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PRICE TWOPENCE

Can man by searching find out God?—THE BIBLE.

The Ways of God.

“And justify the ways of God to men.”—MILTON.

WE would take off our hat to John Milton the poet, we would take off our hat twice to John Milton the stylist, but we would not touch the brim of our hat to John Milton the theologian. If the truth must be told, Milton the theologian was a colossal joke. Not only did he make God Almighty quibble like a school divine; he utterly failed to carry out the promise of the last line in the stately exordium of *Paradise Lost*. He did not justify the ways of God to men. He left them as unjustified as ever. Nay, he capped the mystery of evil, as illustrated in the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, with a monstrous piece of farce by making Satan tell all the devils in hell that he had actually seduced this wonderful pair, the last consummate work of God's, with *an apple!* It was enough to make the proud chief of Pandemonium laugh, and powerfully excite the risibility of every other denizen of the establishment. With a mere pippin he had played ducks and drakes with creation, frustrated the designs of Providence, and spoiled the vast six-days' effort which had taxed the energies of the Omnipotent. Yes, it was not only a joke, but the joke of jokes. Nothing could equal it. Hardly anything could come within measurable distance of it. A single stroke achieved the very perfection of low comedy.

Where the great John Milton failed, we do not see how smaller men can hope to succeed. And let not these smaller men (by the way) feel hurt at being told that they *are* smaller. It is no disgrace to them to stand in the shadow of such loftiness.

The Rev. Charles Voysey, therefore, will understand us as not wishing to insult him. This gentleman sends us a printed copy of the sermon he preached at the Theistic Church on Sunday, January 31, in reply to our article in the *Freethinker* of January 10 on “God at Chicago.” With it he sends us a note, hoping it “will be found a courteous criticism.” Yes, it is courteous enough, and we trust that our answer will be no less so in Mr. Voysey's estimation.

Mr. Voysey, although a Theist, who came out of the Great Lying Church a good many years ago, appears still to preach from Bible texts; and the one he selects for this sermon is “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” No doubt this text is striking and convincing to a believer, but how can it be expected to make any impression on an unbeliever? Judges and justice are not always inseparably associated; moreover, it is not so much the judge as the ruler of the world whose “ways” are under consideration; and, in any case, a general question is no reply to a definite argument.

But let us come to what Mr. Voysey himself has to say. He starts by taking Atheism as involving Pessimism. Is he, however, correct in this? Most of the Atheists we have known were neither Pessimists nor Optimists, but Meliorists. They thought it possible that the world might be improved. This is a modest creed, but it has the advantage of practicality.

Mr. Voysey's definition of Pessimism is peculiar. He regards it as “that state of mind and feeling in which one looks upon the sorrows and sufferings of the world as proofs of the negligence, impotence, or malignity of the Creator.” And he says that he is ambitious to “suggest to the Pessimist that he stands in need of more and deeper thinking.”

While not accepting this definition of Pessimism—which really has no necessary relation to theology—we may cheerfully admit that the Pessimist (if Mr. Voysey will continue to think us one) stands in need of more and deeper thinking; only we happen to believe that this need is quite universal, and ought to be universally felt.

Mr. Voysey instances our article on the “dreadful catastrophe at Chicago” as a specimen of the “dogmas of Pessimism.” He quotes, fairly enough, a passage from the article, ending with our invitation to our readers to follow the details of the catastrophe with their imaginations. “Then follow the details,” he says, “painted with a master hand, too horrible and heart-rending to be repeated here.”

Why did Mr. Voysey find those details—which, after all, could have been but a shadow of the grim reality—too horrible and heart-rending to be repeated before his congregation? Was he afraid of the facts? He ought not to have been, because his argument is that these facts, and all other such facts, are proofs of God's goodness, if you only view them in the right light. Is not his shrinking from the facts tantamount to a mistrust of his theory?

Mr. Voysey takes the position that the fire at the Iroquois Theatre was due to natural causes; there were faults in the structure, defects in the management, and panic fear on the part of the audience; so that “the catastrophe could not be averted without a miracle”; and the question at the finish is whether miracles would or would not be part of a wise dispensation. Mr. Voysey argues that they would *not* be. But he must admit that the vast majority of religious people, including Christians, *do* believe in miracles, and ask for one every time they pray.

“Which is best for mankind,” Mr. Voysey asks; “to have certainty or uncertainty in the operation of natural laws?” This question admits of only one answer. But what has the Theist to do with natural laws? His theory is that there is no such thing. He holds that all which happens is really the act of God. He also claims that God has infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. He is therefore bound to meet the sceptic's objections based upon the wide and continuous existence of evil. It is no answer to say that a specified change might only make things worse. Some other change might make them better. And, according to the definition, God knows how to do it, if it can be done. If he cannot do it, he fails in omnipotence; if he does not know how to do it, he fails in omniscience. That is to say, he ceases to be God. Unless, indeed, you argue that God is a limited being, bounded by other existences, and limited by other powers; and that what he does, wretched as it so often is, is the best he is able to do in the circumstances.

Mr. Voysey will pardon us, perhaps, for reminding him of the truth which Newman stated so logically and fearlessly, that the great difficulty, after all, to

the Theist is not why evil continues, but why it ever began. Here, as in so many other instances, it is only the first step that costs. When all is said and done, the theologian faces a "mystery." That mystery is simply a contradiction between his theory and the facts. He has always to fall back upon faith. We must trust in God now, he says, and the explanation must be left to some future, and perhaps far-off, revelation of his Providence.

This is really what Mr. Voysey does. He confesses that "if there be no future life after all is over in this life" our "charge against the negligence or malignity of the Creator has been confirmed." It is in the fact that we are "immortal souls, destined for endless mental, moral, and spiritual life and progress" that we "get the clue to solve the mysteries of Pain, Death, and Sin." Thus it is evident that Mr. Voysey's theology is as much an "act of faith" as that of the ordinary Protestant or the most superstitious Roman Catholic.

It is always a case of "wait till the clouds roll by." But they never do roll by. The problem of evil is still just what it was in the dawn of human thought. Once it was said that the millennium would come upon earth, that the golden age would be renewed, or that the Savior would return and inaugurate the reign of peace, justice, and happiness. But these are now recognised as dreams. Yet faith bids us wait on; there is still to be a sweet by-and-bye, if not in this world, then in the world to come. The unknown is to explain the known; the future is to explain the present. Ah, but the answer lies in the words of poor Ophelia—"We know what we are, we know not what we may be."

G. W. FOOTE.

Herbert Spencer: the Man and His Work.

VII.

MR. SPENCER'S arguments, however, are not directed against special governmental actions only, but against State action as a principle—and this in spite of his restricting the work of the State to the function of a policeman. His great objection to certain classes of State action (and which, if logically applied, covers *all* State action) is that it interferes with the play of Natural Selection, and purchases a temporary benefit at a permanent cost. Again I can give but one or two excerpts on this head from the revised edition of *Social Statics*. There is, he reminds us, a discipline in nature that is cruel so that it may be kind:—

"That state of universal warfare maintained throughout the lower creation, to the great perplexity of many worthy people, is at bottom the most merciful provision which the circumstances admit of. It is much better that the ruminant animal, when deprived by age of the vigor which made its existence a pleasure, should be killed by some beast of prey, than that it should linger out a life made painful by infirmities, and eventually die of starvation. By the destruction of all such, not only is existence ended before it becomes burdensome, but room is made for a younger generation capable of the fullest enjoyment."

So much for the lower animal world, although even here some little qualification should be made owing to the mutual aid given by animals, and which so far shields some from the full consequences of their physical weakness. But that Mr. Spencer believes the same phase of Natural Selection should be allowed to operate in human society is seen by his contemptuous reference to the "population of imbeciles" with which "our schemers" would fill the world, and which nature is ever trying to get rid of. And also by the following:—

"Strange to say, now that this truth (Natural Selection) is recognised by most cultivated people—now that the beneficent working of the survival of the fittest has been so impressed on them that, much more than people in past times, they might be expected to hesitate before neutralising its action—now more than ever before in the history of the world are they doing all they can to further survival of the unfittest."

Such expressions quite bear out what has already

been said, namely, that Spencer, in dealing with State action or the functions of government, ignores the development of the psychic factor in social life. And the result of this is that a further truth is lost sight of: this is, that without some form of collective control of social forces you can no more be certain of developing a *desirable* social type than you could be certain of developing a high intellectual type under conditions of savage life. In the latter case the surroundings place a premium upon purely animal characteristics, and in the former the mental force that expresses itself in cunning and trickery is only too apt to control the better intellectual types.

Moreover, in tilting against those who uphold the legitimacy of State action, Mr. Spencer overlooks the fact of how largely certain social influences operate in the direction of producing just what he is afraid will be produced by an "interference" with natural laws—the multiplication of the unfit. Accident of position, the fact of being born the son of a particular parent, gives the power of commanding and the use of wealth to many who would be unable to win it by mental strength, or hold it by physical strength. No one can claim that were the wealth of the world "pooled" to become the property of all such as could obtain and hold it by pure animal fitness, that it would revert to the same hands that now possess it. That this would not be so proves that in some way Natural Selection *has* been "interfered" with. And thus one is bound to conclude that those who deprecate State action in the interests of the weak against the strong are actually, in virtue of the protection of laws, protecting the strong against the weak.

A still more drastic objection may be taken to Spencer's position. This would take the form of a denial that Natural Selection either does or can produce the *highest possible* development of any species of animals, man included. That Natural Selection produces a *higher* type, and that by this means higher types have been evolved is unquestionable, but it is not true that by the same process the highest possible development is obtained. What is the effect of Natural Selection? Other things equal, it favors the survival of any variation from the normal type that brings its possessor into a more perfect harmony with environment. But this is all it does and all it can do; and it does this without the least reference to whether the favored variation comes nearer the ideal type or the reverse. A Stock Exchange variation that produced a Spencer would stand little chance of survival. Nor would a typical Bill Sykes fail to be eliminated from, say, the Royal Astronomical Society.

One or two concrete illustrations will make this principle clear. All our varieties of roses come from the dog rose. A variation occurred among the normal five-leaved specimens, that formed the starting-point of the development of our other roses, with their numerous petals and powerful fragrance. Now, suppose this variation had been left alone, what would have been the result? Unquestionably the variation would have been "swamped" by the normal variety, and the five-petalled kind would be the only one existent. And what does this mean? It means that, while Natural Selection does not evolve a higher form, its effect is to keep the species *down* to a certain level of excellence. It is a conservative force as well as a progressive one. And what actually has occurred is this. Man selected the variation that pleased him most. He deliberately released this variation from the competitive form of the struggle for existence, surrounded it by all that was essential to its development, and so produced in a comparatively brief time a rose that Natural Selection either never would have produced or would have taken infinitely longer to produce.

And what has been said of the rose is true of all our domesticated plants and animals. In every case the higher variety has been produced by eliminating the action of the survival of the fittest. And the proof is seen in the fact that if we were to leave our roses alone they would revert to the wild variety.

Turn cats loose, they revert to the wild species. So with dogs. So with all our domesticated kinds. And the same phenomenon can be seen with man, who, when separated from the "artificial" creations of society, also reverts to a semi-savage state. Natural Selection does not, therefore, make for the highest possible kind. It eliminates all that are too distant from a normal line, whether it be upward or downward. The whole effect of biologic competition is to prevent development beyond a certain point. The aim of social co-operation is to raise this development to the highest possible point.

Now, if the above reasoning is true concerning the nature of the struggle for existence, why should it not hold good of human society? In other words, why should not man do for his own kind what he does for other species? If the elimination of the struggle for existence is the condition of a more rapid and desirable development of domesticated animals, why may it not be the same in the case of man? Mr. Spencer would have been the first to point that the biological laws governing both man and the animal world are identical, and if this is so control in the one case is as legitimate, and may prove as beneficial, as in the other. It would seem almost a truism that while man is exposed to the stress of a struggle for bare existence development of the higher aspects of life is next to impossible. Culture and refinement only comes with leisure for devotion to higher pursuits, and adequate leisure can only be obtained by and through social organisation.

Of course, as a matter of fact, man has always done this, the difference being that he now aims at doing *consciously* what he has hitherto been doing unconsciously. But all human institutions, customs, etc., are so many attempts to put a limit to the form of competition that exists in the animal world. Even labor and tools is an artificial transformation of the environment. And the operations of the State, rightly viewed, differs in no respect from man's attempt to control and direct evolutionary forces in other directions. Man *may* blunder more here than elsewhere; but this is an argument for more knowledge, not a proof of the essential unsoundness of his line of action. The remarkable and regrettable thing is that this aspect of the subject should have been so ignored by the great law-giver of evolution.

Yet when all qualifications have been made, and all criticism passed, on Spencer's work, our debt, and the debt of all future generations to him, is a large one. Few other thinkers in the history of the world have taken so comprehensive a view of nature, and few, if any, have displayed greater power of both analysis and synthesis. One need only take up two such small and easily obtainable volumes as *The Study of Sociology* and *Education* to realise that one is dealing with one of the world's masters in the region of thought. In truth, even the portions of his writing I have criticised adversely, have their corrective in the *Synthetic Philosophy* itself, and I do not think I have stepped outside the work for arguments. That certain illustrations may be found faulty, or that some statements, based upon our present scientific knowledge, may need revision as time passes, is inevitable. But these will not affect the main principles set forth. Over forty years of hard work gave the world a complete philosophy of evolution that embraced in its sweep all changes from atom to planet, from protoplasm to man. And the man who did this in spite of weak health, in spite of financial and other discouragements, can never cease to hold a high place in the estimation of all who value truth and unflinching devotion to an ideal.

C. COHEN.

Atheism and Faith.

WE have seen that the Ven. Archdeacon Wilson's defence of the Bible, in his now famous Manchester lecture, is so vague, ambiguous, and unconvincing that the Bible League would be justified in charac-

terising it as a formidable, though semi-disguised, attack. This official champion of the Holy Book damns it with faint praise. Certainly, a more disappointing defence never found utterance. As another illustration of the essential weakness and ineffectiveness of the present apologetic Lectureship, we will take the third lecture in the series, which is entitled "Atheism and Faith." This is by the Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon, a popular Congregational minister, who has a large and prosperous church in the north of London. This lecture reads more like a sermon delivered to a congregation of Christian believers than a serious attempt to convert Atheists by demonstrating to them the wholly illogical and indefensible nature of their position. Mr. Gibbon poses here as an altogether superior gentleman, who is serenely above the influence of arguments, and eminently capable of tampering with facts. His main point is that God is not a discovery of the human reason, but a free gift conveyed to us through the Bible. He has no patience with people who dream of "rising through Nature to Nature's God." "The Bible," he says, "knows nothing of that way of ascent; nor does history know anything of it. It is a fine phrase, and it is nothing more." And yet only a few years ago that keen and clear thinker, John Fiske, delivered and published a lecture, the title of which was *Through Nature to God*; and there are thousands of Christians whose gratitude for that ingenious booklet lies too deep for adequate expression. But Mr. Gibbon dismisses, with a mere wave of his hand, the very idea of *finding* God through anything. Man cannot find God; it is God who finds man. Hence, all knowledge of the Divine Being comes by revelation. All we have to do is to allow ourselves to be found of him.

It is in this connection that Mr. Gibbon is guilty of tampering with facts. He says: "There appears to be in England at the present moment a distinctly Atheistical movement on foot. It may not be, in fact it is not, widespread; but it is noisy, and it is aggressive. It has its apostles and missionaries in the press and on the platform, and it holds in its hand a great bribe." This vile charge has been triumphantly disproved a thousand times; and yet this minister of the God of truth repeats it without a blush. This is how he puts it:—

"Atheism offers our youth, our working classes, our governing classes, our capitalists precisely the same bribe (as idolatry offered ancient Israel) in a fuller measure. That is to say, it offers free indulgence of all the passions. 'There is no sin,' says Mr. Blatchford; 'there can be none.' It offers, then, this bribe. It points to men the Ten Commandments shivered to atoms beneath their feet; all authority overthrown, all fear of judgment cast out; in a word, Atheism in our day seeks once more to bait the old dragon and blood the tiger in mankind. My friends, it is a grave national peril, for the history of Atheism is a thing known; the history of Atheism is writ large in the ruin of nations. All epochs in which faith, under whatever form, has prevailed have been brilliant and fruitful, both to contemporaries and to posterity. All epochs, on the contrary, in which unbelief, in whatever form, has been prevailing have been barren."

This is prejudice allowing itself free course. This is an unpardonable falsification of history! Has the reverend gentleman never heard of the Decretals of the Popes and the Donation of Constantine? Has he never heard of the epoch during which the Papal Court was governed by a notorious courtesan? Can he call such epochs "brilliant and fruitful"? Surely Mr. Gibbon must have read ecclesiastical history through strangely colored spectacles. Even Dr. S. G. Green's *Handbook of Church History* ought to have prevented him from falling into such a dreadful error, while a fair knowledge of Mr. Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire* would have enabled him to walk in the way of truth. Were not the Dark Ages pre-eminently believing epochs? Were they not the ages during which the Church was triumphant and Atheists would have been burnt? Again, can Mr. Gibbon name the epochs in which Atheism prevailed, and will he describe the consequent barrenness? He cannot but be aware that Atheism is not synonymous

with idolatry, although in his lecture he seems to treat the two as identical. Both idolatry and paganism were forms of religious belief, and cannot be confounded with Atheism. It is conceivable, of course, that Mr. Gibbon regards all religions, other than Judaism and Christianity, as essentially Atheistical, in which case it would be useless to argue with him. But taking Atheism in its only legitimate sense, will the lecturer point to one dominantly Atheistical epoch, and give us a detailed account of its barrenness? Furthermore, will he condescend to tell us which Atheist, known to history, ever offered a bribe in order to win converts? Who are the Atheists of to-day of whom it can honestly be said that they "hold out to men a great bribe"? Most assuredly Mr. Blatchford is not one of them, although Mr. Gibbon quotes him as if he were; but the quotation is monstrously inaccurate and misleading, and the editor of the *Clarion* has a crime imputed to him which he never committed. 'Nunquam's' whole life and teaching give the lie to the vile insinuation. Surely a sense of honor should compel Mr. Gibbon to withdraw his baseless charge against Atheism.

In consequence of his false reading of history, the lecturer draws several curious and startling inferences. For example, he says: "I am not called upon to prove my faith. If, say, there are nine reasons against my believing, and one reason for, I am justified in taking that one. Why? Because belief has proved itself so fruitful in goodness. By faith, at any rate, I have a great deal to gain; and even if, in the end, I am mistaken, why then I have nothing to lose; on the Atheist's own showing, I have nothing to lose. So I am not called upon to prove. It is the unbeliever that ought to be sure of his ground; and he never can be sure. You cannot prove a universal negative." In that brief extract there are two palpable and pernicious fallacies. The first is that the burden of proof lies on the unbeliever. Nothing could be further from the truth. To be an Atheist means simply to be without belief in a God, or, more literally, without a God. The Christian Theist repeats this article of his creed continually: "I believe in an infinite, eternal, intelligent, omnipotent, omniscient, holy, and loving Being, who indwells and manages the universe." The Atheist has no such article in his creed, and all he can say is this: "I have no knowledge whatever of such a Being, and to me his existence is unthinkable. As a child, I too was taught to believe in him; but my growing knowledge of Nature has robbed me of that early belief." Therefore, the duty of proving surely rests on the believer, not on the unbeliever. There are things in which the Atheist firmly believes, and which he would never dream of denying, such as "Matter," "Nature," "Substance," "Existence"; but he has absolutely no knowledge of anything outside, beyond, or above the realities connoted by those terms. The Christian Theist, on the contrary, claims to have received, through the Bible, a special and gloriously ample revelation of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and of the unseen realm in which the triple Being is said to have his abode. Now, the Atheist, who does not believe in because he does not know such a Divine Being, naturally turns to the believer and says, "Prove to me, in some way, that God exists and acts, and I too will believe in him. All the facts with which I am acquainted seem to indicate very clearly that he neither acts nor exists; and until you succeed in supplying me with proofs to the contrary, I shall continue to declare that his existence is utterly unthinkable." But Mr. Gibbon says he is not called upon to prove anything. The Atheist has studied the Bible with the utmost diligence and care, and all he has been able to find in it is the Christian God in the making, not God talking revealingly to men, but men talking volubly about and in the name of a God whom their own fancy had woven by a long and slow process. God-making was a favorite occupation in primitive times, as God-believing is in these. What we ask for is some proof that the God believed in and worshipped by Christians to-day is not a product of human manufacture. And

this request Mr. Gibbon bluntly declines to comply with. Like Archdeacon Wilson, he falls back upon feeling, upon the experience of ages, upon the testimony of the heart, and says:—

"Has faith no evidence? Oh yes, abundant evidence. Here it is:—

"If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;
A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'"

This, then, is the supreme proof, the first and last evidence, of the existence of God, which is equivalent to an admission that there is no proof, no evidence at all. Nature knows nothing of God. Here is a most significant passage:—

"Can we adduce proofs of God's existence, taken from his works, that shall largely command, nay, compel, the assent of all men's reasons? No, we cannot. The very idea of proving God's nature implies that there is something greater than God which is the standard of God. You prove a thing by something that is greater than the thing, by a standard.....I am not the least bit surprised, nor the least frightened, when men like Professor Haeckel, or the late Grant Allen, seeking God in the manner and in the direction in which they do, tell us they cannot find him. To a reader of the Bible that is no news. I even welcome these men as fresh workers in a great but sadly neglected field. What you and I can find out for ourselves is not God, not the heavenly Father we want, and this way of helping religion has always helped to hinder it."

Nature having so signally failed to prove the Divine Existence, what about our own reason? Cannot this noble faculty of the mind of man find out God? No:—

"My friends, religion resting upon reason is a house founded upon sand. Reason has her province, and religion has hers; but they are distinct. The province of reason is to deal with causes, and find out why this thing followed from that and how. The province of religion is to deal with purposes, to find out the wherefore and the whether of things. Reason and religion have certitudes of their own, but they are of a different order, and should never be confounded."

Thus the Christian theologians and preachers of the twentieth century occupy a platform composed of only one and insecure plank called indifferently, *experience, feeling, and heart*. If I want to find God I am instructed not to search for him in Nature, although I am a part of Nature myself; and I am warned, further, against the delusion that my own faculty of reason can render me any assistance in the important search. How, then, is the search to be conducted, and in what field? The truth is that by *searching* I shall never succeed in finding my heavenly Father at all. All I have to do is to open the eyes of my heart, and the moment I do that I shall see him, and know him, and dedicate myself to his service. The answer to this nebulous, sentimental theology is that religion resting upon feeling, or heart, or experience is a house founded upon sand. Unless I can believe with my whole being, I have no right to believe at all. The heart, uninstructed by the perceptive and reasoning faculties, is a most dangerous guide. I know a man who for twenty years believed in God *emotionally*, and whipped his reason into acquiescence. He could work himself up into such a state of nervous excitement that the Christian Religion appealed to him as altogether true. But when his reason effected its emancipation, and his heart became enlightened, his faith vanished. He walks now in the clear light of reason, and his heart adds genial warmth to the transparent rays, and converts life into an incessant series of loving, helpful thoughts and deeds.

And this leads me to the other fallacy into which Mr. Gibbon has fallen. He says that if there were nine reasons against believing, and one reason for, he would be justified in taking that one, "because belief has proved itself so fruitful in goodness." I ask, when did "belief prove itself so fruitful in goodness?" Was it at Corinth where the believers,

according to Paul's own picture of them, wrangled, and quarreled, and divided into bitter factions, and were guilty of horrible irregularities? When and where did belief lead men to forms of goodness to which they would not have attained without it? I gladly admit that many Christians, in all ages and countries, have been pre-eminently true, upright, noble, sympathetic, and self-denying, and have lived lives that have permanently benefited mankind; but that their exalted characters and useful lives were not directly due to their faith, is abundantly proved by the fact that many other Christians, equally zealous for the faith, have been pre-eminently false, base, cruel, and self-seeking, and have led lives that have permanently injured mankind. The fact seems to be that good people use their religion as the channel through which their goodness flows to and serves their neighbors, while wicked people make theirs the instrument of their cruelty, selfishness, and greed. It is true that belief has often proved itself exceedingly fruitful in piety, but piety is a radically different thing from goodness. If you believe the Bible, you know that King David was at once a shining example of piety and one of the greatest criminals that ever lived.

In taking leave of this lecture, I must call attention to Mr. Gibbon's glaring inconsistency. Speaking of Atheistic attacks on the Bible, he says: "When men attack it, when men make it out to be a mere heap of miscellaneous follies and mistakes gathered from no one knows where, I feel that they are books not worthy of being answered. As I read them the fire burns within me, and my heart rises like a man in wrath, and says, Whatever be true, that is not true." But later on he makes this significant admission: "The astronomy of Genesis, the geology, the botany, and the science of Genesis are defective; they all belong, evidently, to a primitive stage of human culture. They are of the earth earthy, local, transient. But the conception of God, though expressed naively and in childish ways, is unique, for God himself revealed it." If the first three chapters of Genesis are wrong on so many points, how does Mr. Gibbon know that their conception of God is true? He does not and cannot know. Again, if there are so many mistakes in the three opening chapters, the probability is that most of the subsequent chapters teem with defects and blunders; and if the whole Bible be full of such blemishes, is it any wonder that unbelievers attack it? On investigation they learn that its conception of God is as defective and as self-contradictory as many of its other conceptions, and the only conclusion to which they can possibly come is that the case for Theism, including the case for Christianity, has utterly broken down.

JOHN LLOYD.

Jesus Ben Pandera.—II.

(Concluded from page 93.)

There is really no history, that is, no connected history of Jesus in the Talmud. He is alluded to as a man whose history every Jew is supposed to be already acquainted with; anecdotes are told of him, and he is generally held up as an example to be avoided, and as a warning to others. The longest and most important piece of information regarding Jesus is introduced as an illustration of the disastrous results of over sternness with a disciple, they would say, there is the famous case of the great Joshua ben Perachiah who was too stern with his disciple Jesus. The passage runs as follows:—

"The Rabbis have taught: The left should always be repelled, and the right, on the other hand, drawn nearer. But one should not do it....." as R. Joshua ben Perachiah, who thrust forth Jeschu with both hands. What was the matter with regard to R. Joshua ben Perachiah? When King Jannai directed the destruction of the Rabbis, R. Joshua ben Perachiah and Jeschu went to Alexandria. When security returned, Rabbi

Simeon ben Shetach sent him a letter to this effect: 'From me, Jerusalem the holy city, to thee, Alexandria in Egypt, my sister. My spouse carries in thee, and I dwell desolate.' Thereupon Joshua arose and came; and a certain inn was in the way, in which they treated him with great respect. Then spake Joshua: 'How fair is this inn (*akhsanga*)! Jeschu saith to him: 'But, Rabbi, she (*akhsanga* — a hostess) has little narrow eyes.' Joshua replied: 'Thou godless fellow, dost thou occupy thyself with such things?' directed that 400 horns should be brought, and put him under strict excommunication. Jeschu oftentimes came and said to him, 'Take me back.' Joshua did not trouble himself about him. One day, just as Joshua was reading [? reciting] the Shema, Jeschu came to him, hoping that he would take him back. Joshua made a sign to him with his hand. Then Jeschu thought that he had altogether repulsed him, and went away, and set up a brickbat and worshipped it. Joshua said to him: 'Be converted!' Jeschu saith: 'Thus have I been taught by thee: From him that sinneth and maketh the people to sin, is taken away the possibility of repentance.' And the Teacher [*i.e.*, he who is everywhere mentioned by this title in the Talmud] has said: 'Jeschu had practised sorcery and had corrupted and misled Israel.'"

This famous passage, says Mr. Mead, if taken by itself, would fully confirm the 100 years B.C. date of Jesus. Jannai or Jannæus (John), who also bore the Greek name Alexander, was one of the famous Maccabæan line of kings, the son of John Hyrcanus I., and reigned over the Jews 104-78 B.C. Joshua ben Perachiah who lived in the reign of Jannai, is considered by the Jews to have been the most learned teacher of his time.

The passage we have cited is to be found twice in the Babylonian Gemara. "But," says Mr. Mead, "we have not yet done with this famous story, for it occurs yet again in the Talmud, though in a different form. In the Palestinian Gemara we thus read:—

"The inhabitants of Jerusalem intended to appoint Jehuda ben Tabbai as Nasi (President of the Sanhedrim) in Jerusalem. He fled and went away to Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem wrote: 'From Jerusalem the great to Alexandria the small. How long lives my betrothed with you, whilst I am sitting grieved on account of him?' When he withdrew to go in a ship, he said: Has Debora, the landlady who has taken us in, been wanting in something? One of his disciples said: Rabbi, her eye was bright! He answered: Lo, you have done two things; firstly, you have rendered me suspected, and then you have looked upon her. What did I? Beautiful in appearance? I did not say anything (like this) but (beautiful) in deeds. And he was angry with him and went his way."

As the Palestinian Gemara, says Mr. Mead, is generally considered to be older than the Babylonian, it is argued that we have here the original form of the story, the name of Jeschu being inserted at a later date, and he considers "this argument is one of great strength, and for most people entirely disposes of this question."

In mitigation of this point of view Mr. Mead observes that the Babylonian version "quotes from an earlier source or tradition of the story, and therefore we have to push the date back to this source, which was in all probability Palestinian. It is further to be remarked that the setting of the whole Babylonian version is far more exact in its historical details; it is a far more deliberate tradition than the vague and pointless Palestinian account." Let us consider the facts of the case.

It seems to be agreed that the Talmud was not committed to writing until after the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, indeed we find it repeatedly laid down in the Talmud that the tradition must on no account be written down but solely committed to memory. But upon the dispersion of the Jews, their leaders thinking that their traditions were in danger of being irretrievably lost, reluctantly submitted to the inevitable and commenced the task of collecting and committing these traditions to writing, the work being finally completed towards the end of the fifth century A. D. There are two versions of the Talmud the

* "The words omitted by Streane are," says Mr. Mead, "as Elisha who repelled Gehazi nor."

Palestinian and the Babylonian, of these the Babylonian collection is at least four times the size of the Palestinian, and by far the more important "for the later Jews" says Mr. Mead, "the Babylonian collection gradually became the Talmud, while the Palestinian fell into disuse. In our own days the latter is never taught, but always the former." The Palestinian Talmud is always spoken of as containing the oldest tradition, but as a matter of fact the Rabbis disagreed upon the matter among themselves. "The North-French Rabbis of the Middle Ages held that the Talmud was never committed to writing till after its final completion at the end of the fifth century A. D., while the Spanish Rabbis maintained that the Palestinian Gemara was written down by Rabbi Jochanan (199-279) and the Babylonian Gemara by Rab Aschi and Rab Abina (375-427).

Now, as a matter of fact, the Palestinian Gemara was not written down by Rabbi Jochanan, for, as Mr. Mead points out in a note (p. 84), "many of the authorities cited in the Palestinian Gemara lived after R. Jochanan, some even a century later." As to the time when the Talmud was committed to writing, we have nothing but tradition and conjecture to guide us. "Indeed," says Mr. Mead, "a scientific review of all the Talmud passages germane to the question reveals a most confused state of mind on the subject, even among the many makers of that stupendous patchwork themselves. While, on the one hand, we find it most stringently forbidden to write down Halachoth, we come across isolated references to older written Halachoth; and though the writing of Haggadoth as well is apparently included in the general prohibition, we meet with very precise references to Haggada books, and even collections of such books."

The inference from all this being that much of the Talmud existed in writing, and was merely collected into one whole, some time after the Dispersion. Even if it could be proved that the Palestinian Gemara was reduced to writing before the Babylonian Gemara, it would still be open to dispute which contained the *oldest tradition*. Now, as we have pointed out, the Talmud does not pretend to give the history of Jesus; it merely relates a few facts about him, and holds him up as an example to be avoided. Therefore there must have been some source, oral or written, from which the Talmud drew these particulars. Dr. Samuel Krauss, who, says Mr. Meade, has written an excellent work upon the subject, enriched by notes by Bischoff and Strack,* argues that the "principal source" of the Toldoth, or Jewish Life of Christ, is the lost Hebrew History of Josippon (not Flavius Josephus), whom the Jews regarded as the main source of the events of the period of the Second Temple. However that may be, we believe that the Talmud and the *Jewish Life of Jesus* drew from a common source, although later on the Jewish Life became mixed up with much extraneous matter.

Mr. Mead is much exercised, in his chapter on the Ben Stada Jesus stories in the Talmud, over the fact that in these stories Jesus is made a contemporary of Rabbi Akiva, who lived in the first century, and was put to death by the Romans, 135 A.D. But, as the Rev. Baring Gould points out,† there are "two lives of Jesus"—one a contemporary of Jannaeus and one a contemporary of Akiva. The Rabbis later on mixed the two lives up until it is difficult to tell what belongs to one and what to another—one Rabbi even declaring that there was only one Jesus to which all the tales applied, only to be promptly corrected by another Rabbi.

We believe that the oldest and most authentic record of Jesus is the fragment we have cited from the Babylonian Gemara. In a future article we shall deal with the version of the Jewish Life of Jesus, or the Toldoth Jeschu, given by Mr. Mead from a Strasburg MS., and consider it in connection with the Talmud and the Gospels in the endeavor to discover who Jesus Ben Pandera was and what he did.

W. MANN.

* *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen*; Berlin; 1902.

† *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, pp. 70-71.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Lloyd-George's amendment to the Address contained the concentrated essence of all the humbug of the Passive Resistance movement. It expressed "regret that, having regard to the widespread dissatisfaction amongst your Majesty's subjects at the Education Act of 1902-3, no intention is expressed to introduce legislation with a view to establishing popular control over all education maintained out of public funds, and to abolish sectarian tests." The last clause is a sheer lie masquerading as a truth. Mr. Lloyd-George and his Nonconformist friends do *not* want to abolish sectarian tests. What they want is to maintain sectarian tests of *their own pattern*. They know as well as we do that sectarian tests are inevitable if any kind of religious teaching goes on in the public schools. The only question left, in that case, is what the tests shall be.

We saw the report of a provincial Council meeting the other day, at which this "sectarian" business was discussed. An application from a Church clergyman was refused; the Council decided that it would have no "sectarian" teaching; and then it resolved to apply for Bibles and Testaments for use in the school. We suppose there was nothing "sectarian" about the Bible as regards Freethinkers, nor about the New Testament as regards Jews!

Catholics we understand, and Churchmen we understand. With them it is plain sailing. We know what they are after. And they admit it. But these Nonconformists are shuffling and snuffling hypocrites, with one thing on their tongues and another in their hearts; in short, they are contemptible and disgusting.

A number of Church clergymen, including Dean Stubbs, Canon Scott Holland, "Father" Adderley, and the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, have put forward a scheme "to amend the clauses of the Education Acts which deal with School Management and Religious Instruction." What these gentlemen propose to the Dissenters is that they should "pool" their opportunities, and thus present a united front against the non-religious world. They propose, in brief, to "put all forms of religious teaching on an equal footing," to give "full public control in all secular matters," and to allow religious instruction to be given to the children, in school hours, according to the wishes of their parents, and by "persons approved by the various religious bodies, singly, or in combination with one another." The "religious bodies" for instance are "Anglican, Roman, Free Church, and Jewish." So that all the religious bodies may have *something* at the public expense, while the non-religionists stand in the cold outside. A very pretty arrangement, no doubt! But would it work?

In the first place, there is a division of opinion even amongst these Church clergymen. Some of them support the giving of religious instruction in school hours, and others *out* of school hours. Now this is a very small difference in words, but a vast difference in practice. During school hours you have the children under your hand. Before or after school hours you have to get them there. And those who think this is a simple and easy task don't understand the facts of the case.

In the second place, this arrangement would be far more convenient to the Established Church than to what are facetiously called the Free Churches. There is a Church clergyman in every parish, who might undertake the job of dosing the school children with religion once a day. But the Nonconformist minister is not always available. As the Rev. W. Carey Sage, M.A., B.D., points out in a letter to the *Daily News*, in a district like his own in Wiltshire "it might take months for an able and energetic organiser to arrange an effective system of Nonconformist teaching in every one of fifteen or twenty day schools," and by the time that organisation was ready "the clergyman would be in possession."

In the third place, the use of the schools for religious teaching at all—and especially during school hours—is a violation of the "secular" principle on which, sooner or later, every civilised State finds it necessary to rest. Religious teachers, belonging to recognised religious bodies, would be enjoying the free use of buildings erected and maintained at the expense of *all* sections of the community, including the non-religious. They would also be using the State machinery, to a certain extent, if they taught religion during the legal school hours, when the schools were bound to be open, and the children bound to be present.

Finally, there is the objection of many earnest religionists that the most important thing about a school is its *atmo-*

sphere. There could be no definite religious atmosphere in a school invaded by representatives of all the sects. On the contrary, the children might see something of the joke of these rival teachers of the one true religion, and be led to smile at Christianity itself. And that would play the game of the Freethinkers rather than the game of Churchmen, Catholics, or Dissenters.

Rev. R. C. Fillingham, vicar of Hexton, has returned home from his conquest of America—although we believe the continent stands pretty much where it did. He is now once more fighting his own Church in the interest of Nonconformity. His latest effort in this line is a letter to the *Daily News*, dated from the George Hotel, Nether Stowey, Bridgewater—where we suppose the reverend gentleman is seeking to prolong his absence from heaven, and to extend his pilgrimage in this miserable vale of tears. Mr. Fillingham's letter is a long wail over the sufferings of a Passive Resister at Derby, who happens to be a Dissenting minister named Sharman. This gentleman's dining room had been dismantled by unfeeling bailiffs who wanted him to shell out his Education rate, and were instructed and authorised to demand his money or his goods. The table was gone, the chairs were gone, the very curtains were gone. And why? "He had refused," Mr. Fillingham says, "to pay for the teaching of Transubstantiation, confession, Mary-worship, the worship of the wafer; and, consequently, though his share of the Education Rate is only 25s., goods to the value of £20 have been seized." The Nonconformist-loving parson places "these plain facts before the public without comment." Perhaps that is what he meant to do. But in the very next breath he asks, "How long shall this tyranny disgrace our once free land?"

So English freedom is gone, is it, because the Rev. Mr. Sharman has to pay his rates? The idea is worthy of Mr. Fillingham's intellect. Perhaps this eccentric parson will tell us where English freedom was between 1870 and 1903, while all the Non-Christians in this country were compelled to pay for the teaching of Christianity in the public schools. It is all very well to talk about Transubstantiation and Mary-worship, as superstitions which Nonconformists, who reject them, have in some places to pay for. But is it impossible for Mr. Fillingham to see that these very superstitions are defended from the Bible, which he wishes to see forced by law into the public schools, and which he would make all Freethinkers (for instance) pay for? If the words of Jesus Christ, "this is my body," do not teach transubstantiation, the New Testament may as well be closed, and flung into the waste-basket. Besides, there was the miracle of turning water into wine: was not that transubstantiation? And as for Mariolatry, does not the New Testament say that the Holy Ghost "overshadowed" Mary, and warned her husband, Joseph, against mixing matters by exercising his own conjugal rights? Does it not say that her child was "born of the Holy Ghost"? Does it not say that she was selected of all the women on earth to be the Mother of God? And how is it possible for any Mary-worship to go beyond that? It seems to us that Mr. Fillingham is able to see motives in other people's eyes, but not beams in his own. We advise him to lay to heart the text, "Physician heal thyself." It is absurd to quarrel with this superstition and that superstition while clinging to a book which is full of superstition.

The vicar of Woodhorn, in Northumberland, recommends thrashing as the best treatment of drunkards. Well, why doesn't he begin—in his own parish? Surely there must be a drunkard or two handy for the reverend gentleman's experiment. We hope, however, for his own sake, that he won't begin on a big drunkard. It might incapacitate him from tackling another.

"We are suffering," the vicar of Woodhorn says, "from softness." We agree with him. This is a Christian country. Thomas Carlyle put it in another way, but it comes to the same thing in the end.

What wretched poor creatures are a vast number of these "eloquent" men of God! Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of them had a ready subject for a sermon on the Sunday following the death and burial of the late Mr. Whitaker Wright. Had he been alive, and prosperous, and at the height of his financial glory, not one of them, probably, would have opened his mouth the width of the edge of a sheet of tissue paper against the great company promoter's methods. Being dead, however, he was fair game for the professional exhorters. They were on him like a lot of flies—or fleas. A "large number" of their sermons found their way, quite naturally, to the *Daily News* office; and the gentleman who edits the "Religious World" column for that journal had to cry off printing any of them on the ground that he "could

not possibly find room." But he gave some of the texts of these brave discourses. One preacher took "The last shall be first." Another took, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Another took, "Ye shall die in your sins." Not one of them thought of the text, "Now the greatest of these is charity." If there be a God, Whitaker Wright went deliberately into his presence, and the pulpit-bangers might leave him there.

It is perhaps as well to remember, in this connection, that Nonconformist ministers up and down the country were the most active agents in the service of Mr. Jabez Balfour. Many a poor fellow went to the Devil because his trusted man of God advised him (for a consideration) to invest his savings in that great swindler's enterprises.

The midnight meeting craze continues amongst the Christians. Perhaps they will get back in time to the midnight love-feasts; and sometimes, as of yore, hold them underground or in the dark.

Dr. Torrey, the Yankee revivalist, is the newest hand at this midnight meeting game. A glowing description of one such meeting of his, at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, was given in the *Daily News*, which called it a "midnight meeting for drunkards." We are told that some three thousand people were collected out of the public-houses, and sung to by Mr. Alexander and harangued by Dr. Torrey. "Nearly all men," the report says, "and many of them intoxicated." Mr. Alexander sang "Tell mother I'll be there," and we can easily understand that many of his audience were soon shedding maudlin tears. "I want to take you back to your mother's knee," Mr. Alexander said; and there were more maudlin tears. Dr. Torrey then got at them, and the result was that "a large number of the audience professed conversion." *Professed* is good. Pious reports occasionally let out the truth by accident.

Seriously now, we ask any man with a grain of common sense whether he really believes that any durable good is done by these hysterical methods. Singing and preaching to the scourgings of public-houses may be all right as a religious pastime; but are the poor creatures thus "converted" followed up, and is it found that their "conversion" is a real, lasting change? And what effect has this kind of thing on the nation's annual drink bill?

Dr. Campbell, of the City Temple, has a choir consisting of about fifty ladies and gentlemen, who sing in full view of the congregation. According to the *Christian Commonwealth*, he has "suggested that they should wear a uniform dress, purple or dark grey, white collars and cuffs, and mortar boards." And why not? They have lately spent some £7,000 on "doing up" the City Temple, and they might as well spend a little more on "doing up" the choir.

There are often some big jokes in the King's Speech at the opening of Parliament, but the biggest joke always comes at the end. Winding up his royal address on February 2, King Edward said: "I commend your deliberations to the care and guidance of Almighty God." Has it come to this? God help them!

Florence Williams was charged at Bristol lately with wandering abroad on Clifton Downs. Some time ago, according to the police, she and another girl had their fortunes told, and the results being unsatisfactory they threatened to commit suicide. The other girl poisoned herself by taking carbolic acid, and since then the defendant had given a great deal of trouble, refusing to return to her situation, and when taken to the police-station saying she would strangle herself. A very sad story! And no doubt the fortune-teller ought to be punished. But ought not those who upset silly people with tragical guesses and fanciful threats to be dealt with impartially? In that case, many a minister of religion should be sent to prison for frightening people with tales of future punishment in hell—about which he knows just as much as fortune-tellers know about the future of servant girls.

Mr. A. G. Hales, the war correspondent, is writing a story in the *Daily News* called "The Watcher on the Tower." In the seventeenth chapter he refers to "a little colony of Italians" in London a hundred years ago, and describes them in the following way:—

"The men were the bravos of the great unholy city—they could, for the most part, be hired out to do anything that was ruffianly for a small wage. They were poor, ignorant, and superstitious; they had idols of wood and cheap clay, holy beads and sacred pictures—all of which had been blessed by their priests, a set of charlatans almost as ignorant as the poverty-stricken ruffians on whom they imposed. A lay

brother sold these gaudy appendages to religion in a dirty shop, that looked as if it had never been blessed by means of a thorough scouring since it had been erected."

This is how Protestants permit themselves to talk of Catholic priests. But what a row they make when Freethinkers talk in the same way of Protestant clergymen! Yet a Protestant clergyman is no more likely to be honest than a Catholic priest. Both belong to the same trade—and it is the trickiest trade in the world.

Rev. Charles Chidlow, vicar of Llanwathden, a small village in Pembrokeshire, had a quarrel with Mr. Jones, organist of the parish church, and headmaster of the national school, of which the vicar is manager, until the control is taken over by the County Council. There were blows, and there was bloodshed; indeed, it seems to have been quite a Homeric encounter; and the "whys" and "wherefores" of it are apparently to be threshed out in a court of justice.

In one evening paper, quite recently, we saw three cases of men of God sent to prison for indecent or obscene conduct. If a Freethinker goes wrong once in twenty years, that proves the hollowness of infidelity; but if three Christian clergymen go wrong in one day, that proves nothing at all.

The *Daily News* allows Mr. A. Le Lievre, of the Protestant Press Agency, to call attention to "Rome's Appalling Record" in the matter of immorality. So many French priests and monks, he says, have been sent to prison of late years for gross sexual offences. True, no doubt, and very shocking. But is there nothing of the sort going on in England? Why, in the very number of the *Daily News* that gave prominence to Mr. Le Lievre's letter, there is a headline, "Clergyman Sentenced to Hard Labor," and under it an account of the Rev. Alfred Bond, of Kidlington Oxford, being sent to prison for six months for assaulting five young girls.

The Torrey crusade at Birmingham is producing the usual batch, on paper, of converted—children. One mother writes that her "youngest children" gave their hearts to God, and "are now inviting their school friends and holding a little meeting themselves in the evening." We shall expect to hear presently that somebody's infant has refused its bottle until Mellin's food is wrapped up in one of Torrey's tracts, or that some other infant won't sleep until it has Mr. Alexander's hymns sung to it. Another man writes that he brought his children to the meetings, and "My wife and I have been praying for their conversion, but failed to notice any change." Now, however, "they have all of their own accord stepped forward and accepted the Saviour, and there is a change all round." If we may be permitted a religious expression, we are inclined to say, God help the children when their parents feel called upon to ask a travelling mountebank like Torrey for his help to bring them up. It is as pitiful as this evangelistic trading in children is contemptible.

There is unconscious humour about some of the reports, due to the fact that while there seems every desire to outline Ananias, the reporters lack a certain sense of proportion which would give, to quote Pooch Bah, a bald and unconvincing narrative an air of verisimilitude. Thus, a meeting of drunkards was held—this audience, at least, could have given an adequate reason for its presence. One of the audience, "uproariously drunk," disturbed the meeting. He was taken into a side room by Mr. Alexander and prayed over. In a short time the man returned to the hall "sobered completely.....took a seat right in front, listened carefully to the end, and was almost the first man to rise and take Dr. Torrey's hand in the after meeting." Really Mr. Alexander's talents deserve a wider field than is offered in mission meetings. A man who can "completely sober" an "uproariously" drunken man would be a perfect "God-sent" in many a district in Christian England.

Dr. Torrey read one letter to the meeting that was *very* funny—from an *Agnostic*—that is, one of Torrey's Agnostics. The man said he had read the third chapter of Ecclesiastes from the eleventh verse to the end, and "it upset all my Agnostic ideas." Probably the majority of the audience would be unaware of the nature of this chapter of Ecclesiastes. Those who do know the chapter will remember it contains the verses: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Rather curious this upsetting "Agnostic ideas"! The principal reflection such stories are apt to give

rise to is the number of different circumstances that go to make a really artistic liar, and how seldom they are met with in one individual.

One of "Torrey's converts" at Birmingham has had to be taken care of by the police. His name is Frank Busby, he is about nineteen years of age, and has been employed by Messrs. Buckler and Webb, printers, of Church-street. He has been attending the Torrey-Alexander mission services at Bingley Hall, and the result is an acute attack of religious mania. Great difficulty is experienced in persuading him to take nourishment.

We are informed that the following notice was quite recently posted outside the East London Tabernacle, Burdett-road, as the subject for a Sunday evening:—"Is There A Hell? All are welcome. Come and bring your children."

James Nisbet, who has just been sentenced to two months' imprisonment at Edinburgh for stabbing his wife on the face and head, is a Protestant, and she is a Catholic, and their quarrel was about the baptism of their child. Good old religion! It has always been a Cain-and-Abel business.

A Kircaldy poacher, Kirkpatrick Ouchterlony, brought a Bible into court with him, and argued from it that he had done nothing but what was right. Amongst other texts he quoted, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you." "If I am guilty of going to poach," he said, "it was for my share of the fowls and rabbits and game as well as Mr. Dobbie"—the reverend prosecutor. Moreover, the Bible said "Seek and ye shall find," and, being out of work for three months, he "went and sought." This Bible-reading poacher seems to have been quite serious. "If you condemn this book," he said, "put it in the fire and burn your churches." But there was a no less serious Sheriff on the bench who fined him £2 with the alternative of eight days' imprisonment.

The Bishop of Worcester told a Birmingham audience on Saturday last (Feb. 6) that along the Mediterranean Coast there once existed nearly 500 bishops ruling a people that are now given over to Mohammedanism. We can bear this distressing news with equanimity. In addition Bishop Gore might also have told the audience, that wherever, in the East, Mohammedanism and Christianity have met on equal terms the victory has usually been with the former. But this would hardly have suited the Bishop.

The other day Mr. George Abbu told a meeting of shareholders of one of the South African Companies that "It is not your missionary who will civilise the natives; I am afraid it is just the reverse. The native who has a smattering of the knowledge of reading and writing is almost useless for anything, either as a man laborer or as a houseboy." On this, Canon Scott Holland remarks: "The Colonist feels the difference between the simple, unsophisticated savage and the Christian native. For the practical purpose of blacking his boots he much prefers the former. And for that limited purpose he may be right." But this is not the issue at all. Most unprejudiced people who have lived in South Africa could tell the Canon that the converted native is usually lazier, dirtier, and more dishonest than the unconverted one. It is very largely upon these grounds that the notice, "No missionary boy need apply," is hung out in South Africa, even by Christian employers.

We reproduce on another page an interesting leader on Paine's *Age of Reason* from a Birmingham evening paper. The letter therein referred to as appearing in the *Daily Post* was written by a person who had not the courage to disclose his identity. His protest was made "in the name of all that is holy," and his talk about "deadly poison" and "un-sheathed razors" simply shows, as the man in the street would say, that he "has 'em bad." It is a wonder that a paper like the *Post* printed such a letter.

SACRED AND PROFANE.

ABOUT three hundred years ago, an Italian sculptor was burned alive, in Spain, for breaking a statue he had himself made, being angry because the customers would not pay the price for it. The statue was a graven image of the Virgin Mary. Had it been the image of his own mother, he might have ground it to powder if he liked, or he might have beat his own living wife, and had no fault found with him.—*Theodore Parker.*

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, February 14, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.: 8, "How the Clergy Answer Mr. Blatchford."

February 21, Queen's Hall, London; 28, Coventry; March 14, 13, Liverpool; 27, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—February 14, Birmingham; 21, Newcastle; 28, Liverpool; March 6, Queen's Hall, London.
- J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 14, Camberwell; 21, Birmingham; 28, Queen's Hall; March 6, Glasgow; 13, South Shields; April 3, Sheffield.
- G. D.—Thanks for the *Sydney Bulletin* cuttings. It used to reach us regularly, but we have not seen it now for a long time.
- G. G.—Acknowledged as desired. Yes, in spite of difficulties and occasional relapses, Mr. Foote is decidedly better than he was this time last year.
- W. FERGUSON.—Your lines have merit, but one of them might land us in a libel action, and you know what mercy (or justice) a notorious Freethinker may expect in an English court.
- W. GREGORY.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- W. HENDERSON.—See paragraphs. Always glad to receive cuttings on which we can comment in "Acid Drops."
- OLD READER.—We say what seems necessary in such matters, and no more; and that, of course, involves a certain advertisement—which we do not prolong gratuitously.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—We know the Birmingham "saints" could be relied upon to stand up for the rights of Freethought. The Torrey tracts are being proceeded with, and will be hurried through. There ought to be some Freethinker ready to send us along a decent cheque to cover the cost of doing this thing on an adequate scale. *God at Chicago* and the Torrey exposures ought to be circulated, not by tens of thousands, but by hundreds of thousands.
- A. E. E.—Thanks, though we must defer dealing with it till next week.
- W. SCRIVENER.—We cannot deal with Dr. Stanton Coit's letter on Ingersoll unless you obtain his consent for its publication. You may take it from us, meanwhile, that critics are plentiful and Ingersolls scarce.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- M. W. ADDERLEY.—We don't think such advice is necessary to our readers.
- M. SILVERSTONE.—Will go in next number; delay unavoidable.
- CASTOR.—As you forgot to add your name and address we are quite unable to see to the first part of your letter. Your subscription is duly acknowledged. Thanks.
- R. OWEN.—The subscription handed you by a gentleman at one of Mr. Foote's meetings at Manchester is acknowledged as from "Unknown."
- G. THACKRAY.—Will try to trace it.
- N. D.—Noted with appreciation.
- A. M. S. (Lancaster).—Smith & Sons evidently do not regard ours as the "respectable" journal when they supply you with the monthly paper you mention but will not supply you with *Freethinker* even "to order."
- THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
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The New Year's Gift to Freethought.

SIXTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

G. G. 10s., "D., Special D." £1, M. Cohen £2 2s., A Glasgow Friend £5, The Turnbull Family 16s. 6d., J. Thomson (Renfrew) 2s. 6d., Collection at Mr. Foote's Lecture 16s. 6d., A. L. 2s. 6d., R. W. Taylor 2s. 6d., Collected (Birmingham) 2s., F. Aust 1s., Castor 5s., Un-known (per R. Owen) 4s., J. M. M. 2s., W. Lamb 5s.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had a record morning audience at Glasgow on Sunday, and the hall was packed in the evening, not only the seats but the standing room being occupied. Mr. Turnbull, who presided at both meetings, said that they were all delighted to welcome the President back to Glasgow, and still more to see him improving in health and able to attack his platform work with his well-known vigor. Mr. Foote's lectures were very warmly applauded, and there were questions and discussion on both occasions.

Considering how much the Glasgow Branch owes to its able and energetic secretary, Mr. Thomas Robertson, it is a great pity that he is far from being in the best of health at present. His many friends all hope that he will derive great advantage from his contemplated trip to the south of England. Mr. Robertson is one of those men whom a party can least of all afford to spare.

The Glasgow Branch has ordered 10,000 copies of Mr. Foote's new Tract, *God at Chicago*. This Branch has already circulated some two or three thousand copies of Paine's *Age of Reason*.

Mr. Foote opens the new course of Queen's Hall lectures this evening (Feb. 14), taking for his subject, "How the Clergy Answer Mr. Blatchford." There is a lot of amusement as well as instruction to be got out of the special defences of Christianity put forward by distinguished representatives of different Churches. These gentlemen pretended not to know of the *Freethinker* and other organs of Freethought, but they fancy they must do something to repel Mr. Blatchford's attacks in the *Clarion*, because that paper happens to have fifty thousand readers. So they have taken the job in hand, and a pretty mess they are making of it—as those who hear Mr. Foote's lecture will recognise.

Mr. Foote takes the second Queen's Hall lecture as well as the first. Mr. John Lloyd takes the third, and Mr. Cohen the fourth. At all these lectures, be it noted, the admission is *absolutely free to all seats* except a few front ones which will be reserved for elderly persons and ladies, or persons coming from a distance who want to be sure of a seat on their arrival. These reserved seats are one shilling each.

These Queen's Hall meetings are under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, which is also carrying on a strong missionary effort at the Camberwell Secular Hall during the remainder of the winter season. Large meetings assembled last month to hear Mr. Foote, who was unable to attend through indisposition, but was ably represented by Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. No doubt there will be good meetings again now that the Camberwell lectures are resumed after an unfortunate, but inevitable, interval of a fortnight. Mr. Lloyd takes the first lecture under the resumption this evening (Feb. 14). He will be followed the next Sunday evening by Mr. W. H. Thresh, who makes his first appearance then upon a Freethought platform. Mr. Thresh will be followed in turn by Mr. Davies, who is so well-known in connection with the outdoor propaganda of Freethought in London.

Considering that "free admission" applies to Camberwell, as well as to Queen's Hall, there ought to be no clashing between these two efforts. The two meeting-places are miles apart, and there are plenty of Freethinkers, and liberal-minded people generally, to fill both to overflowing.

The *Athenæum* reviews a book entitled *Religious Freedom in America* by Dr. J. H. Crooker, of Boston. Dr. Crooker recognises that there is strong opposition to Secular education in America, but thinks that "surrender to this opposition means the extinction of American liberty." He is for leaving religious instruction to the churches and Sunday-schools. "Since there are a hundred thousand pulpits," he says, "and a million Sunday-school teachers engaged in enforcing the Scriptures in our land, it is folly to claim that ceasing to use it for religious purposes in the public schools is depriving our people of the Bible." "Why," Dr. Crooker asks, "go to the public schools at all with this question? It is a problem that belongs to the Churches. If the people are becoming ignorant of the Bible, our ministers are to blame for it. Let us not hold the overworked common school teacher responsible for this ignorance, while we allow the Churches to go free of censure.....Let the Church train

competent Bible teachers and pay for Sunday-school instruction. Here, and here alone, is the remedy." This is just the position taken up by Secular-Educationists in England. Evidently the battle is much the same in both countries.

At the recent annual meetings of the London Baptist Association, held at the Shoreditch Tabernacle, a paper was read by the Rev. R. Foster Jeffrey on the religious problem in Education. This was followed by an animated discussion, according to the *Daily News* report—"several speakers opposing the idea of purely Secular Education, and several being in favor thereof as the only logical position." The latter fact is of considerable importance. It shows that Secular Education is being recognised, even within Dr. Clifford's own special party, as the policy of the future. No doubt it is the younger men who have the sagacity to perceive this.

It is curious, although the fact is very welcome, that a nobleman should have to step out and protest against the reactionary policy of a professed Democrat like Dr. Macnamara, which is dealt with in our "Acid Drops" this week. We have much pleasure in making the following extract from Lord Stanley of Alderley's letter in the *Daily News* :—

"I protest against Parliament imposing compulsorily a scheme of religious teaching on the schools of the country. Such a scheme, whether denominational or undenominational, is equally a State establishment of religious teaching, a matter which, while of course Parliament has no legal power to do it, is, in my opinion, beyond the moral competence of the State, and an attempt to usurp spiritual functions which the community is not competent to discharge. Religious activity must be left to the free, private actions of persons, in accordance with their varying speculative convictions. Even the present system of permissive local endowment of theological teaching, whether called by the name of "Common Christianity," undenominational Bible teaching, or any other phrase, is not defensible in principle, though many acquiesce in its continuance. But at any rate it rests on the voluntary action of the locality, subject to modification from time to time. An Act of Parliament would bind the whole community, and an Act of Parliament not supported by the feeling of those who administer it locally would lead to formalism, hypocrisy, and evasion. This question is not going to be settled by a combination of ecclesiastics, of whatever denomination. The schools should be the schools of the people, a training ground of citizenship, and managed by citizens. Municipal religious teaching of the young is as indefensible as municipal church services for all."

The Executive of the National Secular Society has resolved to put itself into direct communication with the International Freethought Federation, with a view to being separately and distinctly represented at the Rome Congress in September. In consequence of this resolution, Mr. Foote and other N. S. S. representatives have withdrawn from "The General English Committee."

It will be remembered that the Birmingham friends, who ordered 10,000 copies of *God at Chicago* as a Tract, were stopped by the police when they distributed them outside Dr. Torrey's meetings at Bingley Hall. We wondered what right the police had to do this, and it turns out that they had no right at all. Mr. Partridge, the Branch secretary, kindly sent us a copy of the city Bye-Laws, on reading which we were able to advise the "saints" to go on distributing, to be respectful to the police but not yielding, and to leave them to find their own remedy. Mr. Partridge informs us that half a-dozen members have distributed the Tract since without let or hindrance. So much for Dr. Torrey's "complaint." We can quite understand that he does not like Freethought tracts being in the same street with himself, but he will not find the police such *effective* friends in this country as we believe he has found them in some parts of America. Club-law is not an institution here.

The price at which Mr. Foote's new Tract, *God at Chicago*, is issued is far from covering the bare cost of production—and we wish this to be distinctly understood. Mr. Foote is meeting the deficit out of the "*Freethinker* advertising" half of the New Year's Gift to Freethought.

The Annual Children's Party, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, has been "fixed" for Thursday, March 3, in the large hall of the Club and Institute Union, adjoining the Holborn Town Hall. Collecting-cards for the expenses of this function can be obtained from Miss E. M. Vance, secretary, at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

DEATH.

DEATH is a valuable stock-in-trade to the priests of all religions over all the world. Christian priests are no exception. Without death as a working capital, the Churches would soon become bankrupt and the priests unemployed. As a means to influence children, women, and the multitude, life is not in it compared with death. To the preacher, as a climax to his sermon and a means to produce pathetic impressions, which will bring the house down, so to speak, there is nothing so effective as death. Without death, the revivalist would be a workman without tools, unable to keep his show going. Priests everywhere know human nature to perfection, and they make good use of it to their own advantage. In the affairs of this world few, if any, would ever consult a priest, or be guided by them. But they have managed, by some means or other, to make the multitude believe that they know more about death and after, than any other men, and that they can, by some magic power of their own, influence the conditions in the beyond. It is all a delusion, but it exists, and by its means and the terror of death the priests are able to enslave the young and weak-minded, and gather their wealth to feather their own nests.

Parsons are very fond of quoting words from the Epistle to the Philippians: "To die is gain. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." That language is full of the priest. He would like to die and go to heaven at once, but he will live as long as he can for the sake of you. He will keep away from heaven as long as he can, like all the rest of humankind. However strong may be the desire for heaven, fear of death and love of life is stronger.

The Bible is a priestly book. If it was not intended to make it a book for the priest, by its writers, the priest and his bodyguard, the Church, has made it so. And the Bible is teeming with death, as a matter of course. At the beginning death is introduced in the following language: "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It was God that said that. But the wonderful serpent that could talk told them, "You shall not surely die"; and the serpent proved itself a better prophet than God, for we are informed that Adam lived to be over nine hundred years old.

According to the Bible, death is a punishment for sin. If Adam and Eve had not eaten the apple, and thereby disobeyed the command of God, they would have been immortal. That is the only conclusion that can be drawn from the narrative. And I suppose all living creatures, from the microbe upwards, would have immortal life as well, as we are told that it was the sin of Adam and Eve brought death to the world and a curse upon the earth. That the Bible teaches the doctrine that death is the result of sin can be proved by numerous passages in addition to the legend of Genesis. Here are a few quotations:—"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "For the wages of sin is death." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "It is appointed unto men once to die." Thus in the Old and the New Testament the doctrine is taught that the sin of Adam brought death into the world.

It is almost impossible to alight on anything in the Bible that is right and true. Whatever Biblical subject we take up, as soon as we begin to investigate and analyse its contents, we find it full of errors. So it is with Bible teaching about death. It was not sin that brought death to the world. Death is as natural and as old as life; and both, in some form or another, are eternal. They are linked together, like a cause and effect. Death is only an ending of one form and the beginning of another.

The whole universe and everything in it move and change without ceasing. Suns and systems have their birth, growth, and death. So it is with human and every other form of life. Wherever life is, death is there with it. Death is no more the wages of sin than life is. Nature is the mother of both.

That the writers of the Bible were ignorant is not to be wondered at. In their time science was not born. We do not wonder at men in the Stone Age because they used stone tools, nor do we blame them for not using bronze and iron implements. The stone tools were the best things they knew at the time. So the writers of the Bible wrote what they thought at the time was true knowledge, and they are not to be blamed for not knowing the knowledge of the twentieth century. As the work of fallible men in a semi-civilised state, we can understand, admire, and appreciate the Bible like any other ancient literature.

But when we are told, and commanded to believe, that the Bible is the Word of God the matter is entirely different. Whether it is taught that the Bible is the actual words of God or that God inspired certain men to write it, the facts remain the same, and the inference from them are the same. If God is, and ever was, all-wise, he knew everything from eternity to eternity, and he could have revealed at the first all that is known to-day and to be known in the future. Why did he not do it? Why did he give a book to the world full of errors, falsehoods, absurdities, contradictions, and immoralities? There are writings in the world by other nations older than the Jewish Bible, and quite equal to it, if not superior, written by men without any inspiration from God; and why was inspiration required to write the Bible? What is there in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, that man could not discover, know, and write without being inspired by God? If Shakespeare, Bacon, Newton, Darwin, Edison, William Morris, Robert Owen, and scores and hundreds of others, could write and do what they did without special inspiration from God, why was it needed to write the Bible? The Bible is over-rated because it has been made by priests and rulers a fetish book, a stock-in-trade for the priestly business. There are many names in the literature of the world that would be libelled by calling them the authors of the Bible as a whole. Most certainly, if there is an infinite, all-wise God, it is a gigantic insult to his wisdom to call the Bible his words. A greater libel on the name of God, or a greater blasphemy, there cannot be than calling old Jewish legends the holy words of God.

I do not think it would be unreasonable to ask, if there was an infinite God, would he have remained silent when a book like the Bible was called his holy word? Would he not have repudiated it in justice to his character? As an all-loving father would he not save his children from a delusion that has darkened the whole atmosphere of life? The silence of God is a great and a suggestive fact. It is no answer to the objections to say that God had to speak through ignorant, erring men, who were not advanced enough to receive the knowledge of to-day. An infinite God could have made man perfect, so perfect that a revelation would never be required. On the supposition that a revelation was wanted, and that the Bible is a revelation, another revelation is wanted to-day to reveal the meaning of it. But God never shows himself, never speaks, never answers a call; and this eternal silence proves there is no God, or that he is not Almighty, or that he does not desire to be known by man.

Then, why dwell so much as the churches do, on death and after, and the necessity to prepare to meet God in another world, of which we know nothing, not even that there is one. If there is a God, and he is infinite, he is everywhere, and we are always in his presence. Talking about meeting God somewhere or other after death, makes him a local magnate like a judge or a magistrate. And why should anyone prepare to meet God in another world more than in this? Will God be different in another world to what he is in this? If God does not show

himself or speak to anyone in this world, is it likely that he will act different in another? If God is unchangeable, as we are told he is, he is the same to-day as he was from eternity, and will be to eternity, and the same everywhere as he is in this world. But we know nothing about him, nor about what will be after death. It is nothing but presumption on the part of man or an assembly of men, to assume a knowledge of the mind and purpose of God, or to pretend to reveal the secrets of the impenetrable future.

The fear of death, I often think, is due largely to what is erroneously called religious teaching. Although many Christians have abandoned their belief in hell, and that there is less of it in some of the churches than formerly, the belief in a burning lake of fire and brimstone is still strong and active in the popular mind. When all the churches will become silent about hell, as no doubt they will in time, as long as hell is in the Bible, the Holy Word of God, and in the Catechisms, and the books read, the popular, though hideous superstition, will live. To banish hell and the fear of death from the pulpits is not sufficient. Whilst the churches continue to place the Bible and Catechisms in the hands of children to read, they continue to preach and teach the horrible doctrine of hell, almost as effectually as as if they did it from the pulpit. The frantic efforts of priests of all sects to have the Bible read in the schools is a proof of the truth of the assertion.

I have no hesitation in saying that much talking about death in the nursery, the school, or the church, to, or in the presence of children, is unwise, immoral, and dangerous to them. Owing chiefly to the teachings of religions, which is only another name for priestly teaching, morbid dwelling on, and talking of death and after, has driven tens of thousands of grown-up men and women to lunatic asylums and to untimely graves. If the contemplation of death has that effect on adults, the danger of it to children, when the brain is not fully developed and set, must be obvious to every clear mind.

The present world and life in it now is enough to occupy our minds and time. Prepare to live not to die. No preparation will alter death or prevent its coming. Death is natural and inevitable. If there is another world for us, the best preparation for it is to make the best possible use of this. As we know nothing about another world, it is wasting time to prepare for it. It will be soon enough to prepare when we get there, or get some knowledge of its conditions.

I know of no valid reason why man should fear death or anything after. Why should we think that any other world is either better or worse than this? What is there to show that there is a world without wrong, called heaven, and another without anything good, called hell? Our present world is a mixture of good and evil, and all we know of Nature would lead us to suppose that any world, where life is possible is a mixture also. As for God, if there is one, why should we be more afraid of him after death than during life? Is he more cruel after death than before, or what? If God is infinite, we are always in his presence, and will be no nearer to him, even in heaven, than we are now. To talk about preparing to meet God, in whose presence we daily live is nothing but priestly nonsense. And if God is our Father, as we are taught he is, to tell us to fear a loving father is absurd.

If there is a heaven or a hell, or both, after death, we cannot change or abolish them. If there is no hell or heaven, we cannot make them. But here on this earth there is a very real hell of poverty, sin, and misery. A worse hell there cannot be anywhere. But it is a hell that man might abolish by mutual aid and justice, and this all of us ought to do what we can to bring about. It is the living that suffer and not the dead, and life should be our concern and not death. A general co-operative effort would speedily make this world a real heaven of joy and plenty for all its inhabitants.

R. J. DERFEL.

The Red-Headed Nigger.

"You don't believe me? Well, it's as true as I'm here. That nigger, or colored man, or whatever you like to call him, had wool of the most fiery red while his skin was as black as the blackest nigger that ever was. He wasn't exactly a pure-blood nigger—his father was a red-headed Scotsman; his mother, of course, was a negress; and I suspect that color of hair was the last remaining heirloom his father's family possessed.

"When he was born the black folks were kind o' startled. They serenaded him and his mother for pretty nearly a whole week, and, perhaps, would never have stopped if the old man hadn't got drunk on the latest importation of 'Scotch,' and threatened to use his ancestral claymore on the whole crowd of 'em if they didn't git. They scooted when they saw the claymore, for Old Sandy had told 'em wonderful yarns of the doings of that sword. However, when they brought heaps of presents in the shape of pigs, hens, yams, bananas, goats, cows, and suchlike for the baby, the old man sort o' scented good business, and gave 'em plenty of encouragement.

"It was the hair that did it; and, when you come to think of it, the combination was extraordinary. Old Sandy wasn't expecting they'd make a deity of his kid, but they did, though. The first intimation he received of it was one morning when he got up and found a palisade round his hut and heard the niggers chanting some verses just as the sun rose above the horizon.

"'Whew,' he said to himself, in his broad Scottish way, the precise situation coming upon him with a rush, 'who'd 'a thocht I'd ever be the feyther of a sun-god!'

"So Old Sandy, from being a hard-living, hard-drinking, hard-swearing, wandering Scot, came to be considered a person of much sacredness, and all because he was the father of a red-pated, black-skinned coon. When expostulated with, at a later date, for having fostered the deity-delusion of the niggers, he replied:—

"'Mon, where's yer sense! Ye ken, it was o' nae use argyng with they heathen. It would hae been o' nae use for me to hae tellt 'em I was no a sanctified person—they wouldna hae believed me. So I just adapted meself to me peculiar circumstances an' took the honors o' me poseetion wi' a' the dignity of a mon who is Laird o' Muckleachan in his ain right.'

"Till that time Old Sandy was the only white man who had reached those parts, and, when he found how prosperous he had become since the birth of his extraordinary offspring, he didn't want to see another white man come along. Consequently, he instructed his followers to spread very depreciatory reports of their country, and this they did so assiduously that many intending prospectors were most effectually 'choked off.'

"However, it was not very long before Sandy found himself in a dilemma. The niggers, without exception, now looked upon him as their boss medicine-man, and he had come to the conclusion that the ordinary dress of a white man was quite unsuited to the duties of a priest. He cudgelled his brains in an endeavor to invent some startling, outlandish form of attire, but was most providentially saved the trouble. He was raking over the offerings one evening, when he saw a piece of Stewart tartan sticking out from amongst several packages of native material. Lugging vigorously at this reminder of Scotia, he exposed to view the somewhat stained but still wearable kilt of a regimental piper. A bundle fell out of it as he held it up, and this, to his great delight, proved to be a dilapidated set of bagpipes. In addition to these he discovered a balloon-sleeved bodice, which evidently had belonged to a very stout woman.

"During the following two days he retired to the seclusion of the inner sanctuary, where he busied himself in the preparing of his ceremonial garments and in the repairing of the bagpipes. With the aid of a few skins and some feathers he made quite an imposing ceremonial coat of the balloon-sleeved bodice, while the kilt, in combination with an enormous sporan, completed, in a remarkable manner, his sacerdotal outfit. As a sort of totem he decorated two empty whiskey bottles with beads and feathers, and hung them round his neck by means of a leather thong. A few daubs of paint, applied to his face, finished his toilet, and he was ready.

"At sunrise, on the third day, the niggers were astounded to hear prolonged groanings, interspersed with a kind of rapid and acute bleating, proceeding from the direction of the Holy Hut. Curiosity succeeding amazement, all the men trooped to the sacred enclosure, to find out the cause of the soul-disturbing sounds. Suddenly Sandy, in all his glory, emerged from the hut and strutted round the enclosure to the martial strains of the 'Garb of Old Gaul'; whereupon, with many pious

ejaculations, all the niggers fell down in the very ecstasy of adoration.

"After some ten minutes of strutting round the enclosure to the weird music of his bagpipes, Sandy disappeared into the inner sanctuary again, to reappear presently holding aloft a long, feather-and-skin-bedecked pole, surmounted with a jet-black, turnip-like representation of a human head, and having an immense mop of fiery red hair. Planting his burden firmly on the ground, he steadied it with his right hand, and then, with a fervor worthy of a better cause, he gave an exceedingly ferocious rendering of 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled.' The effect was electrical. The niggers worshipped like steam-driven bowing machines, and the next morning the number of offerings was positively alarming. Sandy was waked by the bleating of sheep and goats, the bellowing of cattle, the shrill crowing and cackling of fowls, the grunting of pigs, and the low, monotonous chanting of the niggers. To signify the god's pleasure at the gifts offered him, Sandy skirled for several minutes on the pipes, then exposed the symbol of the red-headed deity as a sign of dismissal.

"Thus, for a number of years, until the prodigious offspring of Sandy had arrived at somewhere about the age of eighteen, did the fame and sanctity of the 'Red-headed Glory' grow increasingly, and the niggers for many miles around got to regarding the village of K'Mopo in much the same manner as the Mohammedans regard Mecca, as the Jews regard Jerusalem, as the Buddhists regard Lhasa. And, during all that time, Sandy waxed exceedingly in riches.

"It was just about this time that the cloud no bigger than a man's hand rose above the horizon. It came from America, and arrived at K'Mopo in the shape of the cadaverous, but remarkably wide-awake figure of the Rev. Jonathan Shellback, formerly pastor of the 'Apostles of Righteousness,' but now Extraordinary Gospel Messenger to the biggest missionary society in the Almighty Country.

"For some time he had been in doubt as to where he should go to exercise his powers of conversion; but, hearing of the 'Red-headed Glory,' he decided on Africa. Accordingly, one fine summer forenoon, he and his daughter, a young woman of robust, but quite unromantic appearance, departed from New York by the ss. *La France*, amid the myriad-throated acclamations of the most tremendous evangelistic crowd that had ever assembled in that enormous city. Indeed, the Rev. Shellback, commenting on his send-off to the Captain while at dinner, made the remark that it 'constituted the most affecting scene that was ever beheld, and was certainly unproducable by any other country! The Captain, a man of advanced ideas, agreed with him entirely. But all too quickly the voyage was concluded, and the Rev. and Miss Cornelia Shellback found themselves, on the day succeeding that of disembarkation, jolting northward in an ox-wagon. Around them was a vast expanse of veldt, and through the limpid, smoke-untainted air the distant mountains showed wonderfully distinct. And even the Rev. Jonathan Shellback was strangely impressed by the mighty sweep of earth and sky through which he was crawling.

"As day by day they drew nearer to the place of the Holy Kraal they heard more and more of the 'Red-headed Glory'—of the miracles performed by the deity, of his remarkable sayings, of the mysteries of his worship, of his wonderful dwelling. And yet he was a god of scarce eighteen years' repute.

"The Rev. Shellback fully expected to be barred from entering the Holy Village, but was agreeably disappointed. So, one evening, feeling much relieved, he alighted from his bone-shaking conveyance and proceeded to take in his surroundings. And the first sounds that smote his ears were the piercing tones of Sandy's pipes screaming the *Pibroch*.

"On the following morning the Shellback's made a reconnaissance, but failed to get sight of Sandy. Nor did they on several successive days, for Sandy had suddenly developed a pronounced aversion for publicity. However, the Rev. Shellback quite unsuspected that the High Priest of Red-headed gloryism was a white man.

"Now, the Rev. Jonathan, although a missionary, was a man of ideas; probably, because he was a Yankee. He conceived that to set up his rival creed in the stronghold of the native religion, without careful preliminaries, would lead to no good result, but probably to considerable trouble. With this view, he proceeded to formulate a plan of campaign. He had been given to understand that witch-doctors were extremely partial to fire-water. Hence, his first move was to make Sandy a present of several bottles of the fieriest American rye-whiskey, a quantity of which he had brought with him expressly for this purpose. He waited for a week, then sent to Sandy, asking for an audience, which, to his surprise, was granted with very un-native-like hastiness. However, he very leisurely availed himself of the favor, and it was quite two hours later before he went to the Holy Kraal. He was admitted with much

ceremony, and suddenly found himself face to face with the chief medicine-man, whose eyes, in the dimness of the interior, seemed to shine unnaturally.

"The Rev. Jonathan was the first to speak. He greeted Sandy in the native tongue, his Yankee accent being most conspicuously in evidence, and was amazed to hear the witch-doctor ejaculate, 'I thoct as much!'"

They stood regarding each other, the one incredulously, the other wild-eyed and reminiscently.

"Gie's your hon', mon," said Sandy, "I'll be your first convert. Ye ken I was starchy wi' importance till ye cam' along wi' that soul-killing rye whusky, an' noo I'm as limp as a wet clout. I've been dreamin' o' the Rockies for the last twa days, an' I'm just truly thankfu' it's got no worse than seein' hills and snow. Anither bottle, and t'would hae been grizzlies and rattlers. An' ma stummick is like a kiln. Sit ye doon, mon, an' tell us the latest noos. Ye ken, it's gey dull here wi' only niggers to gass to."

"When the Rev. Jonathan had finished his interview with Sandy, he left the sanctuary with a smile of triumph on his face. Victory was in his grasp, but he remembered he must be careful, for was he not dealing with one who hailed from the north of the Tweed? However, he felt confident in his Yankee superiority. And the prize was well worth the trouble. The chief difficulty in the way now was how to deal with the god, the son of Sandy, the 'Red-headed Glory,' who, it seemed, had very imperious notions, and was not easily approachable. As for the niggers, they would veer with the change of circumstances. And even if they did act ugly, would not the iron hand of the British Government fall heavily upon them, and a protectorate be declared? But, suddenly, a brilliant idea occurred to the Rev. Shellback, and he laughed a high-pitched, chuckling sort of laugh. He ruminated on that idea during all one day, and at the end of it his plans were ready for carrying into execution.

"Exactly five weeks after the advent of the Rev. Shellback, there arrived at K'Mopo quite a caravan of ox-wagons. These were carefully unloaded, and the contents, under the superintendance of the rev. gentleman and a few American workmen, assisted by natives, soon took the shape of a chapel. When the structure of wood and corrugated iron was finished, the Rev. Shellback broached his plan to Sandy for the wholesale conversion of the Red-headed gloryists. Sandy applauded the plan, but was careful to remind the rev. gentleman that his son was a jealous god, and mighty quick in avenging himself. But the Rev. Jonathan expressed himself as being quite without qualms on that score. The next day he, his daughter, and their native staff paraded the streets of K'Mopo, singing hymns in the vernacular to the accompaniment of an American organ. Almost needless to say, they 'caught on' immediately, and when they struck up a good old rousing revival hymn, set to the tune of a rollicking plantation song, the K'Mopoites, with one accord, took to dancing, and called for many encores. The thin end of the wedge had been inserted.

"But the wrath of the 'Glory' had been aroused, and he denounced the newcomers in most unmerciful terms, declaring that, if they did not depart before the sun rose again, he would slay them. The Rev. Shellback retorted by publicly praying, in the native tongue, that the 'Red-headed Glory' might have his wool blackened for ever and ever. The niggers were uneasy at this turn of affairs. They liked the Rev. Jonathan and his music, but they feared K'Mopo, or the Red-headed One, with an exceeding great fear. Hence they retired to rest that night with a most uncomfortable sensation of impending disaster, and waited dreadfully for the morrow.

"But there was a very interesting little drama played at the Holy Hut during the awful suspense of that night, the principal items in which were the stertorous breathing of a man under the influence of a powerful narcotic, a peculiar chemical smell, a pause, the splashing sound of water, then some exclamations of satisfaction.

"And at daybreak every inhabitant of the Holy Kraal was crowding at the entrance to the Sacred Enclosure, and a great cry went up from them.

"Show us the Glory,' they shouted, and Sandy led him forth, in the customary manner, his head shrouded.

"Unveil! unveil!" wailed the multitude, and the shroud flattered to the ground. A dead silence swept over the niggers, then they broke into terror-stricken flight.

"Black! black!" they screamed. 'Let us make peace with the Great White Wizard, or we are lost!'

"Thus did the Rev. Jonathan triumph, and make the biggest missionary success of the century. As for the 'Glory,' he was induced to go through a civilising process at one of the training colleges in America, after which he returned to K'Mopo, where he speedily became a docile Jupiter to the Shellback Juno.

"The last heard of Sandy was that he was wasting his substance in riotous living at his native town of Glasgow."

JAMES H. WATERS.

The "Age of Reason."

A CHARGE AGAINST THE FREE LIBRARIES COMMITTEE.

(From the "Birmingham Daily Mail," Feb. 8)

IN the correspondence columns of the *Post* to-day a peculiar complaint against the Free Libraries Committee finds expression. The writer has been "amazed" to discover that Paine's *Age of Reason* and another book from the same virile pen should have been placed on the shelves in the Reference Library, and protests "in the name of all that is holy and all that is true" against the admission of the volumes in question to a public library. The Committee, we believe, does not pay serious attention to anonymous communications, especially those directed to a third party, and unless the present complaint assumes a more personal form it is hardly likely that the authorities will heed it in their official capacity. Underlying the letter there is, however, a matter of some public importance, in the suggestion which it may convey that either wittingly or unwittingly the committee has been the means of providing for popular reference a book of a harmful character in the religious sense. Mr. Capel Shaw, the chief librarian, was interviewed on the subject by a *Mail* representative to-day, and expressed himself surprised that any exception should have been taken to the action of the committee in admitting the book, particularly in view of the fact that it had been secured in response to an appeal from the outside public. The protest, he thought, was the more unjustifiable, considering the position and authority of the author, who was unquestionably one of the most remarkable of the literary men of his time. "I can see no more reason," said he, "why anybody should object to the *Age of Reason* in a public library than to certain of the works of (say) Huxley and Darwin, which, in the principles which they enunciate, do not accord with the orthodox Christian beliefs." In a free library the authorities had to cater for all classes, and for people in the literary sense, of widely differing opinions and inclinations. So long, therefore, as the committee did not pass anything of an immoral nature, Mr. Shaw saw no reasonable ground for grievance.

A MAN OF MANY PARTS.

A slight acquaintance with the eventful career of Tom Paine, the famous author of *Age of Reason*, is sufficient to confirm the statement of the remarkable part which he played in the public life of his day. Born in Norfolk towards the middle of the eighteenth century, and the son of a member of the Society of Friends, Paine spent his early years seeking adventure on the high seas. Then, for some years, he settled down in London to the prosaic occupation of a stay-maker. After that he was employed as an usher, and in turn did a little preaching, an attempt to secure ordination being unsuccessful. At a later period he lived and wrote in America and France respectively. The *Age of Reason* enjoys with *The Rights of Man*—a reply to Burke's attack on the French Revolution—the reputation of his masterpiece. In England his extreme Radical views, in the political as well as the theological world, brought him into conflict with many of the leading men of the day, and it was in France and America, especially the former country, that he was held in highest esteem as a thinker and a writer. At one time, immediately after the dethronement of the Monarchy at the close of the century, Paris received him with open arms, and even went so far as to confer upon him civil rights, and elect him a member of the Constitution. Though coarse in places, he wrote with conspicuous freshness and independence, and at least one authority has acknowledged the "shrewdness" of his Biblical criticisms. Cobbett, originally a bitter enemy, eventually became one of Paine's warmest admirers. Like other notable men, Paine had to withstand a spirited attack upon his private life, but the allegations levelled against him are not now seriously entertained. He died in New York, and was buried there in 1809. Subsequently, at the request of Cobbett, the remains were exhumed and removed to Liverpool, where, at a later date, they were seized under the bankruptcy of Cobbett's son.

Mankind went to religions, which proved nothing, for they differed among themselves; it went to philosophies, which revealed no more, for they contradicted one another; and it will now try to find the way out of the difficulty by itself, trusting to its own instinct and its own simple good sense; and since mankind find itself here on earth without knowing why or how, it is going to try to be as happy as it can with just those means the earth supplies.—*Dumas (the Younger)*.

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, G. W. Foote, "How the Clergy Answer Mr. Blatchford."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30. John Lloyd, "The Birth and Resurrection of Jesus Christ."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Brumley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7. F. J. Gould, "The Three Spirits: The Orthodox, the Critical, and the Ethical."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "Political Ethics."

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

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Harringay): 7.15, Harry Snell, "The Other Side of Darwinism."

COUNTRY.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane Failsforth): 6.30, H. Percy Ward, "A Rough Outline of Darwinism."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. "My Objections to Roman Catholicism," Mr. Scott; 6.30, Mr. A. G. Nostic, "Prehistoric Man." With lantern illustrations.

LEEDS (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, H. R. Youngman, "The Atonement"; Woodhouse Moor: 3, George Weir, "The God of the Bible"; Town Hall Square: 7, W. Woolham, "Egoism and Secularism."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, T. E. Rhodes, "Richard Jefferies"; 7, J. Balfour, "The French Revolution." Monday, 8 p.m., Debate with Hamilton Mission Debating Society on "Is Theism Reasonable?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, J. Mayoh, "Russia and Japan: the Outlook in the East."

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, February 11, at 8, N. McIntyre, "Calvinism in Scotland."

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (Market Place): Ernest Pack, 11, "Christian Absurdities"; 3, "The Bible and Beer"; 7, "The Way to Heaven."

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