

# THE Freethinker

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*Do not believe that a multitude is right, that a lie stated by a hundred mouths ceases to be a lie, that an error proclaimed by a band of blind men becomes a truth which nature will sanction. Do not believe, either, that, by setting yourselves to the number of ten thousand who do not know against one who knows, you will come to know anything, or that you will compel the humblest of the eternal laws to follow you, to abandon him who recognised it.—MÄTTERLINCK.*

## Before Moses.

MR. CHILPERIC EDWARDS, whose initials are not unknown to our own readers, has written a very useful and interesting volume on *The Hammurabi Code and the Sinaitic Legislation* (Watts & Co.). It provides in a brief compass all the really important information about the now-famous sculptured code which was discovered at the end of 1901 by the excavation party under M. J. de Morgan, a deputy of the French Government, upon the site of Susa, the ancient city of the Persian kings. Mr. Edwards also gives a complete translation of the code as far as it is available, for a portion of it seems to be irretrievably lost. His book, therefore, is of the highest value to the ordinary student, who cannot hope to become an expert in archæology.

The Hammurabi code was discovered on a pillar of black diorite, in the shape of an elongated sugar-loaf, 7ft. 4in. high, 5ft. 4in. in circumference at the top, and 6ft. 2in. at the bottom. The back and front are covered with columns of the ancient Babylonian hieroglyphics in wedge-shaped lines. "The direction of the writing," as Mr. Edwards says, "is exactly the same as in Chinese, to which the Archaic Cuneiform bears a remarkable resemblance." The stone itself is very hard, and has preserved the original writing with extreme sharpness. The greatest damage was done deliberately by the Persian monarch who removed the pillar from Babylonia to Susa. He had the last five rows of columns upon the front erased, in order to have his own name engraved upon it as a trophy of victory. A foolish piece of vanity which has robbed the world of some very useful knowledge.

This writing upon stone was common in that period of the world's history. That is why Moses, in the Hebrew legend, brings down two tables of stone from Mount Sinai, containing ten commandments written with the finger of God. Legendary stories are generally valuable for the bits of archæology embedded in them.

The date of Hammurabi is about 2,000 B.C. He was a great monarch, who ruled for many years. Mr. Edwards describes him as "an impartial judge, who tolerated no corruption in his officials," and as being "ever vigilant for the administration of justice in his realm." The inscribed code represents his object as being (in its own words) "to establish justice in the earth, to destroy the base and the wicked, and to hold back the strong from oppressing the feeble." A most admirable ambition! Perhaps "destroy" is a little too strong; but, after all, it is better to destroy the base and wicked than to cherish them, as we too often see done in these days of "Christian civilisation."

Hammurabi was not the founder of a dynasty, neither did he originate the laws he promulgated. His work was a codification of former laws—something like the Code Napoléon in France. His code, as Mr. Edwards says, was "probably a great advance in Babylonian jurisprudence, yet the laws themselves were not innovations, but a digest of previous custom."

Behind the Hammurabi code was a long Babylonian civilisation, and behind that was the old Akkadian civilisation out of which it grew. And as the date of Hammurabi is about 2,000 B.C., and the supposed date of Moses is about 1,400 B.C., it is easy to see that the Hammurabi code brings us, directly and indirectly, face to face with a civilisation that goes back far beyond the very beginnings of Hebrew culture.

Bearing this fact in mind, let us see what sort of civilisation the Hammurabi code supposes. We cannot do better than take Mr. Edwards's description.

"They contemplate a country with a numerous settled population, where the art of writing is in common use, where agriculture is associated with irrigation upon a large scale, and where ships and navigation play an important part."

Such was the civilisation of Babylon many centuries before the "chosen people"—a set of desert nomads—were first heard of under their leader Moses.

Not only did the "chosen people" borrow largely from Babylon, as anyone may see by reading the Hammurabi code; they were not even original in their language, which, the Christian divines have told us, was exclusively their own, and the special language of inspiration. Mr. Edwards points out—and the fact is of immense importance—that the "Hebrew language was not confined to the Jewish community, but was the common tongue of all the ancient inhabitants of Palestine." The facts, indeed, show that "Hebrew had been spoken in the country from time immemorial."

From these and other facts pointing in the same direction we may see that the ancient Jews were an insignificant little people; that their Scriptures are full of patriotic boasting—in which, of course, they are not singular; and that the principal elements of what civilisation they possessed were borrowed from the great empires with which they came into contact—the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Assyrian, and the Persian. It is, indeed, arguable that the undoubted force, in body, mind, and character, of the modern Jew is the result of fifteen centuries of Christian persecution; so that when the Christians are beaten by Jews in open competition they are beaten by a rod of their own making.

Mr. Edwards draws up a long list of resemblances between the so-called Mosaic Law and the Hammurabi Code, and then writes as follows:—

"These resemblances should be decisive. In our notes on the Hammurabi Code we took occasion to compare it with an independent system of legislation, the Laws of the Twelve Tables [Roman]; and the similarities discovered were neither numerous nor striking. On the other hand, in the comparison of the Hebrew Book of the Covenant with the Babylonian Code, the resemblances are simply overwhelming. Out of thirty-two ordinances, twenty-one are in accordance with the Babylonian, most being practically identical, and the others being quite in the Babylonian spirit.



The inference is, therefore, that *the Hammurabi Code must have been the immediate or remote progenitor of the Hebrew legal system.*"

The italics are the author's own, and they emphasise the gist of the whole matter. It is well known that the two accounts of the Creation, and the stories of the Flood, are merely excerpts from the Babylonian cosmogony and mythology; and it now appears that the Hebrew *legislation* is also of Babylonian origin. Of course the Jews attributed it to Moses; but, for our part, we have always contended that Moses is a purely legendary character; and we note that Mr. Edwards makes a critical reservation on this point by inserting in brackets after the name of Moses the words "if he ever had any real existence." As for the historical character of Abraham, Mr. Edwards dismisses it with unhesitating contempt.

The Mosaic Law was evidently borrowed from the Hammurabi Code, and it is not only later but inferior. "The Babylonian Code," as Mr. Edwards observes, "nowhere inculcates religious persecution." Elsewhere he remarks that "The fierce and senseless intolerance of the Laws of Moses forms a significant contrast to the judicial dignity of the Laws of Hammurabi." "The basic ideas of the Hammurabi Code," Mr. Edwards says, "are civil right and solid justice." Theology is rigidly excluded. But this is "all over the shop" in the Mosaic Law, which establishes what Mr. Edwards well calls "a theological reign of terror," and is a signal "combination of bloodthirstiness and ceremonial zeal."

It is perfectly clear that Gibbon was quite accurate (as he generally was) in deriving the fanatical zeal of primitive Christianity from Judaism. There was nothing resembling it, we believe, in any of the other religions within the pale of the Roman Empire.

We are thankful to Mr. Edwards for pointing out that what Herodotus said about the Babylonian women was mere babble. It is utterly disproved by the marriage contract tablets which are extant. We will not dilate upon this point. Suffice it to say that it is reassuring to a Humanist to find the falsehood of this scandalous report of a great people. Such a story, we may add, has been too easily believed about a pre-Christian civilisation.

We take leave of Mr. Edwards's book with feelings of admiration and gratitude. He has done a valuable piece of work very thoroughly, and conferred a boon upon the general body of students of comparative religion. He has also shown how the "inspired" Mosaic Law was essentially derived from the uninspired Code of Babylon, and has thus helped to unmask the most colossal and hitherto successful of all religious impostures.

G. W. FOOTE.

### A Parson on Doubt.

A CLERGYMAN preaching on the subject of "Doubt" is an interesting spectacle. One knows beforehand what he will say, but this serves only to increase one's amusement at the pretence of judicial consideration assumed, while the lofty air of superiority towards the poor, unhappy doubters is a fine object-lesson on the very peculiar virtue of Christian humility. It would not be fair, perhaps, to suggest that the average clergyman is a stranger to religious doubts; he may have as many as any layman, but he is more careful in expressing them. He is paid for telling people, not how much he doubts, but how much it is good for them to believe. Whether he believes it himself, or *how much* he believes himself, is quite another question.

The Rev. C. Silvester Horne is the parson in charge at Whitefield's Tabernacle, Tottenham Court-road—a district that, while well looked after religiously, opens up wide opportunities for improvement in other directions. His monthly sermon to young people, delivered on July 10, dealt with "Doubt," and it is really all that one could reasonably expect from such a quarter. He is such a keen

observer as to actually recognise that there is much doubt in the minds of the rising generation on religious questions, and he is full of commiseration—of the cheap and nasty order—towards all who are troubled in this manner. And he has, apparently, little faith in this doubt being removed, or even diminished, by mere argument. The Christian faith, he says, is not going to win in that way. The only way to remove religious doubting is by carrying Christianity into daily life. By which Mr. Horne means that A will remove doubts as to the divinity of Jesus from the mind of B by not picking the pockets of C, and if D is troubled with doubts concerning the existence of the supernatural these misgivings may be stifled by handing a subscription to a local hospital.

Mr. Horne appears to be in a very peculiar fog concerning the meaning of "Doubt" and "Disbelief." He uses both terms as interchangeable through the whole of his sermon, and evidently thinks they stand for the same frame of mind. But, of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Doubt is a wholly suspensory attitude. One is in doubt concerning a statement when the evidence *pro* and *con.* is of an indecisive character. I doubt, for instance, Mr. Horne's ability to navigate a ship from Liverpool to New York. I do not say he cannot do so, because I have no evidence to go upon; and even though I had some evidence, it might not be of a conclusive character. On the other hand, I have a strong disbelief in Mr. Horne's ability to handle a philosophical subject. I am in no doubt here, because the sermon before me is (to me) quite conclusive. But there is no hesitation and no doubt about my want of belief in Mr. Horne's abilities in this direction. It is a definite, a positive, conviction. It is positive because all disbelief is the reverse of a belief; and the more emphatic a man's beliefs are, the more emphatic are his disbeliefs.

The distinction is worth emphasising, because it completely upsets nearly all that Mr. Horne has to say. Mr. Horne says: "A man of unbelief is never safe, never sure, always in danger of having his very foundations shaken.....Unbelief does nothing; it conquers no worlds, it makes no heroes, it carries no heights, it solves no problems, it gives no peace," etc. Now all this, as the context shows, is really apropos of *doubt*, and all it amounts to is that the man who doubts the wisdom of a course or the success of an action will not act so decisively, and will not be so likely to achieve success, as he who is full of confidence. And this no one questions. But the doubter is not the unbeliever. As a matter of fact, all great *doers* have been vigorous unbelievers. The belief of Galileo in the rotundity of the earth was equally an expression of his fervent unbelief in the orthodox theory as to its flatness. Darwin's belief in Natural Selection was an expression of his disbelief in special creation. Even Mr. Horne's loudly expressed belief in Christianity is only the reverse side of his disbelief in anti-Christian theories. Great work has been done by great believers, true; but all great believers have been great *unbelievers*, and the man who contrasts unbelief and belief as antagonistic frames of mind shows himself lacking in even a rudimentary knowledge of the nature of mental processes. If I were religious, I should be inclined to say, God help the "young people" trained under such a teacher.

Of course, it may be urged that Mr. Horne is not so ignorant as he would make himself to be. He is in the pulpit; he must play the game according to the rules of the pulpit, and one of these rules is that the religious unbeliever must be held up as a poor wavering, undecided sort of a creature who goes through life mouthing "I do not believe," but without a shred of positive conviction. Everyone should know how much of a caricature of the truth this is. The religious unbeliever does not *doubt* religious doctrines; he has a strong conviction of their untruth. He disbelieves a number of religious teachings, but these are all concerned with matters that are of no real value, and are only one aspect of strong



beliefs concerning those principles and teachings that experience has shown to be all-important for the right conduct of life. He does not believe in the providence of deity, but he does believe in the power of human intelligence properly organised and applied. He does not believe in miracles, but he does believe in the principle of universal, invariable law. He does not believe that morality is a matter of revelation to be enforced by threats and rewards, but he does believe that morality is a social product, and that its operation over an ever-widening area is the result of the operation of forces and processes that are practically indestructible. If anyone cares to take the trouble of constructing a table with the beliefs of the religious unbeliever on the one side and the unbeliefs of the religious believer on the other, he will discover that while the former involves the affirmation of the dignity and self-sufficiency of human life, the latter is really an affirmation of its intrinsic worthlessness and incapacity. And perhaps the poorest picture of all is that offered by a man in Mr. Horne's position, who can tell his audience: "For my own part, I am sure of nothing but Jesus Christ—nothing." To which all that one need say is that, when a man mounts a pulpit to tell people that he is sure of nothing in or around human nature, but only certain of an impossible story about a mythical personage, he is in the only place where such a statement could be made without bringing upon the speaker a charge of idiocy or insanity.

Mr. Horne has, of course, the usual stupidities concerning Materialism. To be told this in an age of doubt, he says, may mean "that your age is perfectly Materialistic; that you do not, and will not, believe that there are any higher realities than chemistry, or any other form of (force) science can bring to light." Such language is either stupid or dishonest. What has the question of whether there are other ("higher" is a word dragged in as part of the dishonesty) forces than those disclosed by science to do with the unbeliever's appreciation of the *morally or mentally* higher aspects of life? The highest development of the maternal instinct is a development of what is found, in a more transitory form, in the lower animal world. But this does not rob it of its character or value as it exists now. The social or moral value of qualities now existing is quite distinct from the question of whether these are the outcome of the subtle action and reaction of chemical and physical forces or not. The perfume of the rose and the stink of *asafœtida* are both, physically, vibratory phenomena; but the fact of their being so does not rob one of its stench or the other of its perfume. The atomic grouping of carbon makes here a diamond, and there a piece of blacklead; but who denies a difference because science shows the component to be identical in the two cases? It is simply inconceivable that a man who has the right to put M.A. after his name can be so unutterably stupid as not to see this. In sheer defence of Mr. Horne's intellect one prefers to attribute his language to pulpit dishonesty rather than to stupidity.

Mr. Horne has also something to say about certain classes of doubters. He has nothing to say to the men who can laugh at religion, who "brazenly" boast of their unbelief. To these he will say nothing; only scorch them up by his contempt. The class of unbelievers he will speak to, and whom he profoundly pities, are those "who sorrowfully and reverently confess that they cannot feel sure that the revelation of Jesus Christ is true. They confess it in sorrow and sadness."

This is the class Mr. Horne addresses, and all unbelievers will feel heartily thankful for the pity of this Methodist preacher. If one cannot say that they agree with Mr. Horne, there is at least the consolation that one has his pity. True, I am not acquainted with any unbeliever who goes about the world lamenting in "sorrow and sadness" that he cannot believe in Jesus; all seem to lead a fairly enjoyable life under the circumstances; but, presuming they exist, Mr. Horne addresses his sermon to them. And if one were to seek a reason for this

selection, one, I imagine, would find it in the fact that the only people who would be impressed by Mr. Horne's sermon are those who agreed with him beforehand. Those who did not believe in Christianity before reading it would hardly be likely to do so afterwards.

C. COHEN.

### The Irreducible Minimum.

WE are all familiar with the great and significant concessions which theology has made to literary criticism and physical science during the last sixty years. Even the most conservative divines have abandoned not a few positions which were regarded, a hundred years ago, as indispensable to the Christian religion. Wonderful instances of this were given at the Open Conference recently held at the Central Hall, Manchester. It was practically a Wesleyan Methodist Conference, the two gentlemen who conducted it being Tutors at Didsbury College. Now, Wesleyan Methodism is supposed to be an essentially orthodox and conservative Connection; but, in answering the various questions put to them, Professors Moulton and Peake conceded so much to their opponents that one naturally wonders whether there is anything left to which they can legitimately cling. Is there a point beyond which these amazing concessions cannot go? Is there an irreducible quantity of truth which is calculated to insure the survival of religion? We shall soon see.

Question 3 covers a large number of fundamental doctrines, such as Creation, the Evolution of the Bible, the Antiquity of Man, and Redemption, and Professor Moulton endeavors to reply to it. On the subject of Creation Professor Moulton's language is provokingly ambiguous. "As a matter of fact," he says, "there are a great many differences of opinion in the Christian Church, and that, I take it, is an evidence that the Church is alive. If those hundreds of millions of people who form the Christian Church thought precisely alike, I should regard it as a sign of religious deadness. We cannot get the whole of Christendom to hold one particular opinion on this subject." But Professor Moulton knows perfectly well that, down to very recent times, the Christian Church *did* "hold one particular opinion on this subject," and would not tolerate any other. Was the Church utterly dead during the Middle Ages, when she cruelly put to death those who ventured to differ from her opinions? Does he not remember how brutally punished and suppressed the early advocates of the new astronomy were, and how bitterly geology was anathematised when it began its propagandist mission? Why, it was only the other day that some articles by the late Dr. Mivart, which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*, and in which he eloquently advocated the claims of science, were placed on the *Index Expurgatorius*. Dr. Mivart was a loyal member of the Catholic Church; but because he vindicated his claim to hold liberal opinions in theology and refused to recant, he was excommunicated by Cardinal Vaughan. It is sheer nonsense to assert that in the Christian Church, as such, differences of theological opinion have ever found enthusiastic hospitality, or even polite tolerance. Even to-day, an orthodox theologian cannot be a scientific evolutionist, because the theory of evolution excludes the idea of creation. Evolution knows absolutely nothing of the Christian God.

There may be those who honestly believe "that the first chapter of Genesis represents literal historical fact"; but my point is that such people cannot honestly claim at the same time to be evolutionists. Herbert Spencer was a sincere advocate of development; but he did not even pretend to believe in God and creation. There can never be such a thing as Spencerian Theology. Hence we are not in the least surprised to find that in the sixties, seventies, and eighties of last century Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, and Spencer were violently opposed and condemned by the divines of that period.



It is only under the irresistible pressure of all-conquering science that the theologians of to-day so readily pursue a concessionary policy. They are evolutionists in spite of themselves, and at the expense of having to re-write the first chapter of Genesis. And this I contend is not honest. Once the first chapter of Genesis has been re-written there is nothing left to justify the old belief in its divine inspiration.

Professor Moulton says: "I would not stop anybody from reading the Bible and taking his own view of it." O, consistency, what a precious jewel thou art! The Professor would stop Roman Catholics from reading the Bible and taking their own view of it. "If I had to choose a set of men," he says, "to whom I would trust the guardianship of the Bible, almost the last would be the Roman Catholics. I think they have succeeded very well in making nonsense out of a great part of the Bible; and as I believe the Bible to be sense from beginning to end, I am not disposed to leave them in charge of it." There is something uncommonly like mock-humility in the next sentence: "I should indeed be very sorry to be in charge of it myself." And it is anything but true. As a matter of fact, freedom of theological speech is not permissible in any portion of Christendom. I admit that ever since the birth of the Higher Criticism, the Church has been moving onward; but even to-day the pace is painfully slow. In the year 1881, Professor W. Robertson Smith was removed from his chair at the Free Church College, Aberdeen, by a vote of the General Assembly, because he claimed the right to apply the canons of literary criticism to the interpretation of the Old Testament. Professor George Adam Smith occupies a similar chair at Glasgow, and teaches views much more advanced than any ever advocated by his late namesake, and no protest is made by the Church. The first Smith moved faster than the Church, and was ejected. The present Smith moves with the Church, and is allowed to remain. It is almost a proverb now that the heresy of yesterday is the truth of to-day, and that the heresy of to-day will be the orthodoxy of to-morrow. But at no time are individuals permitted to think differently about the Bible from the body or bodies to which they belong.

Professor Moulton is well aware how true this is of his own Church. Are not Wesleyan Methodist ministers examined once a year by a committee of the Conference as to their orthodoxy, and if it is discovered that their view of the Bible does not harmonise with that held by the Church, are they not disciplined in some way? Some years ago Professor Agar Beet ventured to read the Bible for himself on the subject of Eschatology, and to publish his own interpretation of it, which differed from that adopted by the majority of his brethren. Was he not in consequence severely persecuted, and was he not allowed to retain his chair only by subjecting himself to most humiliating conditions?

But supposing all people were allowed to read the Bible and to take their own views of it, who is to define the limits beyond which they could not go? Yesterday's Bible is dead, and to-day's Bible is in a state of solution—who can tell what to-morrow's Bible will be like? Once you let go of the specially inspired and infallible Volume you have nothing but your own reason to guide your judgment; and reason must always be under the guidance of knowledge. To religious people the Bible is just exactly what they have been taught to believe it to be. They are governed by bias, by prejudice. Even those who dethrone the Book by their criticism immediately reinstate it by their faith. They pull it down with one hand and highly exalt it with the other. They criticise it as if it were the work of man, and then adore it as the very Word of God. But this is the height of inconsistency, and nothing can put a stop to it until we reach bed-rock in the declaration that the Bible can be true only as the fallible word of fallible men.

Let us see how Professor Moulton himself reads

the Bible. The Bible states that God created man in his own image; and until lately this creation was believed to have been a definite act, and not a long process. But this is Mr. Moulton's interpretation: "The evolutionists tell us that the human body has been slowly evolved upwards and upwards from the most humble beginnings to its present condition. Very well, the Bible says that 'God created man.' I don't see how it is any less true that God created man if he created him in a hundred million years by a long slow succession of processes, than if he had made him just as the sculptor may make a figure out of marble." The Church, which declared itself to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and claimed to have formulated all its doctrines under his unerring supervision, regards the creation of man as a specific act that took place on a specific day. But if science is correct the Church must have been wrong, and her belief in the guidance of the Holy Ghost must have been a strange delusion. And if no infallible Ghost ever guided the Church, who can prove that he inspired the writers of the Bible, or even that there was an outside Ghost to inspire them? And yet Professor Moulton falls back upon the fallacy that although we can no longer take the Bible literally, we are still justified in regarding it as in essence true: "The one thing I care about is, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,.....and man.' 'In the beginning'; and whether that beginning was ten thousand years ago, or twenty thousand years ago, or twenty million years ago, I do not care a straw." But, pray how does he know that there ever was a beginning? Science is totally ignorant on the point, and so, in reality, was the writer of Genesis. It is not history that is given to us in this first book in the Bible, but fancy, dream, legend, myth, which the Hebrews shared in common with many other ancient nations. It is science alone that supplies us with facts; but a beginning is not yet among them.

At last Professor Moulton makes his escape into what he calls "the moral world," where geologists are at rest and biologists cease from troubling. "It is a different matter," he says, "when we come to the Fall and the Redemption. These two questions have nothing to do with biology; they belong to the moral world." Well, what about the Fall? The fact "that men do cruel things, foul things, false things" at present is no proof that at some period in the remote past they did only kind things, fair things, true things. The fact that mankind are down to-day is no evidence that once upon a time they stood on a great height. And has it never dawned upon the Professor that some men are down because others are up, that some men have been crushed into the depths under the iron heels of those who dwell on high? Yes, some men are made stepping-stones by means of which other men—stronger, cleverer, and perhaps less scrupulous than themselves—climb up to a state of prosperity, power, and dominion.

Nothing is more evident than that those who are down need to be lifted up, or than that those who "do cruel things, foul things, false things," require to be taught to do kind things, clean things, true things; but it is not so evident that the reclamation of such people can best be accomplished "in the name and through the power of Christ." It has been proved a thousand times, it is proved afresh to-day by the deplorable state of society throughout Christendom, that the Christian religion has signally failed to redeem the world from its woes and vices. Even the Manchester Mission has not succeeded in setting things right. It may have won many converts; but it has not even attempted to bridge the gulf between rich and poor, between capital and labor, between the cruel sweaters and their wretched victims, or to blot out the false lines that divide mankind into so many different and often hostile camps. Christianity winks at most of our social evils, and makes no effort to secure equal chances for all alike. Professor Moulton exclaims exultantly: "The work of the Central Hall would go on whatever happened to the theories of science." Very likely;



but the work of the Central Hall will never permanently benefit mankind until it makes salvation in and for this present world its supreme aim. The Church has always courted the support and friendship of the rich and great, and taught the poor to be submissive to their superiors and contented with their lot, promising them ample compensations in the world to come. Is that fair and just? Is such a policy likely to redeem the world?

In the Bible the irreducible minimum of truth is its solemn insistence on Righteousness, and in Christianity the irreducible minimum of merit is its proclamation of the royal law of love. After all the dross has been cleared away, this is the pure gold that remains. But this irreducible minimum is the property, not peculiarly of the Bible and Christianity, but of human nature as such. Social righteousness and social love—these, carried into effect naturally and without respect of persons, would redeem the world from all its myriad evils, and cause it to blossom like a beautiful garden.

JOHN T. LLOYD.

### Does Woman Owe Anything to the Bible?

(Concluded from p. 470.)

And it is not the Old Testament only that is against woman. The New Testament, if possible, is more positive against her than the Old. A reference to a few passages will make this clear. "In like manner also that women adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but with good works. Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii., 9-14); "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. xiv., 34, 35); "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Eph. v., 22, 24); "Likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands;.....even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Peter iii., 1, 6); "But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is man. ....For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. ii., 3, 8, 9). There are more passages to the same effect; but enough has been quoted to prove that the New Testament is as much against woman as the Old. Although the Jewish position of woman was as bad as it could be, there is not a passage in the Old Testament so positive against her as those quoted from the New.

As far as the teaching of the New Testament is concerned, woman is entirely neglected and ignored. Jesus, the idol of woman, never uttered a word against her oppressors; never intimated that there was anything wrong in her position; never spoke a word for her emancipation; never claimed for her equality with man, personally, economically, socially, or religiously; and never defended her against her traducers. In the whole of the Gospels there is not a word of promise or an anticipation of any improvement in the position she occupied at that time. The truth seems to be that not a shadow of an idea had entered the mind of Jesus that the position of woman was wrong, that she had any grievances to remedy, or that there was an improvement and an emancipation awaiting her. And the same remarks apply with equal force to the apostles, all of them males.

In fact, the apostles are more unfavorable than Jesus. Jesus neglected the cause of woman, ignored them in the selection of his apostles, but he never prohibited their inclusion in his kingdom. But the apostles, as we have already seen, actually commanded them to remain in subjection, and prohibited them even to speak in the churches. Had the examples of the Bible been followed, and its commands been obeyed, woman would have remained for ever in her position of subjection to man and degradation to herself. From the teaching of the Bible, and therefore of Christianity—for the two cannot be separated—woman never would have obtained personal rights, economical rights, social rights, or religious rights. Therefore whatever rights woman has won—and they are far from being complete—she has obtained through influences outside the Church. Popes, archbishops, and priests never would have emancipated man, let alone a woman. The Church has always been against progress and reform. Woman owes nothing to the Church, Christianity, or the Bible. The partial emancipation and elevation obtained has been won by sceptics and evolution. And yet woman clings to the priest who has done nothing for her, and opposes the unbeliever who has been, and is now, her best friend.

I had written the foregoing remarks when a pamphlet came to my hand containing a lecture on "Christianity and Womanhood," by Miss Burstall, B.A., Head Mistress of Manchester High School for Girls, and late scholar of Girton College, Cambridge, delivered at the Central Hall, Manchester, May 15, 1904, being the twenty-first of a series of lectures on "Is Christianity True?"

This lecture confirms all I wrote at the commencement of this article about the unfounded claims made for Christianity by Christian apologists. I am astounded at their impudence and arrogance. I cannot understand how to explain their conduct, and whether to attribute it to ignorance or wilful deception. Whatever is the cause of it, it is a sad fact to relate. If Christianity and religion make believers indifferent to truth, neither can be good. That Christianity, or something else, makes its advocates regardless of accuracy, is proved by every one of the twenty-one lectures delivered at the Central Hall; and in this respect the twenty-first is conspicuous. The whole lecture from first to last is nothing but a string of unfounded assertions and assumptions, without an argument, fact, or example and verse from the Bible in support of them. This is the burden of the lecture, summarised at the conclusion: "I would appeal to the women in this hall, and to any others whom my poor words may reach, that, whatever may happen, we should stand by the old faith, if only in gratitude. It has raised us from slavery and degradation; it has maintained the woman's charter, the Christian law of marriage; it has upheld the ideals of chivalry, affection, and gentleness; it has given us our true position; it has consecrated whatever gifts we have of self-sacrificing love." Supposing, for the sake of argument, that the Church and Christianity are the same thing, the claims made for the faith are not true. The Church did not champion the cause of woman until it had become strong enough to demand recognition, like all other advanced movements adopted, after vain opposition to its progress. But it is not in the Church, but in the Bible, that we must turn to see what Christianity is. What has been adopted after the closing of Scripture is no more Christianity than any other institution established. Christian apologists forget the closing warning of the New Testament: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. xxii., 18, 19). And the Old Testament is emphatic on this matter: "What things so ever I command, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it"



(Deut. xii., 32). Of course the Church has not obeyed this command, and it is well she did not. Had the Church and the world obeyed the Bible there never would have been any progress and improvement. But in discussing what Christianity has done for woman we must confine ourselves to the Bible; and in the Bible there is not a verse or a sentence in favor of emancipating and raising womanhood. I have no doubt Miss Burstall is well acquainted with the contents of the Bible. Had there been any example or teaching in favor of raising woman she would have quoted it in her lecture. But there is not, and the fair lecturer ignored the Bible in treating the subject. The irony of the situation is conspicuous. In speaking at the Central Hall she was breaking a positive Bible commandment, which prohibits women to speak in the church, and declares that it is a shame for her to do so. I do not blame Miss Burstall for lecturing in the church against the instruction of the Bible. The Bible is wrong and out of date, and women have as much right to speak everywhere as men have. But I do blame her for claiming that Christianity has raised womanhood, when the clearest evidence shows that obedience to Bible teaching would have kept her for ever a mere slave or toy of man. I have no hesitation in answering the question at the beginning of this article with an emphatic No! Woman owes nothing to the Bible for any rights that have been won for her.

R. J. DERFEL.

### Acid Drops.

We invite the attention of Freethinkers, and indeed of all liberal-minded persons, to something which has just occurred at Lambeth, and which throws a flood of light upon the real character of English Nonconformity. The Lambeth Board of Guardians has a majority of Nonconformists; the result, by the way, of some very "spiritual" jockeying at the last elections; and these gentlemen have been showing how much they love their Roman Catholic fellow-Christians. The victim of their bigotry was a poor young woman whose only crime was that she did not share their sectarian opinions. It happened in this way. On the sixteenth of May last the master of the workhouse engaged Miss Emma Edith Hodgson as trained nurse at the schools. She had nothing whatever to do with the teaching of the children; her business was to nurse them when they were ill. Her religious opinions, whatever they might be, were thus an irrelevant matter. But the Nonconformists thought otherwise. They found out that she was a Roman Catholic, and they determined that she should not remain in the Board's employment. Accordingly they took steps to get her discharged. And this is how they did it. Her engagement had been temporary, and could either be ratified or disapproved; and in view of this fact the Schools Committee presented the following report:—

"This officer has been temporarily engaged by the master since May 16 last. She is a Roman Catholic, but this was not disclosed to the master when she applied for the appointment. Her duties, the master informs us, are discharged in a very satisfactory manner, but having regard to her denomination and that of the children, nearly all of whom belong to the Church of England, and also to the fact that Roman Catholic children are cared for in separate institutions, we do not deem it advisable that the engagement of this officer should be confirmed by the Board. We therefore recommend that her services be dispensed with."

What a rascally resolution! Yet it was carried with only three dissentients. And a poor young woman, who discharges her duties in "a very satisfactory manner," loses her situation simply because she is a Roman Catholic. What she was engaged to do, what she was paid to do, she did efficiently. But that is not enough. She must be of the same religious opinions as her employers. And this impudent, tyrannical demand has the support of the Nonconformists, who are always crying out against the want of toleration shown towards themselves.

The ringleader in this disgusting act of persecution was Mr. H. G. Turner. This gentleman is the Rev. F. B. Meyer's private secretary; and Mr. Meyer is not only one of the burning and shining lights of London Nonconformity, but is one of the most fanatical leaders of the Passive Resistance movement.

Mr. Turner, as reported in the *South London Press*,

made a most hypocritical speech on this case. Here it is:—

"It was a serious question if Roman Catholics came to take positions in Protestant institutions. The Roman Catholic institutions to which they sent their Roman Catholic children were entirely managed by Roman Catholic officers. It was not possible by any chance for a Protestant nurse to get employment in a Roman Catholic institution. Catholics very jealously guarded the religious instruction of their children. At Norwood there was a school for Protestant children, and they ought not to engage those who were not Protestants. It was a question of principle.

*It was a question of principle.* Fancy! If Catholics are intolerant, it is a principle for Protestants to be intolerant too! One must be as bad as the other. And the rest of Mr. Turner's speech is worthy of this. He confuses private institutions with public institutions. Workhouse schools are neither Catholic nor Protestant. The poor rate is levied on all citizens alike without distinction of creed. Catholics, therefore, have the same rights in workhouse schools as Protestants—and Freethinkers have the same rights as either denomination.

Two Church clergymen, we believe, the Rev. E. Denny and the Rev. W. Hobbs, protested against Miss Hodgson's being discharged on account of her religious opinions. It was left for the glorious Nonconformists, the people who cant about religious equality until they are black in the face, to consummate the persecution of this young woman. *They took the bread out of her mouth because she was a Catholic.* The words deserve to be italicised. And they deserve to be remembered. It is "a question of principle" with Nonconformists to see that Catholics are not employed by public bodies. The Rev. F. B. Meyer's private secretary says so—and he ought to know.

We have never ceased to hold these Passive Resistance humbugs up to scorn and reprobation. There are a few (*very few*) Freethinkers who believe we are too hard upon them. But we are *not* too hard upon them. We understand them thoroughly. They are not only hypocrites, but dangerous hypocrites; and their decisive triumph would be a bitter day for the Freethinkers of England.

The United Methodist Free Churches' Conference has passed another hypocritical resolution on the Education struggle. It contains all the customary Nonconformist blarney about no "denominational restrictions," no "ecclesiastical tests upon teachers," and so on, and so on, until any person endowed with common intelligence and common honesty is almost ready to vomit. But the cloven hoof is displayed by these canting Methodists in spite of all precautions. They call for "a system providing for simple Biblical instruction in the schools." "*Simple* Biblical instruction" is good. The simplicity (the simplicity of the serpent, you know) is particularly obvious. What the Methodists mean is simply this: Church standards will never do; our own standard is the Bible; that is the right one, and it should be set up in the public schools at the expense of all citizens, whether they approve it or not. And these are the people who pretend to be fighting for "religious equality!"

Just another word about that "simple Biblical instruction." Why "simple?" Why any adjective at all? The Protestant standard used to be "the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." Why is there to be a "simple" selection now? Simply because Freethought first, and the Higher Criticism afterwards, have made even Methodists ashamed of half the contents of the Bible.

The Wesleyan Methodist Conference, at Sheffield, also tackled the Education question, and adopted the usual soft-soapy resolution. Our readers will excuse us from printing it all over again. We will notice, however, the speech of the Rev. J. Scott-Lidgett. This gentleman said that he wished it to be clearly understood that as far as the Methodist people were concerned they wished the Bible to be kept in the schools. He shuddered at the idea that a few ecclesiastical extremists on one side should join hands with an insignificant body of Secularists on the other to take the Bible out of the schools. What Mr. Lidgett means is that he shudders at the idea of the old principle of Nonconformity; namely, that the State should have nothing whatever to do with religion, either for or against. That principle the Nonconformists have betrayed. It is only supported now by the Secularists and a few High Churchmen.

The London members of the National Passive Resistance Committee have passed another resolution. They declare, first of all, that their movement is "based upon conscience"—by which, of course, they mean the special variety known as the Nonconformist Conscience. They also declare their



unalterable opposition to "sectarianism in State education" —by which they mean that Nonconformists, and not Churchmen, must control the religious teaching in those establishments. They further declare that they are willing to lose their votes rather than pay their rates. But that is a personal matter, in which their fellow-citizens have no particular interest. Sectarian aims and sectarian risks are sectarian affairs.

Passive Resisters play the "martyrdom" game very low down in some cases. The Rev. F. Lansdown, of Leicester, for instance, objected to the magistrate's signature being stamped instead of written on his summons. Sir Thomas Wright, the magistrate in question, said that he had stamped his signature with his own hand. Still, the reverend gentleman persisted in his objection. He evidently thought it a grand point on which to evade for the present the glorious martyr's crown—which often looks very nice, but is seldom very comfortable. His objection, however, was overruled, and the magistrate refused to state a case. Nothing, indeed, could be more frivolous than Mr. Lansdown's objection. It is worthy of one fed upon theological and metaphysical chaff. Stamped signatures, if authentic, are quite as good as written signatures. Any man can stamp or write his own signature, as he pleases; and if he is bound by it, there is no reason in the world why anyone else should be dissatisfied.

Another silly Passive Resister is Dr. J. N. Aldridge, of Southampton. This gentleman blamed the magistrates for enforcing a law which he did not approve. He did not put it in that way (he talked about "the feelings of the English people"), but that is what he meant. Moreover, he reminded the magistrates that the Judge who sentenced Lady Jane Grey to death went mad, and darkly hinted that the same fate might overtake them.

What a lark it will be if the Nonconformists carry a new Education Act and Churchmen play the game of Passive Resistance! What a laughable version of the Tables Turned!

Mr. Tennyson Smith, the Christian Temperance advocate, is going to save drunkards in America in the autumn. During his absence from England, the few remaining drunkards will be left in the care of the Salvation Army.

Gipsy Smith's fortune is the "Gipsy." If he were plain John Smith he would attract very little attention. But the "Gipsy" does it. The ladies go to his meetings in the expectation of seeing a bold, black, bad man, with a lot of latent wickedness in him, though it is kept down by the love of Christ. And the men go expecting to see a swarthy horse-stealer in Gospel raiment; Satan in plain clothes, and talking softly. This wonderful revivalist converted a number of "infidels" in England. Their names and addresses are a secret between him and the Lord. Now he is in Africa he is positively setting the veldt on fire. "I have never," he says, "seen anything like it.....Sights enough to break hearts and make stones weep.....the strain is dreadful." Three thousand people were present at one midnight meeting in Johannesburg. Very likely. Things are dreadfully bad out there, and the people want a little diversion. And, as pretty nearly all of them profess and call themselves Christians, there is no reason why they should not find it at Gipsy Smith's meetings. Especially midnight meetings. That is a game that John Wesley never thought of. Superstitious as he was, he had some decency about him. He did not call men and women, and girls and fellows, out of their homes and beds at midnight to squeeze up tight together in a revivalist crowd. The clergy complain of the diminishing birth-rate, and these midnight assemblies may be intended to cure the complaint.

General Booth is going through this country on a Salvation Motor Car, and "it will be the crowning act of his life." At least Commissioner Nicol says so, and we will not dispute it. The car ought to bear the motto, "Souls saved while we wait."

Commissioner Nicol was reminded by a press interviewer that there was "danger," and the General was "no longer young." This is the rest of the conversation:—

"He is in God's hands! He and we are prepared to run the risk, and to leave the issue in the hands of Him who lets not even a sparrow fall to the ground."

"And, I suppose, Commissioner, provision will be made for probable breakdowns, and so on?"

"Oh, yes, as far as in us lies we shall take every human precaution. For the rest, we believe, and are sure, that the result will be according to our faith; and as our faith has no

limit, what can the result be? Good-bye, and God bless you in my own, and in our beloved General's name."

Of course General Booth is in God's hands. So was the child of Henry Thomas Senior, one of the Peculiar People (that is, Honest Christians), and the Christian law of England gave him four months' hard labor for leaving his child there. Evidently, therefore, it is a very dangerous position. Still, we hope the Grand Old Showman will pull through all right. We hope the Lord (or the "human precautions") will keep him in safety. We also hope he will not add to the population of heaven (or the other place) by running over saved or unsaved souls in his "Make Haste Campaign."

General Booth's cup is running over. After his interview with the King came his interview with the Queen. Let us hope the General won't suffer too much from swelled head. Top-heaviness might lead to an overturn in a motor-car.

The Bible Society exported "forty-eight tons of Scriptures" during June. Large shipments of inspiration are still being made to all parts of the world. We don't suppose the Russian cruisers would interfere if every consignment were going to Japan.

General Buller ended a "patriotic" speech in the East Ham Town Hall by alluding to another possible war, and exclaiming, "For God's sake, let the men be ready." We don't know much about "God," but we are willing to add, "For the men's sake may generals with heads lead them."

We have read of men gambling for money and becoming millionaires, but here's a young man who gambled for religion and became a believer. While walking on the street one evening last week, we heard a street preacher relating to his standing audience how a certain young man had only the day before been struck deaf and dumb by the Almighty for having questioned his existence. This is not the first time that such stories have been told. Of course, we have heard of preachers and priests who have been smitten to death by a stroke of paralysis or heart failure in the midst of their religious devotions, but no one has inferred from these that they were punished for praying or preaching. We have heard of churches being struck by lightning, or devoured by the flames, destroying the worshipers as well as the edifice; yet only a foolish man would conclude that the lightning or the fire were sent as a judgment against the church or its members. In one of the towns of Kansas, it was reported that during a long season of drought the village church prayed for rain; the rain came, accompanied with terrific lightning, which struck and wrecked the little church. Was the lightning a judgment against the church for presuming to dictate to or for annoying Heaven? The story of Renfro as related in the papers is that he had made a wager with God that he would believe in his existence if he would demonstrate it by, for instance, striking him deaf and dumb, on the spot. According to the report, his challenge was accepted, and he lost his wager. His frightened comrades, who believed in God, instead of falling on their knees to pray for mercy when this happened, immediately sent for a physician. When the doctor arrived, however, he proved himself a man of science, and not a man of superstition. After a careful examination he calmly declared that such instances were not exceptional, and that with a change of environment, and the soothing antidote of time, the lad would be restored to his normal health. What a treasure is a man of science in a superstitious community. On the following Sunday many of the Chicago ministers took the case of Renfro—the stricken young man—for the text of their sermons.—*Liberal Review* (Chicago).

Dr. Horton's sermon on "The New Atheism," criticised in the *Freethinker* a fortnight ago, was plagiarised from end to end by a Mr. Harry Phillips, who fired it off as his own at a meeting of the Yarmouth C.E.Y.M.S. At least, it was reported as his own in the *Eastern Daily Press*. We hope the *E.D.P.* will beware of Mr. Harry Phillips and not be caught napping again.

A terrible effect of the drought occurred at Rushden. Baptisms could not take place in the Baptist Chapel for want of water. One shudders to think of the awful consequences. Every unbaptised human being goes to hell when he dies. Otherwise there is no use in baptism.

We noted a very funny observation in the *Daily Chronicle* the other day. Referring to the "Thermidor" of the Revolutionary Calendar, our contemporary said: "If anybody does not feel hot enough to-day, he can soon heat himself by attempting to master that awful calendar, with its months beginning on all manner of wrong days in the middle of the Christian mouths." What in the name of



wonder are the *Christian* months? Is July one of them—named after Julius Cæsar? Or August—named after Augustus Cæsar? Our calendar is (with slight emendations) pre-Christian. It was mainly established under Julius Cæsar before Jesus Christ (if he ever lived) was born. We hope the *Chronicle* will not try again to palm off those "Christian months" upon its readers. Even if the first attempt was innocent, there can be no such excuse in future, as we shall see that our contemporary is provided with a copy of this paragraph.

Pasteur, the French scientist, according to the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*, on his death-bed professed his faith in the Catholic form of Christianity. We should like to know the authority for this statement. Not that it amounts to very much, after all; for it is followed by the confession that Pasteur thought religion and science had each its own domain. It was not, therefore, as a scientist that Pasteur accepted Christianity; and thus the case has no more interest than that of the first man you meet in the street.

From all parts of Russia come doleful reports of stagnant trade, silent mills, and closed factories, of men out of work, peasants suffering the pinch of hunger, and of the heavy burden imposed on the Zemstvos of supporting the wives and families of the breadwinners who have been drafted to the front. The populations of Warsaw, Riga, Moscow, Odessa, Kazan, and Kieff are especially suffering, and crimes against property, including arson, are proportionately increasing. But a sacrilegious robbery reported from Kazan this morning has eclipsed all other offences, and attained the dimensions of a national calamity, for the holiest of images in the empire, a sort of Russian Ark of the Covenant, the very name of which was pronounced with profound reverence, has been carried off by sacrilegious men whose object was probably to turn into money the precious stones and costly metals with which it was decorated. This holy ikon was discovered in Kazan in the year 1579 by a nine-year-old girl, who received a revelation from the Virgin Mary, and owing to the miracles it performed the Church ordered a special annual festival to be held in its honor. In 1612 it was removed to Moscow, where it freed that city from the Poles, after which a new ecclesiastical festival was decreed. The ikon is a half-length image of the Virgin, painted on cypress wood. On her left arm she holds the Infant Jesus, who is stretching out his right hand to bless. The value of the decorations is estimated at about £5,000. A curious part of the story is that the St. Petersburg church of Kazan possesses the same sacred image, and nobody knows which is the original and which the copy; but all Russia is in mourning as for a national disaster, and abundant food is provided for superstitious misgivings, of which the present year has been uncommonly fruitful. The cyclone in Moscow and the disappearance of the Kazan "Mother of God" are construed by ordinary Russians as the greatest misfortunes of the present generation, and as the forerunners of evil days.—*Daily Telegraph* (St. Petersburg Correspondent).

"The weekly religious paper," said the late Bishop Stubbs, "is a weekly religious trial which it takes long experience to enable me at least to bear religiously." What would he have said of a daily religious paper—like Mr. Cadbury's organ?

The dear *Daily News* has taken lately to printing a few selected "Thoughts for the Day." One of its recent selections was as follows:—

The soul that can  
Render an honest and a perfect man  
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;  
Nothing to him falls early or too late.

—Fletcher.

Any reader with a decent ear, or a commonly observant eye, might recognise something wrong in the first two lines. They don't scan for one thing. The fact is, the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience has been up to one of its pious old tricks. The "Fletcher" in question was John Fletcher, the dramatist, and what he actually wrote was this:—

Man is his own star, and the soul that can  
Render an honest and a perfect man  
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;  
Nothing to him falls early or too late.  
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.

This frank Paganism did not suit the *Daily News*, so it falsified Fletcher's text, cut away the peremptory Humanism of the dreadful sentence, "Man is his own star," and brought a great poet down as near as possible to the level of the tabernacle.

The death of Mr. Wilson Barrett seems to be a loss to his personal friends. It was no loss at all to literature, and very

little loss to the serious drama. No more absurd sensationalism than his *Sign of the Cross* was ever put upon the stage. Those who would like to read a careful exposure of it, from dramatic, critical, and historic points of view, may refer to Mr. Foote's pamphlet of the same title.

Christian idealism seems to be a very peculiar thing. There is nothing else like it on earth—which perhaps is fortunate. Just look at the following instance. Monday morning's *Daily News* reported a splendid inspiring sermon by the Rev. B. J. Snell at Brixton. It was so inspiring that it even inspired the reporter. "We passed into the glare of the Brixton-road," he said, "with the germ of a pure thought in the mind and a good deed in the heart, looking for the shuffling beggar to come along, that the sermon might have a swift and practical application before the effect of it died away." So the first Christian virtue is to give something that you will never miss to a "shuffling beggar" that you will never see again. Christianity has culminated in this in the course of two thousand years. No wonder the world is growing sick of it.

Those who remember the performance of Saint Peter before the cock crowed him into a better frame of mind, will have a very poor opinion of the value of an oath. Another case in point is that of Emily Wise. Being charged at Westminster with "insulting behavior"—whatever that may be: perhaps winking at a six-foot policeman—and being accused of having been charged before, she exclaimed, "As God is my judge, that statement is false." Directly the words were out of her mouth the date and details of her previous appearance were supplied. The magistrate said it was "surprising." But gentlemen on the bench so often display a superhuman innocence.

First they held a prayer-meeting at the Congregational Church, Bridgeport, Connecticut; then they discussed whether they should close the Church during the hot weather. But differences of opinion waxed so warm that the meeting broke up in disorder, after the school superintendent had punched the deacon's nose.

Hell is a long way off, yet thirty-three hundredweight of black stuff falls annually on an acre of land in Glasgow. The people who put up with it hope for heaven when they are dead. Poor fools!

Rev. W. Pugh Owen, a Church curate, has not been heard of since 1896, when he eloped with Miss Alice Ford, a district visitor connected with the Lady Ashburton Mission. His wife has just obtained a decree nisi in the divorce court.

Rev. George Martin, who got into trouble at the Coronation, is now in another mess, and is ordered to pay a fine of 10s., damages 5s., and costs 5s., or go to prison for a month. Being a great opponent of Sunday trading, he upset a ginger-beer stall near St. George's Church, Southwark. Before the magistrate he contended that the sanctity of the first day of the week should be upheld. But why did he go for a poor ginger-beer stall-keeper? Why not go for a bigger sinner? We should have more sympathy for the reverend crank if he went for the Lord Mayor's coachman or the king's *chauffeur*.

Benjamin Phillips, a hale and hearty old fellow of seventy-three, broke a plate-glass window in Jewin-crescent in order to obtain another comfortable retreat in the lock-up. He had done time before to the amount of twenty-four years altogether; and Alderman Sir Walter Wilkin, at the Guildhall, remarked that it was owing to the care the country took of the prisoner that he was not in heaven twenty-five years ago. So he gave him another two months' "hard" to keep him a bit longer out of glory.

"I hope God's blessing will always be with you." Thus wrote Thomas Field, an old man of eighty-two, before taking poison at his house in Bessborough-gardens, Pimlico. How these Atheists do commit suicide, to be sure!

Christian Spain will have its bull-fights. At San Sebastian last Sunday a big crowd gathered to see a fight between a bull and a tiger. Both animals, we are glad to see, broke loose among the spectators. Bullets flew about after the animals, and they were killed, together with four two-legged bulls and tigers, besides fifty of the same breed who were more or less injured.

A Manchester jury declined to give damages to Mrs. Dora Moss, a Spiritualist medium, who lost her valuable power of communicating with the dead through a shock she received on a Manchester Corporation tramcar. We hope she will recover it now the action is over.



**Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.**

(Suspended during July and August.)

**To Correspondents.**

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—August 14, Failsforth; 21, morning. Kingsland; afternoon, Victoria Park.
- VICTOR ROGER.—Thanks for cutting. See paragraphs. It is a great pity that the Progressives—the cant word for Nonconformists—jockeyed you out of your position of public usefulness at the last Lambeth elections. Evidently they had business on hand which they did not want a Secularist to interfere with.
- W. B.—Pleased to receive your picture-card from the place where George Eliot wrote the Epilogue to "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story."
- HUGH HOTSON, sending subscription to the Rome Congress Fund, hopes that "the Congress may be a thorough success in the city where the brave and matchless Bruno was burnt to ashes three hundred years ago." This correspondent hopes our own health is improving. We are happy to say it is.
- J. H. WAY.—Thanks for cuttings. Write again on the other matter when you think it advisable. We are obliged for your appreciation and good wishes.
- TWO CLIFTON ADMIRERS.—Thanks for your kind and encouraging letter.
- W. H. MORRISH, the Bristol veteran, writes: "I should like to go to Rome myself, but I cannot afford the time. At any rate, you must not fail to attend; I reckon the Congress will not be complete without your presence."
- C. J. ATKINSON.—We reprinted Ingersoll's paper on Lincoln's religious views very recently in the *Freethinker*. There is a book by Mr. Remsburg on the subject. Perhaps we ought to keep something to the front in pamphlet form.
- G. ABLART (Dowlais).—We cannot undertake to answer such questions through the post. Charles Bradlaugh did not say, either at Liverpool or elsewhere, "If there be a God let him strike me dead." Both the watch and the observation did duty in Christian circles before Bradlaugh was born.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your cuttings.
- G. SCOTT.—A thousand readers might easily send in such a "small contribution" and the thing would be done.
- FRANK SMITH.—Your subscription to the Rome Congress Fund is sufficiently liberal. The financial burden would be very slight if it were shared round. You really take more than your due proportion of it.
- S. E. STEVENS.—Always pleased to see your handwriting.
- J. W. DE CAUX.—Sorry we have not Mr. Radford's address to send him a personal acknowledgment of his communication to you. Perhaps he will see this.
- T. H. ELSTOB, Newcastle N. S. S. Branch, writes: "I enclose postal-order for 11s. which I have collected from a few friends towards the Rome delegation. The amounts are only small, but they are evidence of a desire to co-operate in your object, and I am sure if all your readers had as lively a sense of duty as those who have sent their 'mites' herewith the amount subscribed would be worthy of the occasion." This correspondent is thanked for his personal good wishes.
- ROME CONGRESS FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £23 12s. 6d. Received this week:—Frank Smith £2 2s., S. E. Stevens 10s., Hugh Hotson £2, Two Clifton Admirers 10s., W. H. Morrish 10s. 6d., W. H. Spivey 2s. 6d., J. Bassett 2s., S. Burgon 10s., G. Scott 2s., W. Wright 2s., A. Mitchell 1s., Mrs. Hutty 1s., Miss Hutty 1s., Mrs. Siger 1s., A. Campbell 2s. 6d., T. H. Elstob 2s. 6d.
- W. C. G.—As you say, it was a long time ago; too long for our memory, or reference. We believe there is no sanitary advantage in the rite you mention, except, perhaps, amongst miserably dirty people. It is simply an instance of religious mutilation; though it may also have been a tribal mark—a sort of totem.
- G. CROOKSON.—If you refer to our article again you will see that we decline to consider the question of the critic's identity or age. Such a personal matter does not concern us, and we are not curious for information. It is the editor who is chiefly responsible.
- H. S. WALKER.—You will come to see some day how idle it is for one man to tell another how he should write. When you ask why, if men are descended from apes, apes do not become men now, you show you have not even an elementary acquaintance with Evolution. Sensible questions cannot be asked without some knowledge. Why not read Aveling's *Darwin Made Easy*, which you can obtain from our office for a shilling?
- S. WINSTON.—You are quite mistaken. The Twentieth Century Edition of Paine's *Age of Reason*, edited by Mr. Foote and issued by the Secular Society, Limited, was the pioneer of "Sixpenny Reprints." The edition was in every way worthy of the author and the occasion. Mr. G. J. Holyoake has described Mr. Foote's "Biographical Introduction" to the work as "masterly." Certainly it was a labor of love, for Mr. Foote did all his work on the volume gratuitously—for love of Paine and love of the cause.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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**The Rome Congress.**

PERHAPS I ought to give some idea of what the Rome Congress Fund should amount to. In addition to the expenses of three or four direct delegates, there is the contribution which the National Secular Society is expected to make towards the expenses of the Congress itself. A good deal has been spent by the International Freethought Federation on preparations extending over the past eighteen months, and the proceedings at Rome necessarily involve a certain cost. Other bodies are contributing towards these expenses, and the N. S. S. should not be behind the rest. Altogether some £90 ought to be raised; say in round figures £100. This would be a great deal for one person to give. Divided amongst hundreds it is nothing. I do not say *thousands*, because one can never count upon the multitude for financial aid in any movement. Most have not the means, others have not the interest. They would give a trifle if there were someone at their elbows to take it, but they will not incur the trouble of sending by post. I know them.

This is the holiday season, and therefore the very worst for any such appeal; but those who wish to see British Freethought well represented at Rome will please remember that the Congress cannot be postponed; so the sooner they put their hands in their pockets the better. We cannot threaten them with "hell" if they are dilatory, but we may ask them in the name of Freethought to "buck up."

G. W. FOOTE.

**Sugar Plums.**

We must hear more definitely from those who wish to go to the Rome Congress before we can undertake to organise a tourist party. Will those who really mean to go, or really expect to go, kindly communicate without delay? Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, is waiting to hear from them at 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

The sixpenny edition of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*, revised and enlarged, with two new chapters on "Gospel Ghosts" and "The Devil," will be on sale (we hope) by the first of August. It should be, anyhow; but we will not announce the publication in our advertisement columns before it is actually ready. It is quite a wonderful sixpennyworth, and the price has to be "net." The first 10,000 copies ought to go off in "no time." Freethinkers might even purchase copies for distribution amongst their friends and acquaintances. Of course a discount will be allowed on such copies.

Should the popular edition of *Bible Romances* sell as anticipated it will be followed by a sixpenny edition of the companion work *Bible Heroes*.

The Newcastle Branch holds its Annual Excursion on Sunday, July 31, when members and friends leave the Central Station by the 2.30 train for Rowland's Gill. Tea



has been arranged for (one shilling per head) at Mr. Penny's, Rose Cottage. It is to be hoped that all Tyneside Freethinkers will endeavor to swell the numbers, as these reunions are most necessary and useful, and the larger the gathering the more inspiring it is.

Mr. John Morley has had the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws conferred upon him by Edinburgh University. So far so good. We like to see literary excellence recognised in spite of the taint of Freethought. Nothing was said in the laudatory speeches about Mr. Morley's books on Voltaire and Diderot—the greatest of French Deists, and the greatest of French Atheists, before the Revolution. The one subject of praise was his *Life of Gladstone*—the Christian statesman. This was described as an imperishable masterpiece. But it is nothing of the kind. Of course we may be accused of dogmatism, but our dogmatism is simply an answer to the dogmatism of Sir Ludovic Grant.

The French Government does not mean to give way this time to the Pope. He must bend or break as far as the case of Bishops of Laval and Dijon are concerned. If he refuses to withdraw his letters to them, calling upon them to clear out because of their correct and legal attitude towards the Government, the French ambassador at the Vatican will be withdrawn. M. de Courcel, the *Chargé d' Affaires*, is packing up his baggage in readiness.

Mr. J. W. de Caux cannot induce the clergy to answer him in the *Yarmouth Mercury*, but where they fear to tread certain other persons rush in with astonishing assurance. One impudent fellow, who has not the courage or decency to sign his name, but adopts the hackneyed "X," fancies that personal abuse of Mr. de Caux is a very good defence of Christianity. We believe we have seen this fellow's impudence before under other bastard signatures. Mr. de Caux will probably pick him up and shake him, and drop him for ever. "Moral and Material" has better brains as well as better manners; but when he argues in favor of the moral government of the universe he forgets that the more knowing divines prefer faith to reason in such matters. We dare say he will receive a suitable lesson in religious polemics.

Shakespeare, the great Humanist, is to have a monument at Rome. A strong committee has been appointed, and the work will be entrusted to an Italian artist.

The *Open Court* (Chicago) is always welcome, but it always reaches us a little late. The July number is an interesting one. It opens with a fine portrait of Petrarch, which is followed by an article on the Italian poet by the editor, Dr. Paul Carus; who also contributes another, and very sensible, article on "The Yellow Peril," in which he argues that Asia, under the leadership of Japan, cannot be any real danger to Europe, unless the latter becomes degenerate and not worth preserving. The article on "Babism" is concluded, and there are some Shakespearean items; one discussing the question "Was Hamlet Insane?" and another dealing with the interminable, stupid Baconian question.

The *Liberal Review* (Chicago), which also reaches us late, is now in its sixth number; and its interesting and instructive character is well sustained by Mr. M. M. Mangasarian. Perhaps the most important article the July number contains is one by Judge C. B. Waite on "Mormonism as a Religious and as a Political Institution." Some copy from an English pen is headed "The First Paine Celebration in England"—though there have been scores during the past generation, and hundreds during the past century. We see by the editorial notes that the Independent Religious Society is going to pay Mr. Mangasarian's expenses to the International Freethought Congress at Rome in September. We hope to meet him there. We met his son in London three months ago; a pleasant, bright young man, and we dare say a chip of the old block.

Our valued contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, is occasionally "had" by its volunteer English correspondents. One of them writes that he and certain other persons, including "Saladin," do not belong to the National Secular Society. "Saladin" has never belonged to any Society, we believe, but has always fought as a free-lance. The gentleman who uses his name in this way has belonged to many societies, and in every case for the same reason.

The *Truthseeker* quotes with approval our opinion that Dr. Moncure D. Conway will make an ideal representative of America at the International Freethought Congress. Dr. Conway is the author of the classic *Life of Thomas Paine*, and the editor of his writings.

## The Bible and Jesus.

AN EVENING WITH PRESBYTERIANS AT THE LAKE FOREST COLLEGE.

(From the "Liberal Review," edited by M. M. Mangasarian, Chicago.)

THE editor of the *Liberal Review* received, a few days ago, a very cordial invitation from President Richard D. Harlan, of the Lake Forest College, to hear the lectures of the distinguished New Testament scholar, the Rev. Marcus Dods, D.D., of New College, Edinburgh, Scotland, on "The Bible—Its Origin and Nature," to be delivered in the chapel of Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, Ill. The invitation was accepted, and the editor was met by a representative of the college at the railroad station, in Chicago, and conducted to a special car attached to the train of the North Western Railway by courtesy of the college for the convenience of the invited guests. Arriving at Lake Forest, the editor was driven to the Onwentsia Golf Club, whose governors had very generously offered the hospitalities of their handsome clubhouse to the guests of the college.

It was a charming afternoon; the refreshing rains of the morning had brightened up everything; the winds were soft and caressing, and the rolling country about appeared wide-awake with the throbbing of spring in the air. The young grass, which is so daintily cared for by the golfers, was so gorgeously green that one felt like making love to it—like getting very close to it. Sitting on the commodious verandas of the club, there was spread a feast before one's eyes—of villas peeping out of sequestered nooks and smiling fields sweeping and stretching themselves, as it were, to catch a glimpse of the blue lake beyond. How these peaceful fields, freighted with bread and beauty, must wonder at the tossing waters, forever moaning and forever barren! Little do these green lawns and fertile farms imagine that they owe their youth and beauty to the kiss of the waters—to the dew and the rain! It was pleasant to sit in a comfortable chair, on the verandas of the Onwentsia Club, away from the soot and smoke of the care-choked city, and contemplate the serenity of land and lake and sky at that hour in the afternoon when all nature lays down the burden of the day to reflect for a moment or two.

But the dinner bell rang, and the editor was not loath to harken to its call. In the beautiful dining room, and at the table specially reserved for the visitors, the editor was cordially greeted by the clergymen, and asked to sit at the head of the table, which honor, though appreciated, was quietly declined. All of the eight or ten gentlemen present were clergymen—Presbyterian clergymen—and the editor could not but think of the time when he was himself of the same faith, and a *reverend*. One of the clergymen, the Rev. Dr. McCannan, of the Third Presbyterian Church, of Chicago, remembered that he had heard the editor preach in Philadelphia, some fifteen years ago, and remembered even the subject of the sermon, which the editor himself had forgotten. This Dr. McCannan, who has succeeded the Rev. Dr. Withrow, he of the "brim-stone corner," of Boston, is said to be very liberal. He is an Irishman, and comes to Chicago from Canada. He acknowledged to us that there were some quite orthodox people in his church, but he had had no trouble with them for his liberal views. Of course, we were very curious to know why he called himself liberal, and what were his liberal tendencies, and, therefore, quietly, we ventured to ask the doctor if he still believed, for instance, in the virgin birth of Jesus, which some of the clergy in England had dropped from their creed. Dr. McCannan nodded with his head that he still held to the miracles. In all probability this genial Irishman's liberalism extends only to the dogma of eternal damnation. He is too sweet-natured to preach so hope-stifling a



doctrine as a part of the Gospel or the Good-News of God. We infer this from a story which he asked the Rev. Dr. Notman, of the Fourth Presbyterian Church—the church of Professor Swing before his heresy trial—to tell our little company. It will be proper to explain here that Dr. Notman is also one of the “liberals,” and a leader in his denomination. He has considerable to do with the McCormick Theological Seminary, in Chicago, and he uses his influence to open the Presbyterian mind to new ideas. Old Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, used to boast that his seminary had never been accused of inventing a new idea. Well, Dr. Notman rather likes new ideas. How the world moves! Everybody moves more or less; even the Sphinx moves, as we said in our issue of May. “Is it not remarkable,” whispered Dr. Notman to us, at an opportune moment during the evening, “that the majority of the ‘liberal’ preachers in America to-day are from the ‘old country’—from Scotland, the home and stronghold of orthodox Presbyterianism?” And he went on to tell us that the distinguished Scotchman whom we would hear that evening, the Rev. Dr. Dods, was himself a pronounced “liberal.”

But not to forget the story. Principal Caird, of Scotland, was invited some years ago to preach a course of sermons in a rather small town in his own country. But, notwithstanding the great fame of the preacher, the good people of the Scottish town preferred to remain away from his sermons, a fact which greatly puzzled the doctor. One Sunday, however, he made bold to inquire of the sexton why the people did not turn out to hear him preach. “How is it,” he asked, “that in Glasgow the churches are thronged to hear me, while in this place I speak to empty houses? Don’t the people like my sermons?” Now, Principal Caird was one of the “liberals,” and word had reached this small community that he left out *hell* from his sermons. So the sexton, summoning courage to his aid, told the doctor that he was not considered orthodox by the people, and that was why they refused to attend his services. “Not orthodox!” exclaimed Principal Caird, with considerable embarrassment, “What kind of orthodoxy do they want here?” “The kind that has a good big *hell* in it,” answered the sexton. The story was told by Dr. Notman, and listened to by all the clergymen present, who, of course, laughed heartily, as also did the editor. Thus, we inferred, that a denial of, or, at least, a doubt about, the doctrine of hell as preached by Jonathan Edwards or Calvin is, generally speaking, the first revolt of the awakening clerical mind. The first fair and fine thought which succeeds in squeezing itself into the creed-bound sympathies is that of “no hell.”

The conversation at the table was in many ways quite instructive, as well as diverting. One clergyman said that he had just received into his church a lady who gave as her reason for changing her membership that “in her old church (and the church was named) the minister was not preaching the Gospel.” Now, the minister of the accused church was present at the table, and joined in the good-natured laugh which greeted this story. Another clergyman related how the young people in his congregation had met and voted themselves, bodily, out of the Christian Endeavor Society. It appears that one of the pledges which a Christian Endeavorer takes is to read the Bible daily, and this his young people did not wish to do. “Have they dropped the Bible?” asked the editor of the *Liberal Review*. “Yes, and the Christian, too,” answered the doctor. And we all laughed again.

Then the conversation drifted to matters more serious—to John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards. The old theologian of Geneva had scarcely an earnest champion in that company. Ah, how the mighty have fallen!

But yesterday the name of Calvin  
Might have stood against the world.  
Now lies it there, and who so poor  
As to do it reverence.

Farewell, Calvin! Farewell, but not *au revoir*, is

the expression which defines the attitude of the progressive clergy in the Presbyterian Church to-day. Jonathan Edwards’ awful name was uttered, but no one present had a warm word for him. He had helped to shape the theology of this country, remarked one of the younger ministers. “He helped to pinch it,” suggested the only genuine heretic in the company, and there was no one there who was willing to take up the cudgels for the greatest theologian America had ever produced. We had not finished our *café noir* when we were told that the omnibus was waiting to carry us to the lecture at the college chapel, which was some distance from the Onwentsia Club, and we had just fifteen minutes in which to cover the distance.

It appears that a devout Presbyterian, Governor Bross, bequeathed to the Lake Forest College the sum of \$40,000 to pay the expenses of lectures by distinguished scholars (more or less orthodox, of course) on the Bible and its unapproachable superiority to all other so-called sacred scriptures. The subject of the first lecture by Dr. Dods, “The Bible and Other Sacred Books,” was one which appealed very strongly to the editor of the *Liberal Review*, as he had himself just completed a course of lectures before his own Society, at the Grand Opera House, on “The Seven Bibles of the World.”

Dr. Marcus Dods, of the New College, Edinburgh, made a pleasant impression upon his auditors, including the editor of the *Liberal Review*. He had a warm voice, and spoke with the air of one who was willing to learn as well as to teach. The lecturer was certainly “liberal,” for he made admissions which fifty years ago would have shut his mouth up for good in any pulpit in Christendom. In the first place, he was loudly applauded as he rose to speak, and it is possible that applause in a Presbyterian chapel, and side by side with prayer, doxology, and the benediction, is considered enough of a departure from the narrow ways of the fathers to entitle them to be called “liberal.” But there were touches of real liberalism in the lecture of Dr. Dods. He told the audience that the Christian Bible was not the only sacred literature of the world; that to contend that it was, was like fighting for a position which would be absolutely worthless even if conquered; that instead of grieving over the fact that other religions too have their “inspired” documents, their ethical and spiritual books, we should rejoice over it; that the Chinese scriptures, for instance, announced a morality which was singularly exalted; that Confucius taught the Golden Rule before Jesus, and Buddha taught love to enemies centuries before the Sermon on the Mount had been preached; that even in secular books, such as the works of Shakespeare, one could find words of beauty and wisdom equal to any in the sayings of Solomon or the prophets. He stated that all of the books in our Bible, with the exception of one, were written by Jews; and that the Jews, like the Chinese, the Hindoos, and the Persians, did not belong to the literary and scientific peoples of the ancient world, the Greeks and the Romans, for instance, who had no “Bibles.” It was also a pleasure to hear him emphasise to that Presbyterian audience that the Christian Bible was a miscellaneous collection of papers, diverse in spirit and scope, and that a collection of the sayings of Johnson, the fulminations of Carlyle, the sanities of Emerson, the scepticism of Hamlet, and the essays of Coleridge in one volume would not be more in-harmonious than the condensation under one cover of the ceremonial legislation of the Pentateuch, the stories of war and pillage of the era of the desert, the psalms of the sweet singer of Israel, the thunder tones of the prophets, and the utterances of Jesus and his apostles. But, oh! but—and here’s where the “liberal” lecturer, in our opinion, began to apologise, as it were, for his liberalism, and to call back some of the things he had said, in order to give his talk an orthodox odor. While the Bible appeared to be a haphazard collection, nevertheless it was universally admitted that there was a deep and spiritual unity in it, a unity which all other scriptures of the secular



or heathen type lacked, and it was this which made the Bible, our Bible, the Book *par excellence*. The audience breathed again, for, after all, the lecturer still held to the uniqueness of the Christian revelation, and in these days of crumbling creeds even that much of orthodoxy in a scholar was refreshing to the majority of his listeners.

But what is this unity of the Bible which makes it not only better than any other book ever written, but incomparably superior to them, nay, which makes it the only trustworthy word of God, which no man can reject without irrevocable penalties both to his soul and body? In a sense there is a unity in all literature, secular or sacred, for all literature is an expression of life—human life—its hopes and fears, its passions and aspirations. But the lecturer claimed for the various portions of the Bible a unity which no other literature possessed. What was this? The question was not answered. It was stated that the superiority of the Bible consisted in the wonderful unity of its parts, a unity which the church universal had always affirmed, but as to the nature of this unity nothing definite was advanced.

But another distinguishing excellence of the Christian Scriptures was that they culminated in Jesus, "the most perfect revelation which God ever made of himself." Indeed, God had not denied himself to the other nations of the world, but had, from time to time, permitted the heathen, too, to catch a glimpse of his divine perfections, and to hear broken notes of his great voice, but only in Jesus did God condescend to make a fuller manifestation of himself. As it will be readily seen, the good Dr. Dods, when he came to speak about Jesus, stopped reasoning altogether, and began quoting the creed. Will it be unfair to ask the lecturer why he thinks that Jesus was the most perfect character the world has ever seen? Would he have thought so if he had been born in India, instead of Scotland, for instance? What is it which prevents the majority of the people of the world, after two thousand years, from regarding Jesus in the same light? It is very difficult to speak positively of any man as the "most perfect" in all the world. One must be omniscient to be able to state positively who among the myriad, myriad sons of men was the best. Neither have we the data to enable us truthfully to say that Jesus was the best of all the men of whom we have any knowledge. We know less of Jesus than of any of the other founders of religion. The gospels give us his life only in broken patches. They tell us nothing about his youth, education, business training or career, if he had any—nothing about his private life, and only two or three years, at most, of his public life. How, then, is it possible to infer from the few glimpses of Jesus furnished to us by anonymous, undated, and often self-contradictory documents in which fact and fiction, myth, miracle and history constantly overlap and crowd upon each other—that he was "perfect," nay, the only perfect being who ever visited our humble planet?

But suppose we waive all this; what, then, are the proofs of Jesus' perfection? In what respect, for instance, was Jesus more perfect than Paul? Paul sometimes lost his temper and was angry. Did not Jesus? Paul denounced his enemies bitterly. Did not Jesus? Paul complained of bodily weakness—of the thorn in the flesh. Did not Jesus cry, "Let this cup pass from me"? Paul had moments of hesitation and doubt. Did not Jesus groan on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Paul confessed he did not know everything. Did not Jesus admit that "of that day and hour the father alone knoweth"? Paul looked up to another. Did not Jesus say, "the Father is greater than I"? And if Jesus gave his life, so did Paul; if Jesus went about teaching, helping, healing, so did Paul and the other apostles; if Jesus made sacrifices, so did Paul; if Jesus was unmarried and completely devoted to his work, so was Paul. If it is objected that Paul was a persecutor before he became a Christian, we can answer that Jesus was not more tolerant toward those who disagreed with him than Paul was. Did not Jesus say that if people refused to confess him

before men, or to believe, as he wished them to, he would deny them on the last day, and would say to them, "Depart from me, ye cursed?" Wherein, then, was the moral superiority of Jesus to Paul? If Confucius and Buddha, centuries before, created a literature as lofty and as pure as the Hebrew or Christian Scriptures, and if hundreds and thousands of our race labored and died for humanity as bravely as Jesus or Paul, and if there is not a single truth in the gospels which had not already blossomed a thousand times in every country under the sun, how can we make the assumption that our Bible is the only Word of God because it leads up to Jesus—the only perfect man the world has ever laid eyes upon?

But Dr. Dods did not touch upon any of these questions in his lecture. He was addressing Presbyterians, and, of course, it would have been superfluous to have undertaken to give proofs of the uniqueness of Jesus to such an audience. But was it not equally superfluous to have come all the way from Edinburgh to tell Presbyterians that the Bible was superior to all other scriptures?

After the lecture we were greeted most cordially by the minister of the Lake Forest Church, his good lady and daughter, and enjoyed also the honor of an introduction to the lecturer of the evening. Then, a number of the students of the Lake Forest College invited us into one of their rooms, where a company of about a dozen interested and very interesting young men gathered around us, plying us with questions about the Bible, Jesus, the Christian ministry, the religious outlook in Europe and America, etc., etc. It was an exceedingly pleasant hour and a half which the editor of the *Liberal Review* spent in the society of these earnest inquirers of the Lake Forest College. We close by quoting the amusing explanation which one of the young students gave when he was asked whether the boys were compelled to attend chapel: "It is more," he said, "for the purpose of bringing the students together every morning than for any religious purpose." Of this nature are the answers generally given by the intelligent orthodox to defend the practice of forms and the professions of beliefs with which modern times are out of sympathy.

### The International Freethought Congress.

THE International Federation, whose headquarters is in Brussels, and which serves as a bond of union between the most important organisations of Freethinkers throughout the world, has decided to hold a Grand Congress in Rome on September 20, 21, and 22, 1904.

This will be the crowning-point of a vast and vigorous propaganda carried on for twenty-five years.

The Federation, in fact, was founded in 1880 at Brussels by men who, in philosophy, science, or politics, are glories of humanity—Charles Bradlaugh, Cesar de Paepe, D. M. Bennett, Wilhelm Leibknecht, Moleschott, Charles Renouvier, Clemence Royer, Giovanni Bovio, and Herbert Spencer.

Since its foundation, the Federation has held Congresses in London, 1882; Amsterdam, 1883; Antwerp, 1885; London, 1887; Paris, 1889; Madrid, 1892; Brussels, 1895; Paris, 1900; Geneva, 1902; and has thus given an immense impulse to the intellectual emancipation of the people from the domination of churches and dogmas.

The Congress will be held in the Roman College, in its Aula Magna, so kindly placed at the Federation's service by the Minister of Public Instruction for the Kingdom of Italy.

The Agenda as at present settled for discussion includes the following:—

1. Science and Religious Dogma.
2. The Churches in their relations to the State
3. Organisation and Propaganda of Freethought.

Papers on these subjects will be read by the following prominent Freethinkers, among others: M. Gustave Hubbard, Member of the French Parliament and barrister, Paris Court of Appeal; M. Georges Lorand, Member of the Belgian Parliament and barrister at Brussels; M. M. Junoy, Member of the Spanish Parliament and barrister at Barcelona; M. Giuseppe Sergi, Professor at the University of Rome.

In all the leading countries of the world influential committees have been formed in order to send numerous representatives to honor Freethought at Rome. Surely the



National Secular Society, the only Freethought organisation in Great Britain, will not lag behind these countries in enthusiasm for the glory of the cause, and will at least ensure that it shall be represented by the man to whom Charles Bradlaugh handed the emblem of leadership. A great international gathering of eminent Freethinkers would not be complete without George William Foote, the President of the N. S. S.

Apart from delegates who will be sent by societies, individual Freethinkers will be welcome, and, for their information, I subjoin the following programme. A special train will leave Paris on Sunday morning, September 18, arriving in Rome on the following evening. Leaving Rome on Saturday morning, the 24th, arriving at Paris on the 25th, evening.

For the inclusive price of £11 first class, £8 10s. second class, they will get fare there and back, meals *en route*, hotel in Rome for four days, with three meals per day, also carriage to and from the station, and lights and "tips" included.

The lodging will be at the Hotel Minerve, Milan, or Anglo-American.

The meals on the journey will be served in the railway buffets from their ordinary menu.

To these prices must be added the fare from London to Paris.

Delegates will be entitled to a personal pass, giving right to a reduction of from forty to sixty per cent. on fares (according to distance travelled) over all the Italian railways, from September 10 to November 9 inclusive.

An Organisation and Reception Committee has been constituted in Rome in order to facilitate the sojourn of congressists in the Italian capital.

Members of the N. S. S. must make up their minds, if they wish to travel with their French brethren, before August 15. They should intimate at once to Miss E. M. Vance.

V. ROGER,

(Corresponding Member for the N.S.S.)

### Religious Liberty in Japan.

On one of the highest hills in very hilly Tokyo stands the Greek Catholic Cathedral, established, owned, and conducted by Russian priests. The view and outlook from the tower of this building is about the most extensive and comprehensive to be had, for it commands even the palace grounds. Bishop Nicholi has lived here something like forty years, and the school connected with this cathedral, and in the same large compound, numbers its graduates and pupils by the thousands, it is said.

One wonders if Russia can point to one such evidence of her liberality of thought as to permit such an institution to flourish at her capital, wherein is taught ideas, thoughts, and a religion wholly opposed to those of the nation giving it protection and students.

Every stranger notices the fine stone building, looming up into the sky, and asks what it is. On learning, many of them have curiosity enough to try to get a closer view of it; but in these war times the police and detective guard around the spacious grounds, outside and inside and for blocks about, make the effort to photograph it not a very simple matter.

Guards have been multiplied lest some fanatic-patriot attempt to destroy the buildings or its priests and pupils. In a city like Tokyo, where few high buildings are to be seen, and where most of those which do exist are of a totally different style of architecture, this is, to my mind, about the most impressive and thought-focussing spot in the entire city. And it is a strictly Russian centre and stronghold. It is difficult to learn the facts, but it is said that at the outbreak of this war there were several hundred students enrolled, and that they were Japanese (of the lower and poorer class, who were getting their schooling free); Russians, who came to this school to "study Japanese"; Indians, who had been sent by priests from India; Chinese, brought in the same way; and one or two Eurasians from some of these mixtures.

It is as if on Capitol Hill, or overlooking the White House in Washington, there stood a finer and more conspicuous set of buildings than either the home of the President or the Capitol, college and church buildings owned and controlled by an antagonistic faith and an alien race, with which the United States was engaged in a deadly war for her very existence. It is a pretty nearly unthinkable situation, when taken to our shores, is it not? Yet the reason that the Japanese Empire was closed to the rest of the world for several hundred years was simply because the Jesuit priests, whom she had formerly welcomed to her shores, had so interfered in the affairs of government as to cause great and

threatening disturbances of a political nature. Yet now, in the new opening of Japan, one sees the pupils of this Greek Catholic school taking part in all the affairs of life, helping to spread the power and influence of this Russian institution not only in the capital, but all over the Japanese Empire. And, just now, one sees the rare spectacle of the authorities taking added and elaborate precautions to guard it and its priests and pupils against any possible indignity.

There is a unique generosity and intellectual hospitality in such a situation and so broad a religious and political liberty involved as to elicit surprised comments from many foreign visitors.

HELEN H. GARDNER.

—*Liberal Review* (Chicago).

### A Rival Sermon on the Mount.

BLESSED are the Strong, for they shall possess the earth; cursed are the Weak, for they shall inherit the yoke. Blessed are the Powerful, for they shall be revered among men; cursed are the Feeble, for they shall be blotted out.

Blessed are the Bold, for they shall be masters of the world; cursed are the Humble, for they shall be trodden under hoofs. Blessed are the Victorious, for victory is the basis of Right; cursed are the Vanquished, they shall be vassals for ever.

Blessed are the Battle-blooded, Beauty shall smile upon them; cursed are the Poor-in-Spirit, they shall be spat upon. Blessed are the Audacious, for they have imbibed true Wisdom; cursed are the Obedient, for they shall breed Creepings.....

Blessed are the destroyers of False-hope, they are true Messiahs; cursed are the God-adorers, they shall be as shorn sheep. Blessed are the Valiant, for they shall obtain great treasure; cursed are the believers in Good and Evil, for they are frightened by shadows.

Blessed are they who believe in Nothing, never shall it terrorise their minds; cursed are the "lambs of God," they shall be bled "whiter than snow." Blessed is the man who hath powerful enemies, they shall make him a hero; cursed is he who "doeth good" unto others, he shall be despised.

Blessed is the man whose foot is swift to serve a friend, he is a friend indeed; cursed are the organisers of Charities, they are propagators of plagues. Blessed are the Wise and Brave, for in the struggle they shall win; cursed are the Unfit, for they shall be righteously exterminated.

—"Ragnar Redbeard," *"The Survival of the Fittest, or the Philosophy of Power."*

### HALF-WAY HOUSES.

For centuries mankind has, in a measure, lived in a half-way house. A thousand prejudices and, above all, the enormous prejudices of religion hid from it the summits of its reason and of its feelings. Now that the greater number of the artificial mountains that rose between its eyes and the real horizon of its mind have, in a marked manner, subsided, it takes stock at once of itself, of its position in the midst of the worlds, and of the aim which it wishes to attain. It is beginning to understand that all that does not go as far as the logical conclusions of its intelligence is but a useless game by the wayside. It says to itself that it will have to cover to-morrow the road which it did not travel to-day, and that in the meantime, by thus wasting its time between every stage, it has nothing to gain but a little elusive peace. *Maeterlinck.*

### Correspondence.

#### A PERSONAL NOTE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the current issue of the *Truthseeker* there appears an appeal for funds on behalf of the British Secular League, in which my name is referred to as though I were still one of its lecturers. This is done without my sanction. I severed all connection with the B. S. L. about two months ago.

As I started the B. S. L., I owe an explanation for my abandoning it to some of those Secularists who supported me. I, therefore, wish to add that I came to the opinion that the cause of Freethought is best served by strengthening, and not by dividing the existing society; and that defects in organisation can be better remedied from *within* than from without.

If a blunder is made—and who does not commit one occasionally?—surely it is infinitely wiser to rectify it than to persist in it.

H. PERCY WARD.



**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.**

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

**LONDON.****OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, E. B. Rose.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. H. Thresh; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.30, W. H. Thresh.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, J. W. Ramsey.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford-grove): 7, G. Parson.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, a Lecture; Hammersmith, 7.30, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Bull Ring Coffee House): Thursday, August 4, at 8, N. Levy, "Spinoza."

BOLTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall Steps): 11, 3, and 7, H. Percy Ward.

Huddersfield (Market Cross): Saturday and Sunday at 8, G. Whitehead and C. J. Atkinson.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Armley Park): 11, Debate between Weir and Hepton. Subject, "Is Polygamy Sanctioned in the Bible?" Crossflats Park, 7.30, G. Weir, "Christ's Resurrection."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Hammond will lecture in the square. If wet, the lecture will be given in the Hall.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S.: Annual Excursion leaves Central Station at 2.30 for Rowland's Gill. Tea (about 5) at Mr. Penny's, Rose Cottage.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rookingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday Evening. Musical and other recitals, etc.

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