

THE Freethinker

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I have never heard any God described that I believe in. I have never heard any religion explained that I accept. To make something out of nothing cannot be more absurd than that an infinite intelligence made this world, and proceeded to fill it with crime, and want, and agony, and then, not satisfied with the evil he had wrought, made a hell in which to consummate the great mistake.—INGERSOLL.

A Defence of Thomas Paine

WITH

Some Introductory Remarks

ON

Mr. Stead's Article.

My readers were told last week that I had volunteered to do a bit of scavenging. I said that Dr. Torrey had carefully collected all the "charges" ever uttered by bigots against Thomas Paine, and had piled the miserable heap upon that great Freethinker's grave. And I said that it was someone's duty—and that I had made it mine—to cart away that filthy mess and leave it at Dr. Torrey's door.

This I am going to do. But before I do it I want to say a little more about Dr. Torrey's article in the July number of the *Review of Reviews*.

Mr. Stead's magazine is now on sale, and every Freethinker should buy it. Friends have asked me to give long extracts from Mr. Stead's article in this week's *Freethinker*. They mean well, of course, but they have not thought the matter out. When a distinguished publicist, who happens also to be a Christian, makes a strong protest against orthodox lies about distinguished "infidels," he ought to be encouraged. It is not my intention, therefore, to take the plums out of Mr. Stead's article. My desire is rather to say enough to whet my readers' curiosity, and to induce them to read the article for themselves. They ought to read it. They will find it deeply interesting. They will also be astonished at a Christian's speaking out so boldly on such a subject. And I shall be very much surprised if they do not conclude, with me, that it is an ample compensation for all my trouble in the matter, besides being worth many times over the full amount of my Anti-Torrey Mission Fund. Money, indeed, could not have brought about this result. There are unpurchasable things still in the world—in spite of the millionaires; and the moral indignation that inspired Mr. Stead in this task is one of them.

When I speak of "my trouble" in the matter I am not moved by any spirit of vanity. I know very well that if I had not challenged Dr. Torrey he would never have been challenged at all. Mr. Stead practically admits this in the following sentences under the heading of "The Charges against Paine and Ingersoll":—

"I should probably have known nothing about this if there had not been put into my hand, as I was entering the Albert Hall on the opening day of the mission, a small but very effective pamphlet entitled 'Dr. Torrey and the Infidels,' written and published by Mr. G. W. Foote, the well-known editor of the *Freethinker*. The challenge was clear and precise, and it was a few days later emphasised by Mr. Blatchford in the *Clarion*."

Do the Christians of London, it was asked, condone or tolerate the libelling of Freethinkers as a legitimate method of Christian propaganda? As I had taken part in welcoming Dr. Torrey to London, I felt it my duty to clear myself, certainly, and Dr. Torrey, if possible, from so scandalous an imputation."

I am bound to say that the spirit of the last sentence has animated Mr. Stead during the whole course of events leading up to his present article. Only once did I fancy he was faltering, and then I was mistaken. The fact is, as I said last week, that his object and mine were not quite identical. We had to travel the same road for a while, but his desire was to save Dr. Torrey's soul and the honor of Christianity, while mine was to vindicate Paine and Ingersoll without any particular care for the fate of their calumniator.

But to recur to the first sentence of the foregoing extract. It is perfectly clear that one copy of my Torrey pamphlet was well-placed outside the Albert Hall that evening. That single copy was worth the cost of the whole impression. And the moral is that one should always do one's duty, in the belief that truth and justice are like seeds that, however darkly scattered, will spring up some day and somewhere in spite of every discouragement.

There is one point in what Mr. Stead says about Dr. Torrey's libel on Ingersoll which strikes a personal note, and which I venture to reproduce—partly because it shows what justification the American Freethinkers had in agitating for a change in what are summarily called the Comstock laws:—

"The American law authorising a Post Office official to decide what is and what is not obscene literature places an arbitrary authority in the hand of an unknown censor which would not be tolerated for a moment in Great Britain. The Comstock law, as it is called, is so obviously capable of abuse that from time to time men who hold the faith which Milton held in the liberty of the press have protested against such absolute power being lodged in the hands of any official. If, at this moment, this unknown bureaucrat were to decide that the Song of Solomon and Shakespeare's poems were obscene, anyone who sent a copy of the Bible or Shakespeare through the post would be liable to be sent to gaol on the charge of using the mails for circulating obscene literature. In a recent case which led to the tragic death of a friend of my own the judge expressly refused to listen to any evidence as to the morality of the book in question. When the Post Office, he ruled, had decided that any publication was obscene, the function of the Court was limited to ascertaining whether or not an attempt had been made to send that book through the mails. This law arms a Post Office official with absolute power to place whatever publication he pleases on a far more terrible *Index Expurgatorius* than that of Rome. Its existence in a free country is a temporary anomaly and an intolerable anachronism."

The Comstock laws and their operation illustrate what Whitman called the endless audacity of elected persons. He might have said appointed persons too. The moment you give a man power over his fellows he proceeds, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, to exercise it illegitimately.

Dr. Torrey and Thomas Paine.

It will be remembered that Dr. Torrey charged Thomas Paine with having taken another man's wife away and lived with her in adultery. I disproved this charge in my first pamphlet and called on Dr. Torrey to withdraw and apologise. But he took

no notice, and I said he would not until pressure was put upon him by some of his own friends. When pressure was put upon him by Mr. Stead he proved himself to be a most consummate shuffler. He would not deny this and he would not affirm that; in short, he tried to evade all responsibility. But the ominous word "publication" pulled him up smartly. The fear that Mr. Stead would *publish* the correspondence suggested to him the advisability of writing something that would tell in his favor, at least with the more bigoted Christians; in other words, with his own peculiar friends. This something took the form of accumulating under seven heads all the charges against Paine that had ever been born of the malice of his enemies. But instead of standing by the "adultery" charge he threw it over. He said that it was "not proven," and that Paine was entitled to be considered innocent until he was proved to be guilty. Yet he went on stating that Paine had "lived with another man's wife"—as though the words have any other meaning than living in adultery. Such a shuffle as this should damn Dr. Torrey in the eyes of honest men. Mr. Stead naturally speaks of it with the contempt it deserves. He says it is "unnecessary to comment" on such an extraordinary statement as that "when he charged Paine with living with another man's wife, he did not mean to suggest adultery!"

In accumulating his "seven charges" against Thomas Paine, the American revivalist pretended that he was doing it "with great reluctance" and "under an extreme amount of compulsion." He regretted being obliged to show Paine "in a very unenviable light" as "an altogether unlovely man." He did not explain what *compulsion* he was under when he first spoke and wrote the libels for which he was taken to task.

And now for Dr. Torrey's "seven charges" against Paine:

The number of charges made against Mr. Thomas Paine by those who have sought to expose his character are seven. There are others, but I think it will be sufficiently full to state these seven.

1. That Thomas Paine on two occasions was dishonorably discharged from his office in the Excise.

2. That the cause of his discharge was, that while he himself was an Excise officer, that he at the same time himself dealt and smuggled tobacco, and secreted thirty pounds entrusted to him by the Excise men.

3. That he put away his lawful wife without giving any explanation of the cause of his trouble with her, and afterwards on several occasions lived with the wife of another man, who followed him from France on his return to America, and that at his death he did not leave his property to his wife, who was still living, but did leave it to this woman and her children.

4. That his relations with this woman who followed him from Paris were positively immoral and licentious, and that, furthermore, his relations with her were immoral while they still lived in France, and that one of her children, "Thomas," had the features, countenance and temper of Paine—the implication, of course, being that he was Paine's son.

5. That while in Paris, about the time of publishing "The Age of Reason," he fell into habits of excessive drinking, that these habits were continued through a number of years, and that after his return to America resulted in unpleasant manners and dress. That this, along with other things, caused many of his old-time friends to withdraw their society from him.

6. That because George Washington, who in earlier days had been his friend and had shown him much kindness, felt compelled to withdraw his support from him in these later days, Paine accused Washington of treachery, and wrote a long and bitter attack, trying to besmirch Washington's military career, as well as his policy as President.

7. That Paine tried to stir up an invasion of England by Napoleon, and subscribed 100 livres in 1789 toward a descent upon England; and that again in 1804 he was rejoicing in the hope of such an invasion being made.

These are, perhaps, the principal charges that have been made against Paine. My opinion about the charges is as follows:—

Charge 1. Proven and undenied, a matter of record.

Charge 2. I do not think that this is proven. The charge is made by Oldys, one of the commissioners, but it does not appear in the official document. As far as the first discharge is concerned, the record is that he was discharged for neglect of duty by entering in his books examinations which had not been actually made; and as far as regards the second discharge is concerned, the official document states simply that he had left his business without leave and gone off on account of his debts.

Charge 3. The third charge is, as far as I know, not denied by anyone who has ever investigated the matter at all carefully. It is sometimes obscured, or not mentioned by his defenders, but I know of no one who has written intelligently on the subject who has denied it—not even those whose defences of Paine have most distorted the facts, to give them a coloring favorable to Paine.

Charge 4. I don't regard as proven. Cheetham, who made the charge that Thomas had the features, countenance and temper of Paine, was sued for libel by the woman in the case, and she obtained a verdict against him. Of course, this does not prove that the charge was not true, for it is oftentimes impossible to prove to the satisfaction of a jury charges that may be true, but certainly sufficient evidence for regarding the charge as not proven. In support of the charge it is urged that Carver during Paine's lifetime wrote Paine a letter demanding the payment of moneys due him from Paine, and in the letter insinuated similar charges against Paine's character, and that Paine did not sue Carver for libel, but paid the moneys claimed; but even this does not prove that Paine was guilty. Many a man who is conscious of perfect innocence does not feel called upon to sue a man who makes false charges against him for libel. Furthermore, it is said that Carver did not stand by his charges when the libel case against Cheetham was tried. This, of course, does not prove that they were not true; but it certainly throws a suspicion upon them. It is further urged in proof that Paine's relations with this woman were not immoral that her husband afterwards came to New York, where he and his family were re-united. This, of course, does not necessarily prove anything, especially in the light of the fact that this reunion was after seven years of separation, and after Paine's death. It is said, however, that his political relations in France were such that he could not get away until then; but this is exceedingly doubtful, as there was a constant going and coming during those years, even by persons who had been known as Republicans. It may be said that this charge against Paine has not been disproven; but no man is under obligations to disprove charges against them. It is the obligation of those who make the charges to prove them, and to my mind this particular charge against Paine has not been proven, and we are bound to believe him innocent of this particular charge until it is proven. The fact that Paine himself slandered George Washington, slandered the Bible and men of the Bible, and sought to bring bloodshed upon his native land, is not sufficient reason for believing insufficiently supported statements against him.

Charge 5. The fifth charge is admitted to be true by Paine's defenders as well as by his enemies. Some of them seek to obscure the fact, but are forced to admit it before they get through. For example, one writer who writes in defence of Paine says, "The special charges of drunkenness made by Cheetham and Carver are discredited by this proof of their character," and further on says, "Carver afterwards confessed that he had lied as to the drink," but this very writer further down says, "It is admitted, however, that the charge of drinking was not without foundation," and further on gives positive proof of the drinking habits of Thomas Paine at different periods of his life. In point of fact, Paine himself confessed to his defender, Rickman, that he had fallen into excesses in Paris. Mr. Moncreu Conway, Paine's ablest defender, thinks that this refers solely to a few weeks in 1793, but his publisher, Chapman, at the trial in 1792, spoke of Paine's intoxication. It was "rather unusual," he says, for Paine to be drunk, but, he adds, that when drunk, he was given to declaiming upon religion. Ten years later, in 1802, a similar account of an after-dinner outburst upon religion is given by Paine's friend, Henry Redhead Yorke, who visited him in Paris, and speaks also of the filthy state of his apartment. In 1808 Paine's weekly supply of rum was three quarts. It is suggested, in order to explain this away, that he "appears to be kept alive by stimulants during one of his illnesses, and his physical prostration may account for the stimulants and for some

of the slovenly habits." Joel Barlow, while saying that Paine had been neat in his dress "like a gentleman of the old school" at one period of his life, still seems to indicate "the belief that Paine's habit of drinking had excluded him from good society during his last years."

Charge 6. This charge is unquestionably true.

Charge 7. The seventh charge is unquestionably true.

Here, then, is the state of the case as regards Mr. Thomas Paine, as I understand it. It certainly leaves him in a very unattractive light, and shows him as an altogether unlovely man. But in spite of his erratic thinking, his utter unreliability as a statesman (one of his admirers has recently written of him as a "great statesman"), and his very reprehensible conduct, it is only justice to Paine to say that at an important crisis in the American Revolution a pamphlet by him played an important part in heartening the revolutionists, and if the separation of America from England was a good thing, then part of the credit for it belongs to Paine, though probably no such important part as he and his friends have claimed for him. He seems to have very much over-estimated his services, but they were not small. Furthermore, it is due him to say that he anticipated many of the so-called results of what its advocates delight to call "the new views of the Bible." If the destructive criticism of to-day, represented by the Graf-Wellhausen school of criticism, is true, and a real advance in Biblical knowledge, it is not more than fair to admit that on this point Paine was about a century ahead of them, for many of the points they most emphasise are found in Paine's writing. In fact, at a great religious congress in America, Rev. Dr. Howard Osgood, Professor at Rochester Theological Seminary, read at the Congress a statement of the positions held by these advanced critics, and then appealed to them and asked if it was not a fair statement of their positions. They replied, "Yes," that it was. Then he said, "I have been reading verbatim from Thomas Paine's 'Age of Reason.'"

I will not begin my reply to these "seven charges" at the fag-end of my space this week. I am so sure of being able to clear Paine's memory, and to show up Dr. Torrey's amazing ignorance and malignant tactics, that I can well afford to let the "seven charges" stand for seven days. All the reader has to do, if he does not already know the facts, is to hold his judgment in suspense for that period. Meanwhile I may give Mr. Stead's comments, from his admirable footnote to Dr. Torrey's letter:—

"Paine married twice. His second wife and he parted, no one knows why. No one even among Paine's worst libellers suggests that she had any reason of complaint against him. As for the other accusations, some are trumpery, others nonsensical, and none of them material to the main issue. If at one time of his career Paine drank more than was good for him, he but followed the example of the greatest statesmen of his time. To drink each other under the table was the custom in the best English society a hundred years ago, and Paine at his worst never drank as heavily as Pitt and Fox and most of their contemporaries. That Paine criticised Washington for leaving him in the lurch in Paris is true, and no one can blame him for doing so. As to Paine's stirring up Napoleon to invade England in 1789 (*sic*) by a subscription of 100 livres, that may or may not be true; but it does not prove that Paine was immoral. If Paine entertained hopes that the French would invade England, he shared the sentiments of many distinguished Englishmen of that time. That he rendered yeoman's service to the American Revolution is to be remembered by Englishmen with gratitude. For George III. was in the wrong and George Washington was in the right, and so say all of us to-day. As to his anticipation of the results of the Higher Criticism, that also should be placed to his credit. But all these are mere side issues."

My last lines this week shall be occupied in pointing out that Dr. Torrey does not advance a scrap of evidence in support of his infamous charge against Ingersoll. He lets judgment go by default. He has to stand convicted as a moral assassin. This man who came to "save" London has more need of "salvation" than any other man in our vast metropolis; for his crime is sheer cold devilry—without excuse and beyond forgiveness.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

On Sects.

THERE is an old story to the effect that if two Scotchmen were landed on an uninhabited island their first move would be to found a "Caledonian Society." Originally the story sprang into being to illustrate the clannishness of our friends on the other side of the border; but it may be taken as a starting point for the illustration of a wider and more important truth. For human beings are always founding societies and associations, Caledonian or other, and do so because they are human beings. That two men should found a society may be an exaggeration; but it is probable that, if *three* were brought together, two of them would show a greater affinity for each other than for the remaining third, and would thus contain the potentialities of a society. And this would but give us a picture of human nature in miniature. We form associations innumerable—associations artistic, literary, social, political, religious—and the tendency is for their number to increase with the development of civilisation.

The quality of these associations does not matter; they are all expressions of the gregarious instinct—of the fact that man is a social animal, and, whether for salvation or damnation, he will be neither saved nor damned alone if it can by any possibility be avoided. New ideas, new discoveries, are valueless except when imparted to others; and their possessors will go to even more pains to get them known than to discover them in the first instance. Almost any punishment can be better borne than isolation from one's fellows. Isolation is worse than death, since it gives the isolation of death without destroying the consciousness of separateness. The tendency to combine, to organise, to form associations for intercourse or propaganda, is thus an expression of the deepest and the most important trait of human nature. Social evolution, including morality, depends ultimately upon this quality.

And this trait, often in a twisted and distorted form, is also responsible for the growth and multiplication of religious sects. I say in a distorted form, because the association of people for religious ends offers some important differences to their association for other purposes. In other associations the tendency is for them to assume wider and more comprehensive form. The society that begins in a small centre may grow until it takes in the whole of a city, thence to the nation, and finally to an organisation having purely humanitarian objects in view, and more comprehensive than country or race. In religious matters the association of people tends to a greater narrowness of opinion rather than a broadening. Ideas that, without organisation, would either die out as useless, or undergo a broadening and a modification, become, by the very fact of association, stereotyped in their primitive narrow form. The chief movement is in the direction of fresh divisions, the formation of new sects, each one usually narrower than the body from which it separates. In fact, the formation of religious sects makes the hardening of a narrow form of belief comparatively easy. In a larger community the very mingling of varied interests, antipathies, and attractions, would serve to develop a certain breadth of feeling and belief. But a small sect operates by a certain selective process, and attracts to itself just one type of mind, and thus excludes the principle condition of growth. It is for this reason that one is apt to find a greater breadth of thought in a national Church, like the Church of England, or a universal Church, like that of Rome, than among the Dissenting sects. And the smaller the Dissenting bodies are, the greater the measure of their intolerance.

There is not only this multiplication of sects towards a narrower opinion instead of a broader one, but there is really nothing about religious belief to check their indefinite multiplication. In science

or in sociology there are certain common facts upon which all agree, which are constantly being added to, and so serve as a centre of real growth. In religion there is nothing of a solid, reliable nature that can possibly serve as a nucleus. All is imagination, speculation; depending ultimately upon mere temperament and crude feeling. Religious sects multiply exactly as do the very lowest organisms—by simple division, without one generation making any advance upon the last.

In addition there is a whole group of feelings, of a quite unlovely character, to which sectarianism gives rise. Foremost amongst these is the habit of judging life from the standpoint of a mere section instead of from that of the whole. There is, to a student, something highly diverting in the manner in which the average Protestant dates everything of value from the Reformation; or the modern shrieking Nonconformist dates from the seventeenth century Puritans, and writes and speaks as though all that modern England contains worth having is derived from a class, which in reality exerted a repressive and retrogressive influence from which we have not yet recovered, and from which is derived some of the ugliest qualities of modern English life. And this is characteristic of their treatment of life as a whole. Everything is judged from the standpoint of the chapel. In elections people are supported *because* of their membership of a particular sect, or opposed because of their non-membership. The question of social or intellectual fitness does not arise. It is the same in business; and it is common knowledge that membership of a chapel is regarded by small tradesmen as the cheapest and most lucrative form of advertising. And it is not difficult to see that we have here feelings of a most anti-social character existing, and also that this single circumstance goes a long way towards explaining the inefficiency of public men and of the public service. When conformity with religious belief is adopted as a standard, in place of general fitness for public service, we are doing what we can to invite disaster.

It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that sectarian feelings only exist with religious people. I have instanced religion as furnishing the worst illustration of an evil thing. But the same evil is found in politics, and the lesson is not without its warning for Freethinkers. Personally, I have never been enamored of that propaganda of Secularism which merely aimed at establishing another society amid those already existing, a new church with a different ritual and a different terminology. The social gain in that case is small. Sectarian feelings *may* exist in connection with a propaganda against religion as well as with one for its extension; and it is a small reward for all our fighting if we have merely transferred the bigotry from one side to the other. It is only natural that people newly emancipated from religion should carry into Freethought many of their old feelings, and so take the building up of a strong society as the end instead of a means to an end. A secular society is necessary just so long as there is fighting to be done, and the stronger and better organised it is, the more effective it is as a weapon of attack and of defence. But a secular *church*, with all the paraphernalia of a religious body, and necessarily exciting the narrower feelings, would hardly be worth troubling about. Our true function is that of a fighting body, preaching truths that are too unfashionable and too unprofitable for others to preach, and utilising all legitimate means to that end. And when we lose sight of this fact our real usefulness is gone.

After all, what we are fighting against is not so much specific religious beliefs as the type of mind upon which religion lives. Specific beliefs are merely the forms created by the religious mind, and so long as the type exists the destruction of a particular belief often means little more than the appearance of a new superstition. Emerson, I think, said that a man gets out of a book all that he brings to it. And the same is true of life. Life has

a religious or a rational aspect in accordance with the kind of mind that is contemplating it. Not all the reasoning in the world will ever rob a superstitious mind of its superstition. Criticism may destroy one error, but it soon creates another; and often the new is the more dangerous because its presence is unsuspected. Our real work is along the lines of so affecting the environment as to make such a mental type thoroughly inharmonious with its surroundings, and so pave the way for its disappearance.

C. COHEN.

When Did the Gospel Win Europe?

IN reviewing Professor Bartlet's lecture, I quoted Gibbon's estimate as to the number of Christians in Antioch sixty years after the conversion of Constantine in order to show that, if at that most favorable time they only formed about one fifth of the population of the city, their proportion must have been considerably smaller prior to that interesting event. My argument in no way depended upon the accuracy of that estimate. But inasmuch as Professor Bartlet saw fit to challenge Gibbon's calculation in the name of so distinguished a scholar as Harnack, it is incumbent upon me to face the facts, so far as they can be discovered. Gibbon was indebted for his estimate to Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.). Having given the estimate he adds: "It must not, however, be dissembled that, in another passage, Chrysostom computes the multitude of the faithful as even superior to that of the Jews and Pagans." "But," he goes on:—

"But the solution of this apparent difficulty is easy and obvious. The eloquent preacher draws a parallel between the civil and the ecclesiastical constitution of Antioch; between the list of Christians who had acquired heaven by baptism and the list of citizens who had a right to share the public liberality. Slaves, strangers, and infants were comprised in the former; they were excluded from the latter" (Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii., p. 68).

Of course, being a native of Antioch, Chrysostom knew the city well, and being a Christian, he claimed it as a Christian city. But, according to Harnack's words, this is how he sought to establish the claim: "He gives the number of the inhabitants (excluding slaves and children) at 200,000 (Hom. in Ignat. 4), the total of members belonging to the chief church being 100,000 (Hom. 85 [86] c. 4)." Upon this peculiar estimate, Harnack makes no comment whatever. On the face of it, as it stands, it is grossly unfair and misleading, if not positively inaccurate. Harnack does not say that Gibbon made a mistake; he merely records in a footnote: "Gibbon (*The Decline and Fall*) takes the 100,000 to represent the total of the Christians in Antioch itself" (*The Expansion of Christianity*, vol. II. p. 285).

It is simply absurd to imagine that Chrysostom, in a comparative statistical statement of the kind, would only have supplied the membership of one solitary church; and it is more absurd still to quietly believe that any one Christian society in Antioch, or anywhere else, had one hundred thousand members. If there were several churches in the city, it is a certainty that one of them, though the chief, could not have been so abnormally large as Chrysostom represents it.

Harnack himself admits that, in spite of Chrysostom's statement, "it is impossible to make any statistical calculations as to the dimensions of the Church (in Antioch) about 320 A.D." As a matter of fact, this impartial scholar, sets but little value on the testimony of those early theologians, for he knows how woefully given to exaggeration they were. Listen to Tertullian's Apology: "We are but of yesterday, yet we have filled all the places you frequent—cities, lodging-houses, villages, townships, markets, the camp itself, the tribes, town councils, the palace, the senate, and the forum. All we have

left you is your temples." Again: "For all our vast numbers, constituting almost a majority in every city, we lead a quiet and modest life." Again: "On whom else have all the nations of the world believed, but on the Christ who has already come?" Tertullian died early in the third century. Origen, who came later, was much more moderate in his statements. But we find even Porphyry, the Pagan, saying: "Behold every corner of the Universe has experienced the Gospel, and the whole ends and bounds of the world are occupied with the Gospel." Eusebius, the Church historian, writes: "Christ has filled the whole world with his holy name. He alone of all who ever lived is still called by the name of Christ among all men over the whole world." Again: "Even in Christ's life-time He was visited by myriads from the remotest lands imploring aid." Again: "In all the cities and villages churches were speedily set up and thronged, like a well-heaped threshing-floor, with multitudes of people." Again, under Hadrian's reign, early in the second century: "The churches shining throughout the world were now like the most brilliant constellations, and faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was flourishing among all the human race." Once more, speaking of the reign of Commodus, towards the end of the same century: "Meanwhile the word of salvation was conducting every soul from every race of man to the devout worship of the God of all things, so that a large number of people at Rome, eminent for great wealth and high birth, turned to their salvation along with all their households and families."

Harnack transcribes many pages of such perfervid nonsense into his work, and calls it "General Evidence." For the most part, however, wild exaggerations of that sort are evidentially worthless. The only thing they prove is the ignorant recklessness of the writers. Harnack is honest enough to acknowledge that his authorities are by no means reliable. "The language employed by Celsus," he says, "serves as a welcome corrective of the Christian exaggerations. True, Celsus also exaggerates. But he exaggerates in an opposite direction. He makes out as if Christianity were already *in extremis* owing to the rigor of the imperial regulations under Marcus Aurelius. This, of course, is not worth serious discussion. Nevertheless, the mere fact that he could give vent to such an idea, proves that there was no question as yet of enormous crowds of Christians throughout the Empire."

Now, the conclusion to which Harnack comes is that it is quite impossible to form any definite estimate of the number of Christians at the close of the third century. He says:—

"As for the extent to which Christianity spread throughout the various provinces, while the following pages will exhibit all that really can be stated on this point, no evidence available upon the number of the individual churches (or bishoprics) would render it feasible to draw up any accurate outline of the general situation, inasmuch as our information is superior regarding some provinces, inferior in quality as regards others, and first-rate as regards none" (vol. ii., p. 41).

Again:—

"It is highly precarious to essay any estimate of how large was the population in the separate provinces of the Empire and throughout the Empire as a whole about the beginning of the fourth century, and how much harder, it may be urged, would it be to calculate, even approximately, the number of Christians?" (vol. ii., p. 452).

This is more emphatic still:—

"To form wholesale calculations by lumping everything together, is of no use whatsoever. Thus Gibbon thought he could estimate the number of Christians in the reign of Decius at about a twentieth of the entire population. Friedländer only raises this proportion very slightly, even for the reign of Constantine, while La Bastie and Burckhardt calculate about a twelfth for the same period, and Chastel's total for the East is about a tenth, for the West a fifth, thus leaving on an average a twelfth as well. Matter thought of a fifth, Staudlin even of a half.

"The last estimate is decidedly to be rejected. Beyond all question, the number of Christians, even in the West, never amounted to half the population. Even at the opening of the fourth century, Lucian speaks of Christians as constituting 'by this time almost a majority in the world'; that is, even a Christian of Antioch, who was surveying a section of Asia Minor, did not dream of asserting that Christians already formed half of the local population" (vol. ii., p. 253, 254).

I have now adduced sufficient evidence conclusively to show that the Gospel of Christ never won Europe. Harnack emphasises the fact, again and again, that at the close of the third century, about two-thirds of the people of the West were still non-Christians; and according to Gospel teaching that vast number of people lay under the wrath of God and went to hell-fire at death. This is what the Gospel says: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him"; "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." Such is the message of the Gospel; and surely it cannot fairly be said that it had won Europe when more than half of the people were in the darkness and under the awful condemnation of unbelief in Christ.

In my review I also affirmed that Professor Bartlet's picture of Christian life in the early Church is largely, if not wholly, ideal. That my affirmation was well founded is abundantly proved by Harnack. In the second half of the third century Paul of Samosata was bishop of Antioch. Paul was a notorious heretic, and the Church was split into two hostile parties. He had a considerable following; and naturally the strife was bitter in the extreme. In the year 264 an Oriental general Council was held at Antioch to investigate his teaching; but so cunning was he that he succeeded in hiding his real views. A little later a second synod met, and was equally unsuccessful. At a third synod, held probably about 268 or 269, and attended by some seventy or eighty bishops, he was excommunicated and his successor appointed. But Paul was a favorite of Queen Zenobia of Palmira, and under her protection he defied his excommunicators and remained in his office for four years. During the whole of this time the Church was the home of jealousy, and strife, and enmity, and wrangling, brotherly love being conspicuous by its absence. And it appears that even during the episcopate of Paul's predecessor the state of things could not have been much better, for he too came to a bad end, being exiled to Persia.

In Eusebius there is a long and unfriendly description of Paul of Samosata. It may be greatly exaggerated, but it shows that the Church of Antioch was by no means a happy society. Here is a short extract:—

"At an earlier period he was poor and a beggar. He neither inherited any means, nor did he make any money by any craft or trade whatever; yet he is now in possession of extravagant wealth, thanks to his iniquitous transactions, his acts of sacrilege, and his extortionate demands upon the brethren. For he officiously recommends himself to people who are wronged, promising to help them for a consideration. Yet all he does is to cheat them, making a profit for himself, without any service in return, out of litigants who are quite ready to pay money in order to get quit of a troublesome business. Thus he treats piety as a means of making some profit. He is haughty and puffed up" (*Expansion of Christianity*, vol. ii., pp. 281-284).

I confidently maintain that Professor Bartlet has not convicted me of any historical error. I claim, rather, that the facts brought into prominence by Harnack are entirely on my side, and against the sweeping inference that by the beginning of the fourth century the Gospel had won Europe.

J. T. LLOYD.

Acid Drops

King Edward, at the opening of Southwark Cathedral, expressed his confidence that it would help to promote religion and morality in the district. Religion and morality! This implies that religion and morality are different things—as we thoroughly believe they are; and the inference is that religion can exist apart from morality and morality apart from religion. We congratulate King Edward on speaking like a philosopher. He may not have meant to do so, but that only shows that his sub-conscious mind was too strong for him.

Whether the new Southwark Cathedral is likely to promote religion is a question that may be left to the Churches. We are perfectly sure that it is not likely to promote morality. To expect it to do so would be to fly in the face of experience. As a matter of fact, cathedral towns show more drink and prostitution to the square yard than is to be found in other towns—even in the worst of them. We dare say Southwark will sustain the general reputation.

Forty-three Passive Resisters appeared before the Oxford City Court last week, and Mr. G. H. Cooper, a member of the Education Committee, spoke for the whole lot. This gentleman declared that they “regarded the Act as a legalised injustice to them as citizens and as Nonconformists, in that it imposed religious tests, and called upon them to pay for teaching of religious doctrine which they did not believe in.” Now we beg to remind Mr. Cooper, and all the other Passive Resisters of Oxford, that they themselves supported this “legalised injustice” for thirty years against Secularists, Agnostics, Rationalists, Jews, and all other non-Christians. Moreover, it is their avowed intention to go on supporting this “legalised injustice” against all such persons. Would it not be well, therefore, if they were to ask themselves on what principle that which is right when they inflict it on others becomes a wrong when others inflict it on them?

The London County Council has had to face the “religious difficulty” and has come through the ordeal very badly. It had to consider the following recommendation of its Education Committee:—

“That at each of the secondary schools directly administered by the Council, scriptural instruction be given on strictly undenominational lines; that no teacher be required to take part in such instruction; and that the parent of any child be allowed to withdraw that child from this instruction on request in writing.”

Dr. Collins, the Chairman of the Committee, being in favor of purely secular teaching, could not move this recommendation, but it was moved by Mr. Shepherd and supported by Alderman Mullins, in the name of religion, and by Mr. Sidney Webb, in the name of God knows what. Finally it was carried by a majority of four to one.

Mr. Sidney Webb won the applause of Sir Melville Beachcroft (and we hope he is proud of it!) by strongly advocating the retention of the Bible as a piece of our greatest literature. What on earth does he mean by “our literature?” The Bible is not English literature; it is Jewish literature. Moreover, it is not placed in schools as literature at all, but as a book of religion. Mr. Sidney Webb knows this as well as we do. But we suppose it suits his purpose to play up to the religious gallery.

Mr. Verney went one better than Mr. Webb. In his artless way he argued that the Bible was “our best policeman,” and alleged that it had “emptied the prisons” and “emptied the workhouses.” Mr. Webb must have smiled to himself at this imbecility—for he is a very clever man. And he must have shuddered, internally, we imagine, at the company he found himself in for the occasion.

Now let us look at the London County Council's resolution. We will take the end first. It says that the parent of any child shall be allowed to withdraw that child from religious instruction. *Be allowed!* Has it come to this? What airs some people “dressed in a little brief authority” give themselves!

“Scriptural instruction shall be given on strictly undenominational lines.” This is impossible. The Bible itself is a denominational book. It is the book of the Christians. And this denominational truth is made worse by the fact that the Catholics and the Protestants have *different Bibles*. We

suppose Mr. Webb knows this. At least he ought to. Nor is this all. The teachers who are to give the Scriptural instruction on undenominational lines are themselves denominationalists. There is no such thing as an undenominational Christian. Every Christian is a Catholic, an Anglican, a Wesleyan, a Presbyterian, a Baptist, a Congregationalist, or some other kind of a sectarian; and if he gives Scriptural instruction at all, he cannot help giving it according to the bias of his sect. Surely this ought to be clear enough even to the meanest intelligence.

Clause I. is impossible, then, and therefore absurd. Clause II. is hypocritical—“No teacher be required to take part in such instruction.” Oh dear no! He will not be “required.” But he will have to do it or fall under the official *tabu*. His prospects would be blighted and he might just as well clear out of the County Council's service altogether. Yes, that word “required” is distinctly good. It is verbal *finesse* in the mouth of duplicity. The long and the short of it is that the London County Council has gone over bag and baggage to the Chapel party. As far as “religious education” is concerned it is simply a Nonconformist Caucus.

Mr. Sidney Webb should not stop where he is. Having caressed and helped the Chapel party, to the negation of his own principles, he should go the whole hog, and back up a proposal that the London County Council should open its sittings with the “Glory Song.”

Preaching his farewell sermon at Clitheroe, the Rev. W. Down complained that after service people conversed about the proceedings of the previous day rather than discussed the sermon. Even the church officers were more concerned about the amount of the collection than the number of converts during the day.—*Daily Chronicle*.

The Dean of Westminster has written very ably and clearly in support of what is called the Higher Criticism. By way of showing how the Church is harmonious and united the Dean of Canterbury took the chair at the first of Dr. E. Reich's three lectures on the failure of the Higher Criticism. Dr. Reich, a pretentious writer, though of some ability, appears to know as much about the Higher Criticism as a grocer's apprentice knows about international commerce. Indeed, the report of his lecture in the *Daily News* makes one wonder how the “considerable gathering” at Caxton Hall, Westminster, could listen to him with any patience—unless they were the class of people who assemble once a year at Exeter Hall under the ægis of the Christian Evidence Society. For instance, he spoke of the Higher Criticism as “one of the greatest crimes of modern times,” which is the language of lunacy. He also spoke of Bible criticism as though it were arraigning the “inspired” writers for forgery, with a view to a verdict of Guilty or Not Guilty. This foolish analogy he carried to the point of saying that, as every man is to be assumed to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty, so the Bible writers must be assumed to be honest until they are proved to be forgers. But the only question at this time of day is not their honesty but their accuracy.

Bishop Weldon presided at the second of Dr. Reich's lectures. We need not trouble about what Dr. Reich said himself. He appears to have treated his audience to another instalment of nonsense. What the Bishop said is of more importance; not in itself, but because a Bishop said it. His speech was chiefly a diatribe against the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. He “entreated” his hearers “almost with tears in his eyes” to say that they “hated the anti-Christian teachings of which that book was full.” “In all its main articles,” he said, “it was a sustained attack on the Divinity of Christ.” Well, suppose it is; is it to be answered with “tears” or by begging people to “hate” it? Such an attitude is simply silly. Burning books and their writers was wicked, but it was intelligible. It produced an effect—at least for a time. But the policy adopted by Bishop Weldon simply invites contempt and derision. When he cries, “Don't read those naughty books, or, if you, don't heed what they say,” he is one degree worse than the famous Mrs. Partington.

Governments often do stupid things. One need not be surprised at the German Chancellor's prohibiting M. Jean Jaurès's intended speech at Berlin in favor of international peace. M. Jaurès, who is a Freethinker as well as a political leader, will quite understand, as all sensible people in the civilised world will understand, what the Chancellor and the Kaiser dread. When *they* talk about peace, as they sometimes do, they do not mean what M. Jaurès means

when he talks of peace. They mean an equilibrium of big armies and navies, with an advantage to Germany whenever she can get it; he means a cordial co-operation of all civilised countries in the work of progressive civilisation.

Dr. Clifford told a Sunderland meeting that the goal of the Reformation was liberty of conscience. This is one of the historic fallacies that are so dear to the modern Free Churchmen. The truth is that the Reformation party, from Luther downwards, had no idea of liberty of conscience—except for themselves. They denied it to Catholics as they denied it to Jews and Freethinkers.

Dr. Clifford was nearer the mark in saying that liberty of conscience had not yet been reached. And he would have been nearer the mark still if he had said that the Nonconformists are the principal obstacle to that desideratum. Were they true to the essential idea of Nonconformity, namely, that the State should have nothing to do with religion, we should have had complete liberty of conscience in England before this. But they go on fighting for privileges to themselves in the public schools and elsewhere, and they leave liberty of conscience to be fought for by the "infidels."

Sir Oliver Lodge, who has been talking so much about God and religion, quite "gave the game away" in opening the new dental hospital at Birmingham. After stating that "it appeared that brains and teeth could not exist together," he said that "We had got just enough science to make a mess of things; not enough to put them right." And what was the remedy? "We had begun to interfere with nature," he said, "and we could not leave it alone. We must take it in hand and control it." Well, if this doesn't mean shoving "God" aside, what does it mean? Sir Oliver Lodge seems to endorse the old *Freethinker* policy of Home Rule for this planet.

Mrs. Besant, whose home seems now to be in India, is paying London another visit. She is an interesting personality, and we do not complain of the attention given to her by the newspapers. We only wish to observe that they gave her very little attention, except in the way of insult, when she was a militant Atheist.

Mrs. Besant says—if the newspapers report her correctly—that she can carry on conversations with the dead. The same claim is made by many persons in lunatic asylums.

Conversations with the dead have never added anything to human knowledge. That is the most certain thing about them.

"Some little time ago," a correspondent writes, "I read a German professor's opinion on the increase of lunacy. He estimated that 500 years hence half of Europe would be insane. Well, I am glad I am not an authority on this matter. If I were I should have to say that a good half of the people, at least in this country, are a good bit touched already. When one thinks of Booth's fanatical army, and the hysterical crowd round Evan Roberts, and the thousands that flock round a man like Torrey, and the nonsense uttered in the pulpit and the press by doctors and professors, one is inclined to believe that the whole lot will go mad much under 500 years."

Here is a bit of up-to-date lunacy. It appears that the Atlantic-crossing Yankees, particularly those of the feminine gender, are afraid of the number 13, also of 213, or any other form of that "unlucky" number. To meet this objection the number is being abolished on the great liners, the Cunard and the White Star companies taking the lead.

Dr. Agar Beet, whom the Wesleyans look upon as a "heretic," actually thinks it necessary to write to the *Daily Mail* denying the statement that he and some others have "abolished hell." He is anxious to "avoid raising vain hopes." Poor man! Sensible people are more anxious to avoid raising vain fears. But it is these very fears that the Beets and "beetles" live upon.

A pretty incident marked the close of the Torrey-Alexander mission in the Strand. A man called Thorpe was arrested for playing the Glory Song outside the hall on a mouth-organ while in a state of intoxication. He explained to the magistrate that he was "engaged by Dr. Torrey to attract the boys." Such is "salvation" nowadays.

The vicar of Llanddona has given both Evan Roberts and Wales a testimonial. "I believe him," the vicar says, "to be a special messenger sent of God to perform a special work for Christ, at a special season in this our land of Wales, especially favored by God." This is all right as far as it goes, but it might be carried further with advantage. Why not get God to certify that Evan Roberts is his special messenger? This might be easily done, if God exists and is omnipotent. The Welsh sky might have "Evan Roberts" written across it in letters of light between sunset and sunrise. Mrs. Jones's "lights" are played out. Even the pious papers say no more about them. What is wanted is something too striking for doubt, and too obvious for denial. As the matter now stands we are tempted to think that the vicar of Llanddona is led astray by that form of patriotism which is common to little nations; otherwise it would hardly occur to him that Wales was specially favored by God. The Jews used to be the "chosen people." It now appears to be the Welsh. That is, the Welsh think so. But is their opinion shared by outsiders?

The *Daily News* "Welsh Revival" reporter refers to Evan Roberts's "characteristic smile." We presume he means the one in the favorite photograph of this inspired gentleman—which is about the silliest and most conceited that ever sat on a human countenance. Evan Roberts seems to have it at command. It does duty for him at revival meetings, and just as readily at sittings in front of the camera. Possibly the "Evan Roberts smile" will become a proverb.

Why does the pious *Daily News* refer to the old "definition of a diplomatist as a man sent abroad to lie for the benefit of his country"? There is no wit in this; it is downright brutality. Sir Henry Wootton's *mot* was that an ambassador was sent to lie abroad for the sake of his country. This is a witty ambiguity. "Lie abroad" was a more or less common expression at that time for "residing abroad," or "sojourning abroad," but it was susceptible of being taken in a stricter and slyer meaning. The whole point of the witticism is in the "lie abroad."

Count Pueckler, the notorious Anti-Semitic agitator, has a summary specific for German ills. "Let us," he says, "crack the Jews' heads like nuts." Some people think that the cracking of Count Pueckler's head would not disclose much kernel.

Sir Charles Dilke pointed out in the House of Commons to the Jew Baiters that the provisions of the "Alien Bill" would have prevented the Holy Apostles from landing in Merrie England and have sent Saint Augustine back to his native heath.

The right reverend father-in-God the Lord Bishop of Lincoln is particularly anxious about the morality of English commerce. Why does he not turn his attention to the morality of Clericalism? Are not advocons sold to the highest bidder, and frequently for more than they are worth? Is it honest to compel people to pay taxes to support the doctrines of a church they are not in agreement with?

During a recent thunderstorm the steeple of the church of Haie-traversaine, in France, was struck by lightning, and two women standing below were injured, one of them fatally. The vestments of the Abbé, who was officiating at the altar, were also damaged, although he himself escaped without serious injury. It is evident that "Providence" does not discriminate between churches and other buildings; indeed, churches get the worst of it in thunderstorms, on account of their height.

Dr. Talmage used to cry aloud from the housetops—we beg pardon, from the pulpit—that Atheism was the greatest cause of suicide. He gave no proofs. Talmage said it, and that was enough. And now that Talmage is dead his policy is carried on by Dr. Torrey. He gives no proofs either. Nor could he do so if he tried, for the facts are all against him. Nearly all the people who commit suicide are professed Christians. We are almost tired of calling attention to this fact. During the past twelve months we have noted a great number of cases, and we have referred to many of them in the *Freethinker*. One of the latest is that of William Groves, a reservist, of Acton, who, before cutting his throat, wrote a letter to his young woman, in which he twice asked God to bless her. Finally he mixed up his piety with a tumbler of whiskey—perhaps in order to go to heaven full of spirit.

Marie Corelli has said that Sunday is pre-eminently the day for "good works": Does she mean *God's Good Man* and *The Sorrows of Satan*? Public opinion at present runs in favor of such "strong" fiction as *Jonah and the Whale* and *Daniel in the Lion's Den*.

Once "heaven" and "hell" were dreadful realities to Christians. Now they sometimes serve to vary the monotony of the national humor. In the summer number of the *Sketch* one of the artists has two full-page illustrations showing where he wishes his friends and his enemies to spend their holidays. One plate represents the Celestial and the other the Infernal Regions, and the red-hot pincher treatment in the latter is very diverting.

A correspondent finds fault with the N. S. S. Conference resolution "That Secularists should make special effort to withdraw their children from religious instruction of any and every kind in the elementary public schools." He says:—

"This would make the child an object for Christians to persecute throughout its life. I know of one conspicuous instance in a Government office, owing to the fact that there is a society called, I think, 'The Christian Union,' the members of which invite successful candidates to attend meetings at Exeter Hall and other places. Should the tyro refuse to do so, or confess his ignorance regarding religion, his career is blocked; no promotion or favors for him. I wanted to send information respecting this scandal to Mr. Labouchere, but the youth's father—an Atheist—objected. The young gentleman is remarkably clever; he won a scholarship easily. Religious bigots are always pleased when Atheists give them an opportunity to persecute. How they pursued and killed Mr. Bradlaugh! Supposing I lived in Constantinople, I would say, 'Allah is God, and Mohammed is his prophet', every day, rather than give the spiteful brutes a chance to injure me."

It would be idle to deny that there is some truth and force in this correspondent's letter. And it would be equally idle to deny that there is truth and force in the N. S. S. resolution. A stand cannot always be made against bigotry, but that is no reason why it should not be made when possible.

When the surrendered mutineer, the *Potemkin*, was handed over by the Roumanian authorities to the Russian government, the ship had to undergo a kind of reconsecration. "A Russian priest from the flagship," the report says, "conducted a religious service, blessing the ship anew. Each officer, commencing with the Admiral, and every individual member of the crew, reverently kissed the cross held by the priest, and received a blessing in return." The *Potemkin* ought to be all right now.

Regarding the recent arrest of a Chicago priest for keeping a gambling house in his church, our contemporary, *Unity*, thinks it a shame to professing Christians that they compel churches to resort to such expedients as "fairs" and "bazaars," with gambling accompaniments, in order to raise money. But it is only the guileless who imagine that the churches would be satisfied to abandon their grafting methods if an amount equal to what they get from them were contributed from other sources. All is fish that comes into the church's net, and no matter what the size of its legitimate receipts it would continue in the old way. It never gets enough, and it knows that when all other strings have been pulled appeal may still be made to the gambling instinct. The church will not have fulfilled its divine mission to the satisfaction of its promoters until it owns the earth.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Rev. J. E. Rattenbury, of Nottingham, is being called a "second Hugh Price Hughes." We hope he will be something less of an Ananias. It would be a pity to imitate his model too closely.

Dr. Tanner, the fasting man, is now seventy-five. He is going to be buried alive for thirty days this summer. The performance is to take place near Attica, Indiana. He thinks this will prove something or other about Jesus. How many of the clergy would take as much trouble to prove anything? We hope the venerable faster will pull through. He rather adds to the gaiety of nations.

We are glad to see that Dr. Aked, of Liverpool, is at last in favor of Secular Education in State schools. But we are sorry to see that the reverend gentleman is so frightened at the word "Secular." He declines to use it, on the ground that so many people think that "secular education has something to do with the shade of the late Charles Bradlaugh

and a propaganda of *atheism*." Instead of "secular" he prefers "undenominational" or "unsectarian." But these are the very words by which the official Nonconformists seek to confuse the plain issue which is raised by the word "secular." We believe the simple, honest "secular" will triumph in the end; and it might do Dr. Aked good, in the meantime, to reflect that it is not within his power to control the dictionary.

According to a *Daily Mail* advertisement of Guy's Tonic the eloquent "Father" Ignatius has given it a handsome testimonial. Two bottles of it did a lot of good to a "Brother" who suffered from several disorders, including flatulence. Well, there are many preachers who suffer from flatulence—in the pulpit, and some of them might try a bottle of this mixture. It might do some good, and it could not possibly make their sermons much worse.

On second thoughts, we fear that "Father" Ignatius's testimonial to Guy's Tonic is not so valuable as it might be. The two bottles gave relief to the afflicted "Brother," but they were "blessed by God" to that end. Can the proprietors of the Tonic guarantee that every bottle carries the divine blessing?

According to the *Grocer's Monthly* a New Jersey parson gives stamps to encourage the young members of his flock to marry. Perhaps he wants to breed a congregation for his church. From what we see in American papers some men of God are adepts in this line. It was said of the amorous Charles II. that he did his best to be "the father of his people." He seems to have some rivals in American pulpits.

Ingersoll did not believe in "expurgated editions." He said: "If I were to edit the great books of the world, I might leave out some lines, and I might leave out the best. I have no right to make of my brain a sieve and say that only that which passes through belongs to the rest of the human race." These lines are appropriately quoted by the *London Freethinker* in view of the fact that "edited" editions of Ingersoll's lectures are being published in England. The "editors" say they have omitted the first portion of the preface to the *Mistakes of Moses*. It is in the "first portion" that Ingersoll condemns the unauthorised editions of his lectures that are "grossly and glaringly incorrect."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Theobald Benjamin Bennell has got into trouble at Bournemouth. It appears that the Lord directed him to go to Havergal Hall, the meeting-place of the Calvinistic Baptists, to preach; but the regular preacher, the Rev. Joseph Painter, did not feel like recognising the visitor's commission. The consequence was what is called "riotous behavior" on Bennell's part, for which the magistrates bound him over to keep the peace for twelve months—with ten shillings costs. According to the evidence in court, the inspired Bennell used a quantity of bad language, and he did not deny the fact, but he explained that he was "not swearing profanely, but in the spirit." This is a very nice distinction. Dickens called it "speaking in a Pickwickian sense," but the worthy Bennell goes one better than that. He swore in the spirit.

Fool, wilt thou live for ever? though thou care
With all thine heart for life to keep it fast,
Shall not thine hand forego it at the last?
Lo, thy sure hour shall take thee by the hair
Sleeping, or when thou knowest not, or would'st fly;
And as men died much mightier shalt thou die.
Yea, they are dead, men much more worth than thou;
The savor of heroic lives that were,
Is it not mixed into thy common air?
The sense of them is shed about thee now:
Feel not thy brows a wind blowing from far?
Aches not thy forehead with a future star?

—Swinburne.

CATHOLICISM.

This religion suits the pride and weakness of man's intellect, the indolence of his will, the cowardice of his fears, the vanity of his hopes, his disposition to reap the profits of a good thing and leave the trouble to others, the magnificence of his pretensions with the meanness of his performance, the pampering of his passions, the stifling of his remorse, the making sure of this world and the next, the saving of his soul and the comforting of his body.—*Hazlitt*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(Suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton, Essex.—July 16, m., Camberwell, a., Brockwell Park; 23, a. and e., Victoria Park; August 13, m., Camberwell, a., Brockwell Park; 20, Victoria Park; 27, Victoria Park.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£140 14s. 6d. Received this week:—N. Scholes 1s., S. Furness 5s., D. J. D., 10s., Jos. Wilson 2s. 6d., C. M. H., 2s. 6d., T. T., 1s., R. Morrow 5s. 2d., G. Paul (per D. Baxter) 3s., Mathematicus 2s. 6d.

THE RIDGWAY FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£1 4s. 6d. Received this week:—C. D. M. 1s., Mr. and Mrs. James Neate 5s., Blackheath 1s., Jos. Wilson 2s. 6d., G. A. G. 5s., C. M. H. 2s. 6d., E. M. Vance 5s., J. D. Stones 2s. 6d., C. Cohen 5s., Mathematicus 2s. 6d.

R. MORROW sends subscription to our Anti-Torrey Mission Fund "with congratulations on its success."

E. LARKINS.—It was the subject of an "Acid Drop" last week.

A. WEBBER.—Thanks for cuttings. See paragraphs.

R. L. M.—Acknowledged this way as requested. Thanks.

INTERESTED (Liverpool).—We are almost sick of stating that Charles Bradlaugh's brother did not see him during his last illness, or for many years previously. All the information you seek, and which we do not care to keep printing, may be found in the thirty-fourth chapter of Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner's "Life" of her father. It is not true that the "Christian" brother ever was a Freethinker. He was brought up as a Christian, and he never professed to be anything else. You can therefore judge the value of the "converted" for yourself.

H. MOHR.—More Torrey pamphlets sent. Glad to hear you have found them so useful from a propagandist point of view. Your letter did not reach us till Monday. The book order would have been executed earlier if it had been sent direct to the shop manager. Our letters have to be sent on to us, as we are spending as little time as possible in London at present.

J. A. McCRODIE.—Thanks for the magazine, but the Rev. Norman Macleod Caie is not worth much attention, and we are too busy to wade through his shallow rhetoric for the sake of finding a poor feeble argument here and there.

CONSTANT READER.—You could obtain Pitman's Shorthand at any good bookseller's.

R. AXELBY.—All right. Yes, we are keeping well.

JAMES NEATE.—Glad to hear Mr. Cohen had "splendid meetings" on Sunday in Victoria Park.

D. C. EVANS writes: "I have been a reader of your journal for many years. Believe me, sir, in many a dark hour the *Freethinker* has proved more than a comforter to me."

D. J. D.—Received with thanks. Pleased to know you think this a "splendid paper." You might favor us with your address.

EDGAR DAVIES.—It is pleasant to hear from a Christian who prefers our vindication of Paine and Ingersoll to Dr. Torrey's lies about them. We have placed your subscription to the *Freethinker* in the right hands. Your orthodox friends who told you that we were "fined £50 in a court of law for writing indecent literature" ought to be writing penny novelettes. There is not a word of truth in it.

A. NOTLEY.—Glad to learn that the circulation of the *Freethinker* has doubled at Hetton since the lecture on April 29.

A. G. LEVETT.—We shall look for it. Thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

D. BAXTER, newsagent, 32 Brunswick-street, Glasgow, will be happy to receive and transmit to us any subscriptions from Glasgow "saints" towards our Anti-Torrey Fund.

G. W. R. (Wolverhampton).—Yes, we are interested in hearing that the *Freethinker* has been "the making" of you, and that you are "honestly speaking a far happier man by being free from the withering hand of superstition."

T. T.—Thanks. Glad to have your opinion of our "splendid work."

J. CLEWORTH.—See paragraph. We can quite understand that the Picton Hall meeting surprised you.

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.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send halfpenny stamps.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

M. Léon Furnémont writes us with respect to the approaching International Freethought Congress at Paris on September 4, 5, and 6. M. Furnémont is the general secretary of the International Freethought Federation, and it was largely due to his labors that the Rome Congress was such a tremendous success. "We count," he says, "on a numerous delegation from the N. S. S. of England, and we tender you, and also all English comrades, the expression of our fraternal sentiments." M. Furnémont also asks us to reproduce the Congress program in the *Freethinker*. This we hope to do next week. Meanwhile we devote a paragraph or two to the subject.

The Paris Congress takes place on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. On the Sunday—which, by the way, is the anniversary of the proclamation of the present French Republic—there will be a great popular demonstration; and a monument will be inaugurated to the Chevalier de la Barre, a victim of the Church, whose infamous ill-treatment aroused the passionate wrath of Voltaire. This monument will confront the new Church of the Sacred Heart. After the Congress there will be excursions of scientific, artistic, industrial, and commercial interest.

Of course the N. S. S. will be strongly represented by its leading men and women, and the Freethought party will shortly be invited to provide for the necessary expenses. There will be special delegates appointed by the Executive. Ordinary delegates' cards will also be presented to N. S. S. members who attend the Congress on their own account—and there ought to be a good many of them. For the trip to Paris is not expensive like the trip to Rome. The travelling in France, indeed, will be reduced to a minimum of cost, as the French government has instructed the Railway Companies to charge the Congressists fifty per cent. less than the ordinary fare. This reduction will be secured by means of special tickets.

M. Furnémont, who is not a Frenchman, but a Belgian, points out that the Paris Congress should be made as large and influential as possible, if only as an international affirmation of the Republican policy of the absolute separation between Religion and the State, which is a vastly important part of the great general policy of the secularisation of life, which is the aim of Freethought everywhere. It will also be an international affirmation of the necessity of peace and concord, so that a breathing-time may be secured for the proper study and discussion of the problems of constructive civilisation.

The French Chamber of Deputies has passed the Separation Bill by a vote of 341 against 233. Of course it has to go through the Senate yet. In the meantime we may consider its object and scope. The Bill abolishes the connection between the Churches and the State, assures full liberty of conscience, guarantees the free exercise of religious worship, and neither aids nor recognises any form of religion whatever. At the same time it deals generously with the Churches that have hitherto received State support. They are to have the free use of the present religious edifices, subject to certain regulations, and the payment to priests will not be suddenly withdrawn. The separation is to be a gradual process extending over nine years. For the first year the clergy of all Churches will receive full pay. Those of the smallest and poorest communes will receive it during the second year also. Then the payments will be reduced to two-thirds, next to one-third, and at the end of nine years will entirely cease. This is justice tempered with mercy, and is wise statesmanship. And it gives the lie to the common English talk about the "intolerance" of French Freethought.

We beg our friends all over the country to send us the names and addresses of persons who might become subscribers to the *Freethinker* if it were only introduced to them. We undertake to send a copy post free to every such address for six consecutive weeks. Much good may be done in this way, with little trouble to our friends, and a minimum of cost to ourselves; in fact, it is the cheapest form of effective advertisement that we know—and the only one that our resources enable us to command. We often receive letters from persons who have read our free copies of this journal and have become regular subscribers in consequence. Here is an extract from a letter just to hand:—

"This note is to thank you for the free copies of the *Freethinker* you sent me. I now take it regularly from my news-

agent, and look forward to each publication. I used to think very badly of it, but find that I was mistaken."

Now then, please, more names and addresses!

Here is another note of a similar character:—

"I enclose herewith my subscription for the *Freethinker*. The paper has been useful in making me think more than I used to."

This is the best sort of testimonial we could get. If we make people think we do what we aim at. And in the best meaning of the word ours is one of the most successful papers in England.

Our readers may like another bit of "experience meeting" business. A gentleman had a *Freethinker* given him outside Torrey's hall during the last week of the Strand mission. After reading it he came to the shop, said it was A 1, and bought a current number and a *Bible Handbook* as advertised on the back page. Our friends will see from this what good may be done by placing this journal in fresh hands. We hope they will do all they can in this way to promote our circulation. Let those who enjoy the *Freethinker* every week "Pass it along!"

A young Birmingham Freethinker, who has just left the old country for America, where he is to join a Physical Culture College, wrote us a very nice letter before starting on his journey. He addressed us as "Dear Teacher"—a word that we are getting old enough not to be frightened at—and says how much benefit he has derived from reading the *Freethinker*, which he has arranged to continue reading on the other side of the Atlantic. "You have lifted me," he says, "out of the mud of superstition, as none other could have done, and instilled into my being a *morale* which is humane, altruistic, and noble. It was my good fortune to chat with you for a while the last occasion you lectured in the Birmingham Town Hall. We talked together on Vegetarianism and Physical Culture, to my delight, being an enthusiast in those reforms, and your handshake was magnetic and fraternal, giving hope and encouragement. I am not a member of the N. S. S., certain personal circumstances keeping me somewhat restrained, but I have enjoyed the splendid fellowship and personal friendship of many of the members of the Birmingham Branch." We do not print this correspondent's name, but the extract from his letter should prove interesting. It shows how Christians misconceive the object and the spirit of our movement. There is a touch of enthusiasm in it, at which very old people may smile not unkindly, and at which cynics and fools may laugh; but, after all, the writer of this letter has the best of it, and when youth ceases to be enthusiastic the world may as well go and bury itself.

The *Christian World* prints the following editorial paragraph:—

"Torrey-Alexander Mission in London is over, but it is more than probable that a sharp controversy over Dr. Torrey's methods will spring up with the publication of the *July Review of Reviews*. Mr. W. T. Stead, who, when the mission began five months ago, pleaded through these columns for the co-operation of all earnest Christians, has been engaged in correspondence with Dr. Torrey, and part of this will be published next week. Some time ago Dr. Torrey, challenged to substantiate his charge that infidelity and immorality go together, gave Tom Paine as an example. He was promptly taken up by the Secularists, who pointed out that the charges against Paine were dismissed in the Law Courts. Dr. Torrey having declined to withdraw his accusation, Mr. W. T. Stead stepped in and urged the missionary, as a matter of Christian ethics, to modify his statement. After a somewhat acrimonious correspondence, Dr. Torrey has abandoned his first position, but still justifies his initial charges. Mr. Stead is publishing Dr. Torrey's final letter, with some scathing comments of his own. Something like a sensation will doubtless be caused by Mr. Stead's detailed argument that on evidence quite analogous to that cited by Dr. Torrey against Paine, even the personal character of Jesus Christ might be assailed."

This is good as far as it goes, and we are glad to see it. But why did the *Christian World* burke every reference or allusion to our reply to Dr. Torrey in vindication of Paine and Ingersoll until Mr. Stead took the matter in hand? He appears to be supplying courage for the whole Christian party.

Tuesday's *Daily Chronicle* had a lengthy and excellent reference to Mr. Stead's article on Dr. Torrey in the *July Review of Reviews*, and many other papers will no doubt take up the cry after we go to press. It is not probable that any of them will mention us—for they so hate, with the hatred of fear, that awful editor of the *Freethinker*. But that doesn't matter. Our object is not an advertisement for

ourselves, but the vindication of Paine and Ingersoll and the exposure of Dr. Torrey; and if *that* wins we win.

Pretty nearly a quarter of a million of our Torrey pamphlets have been circulated. The last supply is quite cleared out, and we are printing another. Applicants for copies will please note this, as it is impossible to write to all of them. We may add that Dr. Torrey will be followed up at his Plymouth and Sheffield missions with these pamphlets.

The *Hibbert Journal* for July contains some interesting articles. One of them is by Mr. Joseph McCabe, who deals with "Sir Oliver Lodge on Haeckel." Mr. McCabe writes ably and points out the weak places in Sir Oliver Lodge's attack upon what we may compendiously call "Haeckelism." The reply is well done, but Mr. McCabe hardly recognises that all his arguments have been presented in Freethought papers and on Freethought platforms for the past quarter of a century. Presenting them in a "high-class" magazine really does not make them novel. Still, we are glad to see them there. At the end of his article Mr. McCabe shows, as we have done, that Sir Oliver Lodge could not "subscribe *literally* to a single article of the simplest of the official creeds," so that if he differs from Haeckel he differs still more from the Churches, being separated from them by "a whole mountain-range of obsolete dogmas."

Another *Hibbert* article is a brilliant and powerful one by Mr. G. M. Trevelyan (one of the rising men of our day) on "Should Agnostics be Miserable?" This question is answered very decisively in the negative. Mr. Trevelyan argues that religionists must not be allowed to pass themselves off as the guardians of optimism, and that, in view of the spread of scepticism as to a personal God and personal immortality, it is "of vital importance that we should no longer preach the doctrine that atheism implies pessimism." This is the view we have always taken in the *Freethinker*. We have pointed out again and again that Christianity, with its asceticism, its heaven and hell, and its narrow salvation, is not optimistic at all, but pessimistic; whereas Secularism is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but melioristic. Even if the world is irredeemably bad it does not follow that Atheists should refrain from having anything to do with it. "If the good elements in the universe," as Mr. Trevelyan argues, "committed suicide or desisted from propagating their species, the bad would still remain. It is not in anyone's power to destroy the principle of life in the Universe; all that can be done is to destroy oneself, and to prevent certain possible children from coming into existence. Such a course, if adopted by a good person, only leaves the Universe worse than it would otherwise be." Mr. Trevelyan's view is that there is plenty of noble work, and happiness by the way, in making the best of this life; and that, in doing this, the certitudes of reason and experience are a better ground of operation than is afforded by any of the "faiths."

Rev. James Moffat, D.D., contributes an article to the *Hibbert Journal* on "Mr. Meredith on Religion." This article is a curious mixture. Its good and bad points we hope to be able to deal with next week. Meanwhile we may express our opinion that it is good to see such a subject ventilated; for Mr. Meredith is more than a novelist—he is a poet and a thinker.

A correspondent in the *Liverpool Evening Express*, joining in the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon controversy, says that—"The Conference of the National Secular Society, recently held in Liverpool, has apparently made itself felt in more ways than one; and the method pursued by that Society of throwing open the meeting for questions and discussion after each lecture would, I feel certain, if adopted by the P. S. A., be a step in the right direction."

Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham, sends the following list of fresh subscriptions that have reached him for the Ridgway Fund:—

Already acknowledged, £7 19s. 6d. Received: B. R. Godfree £1, C. Banks 5s., Miss A. M. Baker 5s., Mr. Greswold 4s., T. Dison, jun., 2s. 6d., H. Church 2s. 6d., Anon 1s., F. Wood 2s., W. Bean 2s., J. W. Gott 5s., H. M. Ridgway 10s.—Total, £10 18s. 6d.

We hope this Fund for the assistance of one of the gallantest veteran Freethinkers in England, now nearly eighty years of age, will be contributed to by many more readers of this journal.

"Chilperic's" very able and interesting article ought not to be broken, so we print it in full this week, although it occupies so many columns. It looks long to the eye, but it will not be found so in the reading. Most of our readers, we believe, will regard it as "a treat."

How They Lived in Ancient Palestine.

EXPOUNDERS and commentators are very fond of telling us that the dress, life, and habits portrayed in the Bible are absolutely identical with those obtaining in the East to-day. This may be perfectly true, but it is not particularly edifying. Oriental dresses and things can be made to look very pretty in pictures; but the artist cannot reproduce the rags, dirt, and vermin which are the chief characteristics of his originals. In Palestine the necessaries of life are somewhat scanty. The well-to-do resembles our old friend Dogberry, for he is "one that hath two gowns, and everything handsome about him." The ordinary person makes shift with one gown—sometimes not even that. The houses are primitive structures of stones and mud, exactly similar to those seen in the wilder parts of Ireland; and their furniture consists of a wooden chest or two, some earthen dishes, and some tin cans. The people are free to indulge in "The Simple Life" in all its beauty. The country is not a very inviting one. Plague, pestilence, and famine are not mere picturesque features of the Litany; they are very serious and constant realities. For the wretched agriculture scarcely supports life in good seasons, and leaves no margin for bad ones; ophthalmia is the most common of complaints; cholera visits some district or another every summer; and other epidemic diseases of a worse nature recur at frequent intervals. Brigandage was rife at one time, but lately it has been robbed of part of its terrors; for the chief offenders were the desert Arabs, and when the Turkish cavalry were served out with breech-loading carbines some years ago the Bedaween raids became less frequent. More recently the Government has been lining the frontier with Circassian colonies. The Russian occupation of the Caucasus has become too strong for its turbulent inhabitants, and they are gradually drifting into Turkish territory; and, as one Circassian is a match for six Arabs, the wild Bedawy is being strictly confined to his native deserts, and made to behave himself.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian's lot is not a happy one, and when we contemplate this barren, plague-ridden country we are lost in amazement that an eccentric patriotism should ever have designated it as a land flowing with milk and honey. Travellers have endeavored to make out that it was once more fertile and prosperous than it is now, and point out the traces of careful cultivation in spots that are now sterile stone-heaps; but it is becoming more evident every day that this period of careful development of the scanty resources of the country was a temporary one, due to the Roman occupation. Not only are the old terraced fields associated with Roman remains, but the conduits and watercourses at Jerusalem that used to be confidently ascribed to the kings of Judah are found to bear the names and marks of the Roman Legions. The Roman legionary was not only a wonderful worker himself, but he had a genius for making other people work; and where he came the desert blossomed like the rose. Unfortunately, the legionary settled down in foreign colonies, intermarried with the natives, and was gradually absorbed; while his relatives who remained behind in Italy were systematically pauperised with bread and circuses. So that the energetic, valorous, industrious legionary ceased to be manufactured, and the East drifted back to its original idleness and squalor.

However, we were going to try and realise what Palestine was like in the old times, before the legions appeared upon the scene. The remarkable results achieved in Egypt and Mesopotamia by digging out the sites of ancient cities inspired people with the idea that similar remains might be lying under the soil of the Holy Land, and much excavation has been done of late years by the French, Germans, and Austrians, as well as the English; but, though the laborers have been plentiful, the harvest has been

small. The work has been carried on under many difficulties, the chief of which have been the climate, the epidemics, and the general laziness of the population. Continuous labor is not to the taste of the natives. The excavator will engage a fine, strong young fellow, who will work satisfactorily for a few days, and then, one morning, a weedy youth will present himself and explain that his brother is ill, and that he has come as a substitute. The experienced explorer declines to accept the substitute, and a search in the neighboring village speedily finds the missing brother without the slightest trace of illness upon him.

The English Palestine Exploration Fund has investigated several localities; and, for the last two or three years, it has been engaged upon the site of the old town of Gezer. It may be remarked that this site is much better authenticated than the majority of those in Palestine. A sharp-eyed Frenchman espied some letters upon a rock, which turned out to be the name *Alkios* in Greek, accompanied by a short Hebrew inscription reading "Boundary of Gezer." Similar inscriptions were found at intervals, so that it was easy to mark out the limits of the place that was known as Gezer at the beginning of the Christian era. Who or what *Alkios* was we do not know. He was probably the magistrate of the place; and the style of the lettering indicates that he lived about the second century A.D. We learn from Joshua xxi. 21 that Gezer was one of the Levitical cities; so that at the time of the Priestly Code (to which this section belongs) it had strong sacerdotal associations. But the town was never of any great importance. It is only mentioned in eleven passages of the Old Testament; and all we are told about its history is that its king was defeated by Joshua, and that it was captured by the Egyptians about the time of Solomon, and that it formed part of the dowry of Pharaoh's daughter.

The remains found by the P. E. Fund range in date from the neolithic period to the Arab invasion; so that Gezer was evidently a place with a pretty extensive history, if we only knew it. The neolithic relics do not concern us. They are very similar to those found elsewhere; for the Age of Polished Stone was so limited in its culture that there was little room for variation. Neolithic man settled on the bare limestone knoll on account of the vicinity of a perennial spring of water, and he dug himself out dwellings in the soft rock, these dwellings being utilised by later comers as cisterns and cesspools.

The real importance of the excavations lies in the relics of the Bronze Age; or, as the P. E. Fund calls it, the Semitic Period. It is not at all clear at what part of the Semitic Period the Israelites appeared upon the scene; there is no break to show that any fresh element entered into it; but that fact offers no difficulty to those who realise that the stories of the Egyptian bondage and the Exodus into Canaan are merely myths that only assumed a definite form at a comparatively late date. We say "Bronze Age" because that was the dominant material. Stone was, however, in common use until well into the Greek period. Flakes of flint were cheap, and were easily procured—two advantages that appealed strongly to the Semitic mind; but the reader should imagine to himself the difficulty of eating his dinner with a flint knife, or doing anything in the cutting line with a flint tool. Iron was scarce and bad.

From several passages in the Old Testament we may gather that flint was a familiar cutting material, though the references have been obscured by the fact that they chiefly relate to the sacred rite of circumcision. In Exod. iv. 25 Zipporah seizes a flint (R. V.) as the readiest cutting appliance; and in Joshua v. 2, 3, flint knives are mentioned. Poetry habitually employs archaic expressions, and in Psalms lxxxix. 43 "the edge of his sword" is in the original "the flint of his sword," the idea of sharpness being anciently connected with the stone. On the other hand, iron would appear to be scarce; for in the story in 2 Kings vi. the prophet is obliged to borrow an axe to cut his timber, and Elisha performs

a miracle to recover so valuable a tool. It may also be remarked that the Hebrew for "iron" (*barzel*) is not a Semitic word at all.

The Semitic Period of the P. E. Fund at Gezer represents a time beginning about 2000 years B.C. and ending about 331 B.C. The former date is derived from Egyptian scarabs found in the ruins; the latter date (being that of the invasion of Alexander the Great) is deduced from the occurrence of Greek pottery, etc.

To realise the material the excavators had to work through, we must picture to ourselves the houses used by the natives to-day. A square wall is built up of rough, large stones. The interstices are filled with smaller stones, and the whole is liberally plastered with mud. Across the middle of the square a partition is built in the same style of architecture, and the space formed by this partition is roofed over. The roofed part is not very wide, on account of the scarcity of timber. The wood used in the country at the present day comes chiefly from Norway. In ancient times they had to rely on the local supplies. The cedars of Lebanon afforded the only timber of any considerable scantling; but that was too expensive and difficult to procure in a roadless country to render it available for any but very wealthy persons. The Palestinian house, therefore, consists of a narrow courtyard, full of rubbish and animals, with a covered room at the back where the family live with the fowls, who run in and out through holes cut in the door for their convenience. The floor of the living room is sometimes beaten earth, but more often the natural soil.

Now, the remains of the city of Gezer consisted entirely of the foundations of a mass of hovels that had originally been built in the style just described. When one house fell into ruin, another was put on top of it; and, as there were no such things as streets, every builder was at liberty to place his walls at any angle that suited him. Consequently the ruins of Gezer consisted of a bewildering mass of stones that had once been rough walls running in every direction. These stones were just the unhewn boulders picked off the fields and carried up the hill. They were the ordinary soft limestone of the district, easily tooled and shaped; but the Gezerites were too lazy and too unskilful to square their building stones. Even in the Greek period the blocks were merely dressed with the hammer, and that only in the city wall. During the Semitic period the dwellings of the Israelites were like the altars of Yahveh—they were not "polluted" by having any tool lifted up upon them (Exod. xx. 25). Speaking of city-walls, Gezer was hardly "walled up to heaven." In the older period the defence of the town consisted of an earthen bank of no great height, faced with boulders. Later, there was a stone wall, of which only the foundations remain; but these are too narrow to admit of any great elevation in the rampart. The Assyrian and Egyptian sculptures are somewhat conventional; but both of them agree in showing that the fortified towns of Syria were surrounded by a wall of stone strengthened by narrow towers at frequent intervals, similar to the remains found by the P. E. Fund. The walls and towers, however, could be readily stormed by escalade; and storming ladders are, necessarily, of no great length.

Thickly scattered among the wreck of the Gezerite houses were the fragments of the native pottery, a rude ware of the kind used in this country for flower-pots. The vessels themselves were of the rudest character, though mostly thrown on the wheel. Some were decorated with bands and spirals of red and black paint; and a few were rudely fashioned into the shape of ducks and animals, while two or three had the names of the Hebrew potters stamped on the handles. But the most frequent objects were lamps. These lamps were merely shallow saucers, with one end pinched up to hold the wick. They gave a feeble, smoky light, and a nasty smell. Bad as they were, however, they were the only kind of artificial illuminant known to the Ancient Hebrews. What was practically the same thing was used in

Palestine down to a very recent period, though it has now been almost entirely superseded by the tin lamp for burning American or Russian petroleum. The Oriental dislikes being in the dark, and it is a point of honor with the women to keep the light burning all through the hours of darkness. Many passages in the Old Testament show it was just the same in ancient times, and in the description of a pattern woman in Proverbs xxxi. 18 one of her chief excellencies is that "her lamp goeth not out by night."

Large numbers of these earthenware lamps were found in the ruins of Gezer, in a peculiar situation. The old Gezerite was fond of taking a earthen bowl, placing a lamp in it, inverting another bowl over the lamp, and burying the whole under some ruined wall. It was evidently a magical rite. A somewhat similar custom was practised by the Babylonian Jews in the early Middle Ages. When an Israelite was ill, they took an earthen bowl, painted incantations in concentric lines round the inside of the bowl, took a rag from the patient's clothes and buried it in some deserted ruin, placing the bowl over it. The demon who had caused the illness was supposed to have been imprisoned under the bowl, and to be prevented from getting loose again by the incantations. When the Assyriologists began digging up the mounds of Babylon (which were nameless ruins in the Middle Ages) they came on these bowls, and specimens may be seen in European museums. (Unfortunately, no explorer has succeeded in capturing one of the demons that were so securely trapped beneath them). We may therefore be sure that the Palestinian "lamp and bowl deposits" had a similar meaning. They were an ancient method of dealing with the devil by "putting his light out."

Another feature of the ruins was that they yielded a number of potted babies. The dead were all buried within the walls of the city, probably each in his own house, until a comparatively late period; and infants were buried in jars in default of coffins. The Palestine Exploration Fund gentlemen seem to have suffered from "sacrifice on the brain," and they style these interments "child sacrifices," and talk about the immolation of the first-born. As, however, the remains are found surrounded with food-vessels and drinking-cups, it is clear that we have to deal with ordinary burials. Sacrifices do not have such surroundings. The Old Testament knows nothing of immolation by burial. The Ancient Hebrews either ate the sacrifice, or consumed it by fire. Infant mortality is very great in all communities; about half the babies born dying off in a year or two; and, as the ancient Palestinians buried them so carefully in jars, it is hardly surprising that so many infant burials have been noted. The tombs of older persons are less well preserved, for the soil is not of a character to preserve bones. The grave goods are scanty, probably owing to the poverty of their surviving relations.

The insecurity of those times is evidenced by two large bone deposits, which have been preserved owing to the fact that they occur in cisterns. In one instance fifteen bodies were found, together with several bronze weapons, chiefly spears. One of the skeletons was pronounced to be that of a girl about sixteen years old. Her body had been cut in half before being thrown into the well, for no trace of the lower portion could be discovered. In the other case, eighteen bodies were found together, of whom fourteen were pronounced to be men, two women, one a child of twelve, and one infant. In both instances the remains were obviously those of persons who had been massacred and thrown into the first convenient receptacle.

In the regular burials were some slight evidence of what the people of Gezer ate, for the earthenware saucers frequently had mutton-bones upon them. Scattered among the ruins were small granaries, some of which contained corn, all carbonised by long burial. We may infer, there-

fore, that the staple diet was boiled mutton and some kind of bread or porridge. To make bread it was necessary to have flour, and, to obtain this, the Gezerites were in the habit of rubbing their corn between two stones, as is still the practise in Central Africa, several of these grinding stones having been discovered in the town. The quern, or handmill, was a later invention. Bible artists are very fond of showing a woman, sitting down, and turning the upper stone of a quern by means of the wooden handle; but, although this is quite justifiable in illustrations of the New Testament times, it is quite an anachronism for the Old Testament. The amount of bread and mutton available in ancient times it is of course impossible to estimate. From the frequent mention of famines in the Bible, however, starvation must have been a common experience.

From food we pass to clothing. Naturally, the ruins of Gezer yielded nothing in the way of clothes; the soil and the climate had long destroyed all remains of that kind. Some needles of bone and bronze, and a few bronze brooches of the usual safety-pin pattern were the only evidence that the people of Ancient Palestine wore garments. But many passages in the Old Testament show that a suit of clothes was considered a very valuable thing. When Naaman came to the King of Israel (2 Kings v.) he took with him ten talents of silver (£3,750) and six thousand shekels of gold (£1,800) but only ten changes of raiment. A goodly Babylonish garment was a thing that Achan could not resist; and "raiment" was one of the most valuable spoils taken from the Canaanites (Josh. xxii. 8).

Passing from economics to religion, we may recall the fact that Gezer was one of the Levitical cities. Now, it is worthy of note that some of these cities of the Levites bear sacred names—names of the Gods of the Heathen. Thus we have *Gath-Rimmon*, i.e., Gath of the God Rimmon. *Anathoth*, i.e., the Babylonian Goddess *Anatu* with the Hebrew feminine termination. And *Beth-Shemesh*, i.e., "The Temple of the Sun-God." In view of all this, it has been suggested that the Levites were merely the priests of the old High-places; and their cities were the ancient sanctuaries before the political and religious innovations that concentrated the worship of Yahveh at Jerusalem, and discountenanced the veneration of other deities. At any rate, the Palestine Exploration Fund has unearthed at Gezer a sanctuary of the most characteristically Semitic type, that is to say, it is not a building, but an open court, in which conical stones were revered. In this instance there is a line of standing stones, ten in number, arranged from north to south, and situated at the east end of the sacred enclosure. There appear to have been three shrines, each with its conical stone, or *beth-el*. The one that seems to have been most venerated has its top polished by the hands of generations of worshipers, who rubbed it in the Arab style while reciting their vows. Another has a stone altar before it, apparently for incense; while the third (which is evidently the latest) has two "cup-marks" upon it, for receiving butter or oil. Each of these three pillars is about six feet long; and they stand between larger rough-hewn columns, ranging up to eleven feet. Seven of the stone pillars were found still standing in their ancient position. One had fallen, but was easily re-erected; and two had been broken down. The whole series forms a brilliant example of the ancient Palestinian temple, and whether it were used for Yahveh worship or not, the fact that Gezer was afterwards recognised as a Levitical city, proves that its sacred character endured the changes in the official religion—in fact the site is still accounted holy, for the slight elevation immediately in front of this old Semitic temple is crowned with the tomb of a Mohammedan Saint greatly revered in the surrounding villages.

All this holiness is a bitter satire on the conditions of life among the old inhabitants of Palestine as exhibited in the remains of Gezer, and also in the other ancient sites explored by Europeans during

recent years, for they all tell the same story. Deut. vii. 12, etc., details the blessings that the Jews were to receive for serving Yahveh; and yet they leave much more to be desired, to fill out and adorn the life of humanity. These blessings may be summed up under three heads—plenty to eat, plenty of children, and victory over their enemies. What was the use of plenty to eat, when the food consisted of flour rubbed between two stones, made up into gritty bread, and baked in a dirty oven with a fire of cattle-dung? The meanest unblest Gentile has better fare than that. What was the use of plenty of children when they were buried by the score in the city in earthen pots? What was the use of victory over enemies who were no better off than themselves? When we think of the wretched mud-cabins that would be disdained by an English beggar; the total absence of art and refinement; and the wretched, sordid existence of these old Palestinians, we see the futility of religion and its ideals. The miracles of the Old Testament added not an atom to the comfort and enjoyment of life. The revelations of the prophets enabled no one to expand the scanty resources of the country. And the multitudinous sacrifices wasted a host of good material, without making a single improvement in the art of cookery. Every amelioration in the conditions of life, every refinement, and every advance in civilisation has been achieved by man himself, without the aid of the supernatural.

CHILPERIC.

The Risky Frisk.

Two solicitors of Barnstaple, in dear old Devon.
Sat on their slimy tails,
Two common garden snails,
Ranged like Twain's frogs in level rivalry;
Resolved to gamble—risk their chance of Heaven—
On those two snails,
Slow moving on their trails—
Together with one thousand pounds a side.
The man whose wheel led on the race of pride—
Of those same snails,
Still travelling on their trails—
Just tetch'd it's tail with a straw. As tight as bell
Shrunk his durned slug slap into it's shell
Like a shot!

While the opposition snail,
Swept on its glorious trail,
And scooped the lot.

MORAL.

Revivalists! O men of cod!
Don't tetch religion's tail—to filip God.
His mills grind slowly—like our festive snail—
The way to stop them is to tetch His tail.

G. W.

CHRISTIAN PRISONS.

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst
Like asp with adder fight,
We have little care of prison fare,
For what chills and kills outright
Is that every stone one lifts by day
Becomes one's heart by night.
With midnight always in one's heart,
And twilight in one's cell,
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,
Each in his separate Hell,
And the silence is more awful far
Than the sound of a brazen bell.
And never a human voice comes near
To speak a gentle word:
And the eye that watches through the door
Is pitiless and hard:
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
With soul and body marred.

—Oscar Wilde, "Ballad of Reading Gaol."

While truth and genius are simple and brief, affectation and hypocrisy, whether moral or intellectual, are conscious that their words are mere bubbles, and blow them till they burst.—Harc.

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.

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OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, F. A. Davies will Lecture.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "The Myth of the Virgin Birth."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, E. Edwin; Brockwell Park, 3.15, C. Cohen; 6, C. Cohen.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, C. Cohen.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Christian Evidences Criticised."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House Bull Ring): July 20, at 8, A. Barber, "Sir Oliver Lodge as Amateur Methodist Preacher."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Christian Lies About Thomas Paine." Outdoor Lectures: 3, Islington-square (if wet, inside Hall); Monday, 8, Domingo Pit; Wednesday, 8, Edgehill Church.

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