

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals nor forts.*

—LONGFELLOW.

Pious Hypocrisy.

MAHOMET.—Thus saith the Lord.

SERGIVS.—He hath said many things which nobody minds.

—W. S. LANDOR: "Imaginary Conversations."

THIS is an age of weak faith and strong profession. The grand alternative "Believe or be damned" is changed to "Conform or be ostracised." You cannot tell what a man believes from the church he attends or the creed he subscribes. It is an understood thing that practice does not indicate conviction, and an equally understood thing that no one must say so. Hypocrisy reigns everywhere; it is cultivated as a virtue, and dignified with fine names. To have an intellectual conscience is to insult one's neighbors. There is no honesty required, or even desirable, except that which keeps us out of the police-court and the black list of "society." Every sincere man who refuses to countenance a fashionable lie is regarded as a vulgar person who should be banished from the company of gentlemen, and he may consider himself fortunate if he is not left a prey to the wild beasts of persecution.

We need not believe, but we must pretend to. We may reject every doctrine of Christianity, but we must still call ourselves Christians. We may disbelieve any portion of the Bible, but we must still call it the Word of God. We may despise the priests, but we must still maintain them as part of the established order of things, and show them an outward respect.

This is the creed of men of the world, and that of piety is no better. Where is there any vital faith? The Bible is said to be God's word, the treasury of truth, the depository of morals, our guide in life, and our consolation in death. But whose practice conforms to this belief? Ask any Christian to carry out the injunctions of God, and he will tell you, with a bland smile, that times have changed, that what is lawful is not always expedient, and that even religion must be interpreted by common sense. We agree with him, and we are anxious to know why he calls us "infidels" for acting in the same way.

Nine-tenths of the Old Testament are quietly ignored and at least three-fourths of the New. The Mosaic law and the Mosaic cosmogony share the same fate, and no one tries to live by the Sermon on the Mount. God the Son said, "Swear not at all," yet oaths are taken in Parliament and in every court of the land. Pious people fly in the face of Jesus Christ six days out of every seven. They do not sell all they have and give to the poor; they do carry purses and keep plenty of scrip; they take thought for the morrow; they lay up treasures on earth, and use camphor against the moth and policemen against thieves; they consider very deeply what they shall put on; they do not give to everyone that asks; they will not give you their cloaks if you steal their coats, nor turn the other cheek when one is smitten, nor go

with you two miles after being compelled to go one, unless you carry them; and, although they pray, they expect no answer, but leave the healing of the sick to the doctor, and the removal of mountains to the railway navy. To conclude the farce, they go to church on Sunday and confess themselves miserable sinners; yet if you were to call them so on Monday morning they would knock you down.

Christianity is declared to be part and parcel of the law of the land. The man who first said so meant it, and consistently burnt witches to death. Those who say it now do not mean it. They know that Jews sit in Parliament and help to make our laws, and that the name of Christ has long been swept away from our public proceedings. All they mean is that the fiction shall be upheld in order to punish honest men who have the courage to ridicule their hypocrisy.

The Bible is very little read. Millions of good Christians find the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Police News* more attractive. It is never quoted in Parliament, in Town Councils, or other public bodies. When any subject is being discussed, no one ever thinks of asking what the Bible says upon it. In every case it is *shelved*. It is becoming more and more a fetish, to be revered but not studied, and the fate of Uzzah is threatened to all who approach it rashly. But Freethinkers are not easily frightened. They mean to destroy the fetish, and they will succeed.

A grave responsibility rests on all men in this age. When imposture is rife and hypocrisy persecutes probity, whoever is not for Truth is against it. Let all honest men come out of the camp of the wicked, and be no longer participators in their iniquity.

Meanwhile let the true Freethinker stand erect like a man; look every lie, however respectable, in the face; tell it plainly what it is, and smite and spare not.

This may be called eccentric, self-opinionated, or perverse. No matter. The soldier of truth and honesty must expect hard names when he is not taking hard blows. There was a time when he faced nearly certain death or disabement. He need not tremble at angry language now. Nor is he so lonely a fighter as he was. Thousands are with him in sympathy, if not in open effort. Moreover, he has many comrades standing around him in the struggle. It is no longer a case of the world against one man, or of a multitude against a handful. Freethinkers in the thick of the great battle feel that they are winning. Their victory is only a question of time. It may be years, it may be generations, it may even be centuries, but the end itself is certain, however long it may be deferred. And the army of superstition is just as sure of this in its heart of hearts. Its leaders do not say so; they never will say so; no one could expect them to say so. But they fight like men who are losing. They fight going backwards. They know they are retreating. They are always on the defensive. Sooner or later they feel they must be beaten. All they are concerned to do is to keep the field as long as possible. For it *pays* them still. And this is nearly all there has been in religion for the last hundred years.

G. W. FOOTE.

Examining the Idols.

"It is a notorious historical fact," said Mr. Jesse Collings the other day, "that when men began to examine their idols it was generally bad for the idols." There is a very far-reaching truth in this sentence of Mr. Collings; and, although it was uttered with special reference to the fiscal policy of Mr. Chamberlain, it has a very much wider application. For it is unquestionable that the one disease that is fatal to idols—social, political, and religious—is that of being found out. And, as examination leads to their being found out, it is only natural that the high priests of all the idols should have denounced examination as the leading offence of which man could be guilty. For examination assumed doubt, and doubt implied the probability of discovery. For this reason Conservatism and Religion—which is only Conservatism in its crudest and most complete form—have always exalted habits of reverence, docility, childlike credulity, and submission. Take up and study any comprehensive list of the "saints" religion has given the world, and you will find these characteristics in the ascendant. True, religious leaders have often been in revolt against a particular power or belief, but a little critical examination soon shows that, even while urging people to take up an attitude of critical examination of opposing beliefs, they were all the time striving to develop the same unreasoning and submissive state of mind towards their own teaching.

The great thing is to get people to examine their idols. But this is, of all things, the most difficult. A secondary connotation of the word is that of something on which the affections are strongly set, and the mere suggestion of an examination rouses a whole sea of prejudice and passion. *Other* people's idols the average man is willing enough to criticise; the advice to make the examination all-round and comprehensive is rejected with scorn. And yet the mere fact that a belief or a custom has been long unquestioned is, scientifically, an additional reason for examination. For ideas and beliefs, like structures, are forms of adaptation to environment. As the one gets out of date, and obstructive instead of helpful, so may the other. Certain beliefs and customs will retain their value, in their most general characteristics, so long as human society endures; these being, ultimately, but expressions of the conditions necessary to preserve life. But even these must be modified in form as society develops, and the conditions of life become more complex. We have one Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments, and we have hundreds of organisations for the preservation of ancient ideas. What is needed is a few more societies for their examination, their revision, and, often enough, their destruction.

The use of the word "idols" reminds one of Bacon's famous classification. In writing his "*Novum Organum*," Bacon commences with an account of the false notions or idols that beset the human mind, and prevent it arriving at truth. These are Idols of the Tribe, Idols of the Den, Idols of the Forum, and Idols of the Theatre. The first, the Idols of the Tribe, are such as belong to human nature in general. The mind, he points out, is not like a mirror with a plane surface, but like an uneven surface which combines its own figure and properties with those of natural objects. Or, to put the same idea into more modern language, and apply it directly to religious beliefs, the first delusion that one has to get rid of is the delusion of anthropomorphism, which is one of the results of the constitution of the mind.

It is now generally admitted that the conception of nature, ruled by a being who possesses qualities of anger, pleasure, power, or intelligence identical with those of man, is a quite indefensible reading of human feelings into nature at large. All this is plainly a mode of thinking that belongs to uncivilised man, and only persists by sheer force of heredity or

atavism. Modern believers try to escape the objection urged against anthropomorphism in general, by the plea that the personality and wisdom and power of God is altogether different to the personality, power, and wisdom of man. But this is only another way of saying that it is *not* personality or wisdom or power; and the jangling of words only serves to impose upon such as take any phrase for granted without examination, so long as it chimes in with their prejudices. The most refined conception of a god, equally with the most gross, are part and parcel of the same "Idol of the Tribe."

The anthropomorphism does not end here. It is carried into our general conception of nature, and affords a lodgement for the more nebulous beliefs that nowadays does duty as "advanced religion"—a phrase that is strongly suggestive of "moralised murder." Consider how much of the religious apologetic of today is made to rest upon the beauty, and orderliness, of natural phenomena. Yet there is positively no better reason for assuming that there is an "order" or "beauty" outside the human or animal intelligence, than for assuming that nature possesses a brain or a spinal chord. Order and beauty are both qualities that the "uneven mirror" of the mind reads into nature, and then admires a marvel of its own creation. All that can logically be meant by "order" is the manner in which phenomena are presented in consciousness. But mind is ultimately dependant upon associations of likeness and difference, and to say that we see things in an orderly manner is only to say that we see them in the only way possible to see them. Whether the same "order" exists apart from the animal intelligence is another question. The human mind is the result of a process of evolution, it recognises certain aspects of nature, and it is these aspects that constitute the "order of nature." Scientifically there is as much reason for saying that nature is sweet or sour as there is to say that it is orderly in any other sense than the one indicated.

A similar example of the "*Idola Tribus*" may be taken from the world of ethics. What is the "moral law"? To listen to some writers and speakers, one might imagine it were a species of act of parliament to be consulted by any who cared to take the trouble, or at least a law in the sense that gravitation or chemical affinity is a law. Eliminate human society and what becomes of the moral law? Or reduce the human race to a single individual, and where is the moral law then? What would be the use of preaching the wrongfulness of murder, stealing, or lying if there were no one against whom these actions could be directed? The truth is that the "moral law" is a statement of the relations that obtain, or ought to obtain, between human beings, and has no objective existence. Morality in the abstract has no more existence than color in the abstract; and the reading of morality into nature is but a rudiment of the reading of the whole man into nature by the primitive savage. And the importance of seeing this lies in the fact that once it is recognised that morality is a statement of existing or desirable relations between human beings, conduct may become the subject of rational discussion, without the prejudice excited by unreasonable appeals to the "moral law" and what it ordains.

The Idols of the Den are those possessed by individuals in addition to those shared by the race as a whole. These arise from the peculiar nature of each individual, and also from "education, habit, and accident." They involve the sacrifice of truth to individual prejudices and prepossessions, and thus prevent the general and impartial application of the same mental rules and criticisms to all beliefs. Once more religion affords a fruitful field of examples. It is easy enough to make a Christian realise the absurdity of non-Christian religions; but he steadily refuses to see the absurdity of his own beliefs. A belief in a virgin birth in India or Egypt is an absurdity; in Judea it is a profound truth, filled with moral results of inestimable advantage. The

prayer of a savage to his wooden idol for rain, is a mark of degradation. The prayer of a bishop in a civilised country to all that is left of a Jewish deity who was once carried round in a box like an article of furniture, is a proof of moral development and the possession of a "spiritual" sense denied to ordinary individuals. It is the sacrifice of truth to a prejudice of the most stupid description.

There is the same feature in the relation of Catholics and Protestants. The Protestant sees quite plainly the absurdity of all the miracles related by the Roman Catholic Church, and when arguing against them will point out that these narratives belong to a credulous and unscientific age, are contrary to all experience, and belong to a set of similar stories that crop up amid people in a similar stage of development. He will use, in short, every one of the sceptical arguments, so long as he is criticising the miracles of a rival belief. But the moment the miracles of the Bible are called into question a sacrifice is offered to the "Idol of the Den," and every one of the mental rules just dilated on is ignored. A striking example of this is furnished by Mr. E. A. Abbott in his treatment of Newman's expression, "As if moral and religious questions required legal proof." Mr. Abbott, a shrewd writer in general, is quite shocked at this expression, which is used by Newman to bolster up certain aspects of Catholicism. But Mr. Abbott has certain religious beliefs in common with Newman, and so he hastens to qualify his objection by remarking that certainly, as regards the existence of God, his justice and power, "we should allow no facts to disprove these beliefs." Well, one wonders why, if legal evidence is required to prove the specific beliefs of Roman Catholics, why is this kind of evidence not required also to prove the religious belief in God's wisdom or justice or power? And in the same way the Rev. R. F. Horton shrieks out his indignation at such an immoral and irrational belief as the immaculate conception of Mary, but asserts his belief in the immaculate conception of Jesus, on the fantastic grounds that he believes, quite without evidence, that Mary told Luke about it. In each of these cases there is the deliberate forsaking of sound rules of criticism and reasoning, the moment they are found to conflict with the individual prejudices and prepossessions. And in each case there is a sacrifice of truth to the idol that sits enshrined in the obscurity of the intellect.

One need not look very far afield to find numerous examples of the same kind in social and political life. It is found in the appeal to patriotism as the highest of virtues, and the labelling of it as a vice when it is directed against us by other people. It is seen in the recognition of "providential action" when it chimes in with our sense of the fitness, and the rejection of the phrase as blasphemy when the result is otherwise. And in each case there is exactly the same evil—judging men and events in terms of our special fancies or beliefs, in place of carefully ascertaining the facts of the case, and forming a judgment in accordance therewith.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Prayer.

PRAYER holds a very large place in every religion. In most religions, what is called public worship consists of half or more of prayers, and there are, in addition, private and other prayers on all imaginable occasions. Every school, day and Sunday, is opened and closed with prayer, and, where pious people live, there is prayer before and after every meal, and at the beginning and close of every day. Nothing must be done, begun, or finished without praying. Sowing and reaping must be consecrated by prayer. At every birth, wedding, sickness, and death there must be prayer. If there is too little or too much rain, we

are called upon to pray. After storms, shipwrecks, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wars, famines, epidemics, and so on, the priests order prayers. Scarcely anything can take place, politically or socially, but prayer is a part of it. It is true there is less room given to prayer in the Nonconformist Churches, especially some of them, such as the Quakers, than in the Church of England and Catholic Churches. But, in all, great importance is placed on prayer. All this, and more, in our own country. Abroad, and in other religions, the room given to prayer is still larger. In some countries, praying is carried on by machinery. Prayers are written or printed on wheels, which are driven by the winds, and thus pray for the owner, day and night. Christians smile and laugh at the substance and modes of prayers in heathen lands, and call them superstitions, as no doubt they are; but Christians forget that all religions are related to one another, have all sprung from the same root, evolved on the same or similar lines, and that all are as really and truly superstition as the rudest and nearest in form to the original mould.

As prayer occupies so large and so important a place in all religions, it may be not unprofitable to analyse it a little and see what there is in it—is there any reason in it, does it do any good, is it a thing to be encouraged, or is it a harmful ceremony to be condemned and repealed?

I would not like to ridicule or treat the subject sneeringly, as so many consider it so sacred that you cannot even discuss it without sinning. But I would like to intimate that there is nothing too sacred to be analysed and discussed to the fullest extent. There is no doctrine, principle, subject, sacrament, ceremony, or duty more sacred than the other. The pretension that some things are too awful and sacred to be considered by anybody but a priest, is nothing more than a piece of priestcraft—a trump card to stifle inquiry. Whenever this device is resorted to, and you are told the matter is too awful and sacred to be approached in debate, you can take it for granted that it will not stand investigation, and that that is the reason why investigation is shunned. If the priests had an explanation, an argument, a fact, or a consideration capable of satisfying a rational inquiry or doubt, they would use them, and would never think of stifling inquiry and doubt by shouting "boo," as nurses often do to frighten children. When they tell you not to open the box as there is a mystery inside, and not to look behind the screen for there is a ghost there, look inside the box and the mystery is gone; peep behind the screen and the ghost has vanished.

When I feel inclined to laugh at the apparent folly of so much praying, I am checked by remembering that I used to pray myself, and how earnest and real prayer was to me till I reached and passed manhood. I cannot feel guilty, nor blame myself, for believing and practising prayer. It was born in me, and grew with me. I was born in a praying family, who taught me, from a baby, to pray. There was prayer in the house morning, noon, and night. In Sunday-school and chapel the duty and value of prayer was impressed upon me. On Sunday, between home and chapel, it was nearly all praying. And the Bible, which to me then was the inspired Word of God to whom I prayed, commanded me to pray without ceasing. I believed in prayer, and practised it. I was made what I was. My belief and practice were formed for me, and not by me. My surroundings were responsible, and not me. Looking backward, and recalling my praying days, I wonder how it was possible to believe such absurdities, and pray such silly prayers, with all the convictions and earnestness of realities, but I did. There is nothing too absurd to teach a child to believe, or too revolting to practice, and therefore we must learn to look with a lenient eye on the superstitious and barbarous religious ceremonies of the lowest savages. It is no wonder the priests make such desperate efforts to perpetuate their control over the minds of children

in the day-schools, for they know from long experience, if their doctrines are not instilled into the minds of children, it would be impossible when they grow to men and women.

It is high time that Freethinkers should copy the example of the priests in regard to children. In this matter they are, and always have been, very remiss. Children are left to themselves to become a prey to the nurse and the priest. There is no hope for the triumph of Freethought till the children are emancipated and protected from the priest. Not only must all priests be excluded from the schools, but science must be brought in to every educational centre to replace the antiquated and superstitious priests' book called the Bible. When that is done, progressive thought will soon triumph over errors and superstitions.

It seems to me a cruel thing to compel little children to repeat, they can do nothing else, meaningless and nonsensical prayers, morning, noon and night, in the day schools, day after day, week after week, month after month, all their school years. Even if there was any reason or good in prayer, this monotonous repetition would be enough to nauseate any strong minded scholar, and make them hate the very name. How very suggestive is the formula gone through at the commencement of prayers in school. "Eyes closed." Why should the eyes be closed whilst praying? And why should churches be kept in semi-darkness? Is it meant to represent the mystery darkness of the doctrines taught? Is it to induce a cloud of mental darkness over the worshippers? Or is it a proof of the keen knowledge of the priests, who soon found out that darkness has a powerful influence over some human minds. Ghosts are always seen in the night, and worshippers will see many things mentally, and experience many feelings in semi-darkness that they could never see or feel in an open daylight. The semi-darkness of the churches, and the eyes closed of the children are very suggestive of the inward meaning of all the religions in the world. "Eyes open," and "More light" are mottoes of progress, and the only guide to knowledge that will abolish the ghosts and destroy the influence of the mystery trick of all the churches.

The prayers of the churches are mostly in public. How many and how often devotees pray in private it is impossible to say. It is open to doubt, if there was no public to hear, and no priest to officiate, if there would be any praying at all. God never shows himself, and gives no sign that he hears, but the public see, hear, and applaud, and this is quite sufficient to keep the practice going. But the strange thing about the matter is, that all public praying is in direct opposition to a direct command of the supposed founder of Christianity. In Matthew, chapter six, verse five, etc., there is an instruction how to pray. "And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the Synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee. And in praying use not vain repetitions as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." The quotation is taken from the Revised version. Human nature and religious ceremonies are evidently much the same now as they were two thousand years ago. The churches are still using vain repetitions in their prayers as the Gentiles and Pharisees did in the time of Jesus. All the prayers in the rituals are nothing but vain repetitions, and all the extempore prayers are as like one another, as two peas are. They are all vain repetitions, or something worse, in direct opposition to the teaching of Jesus. Of course, you cannot blaspheme a non-existing God. If there is no personal infinite God you cannot sin against Him,

nor blaspheme Him. But if there is one, some of the prayers in the rituals, and most of the extempore prayers are positively blasphemous. They are all an incarnation of conceit. Fancy an ignorant finite mortal giving information to the eternal infinite. And more than that, every prayer is an impudent attempt to teach the all wise, what to do, how to do, where to do, and when to do. In some cases the prayer is nothing more or less than a curtain lecture to God for neglecting his duty. Other prayers are only a bundle of fulsome, insincere flattery—telling God how high he is, how much bigger than any one else, how strong he is, how wise, how good, how wealthy, and especially how clever, and what he could do if he liked. Such flattery offered to man, would quickly find a place for the flatterer outside the door. And what an absurd thing it is to tell the Almighty what he is, as if he was an imbecile and did not know. The confessional prayers, again, are full of insincerity and hypocrisy, and I fear it must be added, often full of pious falsehoods. Men and women confess of sins, which, if true, would make them unfit to enter into any decent society, and which, if any one else, outside the church or chapel was to utter against them, they would prosecute for libel. Such prayers, even for adults, are worse than nonsensical, but in the mouths of innocent children are positively monstrous and ridiculous. There is another aspect of certain prayers which an observing eye cannot fail to detect, and that is preaching, lecturing, and censuring the congregation, or someone in it, under a pretext of praying to God. One cannot attend churches where extempore praying is practised without being convinced that some of the public prayers are nothing but disguised lectures to the congregation or someone in it.

And all this public praying is in direct opposition to the teaching of Jesus. Christians profess to believe that Jesus is God, and that the Bible is the Word of God, and yet they disregard and ignore the plain teaching of Jesus on prayer. Jesus tells his disciples they shall not pray in the synagogue and public places, like the hypocrites, and that is the very thing Christians do. Jesus orders his followers to pray in private—it was to be a secret worship; but Christians pray in their churches and chapels, like the hypocrites in the synagogues and public places. Jesus forbids vain repetitions in prayer, and Christians use vain repetitions, as the Gentiles did. A model prayer was given to the disciples, which Christians call the Lord's Prayer; but it was to be a model of private, and not of public, prayer. It was to be used as a guide in the inner chamber at home, and not to be repeated like a nursery rhyme. Yet the Churches make a parrot exercise of it, repeating it without end, and compelling little children to repeat it, contrary to the plain instruction of Jesus. A more flagrant disregard of a Master's teaching cannot be thought of.

The origin of prayer must be sought in the worship of ancestors—the mummified corpse, or its ghost, which was probably the first family god. The prayers of to-day are descended in direct line from the prayers addressed, thousands of years ago, to mummies and their ghosts, with their outward visible signs in the stone, stake, and cross. There is no break in the chain. The sublimest prayer that can be conceived to-day is only an evolution of the rudest prayer uttered by the lowest savage at the genesis of civilisation. Christians assume an air of great superiority over savage worshippers, who bow to and worship idols, or sacred animals, or natural objects; but the difference in essence between modern and ancient worship is more apparent than real. As a matter of fact, amongst the most numerous of Christian sects, the Catholics, in all their churches to-day all the features of Pagan and barbarian worship may be seen in miniature and modified form. When the savage worship and pray to the idol, the stone, stake, and cross, they believe that a living ghost—a divinity—dwells in them. They pray to sacred animals, trees, rivers, fountains, and other things, because they think there is a living divinity

in them, who can see and hear their devotees, and have power to answer their supplications. In the light of reason and science, the religion of savages no doubt appears absurd and ridiculous; but if you analyse the praying and worshipping of to-day in the same way, very little, if any, more reason or utility will be found in them. In the idol, stone, stake, cross, animal or natural object the savage has a visible altar, in which he believes a god dwells. But a Christian has nothing but an Idea—an impersonal and an unseen divinity—to call upon and worship; and I fail to see any great superiority in that.

R. J. DERFEL.

(To be continued.)

Pagan Christs.

MR. ROBERTSON'S work, *Pagan Christs*, is a continuation of the research commenced in his *Christianity and Mythology*. The author tells us in the preamble that "these studies originated some eighteen years back in an attempt to realise and explain 'The Rise of Christianity Sociologically Considered'; and it is as a beginning of such an exposition that the two books are meant to be taken. In *A Short History of Christianity*, the general historic conception is outlined"; so that the author has produced three goodly volumes, comprising in the aggregate 1,355 pages, as an introduction to his Opus Magnus—a feat reminding us of Buckle writing his monumental *History of Civilisation* as an "Introduction" to a "History of England." And, in truth, these books are not unworthy of comparison with Buckle's great work; they are characterised by the same sincerity and love of truth, the same disregard of conventionalities and prejudices; everything is tested and tried under the keenest criticism, and the authorities, for and against, are cited liberally upon almost every page. We hope that, unlike Buckle, Mr. Robertson will bring his great work to a conclusion; he expresses a modest hope that "Whether or not I am able to carry out the original scheme in full, I venture to hope that these inquiries will be of some small use towards meeting the need which motived them." Upon this point all unprejudiced minds will be of one opinion—that it forms a new point of departure, as Strauss did with his *Life of Jesus*, and Cassels with his *Supernatural Religion*. We can give no higher praise than that, and we take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Robertson, and assuring him of the very great help and benefit we have derived from his studies in Christian mythology, from their commencement in the *National Reformer* until the present.

The theses that Mr. Robertson sets out to prove are (1) "that the Gospel story of the Last Supper, Passion, Betrayal, Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, is visibly a transcript of a Mystery Drama, and not originally a narrative; and (2) that that drama is demonstrably (as historic demonstration goes) a symbolic modification of an original rite of human sacrifice, of which it preserves certain verifiable details."

Mr. Robertson holds that the story of Christ's Supper, Passion, Betrayal, Trial, and Crucifixion, is not an account of any historical fact, but had a dramatic origination. He says:—

"The proof lies, and has always lain, before men's eyes in the actual Gospel narrative. It is the prepossessions set up by age-long belief that have prevented alike believers and unbelievers from seeing as much. Let the reader carefully peruse the story of the series of episodes as they are given in their least sophisticated form, in the gospels of Matthew and Mark. From Matthew xxvi. 17 or 20, it will be noted, the narrative is simply a presentment of a *dramatic action and dialogue*; and the events are huddled one upon another exactly as happens in all drama that is not framed with a special concern for plausibility" (p. 189).

To those who are unacquainted with Mr. Robertson's theory, when he published it in magazine form,

the section on "The Gospel Mystery Play" will come as a revelation.

Other writers have pointed out the connection between the Pagan Mysteries and Christianity, but Mr. Robertson was, we believe, the first to point out the dramatic character of the Gospel story. Once pointed out, everyone can see it for themselves, and begin wondering how it was they never saw it before.

The section on Mithraism, which first appeared in *Time* and also in *Religious Systems of the World*, has been re-written and enlarged, and is alone worth the price of the whole book. The section on "The Religions of Ancient America," is also a valuable study.

We have noticed one little point for correction in a future edition. Mr. Frazer, in dealing with the mocking of Carabbas as narrated by Philo, says that Mr. P. Wendland, in *Hermes*, in 1898, was the first to call attention to the passage. Mr. Robertson, in a note, states that he had discussed the story in the *National Reformer* so long ago as March 3, 1889, and that some previous writer—he thinks Rabbi Wise—had called his attention to it. We may point out that the translator and annotator of Jules Soury's *Jesus and the Gospels* published in 1881, gives the passage in full and comments upon it (pp. 19-20), and still earlier, in 1873, the author of *The Gospel History* gives the passage, and both writers connect it with the mocking of Jesus.*

Mr. Robertson treats his subject so fully, so learnedly, and so exhaustively that, in spite of the quantity of work he has put out upon the subject, we would fain ask for more. For instance, we should like to have a chapter upon the Early Documents of Christianity, and another on Gnosticism, but perhaps these will be forthcoming in future volumes.

The volume has a good summary of the contents at the commencement, and a good index at the end, both so helpful to the student—is well bound, and printed with good type on good paper, and should find a place on the shelf of every Freethinker, and of everyone who is interested in the origin of Christianity.

W. MANN.

Free Thoughts.

The persons who are dead sure of going to heaven never do anything to make earth any better.

Public opinion is a private opinion adopted by the majority.

It is pretty hard to swallow God when he is presented in the shape of a Calvinistic pill.

A man who will live on the fears and pangs of his fellow-beings, and excite those fears and pangs, is not only a wretch and a hound, but is also a scoundrel, be he priest or minister.

Christians, who accept the Bible as the word of God, think that God is the only person who should enjoy the privilege of using vulgar and indecent language, and that if a man trespasses upon the divine prerogative he should be arrested and punished for his offence.

The Greeks left monuments of art, poetry and philosophy which have hardly been surpassed, while the Israelites with God for a teacher, guide, and friend, left little of value to the human race. They really left only what they stole.

The notion that God is behind the zephyr and the devil behind the hurricane is contrary to the Bible statement that the "wind bloweth where it listeth."

—Boston Investigator.

* Since writing this article I find that the Rev. Dr. Giles has also cited the passage in full, in his *Apostolical Records of Early Christianity* (p. 164) published in 1896. He also calls attention to the fact that in ancient MSS. the name of the robber is Jesus Barabbas. Possibly our readers could point out others who have cited the passage.

Acid Drops.

The new Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*, who signs himself "J. M.," waxed merry over what he called a revival of the worship of the Goddess of Reason. Its first religious service, he says, took place on Sunday evening, November 8, in the Trocadero. He adds that it was "a tedious and wholly unoriginal performance." As a matter of fact, apparently, it consisted of selections of classical music and eloquent addresses on the world's great men, from Sophocles down to Zola. Very likely it was "tedious" to "J. M.," but others may well have found it interesting.

"J. M." is astonished that M. Berthelot, the famous scientist, and the perpetual Secretary of the French Academy of Sciences, has become the President of this new body of Freethinkers, and "associated his name with a fad such as this." "J. M." regards this "fad" as a sort of Positivism, and he airs his little joke (a poor thing, but mine own!) about that philosophy. "Positivism," he says, "has been defined as Catholicism without the Pope." Could anything be sillier? Probably "J. M." wanted to say, but couldn't recollect it, that Huxley had defined Positivism as Catholicism minus Christianity. That was one of Huxley's mistakes. "J. M." turns it into mere imbecility.

Mr. Samuel Morley (no relation to Mr. John Morley) was a rich manufacturer, a bustling politician, and what is called a philanthropist. He was also a zealous Christian. He once sent a telegram to Northampton asking the Christians there not to vote for Charles Bradlaugh. In due course he died, like smaller mortals, and there was a good deal of gushing over his grave. But he has pretty well passed out of mind now. Even the Morley Hall, at Hackney, is coming under the hammer. For some time past it has been run at a loss, and the trustees have decided to dispose of it. If there is any balance after paying off the mortgage, it will be devoted to "mission work."

We gather from a review, for we have not read the book, that Mr. Guy Thorne, the author of a new novel entitled *When it Was Dark*, is anxious to compete with Mr. Hall Caine and Miss Marie Corelli in exploiting sentimental Christianity. The leading character in this novel is a millionaire who hates Christianity because he fears it may be true. He carries on a campaign against it through the platform and the press. He also hires a Palestine explorer to go to the Holy Land and fake an inscription to show that Jesus Christ never rose from the dead. On the walls of a Jewish tomb he places the inscription: "I, Joseph of Arimathea, took the body of Jesus the Nazarene from the tomb where it was first laid and hid it in this place." This inscription is immediately accepted as genuine by the majority of the world. Christianity thus becomes practically wiped out—and with awful consequences. Morality dissolves, crime multiplies, the remaining Christians are massacred everywhere, war is in the general air, and Consols drop to 85. This is too much even for the faith of the *Daily News*. It opines that people might act decently if Christianity disappeared; at least, habit would carry them along for a good while; and even on the morning of the Last Day, our contemporary says, the milkman and the postman would go their rounds as usual, while men will put on clean shirts, and ladies "take a final glance in the looking-glass, before appearing at the seat of judgment."

Now for the cream of this elaborate joke. The forgery is finally detected; and when the mob find they have been deceived, and that Christianity is true, they thirst for the blood of the forger and storm his house. "This is a fine touch," the *Daily News* says, "and true to life." A frank but a damaging admission! Perhaps, after all, Mr. Guy Thorne is a sly humorist, and has written *When It Was Dark* in order to show up this too common characteristic of inflamed Christian charity.

Mr. W. H. Lever, of Port Sunlight, appears to spend a lot of money in promoting superstition. He is now building a new Congregational church there at a cost of £25,000. It will be handed over to the Congregational Union of England and Wales. Should the premises ever be required for business purposes, Mr. Lever will repurchase them at a sum of not less than £50,000, which the trustees will have to expend upon similar property on another site in the town. We wish some wealthy Freethinker would come along and put down the money to build a Secular Hall in a good part of London. The worst of it is, of course, that it pays in the long run to build temples of superstition, while there is no profit to the donor in building temples of freethought.

Passive Resisters at Leicester hissed the magistrates on making their appearance on the bench. Later on there were cries of "Shame" and what a friendly report calls "the utmost disorder." One begins to understand the inwardness of the Nonconformist Conscience.

Dr. Clifford sent one of his numerous telegrams to a Passive Resistance meeting in the Congregational Church at Chingford. "We must put liberty and justice," he said, "before everything." The recipient of this telegram was Mr. John Boardman. We believe this is the West Ham gentleman, so well known for his religious bigotry, and for his crusade against the *Freethinker* being placed on the Free Library tables. These people have odd notions of "liberty and justice."

A "Country Parson" writes to the *Times* advocating a new form of Passive Resistance. He says he has a strong and conscientious objection to war, and he intends to refuse payment of the proportion of the King's taxes which he calculates would go the maintenance of the Army and Navy. "I know," he adds, "that I shall be sold up to pay the deficiency, but my conscience will have been satisfied." We presume this is a satirical dig at the Passive Resisters, and not a bad one either.

Nonconformist organs publish lists of local committees under the Education Act. They complain that the committees are swamped with Anglicans, while Dissenters are in a very woeful minority. Other sections of the community, of course, do not matter. Injustice is only real when Nonconformists are the sufferers.

We are delighted to hear that the National Free Church Council election fund is going on healthily, after starting with a promise of £5,000 by Mr. W. P. Hartley, J.P. The object of the fund is to assist Free Churchmen to stand as parliamentary candidates at the forthcoming General Election. We look forward to a fine fight between Dissenters and Churchmen in the political arena. The more they quarrel the better for Freethought.

Mr. Macnamara is so enamored of his statement in the *Schoolmaster*, referred to in our last number, as to the abolition of religious instruction in schools depriving "the most valuable instrument he possesses for the inculcation of morality and the development of men and woman," that he repeats it in the current issue verbatim. Well, we have only to repeat what we said last week; that either Mr. Macnamara is not aware of what the majority of teachers think on the subject, or he is playing his cards with an eye to the Nonconformist vote at the next election. And we think that, if he threw open the columns of the *Schoolmaster* for a frank expression of opinion from teachers, he would find that his view is shared but by a small minority of the profession. It is to be regretted that a paper like the *Schoolmaster* should play into the hands of the real enemies of educational advancement in this manner.

We are glad, in a certain sense, to see Dr. Hopkinson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester, protesting so vehemently against "religious tests" being imposed on teachers and schoolmasters. This is half the theory of Secular Education, but it is not of much use without the other half. Dr. Hopkinson ought to have the sagacity to see that while religion is taught religious tests are inevitable. The idea that a teacher should be free to give a pupil anything he pleases as religious instruction is simply ridiculous. If a certain tune has to be played it is necessary to be sure that the musician knows it.

Archdeacon Wilson, of Manchester, has been pointing this out in a recent address. We differ from him altogether, but he is logical, just as we are. He said it was awful hypocrisy, for instance, if members of the teaching profession taught little children what they themselves did not believe. Dr. Clifford and his friends, however, would put up with that rather than have their fetish Bible banished from the schools.

Lord Wolesley is a good Christian, but he does not believe, as Christ said, that whosoever taketh the sword shall perish by the sword. On the contrary, he says that the sword of England must "always be kept sharp and ready for use" in India. Of himself he says: "All through my life—sinner as I have been—I trusted implicitly in God's providence; I believed He watched over me, and intended me for some important work." Failing to rescue Gordon, for instance, or capturing King Coffee's umbrella.

A man fell into a disused pit near the mining village of Bucknall, North Staffordshire, and as they could not get him out the burial service was read at the pit-mouth by two clergymen, who used the form of burial at sea, and chanted the words "We commit this body to the deep." As the man had been in the pit for a fortnight, he was probably dead; but it was impossible to be certain, and the men of God *may* have "buried" him alive!

Jesus Christ is said to have founded the religion of love. Myriads of preachers say so every Sunday, and a lot of them are paid by the State to say it. Moreover, England is declared to be the most Christian country in the world. And what is the result? A man has just been sent to gaol at Scarborough for a week. He was once a prosperous tradesman in the town, but he came down in the world and was starving; and in that condition he took a turnip out of a field and ate it ravenously. "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven." Old Nick must be laughing like anything in hell. He never cracked so good a joke himself.

Mr. George Harwood, M.P., has turned theological lecturer. His latest religious address was delivered on Sunday afternoon in the Bury Theatre. According to the report in the local press, he dealt with it from various points of view, but never once as the Word of God. We do not, therefore, care to answer him. So much of what he urged is a mere matter of personal taste and opinion. No doubt Mr. Harwood's object was to prop up a tottering book. But the only way to prop it up, in the long run, is to make good its claim to divine inspiration. Its character as a human production is not a religious question at all, but a purely literary one. Consequently, we hold that Mr. Harwood misunderstands the problem at issue; for we should be sorry to think he was humbugging his audience.

The Rev. T. L. Withington, of Keighley, who has just had to apologise for giving publicity to a false story about the late Charles Bradlaugh, has since been telling the Mayor's luncheon party that "the French Assembly declared that henceforth there was no God." We invite the reverend gentleman to give the date of this declaration—and the sooner the better.

Really the Bishop of London is a remarkable personality. A religious contemporary gravely records the fact that when going round his diocese he makes it "a rule to shake hands with Church workers of every degree." The picture is quite a touching one! And how these Church workers of "every degree" must treasure up the recollection of a handshake with a real live bishop! One can imagine some of them refraining from soap and water for fear of washing off the episcopal influence. *Per contra*, the same journal records the story of another bishop, who, having to meet a body of Church workers, said to them: "It is quite impossible for me to shake hands with you all, so I will shake hands with your vicar." And "nearly every one of these workers returned home disappointed."

Mr. Joseph Shayler, in the *Book Monthly*, gives a new reason why young authors in search of titles should attend church. He says if they follow carefully the hymns and lessons and readings they are almost certain to find what they want. Well, if this is all they are to go to church for, it strikes us that they could get the same result by reading the Prayer-book and Bible at home. It is curious, too, the reasons that people do give for attending church. Some go for a rest, others for social intercourse, others to study fashions, others to get hints for novels. About the only people who think people ought to go for religion is the clergy, and as they run the business their opinion is not quite disinterested.

The *Chicago Chronicle* thinks it is a great blessing to the country that Rockefeller is a religious man, for if he were not it is afraid he might have turned out to be a bad man. The *Omaha World-Herald* thinks that in view of the fact that Rockefeller has corrupted Congress and legislatures, ruined scores of men in business, and grabbed everything in sight, it would be difficult for him to be any worse than he is. It thinks that while he kneels at the foot of the cross he worships the impenitent thief. On the other hand, were he an Agnostic or Atheist, it thinks he would have been a better man. "As a rule," it says, "the Atheist or the Agnostic is a generous and honest man, having high concern for the duty he owes to his fellows, and however much we may question the judgment of the man who refuses to accept the testimony of the stars, it is safe to say that among the conspicuous Atheists or famous Agnostics of the world there have been few who could have been persuaded to adopt the

merciless policy by which John D. Rockefeller has grown rich."—"Truthseeker" (*New York*).

What an egoistic thing is religion! General Booth is making the most of his recent bereavement. He publicly thanks the senders of the "expressions of sympathy and regard that are flowing in upon me from all parts of the world." *Upon me* is distinctly good. Not a word about *others*. The "General" ventures even to call this life a "strange dispensation." That is because he has just lost a daughter. As though plenty of other men did not lose daughters too! However, the "General" still feels that "God is good." William Booth is still going strong, anyhow. There's a lot of consolation in that.

Evangelist Torrey seems to be outstaying his welcome in this country. First of all Ian Maclaren (the Rev. John Watson, of Liverpool) went for him by pointing out that the large audiences were simply humbug, inasmuch as they were made up of people who belonged to the various Churches. Then a Dundee minister let the cat out of the bag by saying that the "converts" were all young children, and the doctrines taught there were untrue and uncivilised. Next, the Rev. Moeur Sime, of Huddersfield, publicly denounced Torrey's teaching that all who reject Christ "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Finally, the *Christian World* regrets that Churches should employ a man who uses this kind of "Evangelical barbarism," which it hoped was a thing of the past.

We are, of course, pleased to see that this teaching is recognised as barbarism; but what we desire to point out is that this was the staple teaching of all branches of Christianity for many hundreds of years, until the sceptical attack made Christians ashamed of it. It can claim as great a consensus of authoritative opinion on its behalf as any other single dogma. And why limit the expression "barbarism" to this one belief? Is not all Christianity and all religion, in ultimate analysis, barbarism? What better warranty has the *Christian World* for its belief in a soul, or a God, or in any other item of supernaturalism, than the fact that it was brought into existence by savages, and has been handed down to succeeding generations, as we have various rudimentary physical organs, indications of the primitive conditions of the race? The belief in hell is given up first because it comes into strong conflict with a civilised human nature. But the belief in heaven is bound to decay, for the reason that this one is only the reverse of the other. No one ever wanted to get into the Christian heaven except for the reason that he wished to keep out of the Christian hell. The belief in a future life is, in fact, losing its force, just as the belief in God is becoming a mild speculation. The truth is that these beliefs have all exerted power *because* of the terror of the after-life, and with the removal of that terror they are bound to gradually disappear. Certainly Torrey's preaching is uncivilised, but so is all religious preaching once we strip it of its fine feathers and its meaningless phrases, and look at it squarely in the light of history and anthropology.

There is no mistaking the barbarity of most of Torrey's utterances. Here is a specimen of about a dozen similar stories told in the course of a single sermon in Manchester. A lady had "started for heaven," but her husband induced her to turn back. One Saturday night she was playing cards. She played until the Sabbath broke, and then she rose from her chair, put her hand to her head, and dropped down dead. "She is now," says Torrey, in "a dark place of hopeless despair," crying out to her husband, "I loved you upon earth, and hate you now." It is really idle to mince words with a preacher who can stuff his addresses full of stories of this description. The man is lying—wilfully and persistently lying. And the man who can add to such lies the coarse brutalities he does add, is unfit to stand before a civilised audience. Nevertheless, we hope he will keep on, for he is, in his way, a fine object-lesson of what an immoral, barbarous thing Christianity is when it is unchecked by the civilising influences of modern culture.

Blackburn has at least one man of God who feels competent to answer, and even abolish, Professor Haeckel. This man of God's name is Joseph Farquhar, and he holds forth in the Baptist Church, Montague-street. Beginning a series of sermons on *The Riddle of the Universe*, Mr. Farquhar took for his text "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Is there not something exquisitely amusing to see this preacher parading Haeckel as a fool and himself as a philosopher?

Oh, wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us.

Mr. Farquhar proved his fitness to answer Haeckel by adding some absurd lines from Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler to the stupid insolence of the Psalmist.

He proved that Hope was all a lie,
And Faith a form of bigotry,
And Love a snare that caught him;
Then thought to comfort human tears
By sundry ill-conditioned sneers
At things his mother taught him.

This seems the be-all and end-all of Mr. Farquhar's faith. He sticks to what his mother taught him. But if he were to think a bit, and carry his mind backward, he would see that if somebody had not tried to improve on what his mother taught him the first savage religions the world ever saw would still be holding the field.

Perhaps it is all right to break away from what your mother taught you up to the point of agreeing with Mr. Farquhar. To go beyond *him* is the crime.

Mr. Farquhar takes quite a professional view of this subject. He sees in the spread of unbelief the cause of the "deterioration of morals" which is all around us. Amongst these *deteriorations* he includes Sabbath-breaking in general, and Sunday concerts in particular; that is, things that tend to draw people away from church, and spoil the preachers' business.

According to Mr. Farquhar "the world was once chaotic." Yes, the Bible says so, but what does Science know of "chaos"? Scientifically, there was as much "law and order" in the infancy of the world as there is now. The "chaos" never existed except in preachers' brains.

We note that Mr. Farquhar announced his intention to devote his next sermon to man and his relation to the apes; but it occurs to us that the reverend gentleman might deal more effectively, and even authoritatively, on man's relation to a more familiar quadruped.

There was some pretty tall lying somewhere in connection with the Free Trade meeting in the Birmingham Town Hall on the 10th inst. According to the *Daily News*, no people were allowed to congregate outside the hall, the audience inside cheered the organist when he appeared at 6.30, and then there "was scarcely an audible word" until the speaking began at seven o'clock. The speeches were listened to quietly, with the exception of one or two interruptions, and the meeting began and ended in perfect order. According to the *Daily Express*, the time between the appearance of the organist and the opening of the speaking was taken up by the "vigorous rendering" of patriotic choruses, several windows of the Town Hall were broken, five or six thousand people had assembled outside, and brought such pressure upon the barriers that had been erected that the police were compelled to shore them up with additional beams; the chairman was greeted with "groans, hoots, and hisses"; and the speeches were all delivered amid a running fire of interruptions. We do not say which report is the most accurate, but the two together are a fine example of what dependence is to be placed upon the ordinary newspaper reports.

The *Daily News* is "startled by the following mysterious paragraph" in a new paper (which we have not seen) called the *Hypnotist*:-

"According to a foreign religious journal, Dr. Lightfoot, Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, has spent much time during the last fifteen years in an endeavor to ascertain the exact date of Adam's birth, and has at last solved the problem. After making thousands of calculations he has discovered that Adam was born at 9 o'clock on the morning of October 23rd, in the year 4004 B.C. That this is the exact date, he says, can be proved to the satisfaction of any scientist. He is now engaged in determining the exact date of the birth of Eve, and is confident that he will be able to do so within the next few years."

A little more knowledge of religious literature would have enabled the *D. N.* to see that this is a satire on Dr. Lightfoot, a seventeenth century divine, who so precisely determined the date of creation.

"Protection" goes to great lengths in Germany. Lieutenant Bilsle has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment and dismissal from the Army for having published a novel giving an unflattering picture of life in a small garrison town. This is on a par with sending people to prison for suggesting the Emperor William may not be the wisest, best, and handsomest man who ever lived.

The *Daily Mirror*, the newspaper for women, is treating its readers to "Sermonettes." The first was written by the Archdeacon of London, and was of the good old sloppy variety. One expression was rather unfortunate. The

preacher talked about reclaiming the vicious, and "driving out the evil spirits from the criminal." What "evil spirits" did he mean? Those that played the devil with the Gadarene swine? Or Old Tom and Irish whiskey?

The sermonetter indulged in the common soft clap-trap about Kingdom-Come. "Beyond the veil," he said, "there is a good time coming, when all inequalities will be made even, all poverty forgotten, all misunderstandings cleared up, all sorrow cheered, and when tears will be wiped away from off all faces." He might as well have talked of wiping noses as of wiping faces. What faces will there be in the grave—or beyond it?

While we are writing this paragraph a dreadful act of sacrilege is going on at Ramsey, Isle of Man. Mr. Hall Caine is being opposed by Mr. Kermodé, and we hear that a close struggle is expected. This is really shocking. Mr. Caine is such a close personal friend of Jesus Christ that it is little, if anything, short of blasphemy to attack his seat in the Manx parliament. Mr. Kermodé must be a very bold bad man. Where does he expect to go when he dies?

Mr. Tom Bryan, ex-Mayor of Southwark, and Sub-Warden of the Browning Settlement, Walworth, has accepted an invitation from Mr. George Cadbury to undertake duties in connection with the Six Cross Ways Mission, Bourneville. He will devote a portion of his time, we read, among the adult schools of Birmingham. It appears that "a spirit of materialism and rationalism has revealed itself in some of the schools." Mr. Bryan hopes to stop this. Mrs. Partington hoped to stop the Atlantic.

Jesus Christ.

(BY COLONEL INGERSOLL.)

For many centuries and by many millions of people Christ has been worshipped as God. Millions and millions of eulogies on his character have been pronounced by priest and layman, in all of which his praises were measured only by the limitations of language—words were regarded as insufficient to paint his perfections.

In his praise it was impossible to be extravagant. Sculptor, poet and painter exhausted their genius in the portrayal of the peasant, who was, in fact, the creator of all worlds.

His wisdom excited the wonder, his sufferings the pity and his resurrection and ascension the astonishment of the world.

He was regarded as perfect man and infinite God. It was believed that in the Gospels was found the perfect history of his life, his words and works, his death, his triumph over the grave and his return to heaven. For many centuries his perfection, his divinity—have been defended by sword and fire.

By the altar was the scaffold—in the cathedral, the dungeon—the chamber of torture.

The story of Christ was told by mothers to their babes. For the most part his story was the beginning and end of education. It was wicked to doubt—infamous to deny.

Heaven was the reward for belief and hell the destination of the denier.

All the forces of what we call society were directed against investigation. Every avenue to the mind was closed. On all the highways of thought Christians placed posts and boards, and on the boards were the words "No Thoroughfare," "No Crossing." The windows of the soul were darkened—the doors were barred. Light was regarded as the enemy of mankind.

During these Christian years faith was rewarded with position, wealth and power. Faith was the path to fame and honour. The man who investigated was the enemy, the assassin of souls. The creed was barricaded on every side, above it were the glories of heaven—below were the agonies of hell. The soldiers of the cross were strangers to pity. Only traitors to God were shocked by the murder of an unbeliever. The true Christian was a savage. His virtues were ferocious, and compared with his vices were beneficent. The drunkard was a better citizen than the saint. The libertine and prostitute were far nearer human, nearer moral than those who pleased God by persecuting their fellows.

The man who thought, and expressed his thoughts, died in a dungeon—on the scaffold or in flames.

The sincere Christian was insane. His one object was to save his soul. He despised all the pleasures of sense. He believed that his nature was depraved and that his desires were wicked.

He fasted and prayed—deserted his wife and children—inflicted tortures on himself and sought by pain endured to gain the crown.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

November 29, Queen's Hall.
December 6, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton. November 22, South Shields.
- H. ROUND.—Your composition has merit from the point of view of conception, but the execution is defective. You cannot expect to become a good writer all at once. Success means long perseverance. The best pens spoil a lot of paper in their apprenticeship.
- W. GODWIN.—Pleased to hear you so much like the *Pioneer*. We are debating, however, whether it should be continued in the new year. Perhaps some other readers will give us their opinion on this point. What with the boycott, of which we have several times complained, and other difficulties to some extent connected therewith, we are dubious whether it will, after all, serve the purpose we intended. It was to bear an unaggressive title, be loaded by no unpopular names, and published at a penny, in the hope that it would thus carry advanced principles amongst the general public, and even serve as a kind of tender to the bigger *Freethinker*. If there is no likelihood of its doing this, we should hardly be disposed to go on doing a lot of work for it, and all gratuitously. Up to the present all contributors to the *Pioneer* have been engaged on a pure labor of love.
- OLD READER.—We quite agree with you that a good yearly Index to the *Freethinker* is very desirable, but it would involve considerable labor which we could not undertake, and some expense which we could not incur. We do not believe enough copies of the Index would be sold to cover the cost of production.
- T. A. STEMPPEL.—Thanks. But the Swedenborgians, or Church of the New Jerusalem, are a harmless sect, and hardly worth our critical attention while so many rampageous Christians are about. Swedenborg himself was a great man and a bit of a lunatic. His followers pay most attention to his work in the latter capacity.
- H. C. SHACKLETON.—See "Sugar Plums." Glad you think our article on "Gladstone and Ingersoll" was "splendid." We note that your own experience bears out our warning to Freethinkers against trusting Christians—as Christians.
- E. M. VANCE, secretary, acknowledges with thanks 10s. from H. Wood towards the expenses of the Stratford Town Hall demonstration.
- N. D.—Thanks for a sight of the letter. It is a good one, and should be of service to the cause.
- G. WEIR.—Mr. Foote has written you and the others concerned.
- J. HALLIWELL.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- R. T. NICHOLS sends a second guinea to the Cohen Presentation Fund, which he says "does not grow quite as fast as I should like."
- R. H. WOOD.—Thanks for your encouraging letter, and for a notification of what you have written to Mr. Gott with respect to our projected visit to Leeds, where we hope you will introduce yourself at one of the meetings. We understand that the Voltaire volumes are delayed in transit from America.
- D. P. SWEETLAND suggests that Mr. Washburn's lecture on "Jesus: A Man Made from the Old Testament" should be reprinted in pamphlet form, and offers to take 50 copies if this is done.
- S. C. HINFORD.—Mr. Foote will write you.
- E.—Sorry that bigotry makes it dangerous to let your name be printed. Glad to have your opinion that the *Freethinker* is "splendid."
- T. H.—(1) You overlooked the verbal trick. Drummond was quite right in saying that "No single fact in Science has ever discredited a fact in Religion." This is a truism. One fact cannot discredit another fact. But facts in Science have certainly discredited religious doctrines. Darwinism, for instance, has knocked the "science" of Genesis into smithereens, and reduced the Creation Story to a fairy-tale. (2) In spite of your reverend friend's comment, we do not withdraw a word of our article on "Gladstone and Ingersoll." We meant it to be unpleasant reading for Christians—but it is the truth.
- COHEN PRESENTATION FUND.—Dr. R. T. Nichols (second sub.) £1 1s., R. H. Wood £1 1s., F. Garraway 2s. 6d., R. Lancaster 10s., John Ferguson 10s., James Thompson 2s. 6d., E. 5s.
- F. S.—Thanks for the cuttings.
- M. L. S.—See "Acid Drops."
- C. D. STEPHENS.—Cuttings are always welcome.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for the cuttings.
- J. W. TAYLOR.—We will look into it.
- A. G. LYE.—We are glad to see your letter in the *Coventry Herald*. The Rev. W. E. Blomfield will have some trouble in answering it.
- A. WEBBER.—Thanks.
- 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. 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.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote is fortunately not lecturing to-day. He will be glad of the opportunity to be free from travelling and platform work for a week or so. He got through his task at South Shields with considerable difficulty, the relics of his recent cold being reinforced by a sudden attack of a lowering complaint with which he is unfamiliar. Only the services of a medical friend enabled him to get through his task at all, and the severe exertion in a state of temporary weakness was very distressing. Happily he is otherwise in fairly good bodily condition, and a little rest from lecturing, together with an extra dose of fresh air, will probably set him right again. He was very anxious to fulfil the engagements he had made, and went rather further than prudence dictated. None have been broken, however, and all he asks is any indulgence that may be necessary from his friends in relation to this week's *Freethinker*, which he had to resume work upon immediately on his return from South Shields.

The first of the three special Freethought lectures in the Empire Palace Theatre, South Shields, was delivered by Mr. Foote on Sunday evening, the chair being occupied by Mr. S. M. Peacock. The seats to which admission was by priced ticket were far better patronised than the free seats. Friends were present from Newcastle, Jarrow, Sunderland, and other places in the neighborhood. Two came all the way from Haltwhistle, in Cumberland. The lecture was much appreciated and heartily applauded. We hope the enthusiasm will survive and help to fill the Theatre on the second and third evenings of the series.

Mr. Cohen takes the second of the South Shields lectures this evening (Nov 22). He is well known in the district, and his friends will probably flock in to hear him. Mr. John Lloyd takes the last lecture, and the local Freethinkers will certainly avail themselves of the opportunity to see and hear the latest accession to the Freethought platform.

The Freethought Demonstration on Tuesday evening, November 10, in the Stratford Town Hall, was a great success. There was a crowd of people present, and vigorous and much-applauded speeches were made by Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Cohen, John Lloyd, and F. A. Davies. Councillor MacAllen officiated as chairman. This fine gathering was held under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, and it is hoped that arrangements may be made for a course of Sunday evening lectures in the Stratford Town Hall before the winter season closes.

The common press of this country never gives a line to the successes of Freethought. Mr. Foote may address two or three thousand people in the Birmingham Town Hall and it will be passed over in silence. But any apparent mishap soon goes the round of the newspapers. During the last week or so they have been chronicling the sale of the Secular Hall, at New Brompton, a place which closed after a long period of decay. We are not at all satisfied that this is an important sign of the decadence of Secularism. We shall make a statement on the matter before very long, and our readers will then understand why the case is not at all alarming.

Mr. John Lloyd had good meetings at Birmingham on Sunday, and a most enthusiastic reception. All were pleased with him, the universal opinion being that he was a valuable acquisition to our movement. Credit was given him also for his courage in joining our ranks. After the evening meeting the chairman, Mr. Fathers, referred to the death of Mrs. Daniel Baker, and spoke in high terms of the generous interest she had always taken in the Branch. A unanimous vote of condolence was passed to Miss Baker.

Mr. John Lloyd lectures again at the Queen's Hall this evening (Nov. 22). The man and his subject will doubtless attract a good audience.

The members of the Peel Institute, Clerkenwell, whilst primarily advocating Christianity, appear to be doing good secular work by providing the young men of the neighborhood with a club house, and arranging cricket, football, cycling, and other sports. It also has a Literary and Debating Class. On Friday evening last, at the invitation of the secretary, Mr. F. A. Davies, representing the N. S. S., opened a debate on "The Bible in Schools." Mr. Davies dealt with

his subject in a spirited manner, and had the satisfaction of hearing some of his opponents—of whom there were several—declare themselves in favor of Secular Education. A vote of thanks was unanimously carried, and it was intimated that another speaker would be welcomed on a future occasion. Several local Secularists were present.

The Leeds police continue their persecution of the Secularists who fondly imagine that they have, or ought to have, the same rights as their fellow citizens. Here in London the County Council has the sense to let all bodies sell literature and take up collections at meetings held at the place set apart for such assemblies. The Leeds Town Council *discriminates*. It says you must ask "permission," and then grants it to some bodies and refuses it to others—which is simply a Russian censorship in "free" England. This the Secularists have rightly refused to submit to, and the police have summoned them again and again, in spite of the plain hints of the Stipendiary, who is a gentleman of intelligence and impartiality. Mr. J. W. Gott and Mr. E. Pack have been summoned more than once. Mr. George Weir has just been fined again. Mr. Ben Scott, a Socialist, has also been prosecuted for selling a Labor pamphlet at "the Freethinkers' meeting." Refusing to pay the costs as ordered, we understand that he took the two days' imprisonment in default—which legally should mean one night's imprisonment. We hear that fresh summonses are flying about, and we conclude that the Leeds police (or their chief officer) are the biggest set of interfering fools in this kingdom. We include Ireland.

Mr. E. Pack informs us that he has been served with a summons for "blasphemy," returnable on November 24. The rock of offence is a Cartoon, with accompanying letter-press, which appeared in the October number of the *Truth-seeker*; both being reproduced, by the way, without our sanction or knowledge, from an old (1888) number of the *Freethinker*. Had our consent been asked we should have refused it. The cartoons had served their turn and done their work. We were ready to defend them when we printed them, and this is all that can be expected of the responsible editor of a weekly paper. We certainly feel under no sort of obligation to be answerable for them, when reproduced in other papers without our permission, the best part of twenty years afterwards. Nevertheless, since we regard "blasphemy" as a "crime" created by bigotry, we shall do what we can to resist any attack upon the freedom of the press under such pretences; and we have answered Mr. Pack's letter privately in this spirit; indeed, we have only made the foregoing statement in order that our own position in this matter may not be misrepresented.

We print a letter this week from an Atheist Passive-Resister, who has frequently been in prison for refusing to pay "the poor-rate" on grounds which we do not quite understand, but which we daresay are quite "conscientious." If he goes to prison again, as he expects, and gets into trouble over attending chapel, we hope he will insist on communicating with us. We were taken to task for speaking of our own imprisonment for "blasphemy" as having taken place "in a Christian gaol." But it certainly was a Christian gaol, and so must Mr. Kensett's prison have been, if he was punished for declining to attend "divine service."

We have missed the *Yarmouth Mercury* for some weeks, and have therefore been unable to follow the discussion initiated, on the Freethought side, by Mr. J. W. de Caux. Last week's number, which duly arrived, does not contain a contribution from his pen. Two long-winded Christian letters invite the readers' attention, one of the writers being a mere mountebank. There is also an official note from the Christian Evidence Society, stating that the Rev. C. L. Engström is "very ill," which, of course, we regret. Perhaps we shall find a letter from Mr. de Caux next week.

Our contributor, Gerald Grey, on his recent birthday received from appreciative friends and comrades a handsome gold watch, a silver Queen Anne tea service, a beautiful cane, mounted in ivory and gold, and numerous birthday cards.

We beg to call attention to the *Pioneer* once more. The November number contains some noticeable articles—especially the Editor's on "Passive Resisters" and Julian's on "The Trade in Children." There is the usual supply of telling paragraphs under the head of "Matters and Musings," the lady contributor who writes as "La Pensée" has some interesting paragraphs for women, and there is a brief article by a new contributor on "Nunquam" and Secularism." Other items, which we do not catalogue, combine to render

this number of the *Pioneer* one that might be pushed around with benefit to the Secular movement.

There was a crowded meeting of the Humanitarian League at Essex Hall, Strand, on Thursday night (Nov. 12), when a discussion on Vivisection opened with the reading of a paper by Edward Carpenter, in which it was maintained (1) that a great amount of pain is yearly inflicted by vivisection; (2) that while the scientific results of vivisection are considerable, great medical advances have been made by rational and hygienic methods; (3) that vivisection, while contributing little to our knowledge, violates what is still more valuable, our sense of sympathy and kinship with sentient fellow-creatures; (4) that the science of the future will altogether discard such methods of research as are based on animal torture. Among those who took part in the debate were Mr. George Greenwood, Mr. George Bernard Shaw, and Mr. J. Frederick Green. Mr. Carpenter's paper will be published in the *Humane Review*.

Some weeks ago we drew attention to an absurd story about Charles Bradlaugh's "carrying on" in a storm while sailing to one of the Channel Islands. The details all proved to be ridiculous when Charles Bradlaugh's daughter hunted up, in an old volume of the *National Reformer*, her father's own printed account of his visit to Guernsey; and, as he only visited Guernsey once, and never visited another Channel island, there is absolutely no room for doubt or discussion. As luck would have it, the night was not stormy, but beautiful with clear moonlight. And thus "Bradlaugh in the storm" went the way of so many other phantasies. Mr. H. C. Shackleton, who wrote to us on the matter, now informs us that Mr. Withington has unreservedly withdrawn his "true story" of Charles Bradlaugh. The reverend gentleman told his congregation that he was sorry he had given publicity to what he had subsequently learnt to be untrue. So far so good. All's well that ends well. And we dare say it will be a lifelong lesson to Mr. Withington; although it will probably not deter some of his brethren from committing the same offence.

The Power of Humbug.

THE list of religious prophets and humbugs is a long one, from the Babylonian and Egyptian priests down through all the saviors and redeemers and restorers, Confucius and Buddha and Moses and Abraham and Isaiah and Christ and Mohammed and Joe Smith and Swedenborg and Swartwout and Noyes and Mother Ann Lee and General Booth and Mrs. Eddy and Schlatter and Mnason Huntsman and Sandford and George Jacob Schweinfurth and Cyrus R. Teed and John Dowie and John the Baptist the Second and uncounted half-insane and all self-deluded and mind-warped enthusiasts. Each one thinks he is the only real thing, and that the others are patent frauds. We have Parkhurst, the prophet of the poke-your-nose-into-other-folks'-business society, telling Dowie he is twisted in his mind, when he himself is preaching the same superstition; they all scout Buddha and Confucius and Joe Smith and Mohammed; Noyes is dead, and damned by them all; Mother Lee is but a memory; the iconoclast Jesus is the foundation-stone of the hugest system of religious imposture in the occident; and Mother Eddy and John Dowie, right under the nose of Twentieth Century Civilisation, are erecting superstitious edifices which bid fair to rival the system of Joe Smith, if not to twist the whole Christian system.

How do they do it? What is there in human nature which demands to be humbugged? Why are men always seeking some superstition in which to believe? Why do they delude themselves and others with speculations impossible of a coherent description, not to speak of demonstration? Why the saviors and the prophets? Did the cave man have them? Will they be always with us? Will man never face the facts of existence, accept the known and the knowable, and tell the prophets of the unknown and unknowable to bring their proofs with their importunities?

Gentle teachers like Buddha and Confucius we can read with profit and cherish as the good side of humanity; but they filled their pupils with superstition just the same. Such militant fellows as Mohammed and Christ and John Dowie are pesti-

ferous drags on progress. Mohammed killed his enemies, Christ consigned them to hell, and Dowie has a policeman eject them from the hall. Mrs. Eddy has her Man Friday write to the newspapers about them. The people accept their doom, and proceed forthwith to hunt up another prophet upon whom to bestow their reverence, their money, and their brains. One prophet down and another come on. Joe Smith's followers own a State or two. Mrs. Eddy has found in her humbug the purse of Fortunatus. Dowie has a city worth \$35,000,000, and he owns sixty-three per cent. of it. The exploiters of Christ's memory own the earth.

Van Buren Denslow used to say that anybody could start a religion if he would but base it upon something about which there could absolutely nothing ever be known. He reasoned from history. Auguste Comte failed because we can know something of humanity, and the mind of man is not capable of sufficiently idealising it to make it take the place of God, which is an ideal with no foundation, and consequently capable of sustaining innumerable conceptions and unending description and discussion.

Mrs. Eddy supplements her New Testament superstition with the materialistic power of mind to affect matter—a result affecting the cause. The Salvation Army supplements it with a band and carries its point with a hurrah, as great bodies of men are led in politics. Dowie uses both. And more than these. He appeals to color, to art, to dramatic effects. He borrows from the Catholic Church as well as from the Christian Scientists and the Salvation Army. In his services he uses the Apostles' Creed and the Te Deum Laudamus. He dresses in Episcopal robes. His choir chants the Lord's Prayer in a way to bring the superstitious to their knees. He speaks a few words and the choir sustains him with a volume of harmony. The music and the ceremonial get the audience enthusiastic, as a brass band booms a stupid political harangue. "Ladies and gentlemen," says the orator, "hurrah for our candidate; let the band strike up," and the people vote that way. "Our Father who art in heaven," chants the choir, and the congregation sees the Ancient of Days seated on a cloud with his fingers in his woolly hair. They are taken out of themselves.

If Dowie had the power of Moody, or if Moody had had the organising ability of Dowie, either one of them could turn the heads of a continent of people. With the paraphernalia of Dowie behind him Ingersoll could have made Christians tear down a church. Dowie's weak point is himself: he is no orator; he is coarse, vindictive, arrogant, domineering, blackguardly in speech, and he wins only the non-intellectual. In the thousands he brought to New York, women and men, there are but a few with the clear eyes through which intellect is seen. The overseers or deacons are as slavishly obsequious as the guards, but one can fancy them serving with tongues in cheeks. The guards are born idiots. In their peaked caps and bobbed uniforms they look like monkeys, and they would all have to be directed to shelter in a rainy season. The elderly women look like the sectarians of Revelation. The fresh young women from seventeen to twenty are the only leaven in the mass, and they do not know any better than to be led. They may grow out of it; the others are hopeless. Intellectually Dowie's people belong in the rear ranks of the Salvation Army. Dowie whips them about as a trainer of animals directs his menagerie. A harmless fellow told a squeaking voiced Bible reader that he could not understand him, and Dowie shrieked in his loudest shriek, with extended arm, like Jove directing the lightning, "Officer, put that man out." The audience applauded him. Carrie Nation, on the same night, raised a rumpus, and he wheedled the old lady. The audience applauded her; they would have listened to her as readily as to him. His choir saved Dowie. Sometimes he wears a surplice with broad purple stripes down the front and a yellow one down the back, a mortarboard cap with a gold tassel, cocked over his right eye, and when

he comes forward with that rig on he looks like a turkey-cock. Evenings he wears the regulation dress and looks still more ridiculous. Over the Garden shine enormous electric letters, "John Alexander Dowie." He is the whole show.

When Dowie landed in San Francisco from Australia some twelve years ago, he gathered a corporal's guard in a small hall in that city. With increasing rapidity he gathered followers from the ranks of the ignorant and unthinking. He brought his superstition two-thirds of the way across the continent and built a city on it, as Brigham Young built a state on the superstition of Joe Smith, as Mohammed founded an empire by reconstructing a Jewish myth-book. His intention is to make New York pay tribute to him. Mrs. Eddy has monopolised all the superstition of New England not in the regular churches. Dowie would meet with less success in Boston than here.

Dowie claims to be a divine healer. His deacons cure by laying on of hands and by prayer. The wrist bone of St. Ann cures by having hands laid on it. The persons who go to the miracle shrine are the persons who call on Dowie's deacons and on Mrs. Eddy's healers, and they will be ready for the next healer who comes. There is no health in them, physical or mental. Centuries of superstition have undone them. They are the flotsam and jetsam on that wildest of all seas; they are mental wrecks, aimlessly drifting, till attracted by some larger wreck.

Dowie has brought his pigs to market too near civilisation to last. Noyes, with his Oneida community, did the same. He had to succumb to the general opinion that his superstition was too gross for the time. Dowie's theocracy demands too much of the members. Brigham Young gave his followers opportunity to increase their own wealth; Dowie takes all for himself. What he does not get in tithes he figures to get in rents and unpaid labor. Nobody votes in Zion. The Zionites are theocrats, Dowie is the theos. The superstition of the crusaders has its parallel. Pilgrims steeped in Romish superstition walked bareheaded and barefoot to an empty tomb. Dowie's followers crawl on their bellies to lick his feet.

All this awful degradation of humanity is caused by a saturation of the human brain with religious legends and myths. The Bible, Christianity, the Church, are responsible. But humanity is itself responsible for accepting these things. Fetishism, ancestor worship, ghost worship, God worship—the Ghost of ghosts—man worship, Christolatry, these are the phases of man's progress and downfall. Compared with Dowieism, Eddyism, Mormonism, the ordinary worshippers in the common churches are respectable citizens. Parkhurst writes Dowie that he is ashamed of him as a Christian. It is the pot calling the kettle black. Elijah three is sent by God as much as were Elijah two and one. They were all self-sent, like the Shamrocks three. Dowie never hired women to strip and dance before him, and he does not himself dance before the ark. Dr. Buckley insinuates that he is a lunatic, with megalomania, paranoia, and other twists of the mind. What was John Wesley called? These prophets are all alike. Simon Stylites on his tower was one of them. Why should the followers of Wesley and Simon and the guardians of St. Ann's wrist bone abuse the followers of Dowie?

Dowie is no greater fakir and no less a philosopher than other preachers of supernaturalism. If he is on the moonlit border of insanity, he is not the knave that the man is who, with slow pulse and untouched brain, upholds the system of supernaturalism which is the basis and cause of Dowie's insanity. He believes the Bible more than the orthodox. He takes it literally. They only profess to believe. There is not a sincere word spoken in the churches to-day. For sincerity of Christian faith we must go to the Christian Scientists, the Mormons, the Salvation Army, the Dowieites—the fools for Christ's sake.

Dowie is a religious phenomenon, and a living proof of the power of humbug. Listening to him one is amazed that he should have such control of others, but the amazement is lessened when one looks over those he controls. His is a low kind of superstition, and he gets a low grade of followers. The Mormons are recruited from the most ignorant of Europe. The Eddyites, however, make converts from the best class of churchmen, but the superstition would not appeal to them were not their minds prepared for it by the orthodox Christian superstition, which is the mother of the whole lot of them. That is the superstition which must be destroyed. Dowie is only a pimple on the cheek of the beast.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Devil and the Deity.

A LEGEND.

"The dice of God are always loaded."—EMERSON.

The Devil was deep in thought,
As he studied a note in his hand;
"The meaning," said he,
"Is quite clear to me;
But the motive I *don't* understand."

'Twas a brief and formal note
Requesting his presence in Heaven:
Covers were laid
For two, it said;
And the soup would be served at seven.

A little perplexed was Nick,
But at last he decided to go;
And ordered a vest,
Coat, shirt, and—the rest,
From a leading outfitter below.

His car drew up at the gate,
From within his arrival was seen.
St. Peter said, "Man,
Gie's a grip o' your han'!
Losh, a sicht o' you 's guid for sair c'en!"

(Beg Pardon! "Was Peter a Scot?"
Well, I can't say for certainty; but
When short of a rhyme
And hampered for time,
As well make him Scottish as not).

The dinner was simply superb—
They do those things well up above—
But Nicholas he,
'Tis related to me,
Felt as gay as a Eunuch in love.

As a matter of fact, poor Nick
Was as restive as Primmer at Rome.
The flutter of wings,
The music and things
Made him wish he'd kept quietly at home,

When the cloth was removed, said Jah:
"Do you mind half-an-hour at Ping-Pong?"
Said Nick: "That game
Is so fearfully tame;
And my set have dropped it so long!"

"I move we have musical chairs.
'Twill be fun for the cherubim."
But the cherubim pouted,
And some of them shouted
They didn't expect *that* from him.

"When you shifted your digs," said Jah,
"You left in the wash-hand drawer
Some cards and dice:
I'll see in a trice
If they're still—ah, here they are!"

* On behalf of his friend, the Devil, the author is prepared to apologise to any self-respecting, constitutionally-elected, and democratically-governed body for the subtle but questionable joke concealed in this verse. "Christian Art" usually represents Cherubim as beings with heads and wings only. And it is playing it rather low down to suggest musical chairs as a means of amusement for persons unprovided by nature (or "Christian Art") with the necessary sitting accommodation. This is the only apology offered. For nothing else in the "pome" does the author intend to express his regret. Religious papers please copy.

"Now, suppose you and I, old man,
'Have a lark'—as they say upon Earth.
When the cherubs retire,
In front of the fire
I'll play you for all you are worth."

"Right O!" said Nick. "I'm on—
Though no match for you, I fear!"
(To himself he smiled,
And said: "This child
Has a soft thing on up here!")

When the cherubs had gone to bed—
At, I think, about half-past ten—
Jah and Nick,
At the double-quick,
To the dice-box flew;
And the cubes they threw;
And never a word gave they utterance to,
But, with head bent low,
And eyes aglow,
Each nervously noted the other's throw;
While a torturing gust
Of covetous lust
Swept over the two,
As the dice they threw;
And their eyes would feed
With a grasping greed
On the stakes—which were very high stakes indeed!
For—list to me well
While the truth I tell—
For they'd made of Heaven a gambling-hell;
And they played for the souls of men!

Souls for the cast of a cube!
Who wouldn't indulge in the vice
With such a prize
Before one's eyes?
Souls of every fashion and guise,
From North, South, East, and West,
From every shore and clime;
Brand-new souls, just ready to test,
And souls all sullied with slime.

Black and white and yellow and red,
Of men unborn, and men just dead;
Souls to be used in next year's baking,
Misfit souls, and souls in the making;
Shoals of souls all rotten with age,
Souls of simpleton, saint, and sage,
Souls of babies, shining and bright,
Souls of priests, of a sickly white,
Flabby—of "ancient fish-like smell"—
Reeking of crimes one dare not tell;
Souls of maidens (tinged with red)
Picked from a flowing river's bed.
What a stake
The pile did make!
And the dice-box rattled for their dear sake.

The Devil lost,
Consistently lost,
And doubled his stakes each time he tossed.
Higher and higher,
With brain on fire,
He raised his stakes, and did not tire
Till every soul in Hell that baked
Was ushered up and duly staked,—and lost.
Alas, poor Nick!
'Twas a scurvy trick—
Jah played him with loaded dice.

Cheated—Swindled—Robbed—
Nick rushed to Heaven's gate,
Caught the last car—
"Sirse! There ye are,"
Said Peter, "Gey near ower late!"

Tearing the air to tatters,
Whipping the shrieking wind,
Nick drove through space
With a furious face,
And a curse for the thief behind.

When he viewed his desolate courtways,
His eyes were a trifle wet—
Next morning at nine
He slung out a sign,
And the sign was

HELL
TO LET

F. L. G.

Correspondence.

AN ATHEIST PASSIVE-RESISTER IN PRISON.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have, since 1891, been in prison twelve times for refusing to pay the so-called poor-rate. From the first, I have refused to attend the chapel because I was an Atheist. The rule on the subject when I first went was, that no person should be compelled to attend the service of a church to which he did not belong. But when I went in 1901, after I had been absent for about four years, the then Governor told me I was compelled to go. When I looked at the rules, I found that they had been altered, and now read nearly as follows:—

"If a prisoner of any other church or persuasion than the Established Church specially so requests, the Governor shall permit him to be attended or visited by a minister of that church or persuasion at any reasonable time under rules to be framed by the Commissioners.

"A prisoner who is attended or visited by a minister of a church or persuasion differing from the Established Church shall not be compelled to attend any service except that of the church or persuasion to which he belongs, but subject to this condition every prisoner shall attend divine service on Sundays and on other days when it is performed."

I then specially requested to be visited by my minister, and named you. The Governor did not grant it, as the rule says he shall, but referred to the Commissioners, who refused the request. The Governor again told me I should be compelled to go, and I refused. I was reported for this, and had twenty-four hours' confinement to my cell on bread and water as a punishment. I was then again ordered to go, and again refused; and then the Governor reconsidered the question, and said that I must apply to the Prison Committee of Visiting Justices, next time they came, for permission to absent myself. This I accordingly did, though it was perhaps asking as a favor what ought to be mine by right; and to have to ask permission implies the possibility of refusal. But I was in bad health at the time, and glad of any way out of the difficulty, even if it were a bad one. And, also, I was not sure if you would be able to come, as, of course, I had had no chance of communicating with you, and I should have only made a fool of myself and landed myself in a worse difficulty than before if I had insisted on my right to be visited by my own minister and then the said minister had not visited me.

But I expect to go to prison again about February or March for another couple of months, and if you think you would be able to come and see me, and also if you think it would be advisable for me to do so, I will again apply for permission for you to visit me. I will, of course, pay your railway fare, if you can afford the time.

Of course it is too late now, unless some further action brings it forward, to rake up what occurred three years ago. I applied to the Liberation Society at the time, but I expect, because I was an Atheist, they refused to take it up, although I was a subscriber.

I should say that in 1902, and this year also, when I was in prison, the Visiting Committee again granted my application to be excused attending chapel.

W. W. KENSSETT.

Odds and Ends.

The briefest *exposé* of all the errors of the Bible would require a larger volume than the Bible itself. And yet this book, which contains more errors than any other book in Christendom, is the only book for which Christians claim inferrancy.—*Kemsburg's "The Bible."*

Time was we stoned the Prophets. Ago on age,
When men were strong to save, the world hath slain them.
People are wiser now; they waste no rage—
The Prophets entertain them!

—Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Atheism affirms that there are no gods or goddesses, assuming that God means a personal, extra-mundane personality. This "godless world system" substantially agrees with monism or pantheism of the modern scientist. It is only another expression for it, emphasising its negative aspect, the non-existence of any supernatural deity.—*Ernst Haeckel.*

The Bible, it appears, is only the "word of God," in so far as it is the word of good and wise men. It is not, there-

fore, any more the "word of God" than any other good and wise book written by men. It is no more a "holy" Bible, and no more an inspired book than the *Dialogues of Plato*, or the *Zend-Avesta*, or the works of *Marcus Aurelius*, or *John Ruskin*, or *Buddha*, or *Confucius*.—*Robert Blatchford.*

The church is dead. Snow covers the ground. Silence and heavy misery spread their wings dull against the faces of the people. The church is dead. All the long years of Christianity have come to this? All the preaching and the prayers and the psalm-singing of centuries have come to this? All the rapt outpourings of the soul to God, and hidden yearnings of ages, to this? The church is dead. Snow covers the ground.—*Edward Carpenter.*

To live content with small means; to seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable; wealthy, not rich; to study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly; to listen to stars and birds, to babes and sages, with open heart; to bear all cheerfully, do all bravely, await occasions, hurry never; in a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common—this is my symphony.—*William Ellery Channing.*

When the *Age of Reason* appeared the Church of England people and the Puritans dominated the thought of this land. The clergymen of the first were royalists almost to a man, and hated Paine for political reasons; the parsons of the latter had not become broad enough to tolerate a man who objected to boring the tongues of Quakers and witch-burning as mild religious diversions, no matter what services he had rendered their country and mankind. The author of our liberties was fairly hounded to death by these harpies, and ever since a putrid tide of "Christian" calumny has rolled across his sepulchre.—*W. P. Brann.*

Voltaire's task, however, was never directly political, but spiritual, to shake the foundations of that religious system which professed to be founded on the revelation of Christ. Was he not right? If we find ourselves walking amid a generation of cruel and unjust and darkened spirits, we may be assured that it is their beliefs on what they deem highest that have made them so. There is no counting with certainty on the justice of men who are capable of fashioning and worshiping an unjust divinity, nor on their humanity so long as they incorporate inhuman motives in their most sacred dogma, nor on their reasonableness while they rigorously decline to accept reason as a test of truth.—*John Morley.*

THE LURE.

"What bait do you use?" said a saint to the Devil,
"When you fish where the souls of men abound?"
"Well, for special tastes," said the king of evil,
"Gold and fame are the best I've found."
"But for general use," asked the saint. "Ah, then,"
Said the demon, "I angle for man, not men,
And a thing I hate
Is to change my bait,
So I fish with a woman the whole year round."

—John Boyle O'Reilly.

EVOLUTION.

She sketched a husband strong and brave
On whom her heart might lean;
None but a hero would she have—
This girl of 17.

Her fancy subsequently turned
From deeds of derring-do;
For brainy intercourse she yearned
When she was 22.

The years sped on, ambition taught
A worldly wise design;
A man of wealth was what she sought
When she was 29.

But time has modified her plan;
Weak, imbecile, or poor—
She's simply looking for a man
Now she is 34.

—Punch.

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.

QUEEN'S (Minor) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 8, John Lloyd, "The Break-down of Faith."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, a Lecture.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, H. Snell, "The Other Side of Darwinism."

FINSBURY PARK DEBATING SOCIETY (Co-operative Hall, 79 Grove-road, Holloway-road): 7, Debate "Is the Cry for Protection Genuine?" Open Discussion.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, H. Johnson, B.A., "Cromwell."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Cardinal Wiseman."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Harringay): 7, Dr. J. Oaksmith, M.A., "The Importance of Living in the Present."

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, W. H. Memmuir, "A Trip to Norway."

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane, Failsworth): 3.30, F. Morgan, a Recital.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class, G. P. Anderson, "Matthew Arnold's Empedocles on Etna"; 6.30, Robert Park, M.D., "Fresh Phases of the 'God' Notion."

LEEDS (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, George Weir, "Why I Reject Christianity."

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): 3, Henry Smith, "The Philosophy of Secularism."

LEEDS (Town Hall-square): 7, T. W. Kingham, "Has Man a Soul?"

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Robert Owen"; 7, "The Christian Creed." Monday, 8 p.m., Discussion Class.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, R. Somerville Wood, Esq., M.A. (Oxon), "Behind the Closed Doors of the Laboratories: an Exposure of Vivisection." Illustrated with Limelight Views.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Ernest Pack, 3, "Protestant Reforms"; 7, "The Decline of Belief." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (New Empire Palace, King-street): 7, Chapman Cohen, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?"

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