had been caused by that time that it was hardly worth while interfering. But it may be that the Bishop saw there was at least a chance of vindicating his profession if he only held out long enough. A little tolerable weather might surely be expected before the winter sets in; and, by postponing prayers till the end of August one might hope to get pretty near the welcome alteration. Yes, the clergy are often not such fools as they look.

The new Wesleyan Methodist Pastoral laments that marriage often leads to non-attendance at church. This is quite understandable. Each of the parties often attend church for the purpose of meeting the other, and when this has been accomplished the use of the church has, for them, gone. That marriage drew people away from church was noted centuries ago; and the early Christians met the situation by holding up celibacy as the higher life. After all, intense devotion to religion must involve emasculation in some direction.

Mr. R. J. Campbell is confident that we are on the eve of a great revival of religion. We shall see. Meanwhile official statistics point to an alarming increase of insanity. The facts and the prophecy may be placed side by side. Perhaps it was the former that suggested the latter.

Mr. Campbell, now that he is back in England, seems brimming over with good feeling. He is quite anxious that Churchmen and Nonconformists should fraternise, and to that end desires a return to the method of religious instruction in vogue in Board Schools before the passing of the new Act. We have no doubt. This was a system that favored the Nonconformists most; it helped Churchmen a little, and it played the devil with everybody else. Mr. Campbell doesn't care a hang for the "everybody else"; he is only anxious that the two sets of believers should not fall out. Mr. Campbell is quite amusing in his attempt to disguise a contest of trade interests as a fight for principle.

Mr. Campbell also gives as one of his reasons for wishing to keep the Bible in public schools, that many Agnostics wish to keep it there. The expression is not without its significance as an instance of the way in which some Freethinkers may unconsciously obstruct the development of secular education by professing a sentimental attachment for the Christian's fetish.

Mr. D'Eyncourt, the North London Police Court magistrate, should really put a check upon his impertinence, or somebody should do it for him. There are some magistrates who cannot even yet reconcile themselves to the fact that Freethinkers have a legal right to affirm instead of swearing. There are other magistrates who cannot reconcile themselves

to the fact that citizens who entertain a conscientious objection to vaccination have a legal right to an exemption. Mr. D'Eyncourt is one of these magistrates. He condescended the other day to insult a policeman after granting him the exemption certificate. His tirade from the bench against anti-vaccinators included the statement that they were "selfish"—just as though "selfish" people put themselves to trouble and expense, and ran the risk of being browbeaten by a magistrate who ought to know better. "Selfish" people just take it easy by swimming with the stream, and Mr. D'Eyncourt ought to know this. At any rate, he has no business to discuss the characters of persons who come to his court on legitimate business, and his views on the subject of vaccination are of no special importance to anyone but himself.

The Rev. Thomas Smithers was charged at the South Western Police Court with being found drunk and incapable. His excuse was that he was subject to rheumatism and had taken more whisky than was good for him. Evidently the reverend gentleman had been following Paul's advice and had taken something for his stomach's sake and other infirmities. The unfeeling magistrate fined him ten shillings.

At Rochester a highly respected churchwarden was found, during his examination in bankruptcy, to have been carrying on a business as a moneylender, and as it also came out, was cohabiting with somebody else's wife at Fulham. It was suggested that the latter circumstance was responsible for his bankruptcy. Anyway, it is one of the many choice examples of the purifying influence exerted by association with a church.

We are promised a Nonconformist Party at the next General Election. The Nonconformists are determined not to vote for any candidate who is not opposed to the new Education Act. We are not surprised. As we have often pointed out, the question is, for Nonconformist and Churchman, a religious question entirely. And to the Christian sectarian interests come before aught else. If this party becomes a fact we shall see how Christians on either side are determined to sink every other question—fiscal, social, and imperial—before the sectarian one. A candidate may have good ideas on all social reforms, but the Nonconformists will throw him over unless he is ready to assist them against their religious rivals. The country will have a good object lesson of the extent to which religion obstructs citizenship, and the result will be, we suspect, another Conservative Government.

Commenting on this Nonconformist political party, Mr. Thomas Law, Secretary of the Council of the Free Churches, says they are "in the midst of a great religious struggle." We presume the phrase slipped out, but it is welcome. It is an admission the quarrel is about religion, and that education is a mere pretext. Which we have always said was the case.

The clairvoyants who were invited to give some tidings of the missing lady doctor made a frightful mess of it. They all saw different things when they "went off," and not one of them saw anything to the purpose. Every man of common sense is perfectly aware that the people who pretend to see what is not within the range of their vision are simply charlatans. They may give themselves much finer names, and extract a good deal of money from their silly dupes; but charlatans they are, and charlatans they will remain to the end of the chapter. The whole tribe of them have had a splendid chance in the case of Miss Hickman, but they have let it slip by, and the only rational inference is that they were unable to make use of it.

Mr. Hall Caine has been discoursing on the Bible. This is a tolerably safe subject to talk about to a Christian audience. Praise is all that is required; and whether this is warranted or not by the facts need trouble the speaker but little. Here is what Mr. Caine, among other things of about equal value, has to say:—"The Bible is the charter of liberty, the Magna Charta of democracy, the book of the poor and oppressed and downtrodden. The great test of a book is its value in the dark days of life, and it is the first claim of the Bible that, of all the great books of the world, it has brought the most comfort to the suffering and sorrowing, and that no medicines have soothed the hour of pain and the nights of grief as its words of cheer and hope. It is a great message to the living world as well as a guide to the world to come."

We were about to say that for nonsensical verbiage even Mr. Caine will find this hard to beat, but we recollect his

Eternal City, and refrain. Mr. Caine says that "of all the great books of the world it has brought the most comfort to the suffering." Surely the existence of over 400,000,000 Buddhists is alone enough to prove how absurd such a statement is. Of course Christians say they find comfort in the Bible. We need hardly stay to point out that even this may be questioned in a very large number of cases. The real point is, however, that the fact of people finding comfort in the Bible is of no more significance than the Mohammedan finding it in the Koran, or the Zoroastrian in his sacred book. It is a simple truth of psychology that people find comfort in the direction in which their education and habits have led them to look for it. That this should need pointing out to Mr. Caine is quite enough to damn his claim to rank as a first-rate novelist.

Mr. Caine finds the Bible to be the friend of Democracy. Martin Luther, who may be presumed to know as much of the Bible as Mr. Caine, at a time when the peasants appealed to him for assistance in their struggles for the amelioration of their condition, was of opinion that the Bible taught the peasants to bear the cross, and submit quietly to all the ordinances of man. His advice to the nobles was that these same peasants might be shot, poisoned, or drowned like mad dogs, for daring to rise against the powers that be. And if Mr. Caine takes a more recent instance he will find that, in the war between North and South in America, the friends of slavery found no better friend than the New Testament; which, indeed, was distributed broadcast as a pro-slavery document. The truth is that the Bible was never discovered to be the friend of democracy until democracy as a political fact could no longer be ignored. Then it was found to be in favor of democracy, as it was found to be against slavery and witchcraft. It is the same old game, although Mr. Caine plays it as though it were something original.

Perhaps it is hardly worth while inquiring how Mr. Caine knows the Bible is a reliable guide to the world to come. The form of the statement is delightful. "It is a great message to the living world as well as a guide to the world to come." There may be some doubt about the value of the Bible in the world we are living in, but there is none concerning its value in a world in which we are not living in, never may live in, and which we are not sure even exists. Again we say, the same old tune. Same old game. Same old advertisement.

Mrs. Hall Caine, who, we suppose, is a very good Christian, like her husband, has just been giving her first "few words" in public. Amongst other interesting items, she told the story—it was a very rank old "chestnut"—of a young man who asked another young man how to teach a young lady to swim. After being told how to handle the young lady, he explained that she was his sister; whereupon the other young man said, "Oh, shove her in." (Great applause.) We have heard this sung at the seaside by an "artiste" and we are bound to say it "caught on" immensely. In this great Christian country it seems to be thought that this is just how a man might be expected to act towards his sister. The applauding males appeared to think so, and the worst of it was the applauding females seemed to think so too. For our part, it made us nearly vomit on the spot—especially when we reflected on all that Christianity had done for the inhabitants of this country.

At Shorham the "Passive Resisters" held a prayer-meeting before their cases came on for hearing. In each case a distress warrant was issued. Then the "Resisters" held another prayer-meeting. What we should like to know is, what was the use of the first prayer-meeting? It did not stop the magistrates issuing warrants. And what do they expect will be the use of the second? Do they think it will stop the warrants being served? If not, what is the use of the performance?

A correspondent who facetiously signs himself "Peace"—for he must be a humorist—writes to the *Daily News* pointing out the only way out of the present Education difficulty. He says that there should be no religious teaching at all in the day schools; it should be given in Sunday-schools, and a law should be passed compelling all children under a certain age to attend them. This is the jolliest suggestion we have yet seen. We almost wonder the *Daily News* was taken in so easily.

Mr. R. M. Morrell, the honorary secretary of the National Sunday League, whose jubilee is referred to in "Sugar Plums," has been telling an interviewer what happened in the early days of its history. The Sabbatarians made a great fight against the League and all its works, and one of

their devices was a clerical deputation to Lord Palmerston, who promised to oppose the motion for the Sunday opening of museums and art galleries when it came before Parliament. Lord Palmerston, however, was not illiberal in himself, and he afterwards allowed Sunday bands to play in Kensington Gardens, Regent's Park, and Victoria Park. This provoked the Archbishop of Canterbury into writing Lord Palmerston an indignant letter. His Grace actually declared that unless these bands were stopped he would be "no longer responsible for the religion of the country." We suppose this was simply meant as a warning to Lord Palmerston, and was not intended to convey the ridiculous idea that the Archbishop of Canterbury contemplated resigning his £15,000 a year.

The Bishop of Rochester has issued a list of intercessions for his diocese during September, and among them is one for "peace and mutual charity in the controversy on education." We are far from saying that neither of these qualities are needed, although a sense of justice is what both stand in need of most, and if this were present there would not be so much left to quarrel about. We are only inclined to ask his lordship to try and recall an instance in which peace and charity were present in a religious controversy between Christians. As a matter of fact, men can discuss any subject on earth with greater courtesy than they can religion. A religious discussion seems to rouse all that is most vindictive and unscrupulous in human nature. All experience and all history proves this. The Councils of the early Church that met to discuss points of religion often ended in a fight, and sometimes the service of an undertaker was necessary by the time the religious discussion was brought to a close. The most brutal wars in history have been religious wars; and the most vindictive hatreds are those stirred up by religion. People may discuss politics, science, literature, with good feeling; but religion!—well, the days of miracles are past, and beyond hope of resuscitation.

On taking over the local tramways, which hitherto were private property, the Vienna Town Council has (says the *Jewish World*) summarily dismissed all Jewish employes, not excepting those who have families depending on them. The council has also terminated engagements of all medical men attached to the Tramwaymen's Provident Dispensary who did not possess baptismal certificates. The principal Vienna medical journal, commenting on the action of the council, remarks: "It is sad, indeed, that a responsible body of men should treat in this manner surgeons who have for years past carried out their duties in a most conscientious manner."

Providence is busy. In England the crops have been largely spoiled, although we suppose there will be the usual harvest thanksgiving services when the time comes round. Violent storms are reported all over France also. At Verdun houses have been destroyed by lightning. The Saone is overflowing, farms have been flooded and cattle drowned. Reports from the North and South speak dismally of the prospect of the harvest. The loss on wheat is expected to work out at over £12,000,000. The damage done to vineyards is placed as high as £10,000,000.

Dr. Dowie's new campaign is to be directed against New York capitalists. He announces that he will, with his followers, invade New York and convert all the rich people there. We have no doubt, from all that we hear, that converting rich men is much more to Dowie's taste than saving the souls of poor ones. There is more joy in Dowie's soul over one rich man saved than ninety-nine poor ones—and more profit too.

Sir Edwin Arnold has been giving the British and Foreign Bible Society a puff, in the shape of a letter responding to the query, "What I owe to the Bible." Sir Edwin says he owes it "everything"—including, apparently, his style. He owes his "education as a writer more to the Bible than to any other hundred books that could be named," and he is sure it is "the grandest possible school of style." Some people will think, however, that Sir Edwin's style is not exactly the finest in existence, and that there have been much greater writers who owed the Bible nothing. Some people will even think that this cackle about the literary value and style of the Bible approaches the verge of blasphemy. What impudence it is, if the Bible is the work of Omniscience, to declare it to be quite equal to the Greek and Roman classics as a composition!

WOULD DESECRATE ANY DAY.—"I was just telling my daughter," said Mrs. Noosens, "that it's really a shame for her to play the piano on Sunday." "Why did you mention Sunday particularly?" asked Mrs. Pepprey.—*Philadelphia Press*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

September 13 and 20, Queen's Hall, London; September 27, Manchester; October 11, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

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

G. I.—Thanks for cuttings.

SIGVATSON.—In our next.

W. G. DAVIS.—We cannot insert any more letters on the subject at present. You must admit that the Vegetarians had a good innings in reply to "Rationalist's" letter.

W. STARKEY.—We will answer your letter next week. We are writing at a distance from a Concordance, and we shall need it to hunt up the passage you want.

N. D. (Blackburn).—Your letter and enclosure shall have attention, probably in our next.

N. C. (Darwen).—The letter is written well enough and may do some good in its way, though it is too vague for our own taste.

J. G. S.—Keep on. You are doing good. Your letter is excellent. Shall be glad to see you again at Glasgow. We have handed your order over to the proper hands.

LITCHWOOD.—Everything stands on its own merits. Naturally we prefer what interests Freethinkers as such.

W. J. GOTT.—The Bingley bill arrived too late for any use in this week's *Freethinker*. The meeting was held before we went to press. Let us know the result for next week.

S. STEVENS.—We are looking into the matter. Thanks for writing to us.

A. C. HOWARD.—The "Merlin" article you send us in the *Northern Weekly* appeared a good while ago in the *Referee* and was answered by Mr. Cohen at the time. We don't think it worth another reply.

H. BARBER.—We have given instructions.

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.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

London Freethinkers are invited to make a good note of the Sunday evening meetings in the Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, from September 13 to October 4 inclusive. Handbills announcing these meetings can be obtained at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and we hope our friends will do their best to distribute them judiciously. We should like to see the handsome hall crowded on each occasion.

Owing to the complicated conditions of the letting we are driven into rather complicated arrangements as to the seats at these Queen's Hall meetings. The management is for some unintelligible reason afraid to let a charge for admission be made at the doors, although this is perfectly legal after Mr. Justice Collins's decision, and is actually done at the Sunday League concerts in the large hall on the very same premises. Tickets can be sold beforehand, however; but in this case, as previously at St. James's Hall, no ticket must be priced at less than a shilling. We are therefore compelled to work a mixture of "free admission" and "tickets," and the way indicated in the advertisement on our back page is the only one out of the difficulty. Three-penny seats are not feasible anyhow, but the "sixpenny" people will be able to get a seat at that figure by purchasing a shilling ticket for two admissions. Of course there will only be a very few "free" seats at the back.

Mr. Foote will take the first two of these four Queen's Hall lectures. His subjects are a little off the old beaten path, and should prove attractive to Freethinkers themselves, as well as interesting to liberal-minded outsiders, whom, of course, it is intended to draw to these meetings if possible. Mr. Cohen takes the third lecture, and his subject should also be attractive in view of the present antagonism between the "Catholicising" Church party and the "True Protestant" Free Churches. The last lecture of the course will be given by the gentleman who has been writing his mental history as Richard Trevor in the *Freethinker*. His real name is now disclosed. The Rev. John Lloyd—as he was until recently—enjoyed a good pulpit reputation in South Africa, and we have seen very laudatory references to him in the *Christian World*. According to the press reports, he was an eloquent preacher, who attracted a large congregation. Mr. Lloyd did not throw up his pulpit to join the Secular party. He did not know what he should do except look around him before pursuing fresh lines of activity. The only thing he was sure of was that he could not go on preaching a lie. Of course it was an honest thing to do, but it was also a bold thing, for it is far from easy to begin a second career. Mr. Lloyd resolved to be true at any cost, and we hope he will find this fact appreciated by Freethinkers. Mr. Foote intends to show *his* appreciation of Mr. Lloyd's courage by taking the chair for him on October 4, and personally introducing him to the Freethought party. Mr. Lloyd will, of course, be prepared to lecture from other Freethought platforms afterwards, and we trust he will have many invitations.

The September number of the *Pioneer* is commended to the attention of the readers of this journal, as a publication of interest in itself, and as a useful thing to hand to a friend or acquaintance with some openness of mind, but who might nevertheless take a "scunner" at the *Freethinker*—to which, nevertheless, it might afterwards prove an introduction. The Editor writes on "Tom Payne" by way of reproof to Mr. Arnold White, whose spelling this is. There is an article by "Sphinx" on a new book dealing with the question of progress from the point of view of population and breeding. "Julian" contributes a spirited reply to the *Church Times* on the value of Free Libraries. There is also a reprint of an article on "Spirituality" by Ingersoll from the "Dresden Edition" of his works. Many other interesting items—including some bright paragraphs written for women by one of themselves—may be found in this number of the *Pioneer*.

Mr. J. W. de Caux had another long and able Freethought letter in last week's *Yarmouth Mercury*. He seems to be silencing his opponents—which is in one respect a great pity, as their letters gave him fresh opportunities of showing the absurdity of the Christian superstition.

The National Sunday League has nearly reached fifty years of age. It was established by a small body of working men who were mostly "infidels." Mr. R. M. Morrell, its first secretary, and still its honorary secretary, was a well-known Secularist—though the fact is naturally not trumpeted in papers like the *Daily News*. Mr. Morrell is now eighty years old. His eightieth birthday, in fact, is to be celebrated on September 26 by a reception at Prince's Gallery, to be followed by a dinner at the Holborn Restaurant.

The National Sunday League started with the idea of getting museums and art galleries open on Sundays. But it soon went on to Sunday Evenings for the People, and afterwards to Sunday excursions from London to the seaside and other places worth visiting. The League has grown into a big affair and is doing good work, though it may not show quite the same educational energy that characterised it in the beginning.

The London *Sun* printed a striking lot of figures recently under the heading of "The Poverty of the Clergy." We are glad to see our contemporary having the courage to do this sort of thing. The *Sun* list contained the names of a large number of lately deceased Church dignitaries who have left considerable sums of money, from a few thousands up to half a million. On the other hand, it is pointed out, there are poor clergymen who haven't food enough to eat or clothes enough to wear. No wonder the *Sun* asks, "What is practical Christianity?"

Mr. C. Cohen lectures on Mile End Waste to-day (Sept. 6) at 11.30, and in Victoria Park at 3.15. He has been asked to deal with the Jewish question at the morning meeting, and has consented to do so. We have no doubt there will be good attendances at both lectures.

Tolstoy's pamphlet, *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, has, we see, been suppressed by the Russian Government. It could hardly do anything else. With the Kishineff massacres fresh in the public mind, it would be too much to expect the Russian Government to allow such a pamphlet to circulate freely. The wonder is that Tolstoy is not suppressed likewise. But we suppose that even Russia has to pay some attention to civilised European opinion.

Mr. T. Williams has a lengthy and well-written letter in the *Aberdare Leader* in reply to a Christian arguing in defence of the belief in immortality. We are pleased to see the *Leader* is broad-minded enough to publish such communications. They are always productive of good, immediately to Freethought and ultimately to Christians.

Public Opinion (New York) states that Chicago is the leading theological centre of America, and, perhaps, of the world. Those who remember Mr. Stead's picture of the same city in his *If Christ Came to Chicago* will doubtless find food for reflection in the statement.

The American Episcopal Methodists have formed a new society, a Bible League. The object of the League is to strengthen the enjoyment of the people in the Bible and to drive out destructive higher criticism. We note the qualification. The Methodists welcome all criticism that is one-sided. So they do on this side the Atlantic; but they are not always honest enough to say so.

The *Edinburgh Evening News* has the following:—"It was the annual school inspection, and the paper stated that the pupil was to translate into his own words the following from *The Lady of the Lake* :—

'Now, yield thee, or by Him who made
The world, thy heart's blood dyes my blade!'

One boy, whose father evidently had been in the South African war, and probably had a rough experience there, obeyed the instruction, and paraphrased the quotation thus: 'Hands up, or by God I'll kill you.'

Was Heine an Atheist?

(Continued from page 556.)

It had always been understood that the Germans possessed, in the works of Kant, Hegel, Fichte, and other philosophers and metaphysicians, a mysterious elixir, which enabled its possessor to preserve his faith in some kind of a deity and a future life, against all the assaults of the infidel.* Heine drew the curtain aside; he claims in his *Confessions*, with truth, that—

"In my articles on German philosophy, I blabbed without reserve the secrets of the schools which, draped in scholastic formulas, were previously known only to the initiated. My revelations excited the greatest surprise in France, and I remember that leading French thinkers naively confessed to me that they had always believed German philosophy to be a peculiar mystic fog, behind which divinity lay hidden as in a cloud, and that German philosophers were ecstatic seers, filled with piety and the fear of God. It is not my fault that German philosophy is just the reverse of that which, until now, we have called piety and fear of God, and that our latest philosophers have proclaimed absolute Atheism to be the last word of German philosophy. Relentlessly, and with Bacchantic recklessness, they tore aside the blue curtain from the German heavens, and cried, 'Behold, all the gods have flown, and there above sits only an old spinster with leaden hands and sorrowful heart—Necessity.'"

In his *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, Heine appears as the enthusiastic soldier in the "liberation for long. "As he had rejected the dogmas of the

* In England, as Carlyle has told us, Coleridge was believed to possess the secret. "He was thought to hold—he alone in England—the key of German and other transcendentalisms; knew the sublime secret of believing by 'the reason' what 'the understanding' had been obliged to fling out as incredible." Carlyle caustically continues: "I still recollect his 'object' and 'subject' terms of continual recurrence in the Kantian province, and how he sang and snuffled them into 'om-m-ject' and 'sum-m-ject,' with a kind of solemn shake and quiver, as he rolled along" (Carlyle, *Life of Sterling*, pp. 46-48. This was about 1829. Heine wrote his work in 1834).

war of humanity"; but, as Miss Kroecker remarks, Heine never remained true to any set of convictions Jewish religion, so he repudiated the dogma of Christianity; while, by-and-bye, the dogma of philosophy was not safe from the shafts of his irony; and finally, in his last years, he protested against the dogma of Atheism. This 'sick-bed conversion,' as it has so often been called, I believe to have been only the inmost nature of the man asserting itself.*

It is difficult to say what Heine believed in, or that he believed in anything in particular. As Mr. Havelock Ellis puts it—"Everything in the world became the sport of his intelligence.....The *Confessions* are full of irony, covering all things with laughter that is half reverence, or with reverence that is more than half laughter—and woe to the reader who is not at every moment alert."†

In these *Confessions* he tells us his reason for giving up Atheism, as follows: "So long as such doctrines remained the secret possession of an intellectual aristocracy, and were discussed in a select coterie-dialect which was incomprehensible to the lackeys in attendance, while we at our philosophical *petit-soupers* were blaspheming, so long did I continue to be one of the thoughtless Freethinkers." But, he tells us, as soon as he saw the vulgar began to discuss the same themes, "when Atheism began to stink of cheese, brandy, and tobacco—then my eyes were suddenly opened, and that which I had not comprehended through reason I now learned through my olfactory organs, and through my loathing and disgust."

Heine candidly tells us that it was not only disgust that caused him to desert the ranks of Atheism. "I was oppressed by a certain worldly apprehension which I could not overcome, for I saw that Atheism had entered into a more or less secret compact with the most terribly naked, quite figleafless, communistic communism." He adds that it is not the fear of the well-to-do tradesmen, who fear an interruption of their profitable business. "No; that which disquiets me is the secret dread of the artist and scholar, who sees our whole modern civilisation, the laboriously-achieved product of so many centuries of effort, and the fruit of the noblest works of our ancestors, jeopardised by the triumph of communism."

If Heine had believed Atheism to be unphilosophical or unscientific, he would not have been slow to point it out. Certainly a truth held by educated and cultured people cannot become untrue, simply because it has been assimilated by uneducated people, any more than the Copernican system of astronomy becomes false now everybody knows it. Heine was no more justified in rejecting Atheism because a few Communists had adopted it, than a Freethinker would be justified in rejecting Christianity on account of the Salvation Army. As Heine gives no other reason for rejecting Atheism, we must conclude that he remained an Atheist at heart, and that the rejection was only outward and not inward.

Many pious souls, not knowing the true state of affairs, and believing it to be a genuine conversion, wrote to Heine for particulars, which afforded Heine material for many an exquisite piece of mockery. In these very *Confessions* he tells us that "Very pious, but not very wise men of Protestant Germany have urgently inquired if, now that I am ill and in a religious frame of mind, I cling with more devotion than heretofore to the Lutheran evangelic faith.....No, dear friends, in that respect no change has taken place." He goes on to say that when he resided in Berlin he wished to separate himself from all denominations; but "the rulers there refused a residence in Prussia, and especially in Berlin, to any who did not profess one of the positive religions recognised by the State. As Henry IV. once laughingly said, '*Paris vaut bien une messe*,' so could I say, with equal justice, 'Berlin is well worth a sermon'; and besides, the religion "was a Christianity filtered from all superstition,

* Memoir to *Heine's Poems*, by Kate Freiligrath Kroecker, p. xlv.

† Introduction to *Prose Writings*, p. ix.

even from the divinity of Christ, like mock-turtle soup without turtle. At that time I myself was still a god, and no one of the positive religions had more value for me than another. I could wear any of their uniforms out of courtesy, after the manner of the Russian Emperor, who, when he vouchsafes the King of Prussia the honor to attend a review at Potsdam, appears uniformed as a Prussian officer of the Guard." Again, in the *Religion and Philosophy in Germany* we find another delicious piece of irony at the expense of these would-be infidel converters:—

"Pious souls thirsting after a miracle have desired to know whether, like Saul on the way to Damascus, I had seen a light from heaven; or whether, like Balaam, the son of Beor, I was riding on a restive ass, that suddenly opened its mouth and began to speak as a man? No, ye credulous believers, I never journeyed to Damascus, nor do I know anything about it, save lately the Jews there were accused of devouring aged monks of St. Francis; and I might never have known even the name of the city had I not read the Song of Solomon, wherein the wise king compares the nose of his beloved to a tower that looketh towards Damascus. Nor have I ever seen an ass—at least any four-footed one—that spake as a man, though I have often enough met men who, whenever they opened their mouth, spake as asses."

Heine was never tired of mocking these pious seekers after his salvation. Here is another confession, "made," says Mr. Sharpe, "in his most desperate straits":—

"A religious reaction has set in upon me for some time. God knows whether the morphine or the poultices have anything to do with it. I believe again in a personal God: to this we come when we are sick—sick to death and broken down. If the German people accept the King of Prussia in their need, why should I not accept a personal God? When health is used up, money used up also, and sound human senses used up, Christianity begins.....For the sick man it is a very good religion."*

If Heine had any inclination to religion, he had plenty of time for contemplation during those terrible last six years of his life, when he lay, paralysed and half blind, on what he called his mattress-grave, and his terrible agony had to be eased by daily doses of opium, an overdose of which, says Miss Kroecker, "brought the life, which so long had been only artificially held together, to a sudden and unexpected close."

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

The Tabernacle of the Congregation.—IV.

CONTINUING our search for evidence of the existence of the grand Tabernacle described in Exodus, we come to 1 Samuel iv., in which chapter we have an account of a great battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. According to this account, the worshippers of Yahveh being worsted at the first onset, the leaders decided to send for the ark of God, and fight under its protection. This appears to have been a very ancient practice; for among the spoils taken by the Egyptian king, Thothmes III., from the Canaanites some centuries before the time of Moses was an "ark of gold." When the sacred box kept at Shiloh—the Lord's "ark of wood"—arrived, escorted by the two sons of Eli, "all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." The Philistines were not long in discovering the cause of this jubilation, and exclaimed: "God is come into the camp.....Woe unto us!" Retaking courage, however, they passed the word along the lines, "Quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines"—and did so. After slaying 30,000 of the Israelites (including the two sons of Eli) they captured the Lord's holy ark, and bore it from the field in triumph.

The stories of the idol Dagon falling prostrate before the captured ark, and of the Philistines being smitten with disease by Yahveh on account of the detention of the sacred box are, of course, fables. The sending of the ark back was probably due to a superstitious belief that the god to whom it belonged

might possibly have power to harm them. It was therefore placed on a cart drawn by two cows and driven to the nearest place inhabited by Israelites—Bethshemesh. The latter place, judging by the description, was little more than a village; for the inhabitants were "reaping their wheat harvest" when the ark appeared, and the cart entered a field belonging to one of them, and halted near a "great stone." The narrative then goes on:—

"And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord and the coffer that was with it.....and put them on the great stone, and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the Lord" (1 Sam. vi. 15).

Here, in this solitary passage, we have "Levites" introduced. One naturally asks where this class of priests came from. There were no Levites in attendance at the "house of the Lord" in Shiloh in the days of Eli, and this was but seven months after that priest's death. Where, then, did these Levites spring from? Did they know that the cart would come to Bethshemesh? and did they then come out of their hiding places and wait for it near the "great stone," ready to lift the ark out of it? If so, why did not they "sacrifice the sacrifices," and not leave this duty to be performed by the men of Bethshemesh? It is quite clear that the words "the Levites" have been substituted for "the men of Bethshemesh"; for those mysterious individuals disappear as suddenly as they came, leaving the ark in the hands of the reapers, who did not know what to do with it. The Lord's holy ark could not, however, remain stuck on a stone in the middle of a field. Had there been at that time a grand tabernacle at Shiloh, with a whole tribe of priests and Levites in attendance upon it, there would be no difficulty. The Levites of the family of Kohath, whose duty it was to carry the ark (Num. iv. 15), had simply to come down to Bethshemesh, and, passing two long staves through the rings fixed in the ark, bear it away upon their shoulders (like a sedan chair) to its proper place—the Tabernacle of the Congregation. But, as we have seen, there was no tabernacle or army of priests and Levites in Canaan in "those days"; so the villagers of Bethshemesh sent messengers to the nearest town, Kiriath-jearim, asking the elders of that city to come and remove the sacred box. "And the men of Kiriath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord" (1 Sam. vii. 1). And now, for the second time, we find the ark of Yahveh kept in a room in a private house, and in the latter case not even in the care of a priest.

The men of Kiriath-jearim were of the tribe of Judah; Abinadab was presumably of the same tribe. In the absence of a priest or Levite, the chief men of the city "sanctified" the son of Abinadab to take charge of the ark. This act recalls Micah's "consecration" of one of his sons as priest before he met with a strolling Levite. In the present case the question again arises, Where were the proper custodians of the ark? Where were all the priests and Levites who had been specially appointed to that office by the Lord himself? It is scarcely necessary to say that these, like the mythical Tabernacle of the Congregation, existed only on paper—in the so-called "books of Moses." The men of Kiriath-jearim doubtless did the best they could under the circumstances. Eli the priest and his sons were dead, Samuel had retired to his native place, Ramah; the ark could not be sent back to the old house in Shiloh, which, no doubt, was occupied by a new owner or tenant. Thus it came about that the ark of Yahveh was placed in the house of Abinadab, where it remained for many years—that is to say, during the judgeship of Samuel, the reign of King Saul, and the first few years of the reign of David. And, as might be expected, throughout the whole of this period there is not the smallest sign or trace of the existence of the Mosaic Tabernacle of the Congregation, or of its mythical attendants, the Levites. The prophet Samuel knew nothing about these Levitical institutions; neither

* Sharp, *Life of Heine*, p. 177.

did King Saul; neither did Saul's successor, David. From the history of this period it is quite certain that no grand Tabernacle or Levitical priesthood was then in the land.

In the reign of king Saul, while the ark was still in the house of Abinadab, we hear of David coming to Nob, to "Ahimelech the priest," and of the latter giving him some cakes of shewbread, as well as the sword of Goliath which was kept "wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod" (1 Sam. xxi. 1-6). From this story it would appear that there was at that time a "house of the Lord" at Nob, one probably similar to that set up by Micah, who had a graven image, a molten image, an ephod, and a teraphim. Later on, we hear that a single man named Doeg, an Edomite, by the command of Saul slew all the priests who resided at Nob—"four score and five persons"—besides all the men, women, and children who inhabited that city. Only one of these priests, we are told, escaped—Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech—who sought refuge with David. This story appears on the face of it fictitious, and was probably invented to blacken the character of Saul. It may have been founded on the fact, mentioned incidentally later on, that "Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land" (1 Sam. xxviii. 8), these fortune-tellers being turned into priests of Yahveh and their wives. An incident in the life of David, who, we know, kept a teraphim in his house, illustrates the character of the priests in "those days."

"And David said to Abiathar the priest.....I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David inquired of the Lord, saying, If I pursue after the troop, shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue; for thou shalt surely overtake them" (1 Sam. xxx. 7-8).

This recalls a similar inquiry made by the six Danites to Micah's Levite. There seems to have been little difference between these ancient priests and those called wizards. Both pretended to foretell future events; the first by means of a magic garment that was usually kept in a house dedicated to Yahveh, the second by some other means not mentioned.

Coming now to the reign of David, we learn that soon after that pious freebooter had become king, he caused a tent to be erected in Jerusalem to contain the holy ark (2 Sam. vi). Then, at the head of 30,000 chosen men of Israel, he came down to the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim (which we find was then named "Baal of Judah") to remove the sacred box to Jerusalem. Two sons of Abinadab, Uzzah and Ahio, accompanied the ark, which was placed on a new cart drawn by oxen, as when sent back to Judah by the Philistines. On the way the procession was brought to a standstill by the death of Uzzah who had been walking by the side of the cart. Whatever may have been the cause—it is stated in the narrative that Uzzah "took hold" of the ark when the oxen stumbled, and that he was struck dead by Yahveh for touching it—the sudden death of one of the two attendants was considered a bad omen, and David decided to proceed no farther that day. But what was to be done with the Lord's holy ark? It could not be left on a cart in a public road. David perceiving this, ordered it to be taken into the nearest house, which happened to be that of "Obed-edom, the Gittite," and here it remained for three months. A "Gittite" was a native of Gath, and therefore one of those people whom the sacred writer contemptuously calls "uncircumcised Philistines" (2 Sam. xv. 18; 1 Sam. xvii. 36). Here one naturally asks, Where were all the priests and Levites? And why were not the latter summoned to carry the ark on two staves, as prescribed in the Pentateuch?

A second attempt made by David to bring the ark to Jerusalem proved more successful. On this occasion the model king, following the yearly custom of the damsels of Shiloh, leaped and danced at the head of the procession clad only in an under garment, and in his antics, as one of his wives reminded him, "uncovered himself.....as one of the vain fellows shame-

lessly uncovereth himself." Upon reaching Jerusalem the ark was "set in its place in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it," and the king, who was not a priest, nor even of the tribe of Levi, "offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord."

Here, at last, we have a real tabernacle—a brand new one, made by David—but not of the kind so minutely described in Exodus. Two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, with their two sons, were all who were engaged in its service—or, more correctly, in David's service; for the new tabernacle appears to have been made solely as an abiding-place for the ark. Sacrifices were still offered at the old time-honored "high places," even after the erection of Solomon's temple. It should be noticed that in the account of the removal of the ark to Jerusalem, no mention is made of Levites; nor can any of this class of priests be discovered during the whole reign of David. If we turn, however, to the lying book of Chronicles, compiled two or three centuries after the return from the Exile (when all the laws in the Priestly code were well known), we shall find priests and Levites in abundance. As a sample of the great and systematic lying of this compiler of Jewish history, I select a few sentences from his account of the removal of the ark from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem:—

1 Chron. xv. 1-15.—"And David prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.....And David gathered together the sons of Aaron and the Levites [Then follow the numbers and names of the chief families amongst the Levites].....And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites.....and said unto them.....Because ye bare not the ark at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not according to the ordinance.....And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord."

This veracious Chronicler, it should be borne in mind, had the books of Samuel and Kings lying open before him, and in a large number of cases copied the accounts given in those books verbatim. One of the objects he had in view in re-writing the ancient Jewish history was to make it appear that the Levitical priesthood and ritual were in existence and in operation from the earliest times. To attain this object he has made numerous, and in many cases lengthy, additions to the older records, and has altered and omitted wherever he considered it desirable. Among the events in the life of David, for instance which he thought it well to omit are the adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah the Hittite. In this case he has copied from 2 Samuel the verse preceding (xi. 1) and the verse succeeding (xii. 26) the record of these discreditable acts, and he makes them read continuously as one paragraph (1 Chron. xx. 1-2).

It is needless to say that the Chronicler's version of the removal of the ark to Jerusalem, from which the foregoing extracts are made, is simply a tissue of falsehoods. In this account, it will be perceived, he represents David as saying that "the breach" made by the Lord—that is to say, the death of Uzzah—was inflicted as a punishment for not having had the ark carried by Levites during the first portion of the journey to Jerusalem. Yet this mendacious writer, only two chapters before, has copied the account in the book of Samuel in which it is stated that Uzzah was struck dead for touching the Lord's sacred box (1 Chron. xiii. 9-10). We have in this fact a clear proof, if any were needed, of the systematic misrepresentation employed by the priestly writer of the Chronicles.

ABRACADABRA.

TO AN ATHEIST.

We are the sweet selected few;
 May all the rest be damned;
 There's room enough in hell for you—
 We won't have heaven crammed.

Correspondence.

THE "ZOOPHILIST" AND ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to your paragraph on the *Zoophilist*, permit me to say that Mr. Stephen Coleridge is *not* the editor of that journal. As the person responsible for the sentences you quote, I beg you to allow me to say that, as I understand them, they are in no way in opposition. We owe the modern conception of our duty to animals to Bentham, the Quakers, and the study of Buddhism. The great Christian Church has had little or no part in its formation, in my opinion. I am not aware that any of the "Creeds" of the old churches deal with the matter at all.

With regard to the second sentence quoted in your note, I do not agree that, because a man holds no creed, and embraces no church doctrine, he is either a Materialist or an Atheist. Both systems are out of date. Our greatest scientists—like Lord Kelvin, Tyndall, and Huxley—have taught us that Materialism is an untenable explanation of life and intellect.

Huxley said that "Atheism is, on purely philosophical lines, untenable." A man may be either a Monist or a Dualist without being a Materialist. He may be an Agnostic, and the sentence which seems to offend you so much makes no reference to that popular position with regard to religion.

The vivisector, in my opinion, cares for nothing which he cannot dissect and analyse, maul with his scapel and torture with his battery or see with his microscope. He is a practical Atheist because he recognises nothing higher than his own personal advantage.

I have known the *Freethinker* quite long enough to recognise that its readers and editor believe in self-sacrifice for their fellow-man; and, whatever their attitude towards the "Churches," are animated by a love for "something not ourselves which makes for righteousness."

THE EDITOR OF THE "ZOOPHILIST."

[The Editor of the *Zoophilist* does not really deal with the point we raised: and one point at a time is quite enough for rational controversy. His journal asserted that Materialism and Atheism were the natural allies of selfishness and cruelty; indeed, he practically states this in his present letter; and we tell him it is flat nonsense. Whether Atheism is true or false, or vigorous, or played-out, is quite another issue. With regard to the issue raised in our paragraph, we have to say that whoever affirms that the Atheist recognises nothing higher than his own personal advantage simply does not know what he is talking about.]

—EDITOR.]

Wild Madge.

"WELL, it's time for me to be going. I must be up and doing. I can't lie here all day."

The speaker was a young girl of perhaps twenty-three or twenty-four years. Her hair was dark and tangled, and her eyes were red with fever, and two bright spots burned on her white cheeks. She lay upon a white cot in a hospital, and tried to rise up as she spoke. The nurse made her lie down again, saying, "You must be quiet; you are badly hurt, and must not excite yourself."

"Excite the devil," was the ungracious reply. "I must have money for my mother, and I must leave here to get it."

"It's no use. You will never leave here," was the solemn reply of the nurse, as she prevented the girl from rising.

"Do you mean that I am dying?" screamed the patient.

"Yes. You will soon be with God. Shall I send for a priest?"

"No! no! I won't have a priest. O God! what will become of mother?"

"Trust in God's mercy, child," said the nurse.

"Yes! In God's mercy! He will let her starve to death. That's his mercy. He forced me to sell myself for her. He made me what I am. I was not always Wild Madge. Oh, how I hate your God! I gave my life, my honor, my everything for my poor old mother. And now she must starve as others have starved before her."

The nurse was not surprised at the almost perfect grammar of the fallen woman. It is too common to cause surprise.

"Hope for the best, Madge. Your mother need not starve. There are many places to go to. Put your trust in God."

"Yes. But didn't three little children starve to death down—"

She stopped, and then went on: "I have seen hundreds of people actually starving. And God lets them. He don't care. I will soon be with him. I will have a chance to tell him what I think of him and his mercy. All I asked was to live until she died. And he won't even let me do that, after all I've suffered. Oh, I hate him! I hate him!"

"Who is your mother, Madge? What is your real name? Let me send for her."

"Never! Do you think I would tell you? Do you suppose I want her to know what her girl has come to be? It would break her heart to hear of my shame."

"She will hear of it, anyhow. And it will break her heart not to see you."

"No, she won't. She will suppose I have been murdered or burnt up or drowned; but she will never suspect that Wild Madge was her girl."

The patient's voice was getting lower and lower, and all her excitement was gone."

She lay quiet for a little while, and began to murmur again: "Yes, God; I see it all now. You intended to starve her from the first. It wasn't enough that father must die. I could still support her. So you must kill me, too. I stood between you and your victim a long time. God, but I'm done for now. I can't protect her any more—your mercy—the mercy of the quicksand—which never gives up a victim—you are a just and merciful God—I've seen the workings of your mercy before—if you ever gave anybody—what they wanted—without a curse attached to it—I have never heard of them."

The pauses were more frequent, and the patient spoke with an effort.

"You punish the sinners—and chasten the good—but you hit them all—as often—as—you—can."

Madge said no more, and in a little while she was with her God. And the good nurse felt both shocked and relieved, and piously crossed herself several times.

—*Brann's Iconoclast.*

J. T. McDILL.

Ecclesiastical Millinery.

SOME attention has just been directed to the superb white altar frontal that is used at St. Paul's on festal occasions, though it is not a new one, and has been for some years in possession of the Cathedral since it was worked by the sisters of St. Katharine's School of Embroidery. If that, however, cannot claim present notice on the ground of novelty, the school is now just finishing a set for a Roman Catholic church at Bournemouth that may take rank with any of the most notable examples of ecclesiastical stitchery of the past. The chasuble is of the richest ivory brocade, in a conventional figuring of the fleur-de-lis, lightly out-lined in gold and colors. For the broad cross of the centre, the thickest and heaviest white corded silk has been employed, heavily bordered with bullion twist. The central figure is that of Christ, crowned and glorified, and is worked with the utmost delicacy in the finest silks, the face and hands being so exquisitely wrought as to suggest painting rather than needle craft. Below this is the Madonna, equally beautifully executed, the coloring of the robes, fading from pale mauve into pink, being exceptionally well managed. In the arms of the cross and at the back are various other sacred emblems, and to match, there has been prepared with no less elaboration and beauty the altar veil and burse; the whole having been designed by the Sister Superior, Ellen Mary. A very handsome super frontal in red, worked in gold, has also just been completed for the church of St. Lawrence Jewry in the City.

—*Daily Telegraph.*

PSEUDO-SCIENCE.

Any hack seems to be good enough to cook up science, provided he have a scent for the vulgar and improbable, and a smattering of scientific jargon. And, under the guidance of such pot-boiling mountebanks, the ignorant have acquired a certain arrogant assumption of learning, and are at a loss to understand why such men as Tyndall and Huxley refused to be drawn into the idle speculations that tickle their shallow understandings. Unhappily, it must be confessed that one or two of the ablest scientific men have contributed more or less of late to the establishment of a generally unscientific attitude towards things. We have seen Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, for instance, rushing on the slightest evidence to the most improbable conclusions about the relation of the earth to the universe; Lord Kelvin, too, assuming, on lines which he would be the first to condemn under other circumstances, that we are "compelled to accept the idea of a creative power." Is it wonderful, when the great leaders give vent to such rash and ill-considered utterances, that the vulgar are inclined, according to temperament, either to abandon themselves to fantastic conceits or to remain in safer quarters, "wedged into the world?"—*Sun* (New York).

Grave-diggers in San Francisco have struck for shorter hours and higher wages. This is certainly running the strike business into the ground.

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.

CAMDENWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, E. B. Rose. Brockwell Park, 3.15, W. J. Ramsey; 5.30, W. J. Ramsey.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity and the Jews."

FINSBURY BRANCH N. S. S. (Clerkenwell-green): a Lecture.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, F. A. Davies.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 1.30; Hammersmith Broadway, 7.30, Lectures.

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (Covered Market): Saturday, Sept. 12, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "The Reformation."

BRADFORD (Town Hall Square): 11, Ernest Pack, "Old Nick"; Monday, Sept. 7, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "The Jokes of the Bible."

BINGLEY (Myrtle-place): Tuesday, Sept. 8, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 6.30, Social Meeting. Tickets sixpence each.

Huddersfield (Market Cross): Wednesday, Sept. 9, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "Christian Infidels."

LEEDS (Vicar's Croft): Thursday, Sept. 10, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "The Virgin Mary"; Friday, Sept. 11, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "Bible Beauties."

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): 3, Ernest Pack, "Adam and Eve"; 6.30, "Old Nick."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. P. Ward, 3, "The Evolution of the World"; 7, "How Christianity has Degraded Woman."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Sept. 6, excursion to Conisbro. Meet at 1.40 prompt; front of Victoria Station; train leaves at 1.50; return fare, 6d. If weather be wet, Mr. Berrisford will lecture in the Hall at 7.

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

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