

THE Freethinker

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In the long run, genius and wit side with the right cause. And the man fighting against wrong to-day is assisted, in a greater degree than perhaps he is himself aware, by the sarcasm of this writer, the metaphor of that, the song of the other, although the writers themselves professed indifference, or were even counted as belonging to the enemy.—ALEXANDER SMITH.

George Jacob Holyoake.

RETURNING from Scotland late on Monday night I learnt that George Jacob Holyoake was dead. I had heard that he was failing, and the news did not take me by surprise. Neither did it fill me with sorrow. It is idle to grieve for the death of one so old. Mr. Holyoake was nearly eighty-nine. His life had been both long and full, and to lament his decease is to deplore human mortality—which is like regretting that summer is not eternal.

Having only a brief space at my command I cannot attempt to do justice to every aspect of Mr. Holyoake's career. The newspapers have chronicled his political and social work; his early lecturing as a Socialist missionary of the Robert Owen school, his labors for the freedom of the press, his efforts for the emancipation of the working-classes, his zealous preaching of the gospel of Co-operation, his connection with great revolutionists like Mazzini and Garibaldi, and his participation in the Chartist movement, which contained the seeds of nearly all the reforms that have been achieved in England during the last fifty years. The lines at my disposal must be devoted to the philosophical and religious (or irreligious) side of his character.

Mr. Holyoake, in his younger days, was a strenuous and aggressive Freethinker. Like all the active spirits in the Freethought movement of that time he fell under the ban of the Blasphemy Laws. After a lecture at Cheltenham, in 1842, in reply to a question, he said that he would put the Deity on half-pay. This is carefully concealed by the newspapers, which state that he was tried and imprisoned for Atheism. He was prosecuted for Blasphemy, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for it in Gloucester Gaol. According to many newspapers—including the *Morning Leader* and *Star* which know better—this was the last imprisonment for Blasphemy in England; but there have been several prisoners for Blasphemy since—notably the editor of the *Freethinker* in 1883.

Editing the *Movement* in 1843, Mr. Holyoake adopted a motto from Bentham—"Maximise morals, minimise religion." This was a fair summary of what he meant by Secularism. It was in 1851 that he first used the term "Secularist," and the first Secular Conference was held at Manchester in October, 1852, under his presidency. The *Reasoner*, which existed then and for many years afterwards, under his editorship, was thenceforth an organ of Secularism. Mr. Holyoake was also President of the Secular Society established in London, and carried on a publishing business at 147 Fleet-street in the interest of the movement. It is not true, however, as stated in the *Daily News*, that he was the leader of the Hall of Science "lecturing centre" in Old-street. Bradlaugh

was from first to last the dominant person there. Mr. Holyoake never had any official connection with it.

The stronger personality of Bradlaugh was destined to take the practical lead of the Secular movement in England. Mr. Holyoake resented this. He never reconciled himself to it. When I was a very young man I heard him publicly debate with Bradlaugh on the principles and policy of Secularism, and the occasional bitterness of his speech was only too obvious. It would have been better for Secularism if they could have worked amicably together, but it was not to be. From the day of that debate, while Mr. Holyoake was generally called the Father of Secularism, he did very little for the movement, except giving it "candid advice" at inopportune moments; and latterly he pressed the claims of Rationalism and Agnosticism—his original Secularism being left almost out of sight. Yet I do not believe that his intellect had undergone any change. I am satisfied that he was always opposed to superstition. And when some people said that he was drawing nearer to Christianity, it was simply a case of the wish being father to the thought.

In one respect the newspapers have been unjust to Mr. Holyoake. They were guilty of the same offence against Bradlaugh. When the great "Iconoclast" died they said that he might never have been an Atheist if he had not met a bigot in his boyhood in the person of the Rev. Mr. Packer. This is a frightful insult to Bradlaugh's intelligence. It assumes that he did not think himself into Atheism, but was pushed into it by a parson's rolling against him. In the same way it is now said that Mr. Holyoake might never have been an "infidel" if things had been different in his boyhood; whereas the truth is that he became an "infidel" because nature had given him brains.

The *Daily News* admits that Mr. Holyoake was fated to be an unbeliever, and accounts for it by saying that: "He lost the sense of the spiritual—if he ever had it—and all his life he confined himself, his thoughts and efforts, his aspirations and his hopes, to the mundane and the material." This is saying that he preferred a happy earth to a fabled heaven, believing that man's duty was to secure his own welfare and leave as little as possible to God—if such a being existed. For this he is belittled now, but in the days to come it will be his great distinction. Certainly he believed with Ingersoll that the way to be happy was to try to make others happy. This may not be "spiritual," but perhaps it is something better; it is *ideal*—it is the marriage of science and humanity.

This brief, imperfect article should not close without a reference to Mr. Holyoake's old age. It is inspiring, it heightens one's sense of human dignity, to remember how he kept his mental lamp trimmed to the very last. His outlook was always cheerful. Only a week before senile decay put out his light he dictated a bright letter to the working-classes on the general elections. Death had no terrors for him; his interest was all in life; and when the end came he smiled and laid down for his last sleep. He had warmed both hands before the fire of life; it sank, and he was ready to depart.

G. W. FOOTE.

Education and the Elections.

RIDING in a train the other day, one of my fellow travellers, like Silas Wegg—with a variation, dropped into politics. He turned out to be a Nonconformist of the deepest dye, and was in high feather over the election results, which in all the simplicity of unintelligent sectarianism he claimed as a result of the political influence of the Nonconformist conscience. The Conservative government, he said, had trodden on the rights of Free Churchmen and they had replied by returning an opposition party in overwhelming numbers. Being a Nonconformist, this gentleman was highly delighted, and naturally he was also highly moral. The elections, he went on to say, proved that what the English people wanted was a thoroughly honest and moral government—one that would act honestly and deal straightforwardly with the electorate. And the climax was reached with the declaration that the first act of the new government would have to be a new Education Act to abolish sectarianism in the schools.

All this would have been simply and entirely amusing had my fellow-traveller been a solitary instance of this type of mind. But the case ceases to be wholly amusing when it is viewed as representative of a type. For the most hopeless of types is that which, while fundamentally insincere and hypocritical, is yet fully charged with a consciousness of its own uprightness and impeccability. And of such is the kingdom of modern Free Churchmen. It is a type of mind that is as dead to plain facts as it is to a straightforward logical appeal. I reminded my fellow-traveller that the only case where a candidate had stood as a definite Nonconformist candidate—the Rev. Mr. Riley—he was defeated by six thousand votes. This fact made no impression, and I pointed out that resentment at having been so magnificently fooled over the Boer war—although not openly expressed—for obvious reasons—had as much to do with the crushing Tory defeat as anything else. This was also of no avail. The great thing was the Nonconformist conscience and the Education Acts. And this man was representative of a type that honestly believes itself to be the only safeguard between the country and moral destruction.

What the new government will do with the Education Acts remains to be seen. But there are two things certain. One is, that neither a Liberal nor any other government will be able to meet with the wishes of both Church and Chapel. The other, that apart from the bearing on religion, the Education Acts of the Conservative government were, on the whole, good ones. I do not know that any educationalist has questioned this, and I do not believe any will. The only grounds upon which any Act can give satisfaction is by abolishing religious instruction altogether. This will not, of course, satisfy each party in the sense of giving them all they would wish to have, but it will give a sort of negative satisfaction in not giving either party more than the other. There is no other way out of the difficulty. The *Church Times* denies that any satisfactory middle course, between teaching all religions and teaching none, can be found. And the *Church Times* is wholly right. Not to teach religion at all is a straightforward policy. To teach all sorts of religion at the request of all who ask for it is also straightforward. But to teach a specified religion that suits a number only at the expense of all, and to do this in the name of freedom and religious equality, is an injustice and a hypocrisy that only the Nonconformist conscience is capable of, and an absurdity that only an English public could swallow.

The dishonesty of the Nonconformist party really seems to be incurable. Not one of its leaders will face a fair question or give an honest answer. The Rev. F. B. Meyer is only a degree less blatant than, but in other respects as bad as Dr. Clifford, and openly announces that the Free Church Council has drawn up a syllabus of Bible teaching which is to be submitted to Mr. Birrell, as embodying Nonconformist demands.

This asks for "a hymn, a prayer with the Lord's prayer, and the reading of a portion of scripture with simple, undogmatic and undenominational explanation." And this is announced in the course of a motor-car tour to rouse the West of England on behalf of freedom and religious equality! This is what Nonconformists ask for; the rest of the nation—the majority, if we include the Church of England people and Catholics, who do not want this sort of religious instruction, are apparently of no account. Their function is to pay for the religion required by a freedom-loving Nonconformity. It is only fair to Mr. Meyer to say that the Free Church Council ask for a conscience clause under which children may be withdrawn from religious instruction. "The price for admission to my show," said Artemus Ward, "is fifty cents. You can't come in without paying, but you can pay without coming in." The Nonconformists have adopted Artemus Ward's principle, but without his humor and common sense. Everybody must pay for the religion that suits Dissenters. But once you have paid for it your obligation ceases. You are permitted to go without it should you so prefer. To force people to pay for teaching religion as understood by the Church of England is tyranny. To make Jews, Atheists, Freethinkers of all shades, as well as other Christians, pay for a religious instruction they do not want and will not have, is freedom and progress—us understood by the Free Church Council. If I were a believer in a Deity I would say, "God help a democracy that can be fooled by such obvious humbug."

And this is all that the talk of Free Church leaders about desiring to keep the Bible in the school as literature and ethics amounts to. They want the Bible *plus* hymns, Lord's Prayer, other prayers, and explanations! The other day a correspondent of the *Times* asked Dr. Clifford whether *all* he wished taught from the Bible in schools was literature and ethics. The gallant Passive Resister remained silent. To have answered Yes, would have been to commit himself to a scheme of Secular Education. To have said No would have involved saying honestly what he does want. And this is the last thing he dreams of doing. Meanwhile we have Dr. Horton admitting that a teacher using the Bible can hardly avoid teaching religion. We have a minister who dares to be honest, and to protest against voting for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales without at the same time advocating Secular Education only in the schools, howled down at Mr. Lloyd George's business meetings. And finally we have Mr. Meyer declaring that rather than submit to the Anglican clergymen in the schools they would sooner agree to Secular Education.

Well, we have no doubt it will come to this. The Free Church party have always this trump card in reserve. They know they can always beat the Church party by turning honest and advocating real fair play all round. But why not turn honest at once? It is bound to come to that in the end. Secular Education is sure to come; and it would come quickly if only a prominent Freethinker, such as John Morley, had sufficient courage to rank principle above party and advocate putting into practice what he believes to be right, and which he knows is the only theory that will end this squabble over the control of the schools. After all, a man might do worse than crown his career by a propaganda that would clear the schools of this incubus. John Morley, the man who carried the Secular Education Act, would, in the years to come, give his name as great or greater a title to fame than anything else that is associated with his name. As it is we have education sacrificed on the one side to religious and on the other to political sectarianism. The child is being veritably crucified between the parson and the politician.

But in all the present election agitation no one has said a word concerning the rights of the child. This is one of the strangest features of the case. We hear much of the rights of sects and parties, and

still more of the rights of parents to have their children taught their own faith. But we hear nothing of the rights of the child itself. Yet education is only incidentally a parent's question. It is primarily a child's question, and ultimately a race question. What is called the right of the parent is, in practice, the privilege of the parson, and is usually an ethically unjustifiable use of power by the parent over the child. The rights of a parent all spring from and are dependent on a parent's duties, and ought not to be considered apart. A parent's duties is to see that the child is as well equipped for its after career, mentally, morally, and physically, as may be; and the parent's rights are not invaded unless some obstacle is placed in the way of the discharge of this duty. But the right of a parent is certainly not questioned or destroyed by the State declining to assist him in forcing upon children dogmas they cannot understand and speculative opinions it would probably reject were it older. It would really be far more justified in preventing—were it possible—the parent acting in such a manner. For it is a quite unjustifiable use of the power that parents inevitably possess to impress upon the child as certain teachings that all know to be of a very uncertain character, and many believe to be quite false. And none of the religious doctrines it is taught help to better equip it for its contest with the world. On the contrary, they narrow its outlook, distort its judgment, and retard its development. Religious teaching thus becomes an attack upon the mental integrity of children, even when given by parents; it is more brutally so when undertaken by the State. It is time, then, that we ceased talking of the rights of parents, and said more of the rights of children. And the rights of the child here involve the rights of the race. Montaigne said that to burn a man for a difference of belief was placing an extravagant value on one's own opinion. And we are assuredly overestimating the importance of our speculative opinions when, in their interest, we are willing to risk crippling the future of the race.

C. COHEN.

False Optimism.

SOME people are naturally pessimistic. A necessity is laid upon them to take the least hopeful view of the world and its affairs. Others are by nature excessively optimistic. Undaunted by obstacles and difficulties in the present and undismayed by the gloomiest prospects for the future, they solace themselves with the assurance that in some mysterious way all things conspire to bring about the very best ultimate results. This is an unreasoning, blind, and reckless optimism which cannot be of real service to any cause. The optimistic attitude cannot be of practical value unless based on broad intelligence and justified by undoubted facts.

The other day a Missionary Conference was held at the Memorial Hall, London, which was devoted to a consideration of the missionary openings and opportunities in different heathen countries. The chair was occupied by Dr. Horton, who delivered a characteristic address. His main contention was that "the possibilities of the mission field to-day" are boundless and that the workers everywhere have reason to be of good cheer. In all parts of the world there is "an astonishing opening." Addressing the missionaries before him, Dr. Horton said:—

"You who come from various fields could tell us of the opening in your particular fields, but we who are watching the whole of the great harvest field, from England and from London, are conscious that the encouragement is not in one place alone, nor in one field alone, but it is over the whole world. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The encouragement here spoken of, lies in the supposed fact that all the great heathen countries have thrown their doors wide open for the reception

of Christianity. Dr. Horton looks upon India to-day "as full of hope." He claims that "the whole underlying movement of the modern mind in India is tending towards a great day of the Lord, a permeation of Christian thought and Christian ideals, a recognition of the literature of Christendom as the necessary foundation of true culture, a belief in Christian charity, and a recognition of the personal devotion of missionaries in the Indian field." That comprehensive claim, however, is not upheld by verified facts. Dr. Horton was only indulging in a bit of irresponsible idealisation. The Rev. Herbert Anderson, Indian Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, was not in full agreement with the president of the Free Church Council. Speaking of the province of Bengal, Mr. Anderson said:—

"I found within a radius of 1,100 miles of Calcutta twenty districts, each with an average population of 300,000, and not a single Christian worker of any denomination living in any one of them."

Mr. Anderson knows what he is talking about, because he has been sixteen or seventeen years in Calcutta, and during that time has come into close touch with most of the societies and with most of the work that has been going on there. Moreover this witness regards the modern intellect of India as Christless. This is what he says:—

"A hundred years of education, neither scriptural, nor religious, nor irreligious, but education without any religion whatsoever in it, has created a body of thinking men who, as far as religious ideas are concerned, stand as much in need of the Gospel as the unevangelised masses."

When he came to speak of Japan Dr. Horton gave his imagination more licence still. "While trembling with anxiety for certain features of the work there," he is "overwhelmed with gratitude, and also with expectation of the coming time." "I had a talk the other day with Professor Gulick," he said, "who seems to me the best informed Christian that I have personally met with from Japan, and I was astonished to hear what he told me—that it is not considered in Japan at all improbable, though I am not quite sure how far it is desirable, that before long the Japanese Government, the Mikado himself, may declare on the side of Christianity: that the Japanese people deliberately, after reviewing the condition of the world, and in their eagerness to enter into the race competition of the nations, may choose Christianity in the way that the European nations chose it at the time of Constantine." Well, all we know is that already Japan has refused to adopt Christianity, and that the refusal was made *after* reviewing the condition of the world. What possibilities the future may hold in store no one can tell; but certainly nothing is more improbable at present than the adoption of Christianity by the Japanese Government.

Dr. Horton was equally extravagant in his reference to China. "When you look at China," he said, "the opening there is perfectly overwhelming in its revolutionary and unexpected appeal." Peering through the door, Dr. Horton can "literally see China, that vast population, turning to Christ, turning, as it were, simultaneously, not all knowing, but all seeking to know our Lord and Savior." Yes, in spite of all appearances, "China is already sealed for the King of kings and the Lord of lords." The Rev. Hopkyn Rees, one of the missionaries from China, however, speaking at the Conference, confessed that he was unable to "wear exactly the same kind of glasses" that Dr. Horton and Dr. Timothy Richard wore. He was of opinion that at present the prospects of success in China are not at all bright and encouraging. As a matter of fact, it is well known that Christian missionaries are thrust upon the Chinese, who have no desire for any transactions with foreigners. The Missionary Societies force the Gospel upon them just in the same way as our Government forces opium.

Of course it is but natural that those who believe in the pre-eminence of Christianity should wish to see it universally triumphant. Being the only

religion that has power to save mankind it is essential that all mankind should possess it. It is God's love-letter to the race, and surely the whole race has a right to read it. But here we are face to face with insuperable difficulties. If Christianity is the only religion that saves, why was it delivered to an insignificant section of the human family? If it was intended for the whole world why was it not given to the whole world at once? Can Dr. Horton explain this strange fact? It is easy to hand over the reins to the imagination, or to deal in vague rhapsodies; but it is extremely difficult to keep within the bounds of reason. The Savior of the world is a Divine Being with omnipotence committed to his charge. Well, in the morning of the day on which the Missionary Conference was held Dr. Horton read his little passage of the Gospel, and came across the words Jesus is reported to have spoken to his first little company of missionaries. They were the words, "When I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee." Addressing the missionaries before him, Dr. Horton stated that as he read those words it seemed laid upon him that he was to say as it were from Christ to every missionary, "I am risen again, and I will go before you." Then followed this unique utterance:—

"Not only will He accompany you and be your Companion, but He will go before you, and when you return from your furlough you will find that He has pre-occupied your station and is waiting to welcome you back. He will go before you in the sense that all your work and your ministry are his concern, and you shall follow merely in his footsteps.....I want to lay it upon you with the utmost insistence that your work, however difficult, however lonely and unsupported, is a work which is already in the hands of your risen Lord, a work which He is already doing; and He summons you to-day to take a hand in what He himself could do..... He could have done it in other ways, He could have done it by other means, but He called you by your name, and He sent you into the harvest field to reap the sheaves for him."

Christ could do the work himself, but it is the love He has to the missionaries that makes him claim their help in the mission field. One stands aghast at such a monstrous thought. Christ could do the work himself, and yet He has allowed two thousand years to elapse without doing it. During that long period countless myriads of heathen people have gone down to hell, there to burn unconsumed in the quenchless flame for ever and for ever. He could have saved them himself, but as a token of his love to the few ordained missionaries He refrained from doing so. While the missionaries are away on furlough He occupies their stations, not to save the benighted pagans, but in order to give the appointed workers a hearty welcome on their return. Did it never occur to the president of the Free Church Council that in speaking as he did he was representing the Savior of the world as being guilty of the most consummate cruelty conceivable? To say that Christ could save the world and yet did not is to utter a blasphemy infinitely greater than any that ever fell from the lips of persecuted Atheists.

But it would be useless to follow this pietistic trifling any farther. The truth is that Christian missions are subject to the same law of success and failure as all other human enterprises. One missionary prospers because he is qualified for his work, and another fails because he lacks the requisite capacity. However saintly a man may be, if he is a dullard he is bound to go under in life's struggle. There are many missionaries who have never made a single convert in twenty years, not because their devotions are irregular or their dependence upon the Spirit defective, but because they are weak and devoid of personal magnetism. The Gospel of Christ is the most powerless thing in the world unless it is handled by powerful men. Neither in heathen lands nor in Christendom does it achieve enormous success in spite of human incompetence. Someone said the other day that nothing draws the people like the preaching of Jesus Christ crucified. He who made that remark is one of the most popular preachers of

the day. Thronging crowds ever hang upon his lips. But I know another minister, equally as pious, sincere, and devoted, whose church is always empty. In his experience, Christ is not a drawing power nor is his Gospel popular. The secret of the difference is to be found in the fact that preaching is purely a human function, and that Christ is just what his ministers are able to make him. In other words, Christianity proves itself to be of an exclusively human origin and character by its inability to accomplish its work apart from machinery. Hence the optimism that regards it as a supernatural force to regenerate a lost world is doomed to be bitterly disappointed. A hundred years ago the advocates of Foreign Missions were quite as confident of a speedily coming victory as Dr. Horton and his friends are to-day. The victory is farther off to-day than ever. The Kingdom of Heaven is not at hand; but we honestly believe that the Kingdom of Man is nearer now than it ever was before.

J. T. LLOYD.

Is the Rubric of Eleusis Really Lost?

ELEUSIS, a town of Attica, was situate N.W. of Athens on the coast near the frontier. It possessed a magnificent temple of Demeter, and it gave its name to the great festival and mysteries of the Eleusinia which were celebrated in honor of Demeter and Persephone.

Eleusis is now a small village (Leusina) of some 1,200 inhabitants; but remains of its famous buildings have been discovered in excavations made by the Greek Archeological Society since 1882. They include the Greater and Lesser Propylæa, or gateways to the temple precinct. The temple of Demeter stands on a plateau. It was begun about 440 B.C., but only finished over 100 years after. It was probably destroyed by the Goths under Alaric in 396 A.D.

It is generally supposed and almost universally admitted that the Rubric of the Eleusinian Mysteries is lost. And again, a great many religious apologists choose to infer that if the Rubric were still extant it would be of so puerile a character as not to be worth preserving. But when we consider the immense influence of these Mysteries, and the popularity which the worship of the goddess Demeter had among the ancient Greeks, Greek-speaking nations, and peoples with Greek sympathies, it becomes incredible that such an enlightened and poetic community should have allowed the form of worship to pass into nothingness and become lost in the mists of time.

The great goddess Demeter (identified by the Romans with their Ceres) was the Alma Mater, the universal mother of all.

She was the goddess of the fruitful earth. By her influence nature became bountiful. She it was who blessed the whole earth with both seedtime and harvest. Therefore it is not to be wondered at that she was regarded by the ancients with world-wide veneration.

But it is not the object of this inquiry to define so much the nature of the ceremonies at Eleusis as to ascertain, if it be possible, whether the form of those great services is really a dead letter.

Before a man or woman could be admitted as a fully-qualified member of the guild of the goddess, two distinct ceremonies had to be gone through, the second or greater mystery following the first, or lesser, after an interval of some years.

To the lesser mystery the youthful candidate was initiated by means of sponsors and lustrations, conforming exactly to the present form of Christian baptism.

To the greater, the now adult candidate was initiated by means of a service almost identical with the ceremony of confirmation.

Seeing, then, that the order of ceremony is preserved to us from such antiquity, is it reasonable to suppose that the form of service should be entirely lost? And if the form of service is not lost, whither shall we turn to find it?

An ancient proverb hath it that "The nearer you are to the lamp the more you are in the shade," and so also it may be that whilst one is groping for the service of Eleusis in the dim past, it is all the time at everybody's elbow!

It is an acknowledged fact that the form of the service of the Established Church of England is a translation and adaptation of that which the Church of Rome has used from the early centuries of the Christian Era.

Its undoubted magnificence and beauty has been commented upon many a time and oft. Those who are capable of judging aver that its Latin form by far transcends even the English translation. That it is not the emanation of one brain is self-evident. Who were the actual compilers no one can tell. Undoubtedly it took centuries to bring it to its present state of perfection.

But the question is, was the form of service compiled wholly within the limits of the present dispensation?

Many, if not most, of the Christian services, including the sacraments, were adapted from forms of worship already in vogue at the establishment of Christianity as a State religion. The early Fathers found these festivals so firmly rooted in the popular mind that it was impossible to abolish them, and so they took the easier and wiser course of embodying them in the ceremonies of the Church.

Among some dozens of these adaptations may be mentioned the observation of Easter, Whitsuntide (this very name explains itself), the solemnisation of matrimony after banns, and the administration of the wafer and wine to people at the hour of death.

Now if the early Fathers, commissioned to found a State-supported Christianity, had so many forms and ceremonies ready to hand for adaptation, may it not be possible and even probable that they found the Rubric ready to hand as well?

It does not stand to reason that a few narrow-minded and ascetic monks could, even if they were agreed, compile such a comprehensive, broad-minded, catholic Rubric as that found in the Book of Common Prayer. Bickerings, quarrels, denunciation, and excommunication would have resulted as a matter of course, the inevitable turmoil lasting perhaps for centuries, as it did later on over much less vital questions.

That the great festivals at Eleusis were well-known in classic Rome is an undoubted fact, many commentators surmising, and perhaps rightly, that the spirit of the services is embodied in Virgil's *Georgics* and in the twelfth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The Emperor Constantine had adopted Christianity as his State religion about the middle of the fourth century. Towards the end of the same century, St. Jerome's Vulgate, or Latin version of the Hebrew Scriptures, began to circulate, and the various histories and doctrines contained therein to be known and criticised. An uniform and concise form of service henceforward became a necessity. To formulate an entirely new form was as impossible as to abolish the festivals, and so, most probably, the form of service, that of the universal goddess Demeter, already universally known, was adopted and adapted as the Rubric of the new State Church.

If we open the Book of Common Prayer as used by the Established Church of England, we find the Order for Morning Prayer prefaced by eleven selections taken from the Bible. These are all interpolations, and may be regarded as a negligible quantity.

"That which is written" next is the commencement of the service proper, and by changing the sex of the deity invoked would be just as appropriate in the worship of Demeter as in its present form.

Now, it must be remembered that this form of invocation is used in thousands of modern churches every week, whilst the Mysteries at Eleusis only occurred once a year. If, therefore, we commence at the words "Yet ought we most chiefly so to do" it at once becomes self-evident how much more appropriate the words would be at Eleusis than in a modern church. Here also are the words, "Things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul."

Passing on to the general confession, and again changing the sex of the deity, every attribute of Demeter follows in detail. 'As the goddess of the earth, flocks were particularly under her protection, especially the breeding ewes. As the goddess of order, the first social laws were of her framing. As the goddess of agriculture, all neglect and all needless superfluity came under her ban. As the goddess of cleanliness and health, bodily excess met with condign punishment at her hands. But at the same time, as the Alma Mater, all were treated with benign tenderness who conformed to her commands.

Then follows the absolution, a power put into the hands of the clergy which is totally denied by all Nonconformists, but which would be readily admitted by the vast congregations assembled annually at Eleusis as vested in their priests. Once more changing the sex, the maternity of Demeter is here mentioned for the first time, and by substituting the present text with the words "All-powerful Demeter, the mother of our lady Persephone," the re-transformation is complete.

The Lord's Prayer which follows is, of course, an interpolation; but what can be said of the few sentences which here follow, and those further on after the Creed?

We know from many sources that music was a huge factor in the services at Eleusis. Perhaps these few words were all that the monkish adapters could find suitable for their needs. For anything we know these are the scanty relics of a mighty chorus, the first parts intoned by the officiating priest and responded to by the vast audience. Imagination runs riot as we try to recall the effects of the mighty psalm, sung in the open air by perhaps as many as a hundred thousand voices at one time, and we can but mourn that the rest of the sonorous verse is not preserved to us.

The various Psalms, the *Te Deum*, and the Creed testify by the difference in their language that they are no part and parcel of the service proper.

Finally we come to the concluding six prayers, but of these only two claim attention here. The first is the Second Collect, which, by the style of its language, harks back to the opening portions of the service. By once more changing the sex of the deity invoked the necessary requirements are all met. The second is the prayer of St. Chrysostom, and as his golden-mouthed saintship was himself one of the early fathers there is no reason at all why he should not have adapted and adopted words already familiar to serve his own ends.

The above few remarks are but query. Nothing is stated dogmatically. But there is no more reason why the Rubric of ancient Eleusis should not become that of a modern Church than that the history of Joseph should become the theme of a modern music-hall sketch!

WALTER G. CHRISTIE.

Impressions of a Living Village and Three Dead Churches.

By VICTOR CHARBONNEL, Editor of *La Raison*.

OUR humble holiday house is hidden in a corner of the village, amongst bushy lilacs and branching vines, which descend from the steep hill, a torrent of purple and gold. Beneath our windows the Seine flows slowly and majestically.

Above and beyond the river a distinct curtain of poplars and willows widens the cultivated fields, and still further the vague outline of the forest of St. Germain dies away in the misty horizon.

On the river, the fields, and the forest the most beautiful sky of France spreads its silvery sweetness of the dawns, its burning ardor of the midday suns, its violet melancholy of the twilight. Sweet refuge for the brief days of dreaming.

Now to whichever side the eye turns, to the right the high terrace of Herblay, to the left the green and wooded slopes of Sartrouville, and our village in the centre; one, two, three churches lift up above us the heavy mass of their rustic belfries.

The village is full of life. When the morning sun shines in at the windows all awakes. A troupe of washerwomen descend to the Seine with a whirlwind of chatter. And under the wooden shed begins the sonorous rumbling of the beetles, which echo multiplies in the gables and lanes. Mothers on their doorsteps wash and dress their chubby babies smiling up at the heavens reflected in their pure eyes. Old people exchange their morning salutations from their gardens: "Fine day for the vines; the grapes will ripen."

Now the peasants go to their labor of digging or other work, with the creaking of carts and fretting of old iron and dragging of ploughs and the shouts of fishermen. The river also glides along through its bed of irises and reeds. The small craft have slept through the night, guarded by the red light of their lanterns, now set off to gain the dam near by. The sirens have already whistled. The towing boats are below at the bend of the Seine, monsters breathing fire. They beat the air with their formidable breath and the brutal fins of their screws. . . . Amongst this noise and turmoil the morning angelus rings at the three churches of Herblay, Sartrouville, and of our village. Through space the chimes and tolling answer like a call of the voice: It is God who gives you yet another day to live! Oh, good people, pray. But no pious attention is awakened by the voice of the bells. Not a movement of work interrupted, not a sign of the cross in all the village nor on the river.

The movement becomes more animated. The whistles and rumbling of suburban trains spread up the hill and over the valley. Seven o'clock, eight, already at the station. Let us hurry. A long file of workmen employees and business men hasten by the lilac ascent to the station. With one jump they enter the cars, almost before they come to a standstill. A loud puff from the engine, and the cargo of human labor goes on to the gulf of the town.

Again the bells sound. First the telling of the hours on the clock-face, and then the peal for mass.

Boys and girls come from every street of the village. They pass with a racket of games and cries and laughter. The gayest play ricochet with pebbles on the water, and evolve all the colors of the rainbow; while the more studious, their noses in little picture-books, mutter their lessons. It is the school hour.

The second bell for mass. The black shade of a priest grazes the houses. He stares. The little ones, intimidated, lower their voices. Follow your path, black shade; these children go to school, not to church. You may chime your bells in your distress.

And life rolls on. The last breath of the morning mist mounts up, spreading around the soft rosy sweetness of the autumn sun. Then the purveyors come, with much movement of carts—the baker, the grocer, the butcher, the milkman, and the merchant of household utensils. Mass is finished and the church closed. In the market-place merchants unpack their goods. The housewives go and inspect, and remain to gossip. With a blow of his trumpet the news-vendor appears at the end of the road below, with his burden of news, good and bad, joyful and sorrowful, which he sows from door to door. He announces the last crime of Paris or its suburbs. Again a woman murdered. Cyclists speed swiftly past, and unroll a long riband of the route in a glint of silver. They glance at the clock as they pass. Nearly mid-day. The fires light up, and over the houses floats the joyful blue smoke, promising a good repast. Workers, one by one, have returned. They are at table. Silence is over all the village. The angelus again sounds, at the three churches. Is there one house in the three villages, one peasant, who hears it? In the evening, when the workmen again break bread, gained by a whole day of toil, do they any more hear the angelus which peals out from each of the three churches in the dark silence?

But the great day of the bells is Sunday. They chime from belfry to belfry with full force, ringing triumphantly for hours. Doubtless they would shake off the torpor of a long week—draw at least to the church the prayers of the last of the faithful. The road nevertheless remains empty. The

villagers repose, or make their toilets—the new clothes on chairs, fresh linen spread in the windows. The bells for the third time recommence their appeal; now desperate, they seem to die away in a lugubrious complaint.

Now see! . . . On the bank of the Seine the fishermen gather. Barges spread their white wings and file away, skimming the river with sounds of song and wild laughter. Further away loving couples gain the footpaths. The stations and trains fill up with gaily-dressed crowds. They want their Sunday in the open air, in joyous liberty. They don't go to church. The old folks remain in their gardens, or leaning against the walls of their houses, under the good warm sun.

Some ten poor peasant women and two or three farm servants are at the mass of Sartrouville; a few more people, and even some of the better class, at Herblay—shopkeepers who seek the higher-class society, grocers' wives who show themselves to rich clients, gentlemen's servants behind the ranks of the singers and players of the ophicleide—thirty persons in all; and last some small children, who amuse themselves and mock, at the church of our village—a handful who are in training for first communion. No, the whole thing is dead. Work during the week and joyous times on Sundays; life is found in the fields, in the meadows, and in the vineyards, along the roads and in the movement of the river.

Let the bells ring, on the abandonment of the churches the toll of things dead.

Poor old churches, they have been there for centuries on the border of the river. They have seen in that running mirror generations of men pass away, and the changing of countless days and seasons. They have seen the wreck of the dry branches cast off in the spring, the stubble of the hay-harvest cut by the summer scythe, dead leaves that autumn abandons. They have seen their own reflection carried away in the track of the barges and lighters, gold under the sun, copper at sunset, silver in the moonlight. They have seen all the old life go with its burden of ancient merchandise, and a new life come with fresh changes; iron-work of industry, chemical manure, petrol, electric force. Why do not those poor old churches feel, before the moving river, before the changing of everything, which without ceasing goes on in their view, the law of their destiny?

Men change also: they had faith—they have it no longer. Reflection of the changing skies, it is gone with the stream of human life to the oceans without horizon. Why do those old churches, by the importunate noise of their bells, so tenaciously call to their incomprehensible prayers, a faith now far away, dead, and which can hear no more?

Near to the church of Herblay, on the slope of the smiling hill which dominates the Seine and the forest of St. Germain, a cemetery sleeps softly, strewed with gay flowers. There the dead are at peace; they accept their destiny.

Old churches, in silence, be ye the cemetery of dead ideas, and amongst your ruins let flowers flourish, whose gaiety shall be adorned with heaven's splendor and mirrored in the living eddies of the river.

Translated by (Miss) E. HOLLAND.

THE RETORT INFERENTIAL.

Oscar S. Straus, of New York, formerly minister to Turkey, tells this story of Rabbi Hirsch, of Chicago:—

One day, in a crowded street car, the rabbi arose to give his seat to a woman who had just entered. Much to the Jewish divine's disgust, a young man scrambled into the seat before the lady could avail herself of it. For some moments the rabbi glared at the offender in a way that clearly showed his displeasure; but said nothing.

Finally, the rude young man, growing restive under the keen glance of the Hebrew, said:

"Wot are yor starin' at me for? Look as if you'd like to eat me!"

"I am forbidden to do that," quietly responded Rabbi Hirsch, "I am a Jew!"

This age of personality, this age of literary and political gossiping, when the meanest insects are worshiped with a sort of Egyptian superstition, if only the brainless head be atoned for by the sting of personal malignity in the tail.

—Coleridge.

There is no hostility so admirable, as the Christian. Our zeal performs wonders, when it seconds our inclinations to hatred, cruelty, ambition, avarice, detraction, and rebellion; but when it moves against the hair towards bounty, benignity and temperance, unless, by some miracle, some rare and virtuous disposition prompts us to it, we stir neither hand nor foot. Our religion is intended to extirpate vices: whereas it screens, nourishes, and incites them.—*Montaigne*

Acid Drops.

The "Nonconformist Conscience" suffered a heavy defeat in South Hackney. The Rev. W. Riley, who stood as the "Liberal and Free Church candidate" in opposition to Mr. Horatio Bottomley—the plain Liberal candidate, suspected of religious heterodoxy—gained an ignominious position at the bottom of the poll. He was supported by Dr. Clifford and the *Daily News*, and substantially by the *Daily Chronicle*. His business was to keep Mr. Bottomley out in the name of Jesus Christ, and to win the seat if possible for a definite Free Churchman. Well, he succeeded in polling 804 votes, while Mr. Bottomley polled 6,736.

This is a capital object lesson. It shows us what the independent political power of Nonconformity really is. Free Churchmen vote Liberal just now, and to hear them talk you would fancy that they constituted the overwhelming bulk of the Liberal party. Even the politicians have been imposed upon by this boasting. But the South Hackney election should be an eye-opener for them. And we hope it will be so. Big as its majority is, the Liberal party will go to pieces if the Government tries to carry out the Nonconformist policy in Education. We do not say this as a prophet; we say it as one who looks at the facts. The Nonconformists are not the Liberal party; they have posed as being so, and they have been taken to be so, but this is a mistake. Myriads of people vote Liberal who have Freethought sympathies; myriads of others don't care a straw about the fight between Church and Chapel over religious instruction. Then there are the Catholics, who may be trusted to oppose the abolition of "Voluntary" schools. And, finally, there are the Labor members, who are practically pledged to Secular Education.

The *Daily News* inadvertently lets a little more light in upon the North Lambeth election. It represents Mr. Horatio Myer, who won the seat for the Liberals, as a personal friend of the Rev. F. B. Meyer (the phrase used is "a friend of his.") This should tickle all who read our last week's paragraphs on the subject. Rev. Mr. Meyer is largely responsible for foisting a Jew upon the constituency in "the Christian interest." We suppose they understand each other.

Sir J. F. L. Rolleston, who stood in the interest of Toryism and Religion at Leicester, tried to impress the electors with a "last word" card on the eve of the poll. This precious document bade them: "Remember that Rolleston's return is your guarantee for the safety of the Bible." This was putting God Almighty, the alleged author of that book, in a very back seat. And the worst of it was that the champion of the Bible was placed at the bottom of the poll. Upon which fact the *Christian World* remarks that the Leicester electors did not highly assess his value as a protector of the Bible. But there is an alternative explanation. Perhaps they did not care one way or another about "the safety of the Bible"—feeling that they had more important business to attend to.

Mr. Chiozza Money, the Liberal candidate in North Paddington, was accused *sub rosa* of being "without any religion." Of course he repudiated the suggestion as "a deliberate falsehood." We felt like offering the gentleman our profound sympathy. To have no religion in England is worse than having no morality. It is the unpardonable sin—because the men of God stand to lose most by it. If you are ever so wicked you may need their services, but if you have no religion you will never be one of their customers.

Mr. P. Snowdon, the Socialist candidate for Blackburn, seems to have been trying to make capital out of Mr. A. J. Balfour's supposed want of religion. He is said to have stated that Mr. Balfour was no Christian—Mr. Snowdon himself, we suppose, being one of the purest water. He also declared that Mr. Balfour had "written monumental works in defence of philosophic doubt and the right of agnosticism." Mr. Balfour's attention having been drawn to this, he telegraphed in reply: "The statement you refer to is a stupid lie." It was certainly *stupid*. We don't think that Mr. Snowdon is built to follow Mr. Balfour's mental peculiarities. And probably he has never read Mr. Balfour at all.

Some odd questions were asked of candidates during the recent elections. One free and independent voter wanted to know if the candidate approved the laying on of beer to houses through pipes from the brewers—"same as gas." But another free and independent voter went one better than that. He wanted to know if the candidate was in favor

of heating cemeteries with hot water pipes. Someone should now ask whether the candidate would support a regular ice supply in hell.

Now that Mr. W. C. Steadman has carried Central Finsbury and won what ought to be a fairly safe seat in parliament, we hope he will drop talking "religion" on political and social platforms. He should keep it for chapel—on Sundays.

The shifting-sand nature of politics is very curious. Up to Wednesday night, January 17, the total votes cast throughout Great Britain was as follows:—Liberal, 991,782; Labor, 249,673; Conservative, 1,148,854. The Conservatives, therefore, had polled 157,072 votes more than the Liberals. Yet the Liberals had carried 173 seats and the Conservatives only 69. We are not including the Labor seats (20) in this estimate. We are fairly contrasting the votes and the seats of the two great parties. And we are curious to know whether this is the ideal result of "representative" government. But the most important thing, after all, is for Free-thinkers to keep their heads cool and appreciate these things at their true worth. In the long run, it is not polling and numbers but truth and logic that win the day.

"The conduct of the Grand Jury at the Castleblancy Quarter Sessions, county Monaghan, yesterday (Jan. 17) called forth bitter condemnation from the presiding judge. In the case of a man named Wood, charged with a serious assault, the Grand Jury returned to court stating that they found no bill. Judge Craig expressed surprise at this, and asked if it was because the accused was named Wood and was a Presbyterian and belonged to highly respectable people that they found no bill. He sent the jury back to reconsider their verdict, with the same result. His honor then besought them, for God's sake, never to mind religion or anything else, but do God's justice between man and woman. The jury again returned, however, and found no bill, whereupon his honor discharged them and described the case as one of the worst miscarriages of justice that had ever occurred since he came to Monaghan, and said he never wanted to see any of them again."—*Westminster Gazette*.

The foregoing paragraph may be commended to the attention of those who so lustily proclaim the absolute necessity of backing up morality with religion. The truth is that religion distorts and perverts morality. It is simply impossible to get a religionist to act justly where his religion is concerned. He will lie, persecute, thieve, and murder for it—provided he has enough of it to screw him up to the sticking place.

President Loubet has served France well during his term of office. Internationally she is in a far better position than when he was elected to preside over her destinies. But he is very glad that he is going to retire into private life. Speaking to an *Echo de Paris* interviewer, the President complained of the calumnies and slanders of which he had been the powerless victim, and remarked: "But I resigned myself to my lot. I do not wish to speak any more of the past, and all I ask is to be allowed to forget it. I only think of the future of the men who are coming into power, and I regret that they will have to endure what I have endured." This is one of the saddest aspects of public life. The readiness with which calumnies are uttered and believed tempts one to think that Christianity has preached human depravity so long as to make it almost true.

"By a strange irony," the editor of the "Churches" column in the *Daily News* says, "the opinions on Biblical criticism for which Colenso was chiefly condemned are now not only tolerated, but widely prevalent among the most prominent members of the Home episcopate." The irony (if there is any irony in it) is not at all strange. It is almost universally true that the heresy of one age is the orthodox of the next. Colenso was simply in advance of his time—as far as the Church was concerned.

It is a fact worth recalling that the finest tribute ever paid to Colenso came from the pen of John Ruskin. It was couched in the most splendid Ruskinese, and was entirely honorable to both.

Rev. Dr. James Green, Dean of Maritzburg, South Africa, lately deceased, was the author of a pamphlet suggesting the principles on which the word "God" should be translated into a heathen language. We should say it was very much needed. A missionary in China once translated "God" into what he thought a good Chinese equivalent, but after some time he discovered to his horror that it really meant "stinking fish."

Rev. Dr. Horton, of Hampstead, has been saying that "a gentleman qualified to give an opinion had recently stated that it was not considered at all improbable in Japan that before long the Japanese Government and the Mikado himself might declare in favor of Christianity." Thus, at any rate, Dr. Horton is reported in the *Daily News*—and the force of silliness could no farther go. These men of God have the most astonishing ideas of evidence. This one makes an amazing assertion about the future of Japan, and the only authority he gives for it is a nameless gentleman, who is "qualified to give an opinion"; that is Dr. Horton says he is qualified, so that, at bottom, all we have to rest upon is Dr. Horton's own judgment. Nor is that all. The statement in itself is asinine. Japan is now a constitutional country, and the Government is neutral in matters of religion. It is therefore ridiculous to say that the Japanese Government is going to decide in favor of Christianity. The Japanese Government has no power to do anything of the kind. Neither has the Mikado. But there is no absurdity too great for these men of God (or their dupes) when they are "gassing" about their wonderful religion.

Dr. Horton went on to express a pious hope that when Japan did choose Christianity it would "set a better example than that which was set by the church of Constantine." We infer from this that he fancies Japan to be in the same position of political slavery that the Roman Empire was in when Constantine proclaimed Christianity as the State religion. Evidently the reverend gentleman ought to read an elementary book about Japan—or consult a volume like the *Statesman's Year Book*.

It would also do Dr. Horton good to read the chapter on "Hindrances" in the Rev. R. B. Peery's *Gist of Japan*. Dr. Peery is himself a Christian missionary and knows what he is talking about. He says that the lives led by professing Christians in Japanese open ports set the natives against Christianity. Jesus Christ said "By their fruits ye shall know them"—and the Japanese apply that test to his own religion with very sad results. Moreover, the education given in the Japanese day schools, according to Mr. Peery, is "training a nation of Atheists and Agnostics." The schools do not teach hostility to Christianity; the education in them is purely secular, and all religions are given an equal chance—*outside*. The result is a sad "exaltation of reason above faith, of science above religion." "All religious sentiment," Mr. Peery says, "is being crushed in the schools, other things being substituted. Science, learning, is thought to be all that is necessary, and religion is left to old women and children." This is what is happening in Japan, according to the testimony of a Christian missionary, who has seen it with his own eyes, and sadly confesses it to be the truth. And we fancy he is better "qualified to give an opinion" than the nameless authority up Dr. Horton's sleeve.

A Nonconformist newspaper, in which Dr. Clifford's lucubrations on the Education question are frequently published, finds fault with the Rev. A. Gem, Vicar of Worksworth, West Derbyshire, for misrepresenting the objects of the contemplated new Education Act. One object set forth by the reverend gentleman is as follows:—

"The abolition of any right to consider the religious character of a teacher in making his appointment—even if it should be determined to give some Bible teaching. Thus the Bible lesson—if it remained—might be under the care of a Roman Catholic or an Atheistic or Agnostic master or mistress."

Now it seems to us very odd to quarrel with Parson Gem over *this*. He correctly states what the Passive Resistance party has been constantly demanding. "No religious tests for teachers" is a stock plank in their program; and, if they mean it, they contemplate the possibility of the Bible lesson being given by an unbeliever; which is exactly what the reverend gentleman asserts.

Rev. John Phillips, who was last year President of the Pembrokeshire Baptist Union, hanged himself on a beam in an outhouse on his farm. Dr. Torrey could hardly make *him* out an Atheist.

Of course the jury brought in a verdict of "suicide whilst insane." It appeared that the reverend gentleman's mind was upset by the death of his wife. This is a circumstance which entitles him to our sympathy. But what becomes of the theory that Christianity is the only consolation for human sorrow?

One Leicester elector spoilt his voting paper, but managed to get the prayer he wrote upon it published in the newspapers. It ran as follows: "May the Lord Jesus hasten his

coming to rule the earth himself, and deliver us from these lying politicians and parsons." Jesus has evidently got a big job waiting for him.

The author of that much-puffed, foolish book, *When It Was Dark*, is taken to task by a musical expert in the *Orchestral Times* for exhibiting (quite gratuitously, of course) his "want of knowledge on musical matters." We suspect him of a plentiful lack of knowledge on most subjects.

"And in hell he lifted up his eyes." That is what Jesus Christ said of the rich man who died too wealthy to squeeze through the needle's eye. We shudder, therefore, to think of the fate of the Rev. John Archibald Dunbar, of Sea-park, Forres, N.B., and of Kinloss, Elgin, who died recently leaving estate valued at £151,192. What a temperature he must be in!

THE "COST" OF EDUCATION.

People are always thinking of education as a means of livelihood. Education is not a profitable business, but a costly one; nay, even the best attainments of it are always unprofitable, in any terms of coin. No nation ever made its bread either by its great arts, or its great wisdoms. By its minor arts or manufactures, by its practical knowledge, yes; but its noble scholarship, its noble philosophy, and its noble art, are always to be bought as a treasure, not sold for a livelihood. You do not learn that you may live—you live that you may learn. You are to spend on National Education, and to be spent for it, and to make by it, not more money, but better men; to get into this British Island the greatest possible number of good and brave Englishmen. They are to be your "money's worth."

—*Ruskin*, "Crown of Wild Olive."

SAINTS.

The saints did not assist their fellow-men. Their fellow-men assisted them. They did not labor for others. They were beggars—parasites—vermin. They were insane. They followed the teachings of Christ. They took no thought for the morrow. They mutilated their bodies, scarred their flesh and destroyed their minds for the sake of happiness in another world. During the journey of life they kept their eyes on the grave. They gathered no flowers by the way—they walked in the dust of the road—avoided the green fields. Their moans made all the music they wished to hear. The babble of the brooks, the song of the birds, the laughter of children, were nothing to them. Pleasure was the child of sin, the happy needed a change of heart. They were sinless and miserable—but they had faith, they were pious and wretched—but they were limping towards heaven.

—*Ingersoll*.

PROTESTANTS IN AUSTRIA.

The total Protestant population of Austria proper (excluding Hungary) is less than 500,000. Its principal sections are Lutheran and Reformed. Their Magna Charta of liberty for work and worship is the "Imperial Patent" issued by the present Emperor in 1861. They receive no pecuniary support from the State, but are recognised by the State, and are connected with the State through their Oberkirchenrath, or Church Council, which is composed of both pastors and lawyers, with a president and secretary, and has oversight of the churches. In Vienna itself there are 35,000 Lutherans.

CHANGING RELIGION.

Human nature remains the same; but religion alters. Christianity has taken many forms. In the early Church it had the hues of a hundred heresies. It developed in the successive councils. It has been Roman, it has been Greek, it has been Anglican, Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian. It has adjusted itself to national characteristics; it has grown with the growth of general knowledge.—*J. A. Froude*.

The philosopher Antisthenes, as the priest was initiating him in the mysteries of Orpheus, telling him that those who profess themselves of that religion, were certain to receive perfect and eternal felicities after death: "if thou believest that," answered he, "why dost not thou die thyself?"—*Montaigne*.

"Molly, are you happy?" said the deacon to rather a weak sister. "Yes, deacon, I feel as though I should like to be in Beelzebub's bosom." "Not in Beelzebub's, sister?" "Well some one of the old patriarchs; I don't care which."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 28, Manchester Secular Hall, Rusholme-road: 3, "Robert Blatchford and the Under Dog"; 6.30, "Winston Churchill's Father and Bradlaugh."

February 4, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 28, Merthyr Tydvil. February 11, Liverpool. March 4, Glasgow.
- R. CLARKE.—We referred to Dr. Thomas's attitude towards the Blasphemy Laws in last week's "Sugar Plums." Thanks for your trouble, all the same. We are glad to hear that you have read this journal for some years; that you have introduced it to others, some of whom have become subscribers; and that both your sons are Freethinkers. Pleased to have your good wishes for the Liverpool Branch, of which you are a member.
- JAMES WESTON.—Glad to hear a veteran like yourself say: "We want our weekly *Freethinker*." Also that you keep so cheerful a temper in spite of eighty-four years and trying physical conditions. We hope nature will deal more gently with you in the new year.
- J. BURRELL.—See "Sugar Plums." Thanks. We do not remember your former communication with regard to the founder of the Jezreelites.
- G. DELVES.—See paragraph. Pleased to hear from you as a gratified reader of the *Freethinker*, who was introduced to it by a friend.
- C. T. S. B.—Thanks for letter—also for your good wishes. See paragraph.
- J. THACKRAY.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- A. J. JONES.—The candidates reply was satisfactory from a practical point of view, but it left something to be desired theoretically.
- D. N.—We quite understand.
- J. CHICK.—Glad to hear you were so delighted with everything at the Annual Dinner, and we are able to describe it as "an all-round success." Social gatherings ought to be held more frequently, but London is a terribly difficult place to work in this respect—for more reasons than we can recite here. There is certainly something in your quotation from Ingersoll that "the Episcopal Church is the best because it has the least religion." This reminds us of the exclamation of a philosophical Radical, of the Mill school, sixty years ago. "For God's sake," he cried, "don't talk of disestablishing the Church of England; it is the only thing that stands between us and Christianity."
- A. G. LYE.—Yours was a capital letter to that bigoted candidate, but you could hardly have expected to make much impression upon him.
- RINGWAY FUND.—D. N. 5s., J. Chick 7s. 6d., Eclectic 2s. 6d., Collected at Mr. Foote's Glasgow evening lecture £1 3s., Sympathisers (per John Stewart) 8s. Mr. J. Partridge (183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham) also acknowledges: Evans and Dodd 5s., J. P. Browne 15s., F. W. Donaldson £1.
- J. E. BATTEN.—Thanks for your trouble; also for your good wishes.
- T. ROBERTSON (Glasgow).—As you say, nothing will be done unless Freethinkers bestir themselves; and a great many candidates or members of parliament will give a favorable answer to the Blasphemy Laws if they are only put under sufficient pressure. While the pen is in our hand we take this opportunity of expressing our sincere admiration for the invaluable services you render the Glasgow Branch in your own modest and winning fashion. Not that we forget your hard-working colleagues; they have our hearty esteem also.
- A. CAYFORD.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Gibbs, the Liberal candidate in the Harrow division, was in favor of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. We can quite understand that you saw plenty of bigotry in Montreal.
- W. B.—We never pretended to infallibility. All men are liable to be mistaken—including yourself.
- H. G. FARMER.—We will look out for the book. Thanks.
- L. DESTEFANIS.—What sensible man would expect us to spend our time in contradicting the silly slanders of Christian Evidence mountebanks in Hyde Park or elsewhere? Thanks for the cuttings. We shall be writing something presently on Determinism, with reference to Mr. Robert Blatchford's new book.
- GEORGE JACOB.—Sorry to hear you say that Atheists have no "hope." You must yourself hope that people will become wiser, or you would not take the trouble to correct what you consider their blunders.
- THOMAS DIXON.—Mr. John Johnson, Labor member for Gaterhead, should be in favor of the total repeal of the Blasphemy Laws if he is a "Mill-ite." John Stuart Mill wrote against those Laws. We suggest that you send the honorable member our article on the subject. Thanks, meanwhile.
- G. DUFFELL.—Pleased to hear from you as a recent convert, and to know that you have found the *Freethinker* so helpful.
- H. R. CLIFTON.—Glad to hear that the Labor candidate at Croydon promised to support the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws and had your vote in consequence. The silence of the Liberal candidate was discourteous and discreditable.
- G. M. NICHOLLS.—We will deal with it.

- H. PERCY WARD.—We propose to deal with the letters you received from Liverpool candidates next week. They reach us too late for proper treatment this week.
- W. P. ADAMSON.—The candidates answers are general enough to be meaningless. Thanks, though, for your trouble.
- W. W. OLDFIELD.—Mr. W. T. Lees has debated several, but not twelve, times with Mr. Foote—though not lately. Mr. Lec is a capable speaker.
- W. PHILLIPS.—We much regret to hear that Mr. Charles Fenwick, Labor M.P. for the Wansbeck Division of Northumberland, is opposed to the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. Perhaps he cannot afford to displease his Christian supporters. Accept our thanks for your trouble.
- G. SCOTT (Glasgow).—Glad to hear that Mr. A. D. Provand, Liberal candidate, was in favor of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws; but very sorry that Mr. G. H. Barnes, the Labor candidate, would not reply to your questions.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

SOME correspondence unavoidably stands over till next week.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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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.

The Glasgow elections were only over on the Thursday night, and the bills advertising Mr. Foote's lectures in the Secular Hall stood no chance in the midst of the big electioneering posters on the city walls. Not to put too fine a point upon it, they were smothered, and only got a little show on the Saturday—too late to be of much use. In the circumstances, however, Mr. Foote had surprisingly good meetings. Mr. Turnbull and Mr. G. Scott presided morning and evening respectively, and made earnest appeals for moral and financial support. Mr. Foote's lectures, both new to Glasgow, were followed with intense interest and loudly applauded. A good many questions were asked and answered.

Mr. Foote delivers two entirely new lectures in the Secular Hall, Manchester, to-day (Jan. 28)—his afternoon subject being "Robert Blatchford and the Under Dog" and the evening "Winston Churchill's Father and Bradlaugh." The hall ought to be crowded on both occasions.

Mr. Cohen had very good audiences in the Liverpool Branch's new hall on Sunday—quite as good as he had in the former meeting-place—and more than usually enthusiastic. Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (Jan. 28) in the Secular Hall, Glasgow, and should have capital meetings now that the election fever has abated. He also lectures under the auspices of the Glasgow Branch at Falkirk on Monday and at Paisley on Tuesday—places which have given great promise lately.

Mr. John T. Lloyd delivers two lectures at Merthyr Tydvil to-day (Jan. 28). The district "saints" will look out for the local announcement of the meetings and help to make them as large as possible.

Mr. J. M. Robertson will, unfortunately, not be able to lecture for the Liverpool Branch to-day (Jan. 28), in consequence of the Tyneside election, in which he is a candidate, only taking place on the previous Friday. The platform will therefore be filled by Mr. Schweizer in the afternoon and Dr. C. R. Niven in the evening. The local "saints" are specially requested to rally round the Branch on this occasion—as we are quite sure Mr. Robertson would wish his friends to do.

Mr. Foote's visit to Scotland cut a very big slice out of the past week, and the paragraph part of the present number

of the *Freethinker* is less than usual in quantity, but amends will be made in the next number.

Mr. C. P. Farrell, the late Colonel Ingersoll's publisher and brother-in-law, writing to Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. general secretary, in reference to the Rev. Dr. Dixon's last letter on the Colonel's alleged promotion of obscene literature in America, says: "How thoroughly and magnificently Mr. Foote has answered that entire lot of liars. I cannot tell you how grateful the entire Ingersoll household feel towards him for his ceaseless, generous, and complete work on this nasty matter. I hope Mr. Foote has recovered his complete health and strength again, and will live many years to wage war against error and superstition as he only can do it." We beg to assure the Ingersoll household that nothing could please Mr. Foote better than to know that his defence of the Colonel is appreciated by them. He often had them in his mind's eye when he was sweeping away the filth thrown on Ingersoll's memory by that brace of scoundrels. Particularly that great man's widow, who will always be for Mr. Foote the first lady in America.

Mr. Will Crooks, who is known to everybody now, calls himself a Protestant Nonconformist, but during the Woolwich election he said that he believed in perfect freedom in all matters of religion, and would certainly vote for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

Both the Unionist and the Liberal candidates for the Handsworth division of Birmingham (Major Meysey and Mr. H. S. Leon) were in favor of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws.

Mr. Walsh, Labor M.P. for the Ince division, said that he would have pleasure in voting for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and would make a special point of attending and going into the right lobby whenever the opportunity occurred.

Mr. Astbury, the Liberal candidate for Southport, being questioned *re* the Blasphemy Laws, replied that he scarcely knew what the penalties for blasphemy were; he certainly had no special partiality for blasphemers (laughter)—he was in favor of general freedom, but anything that favored immorality ought to be amended. This was a maundering sort of reply, and we are not astonished that Southport gave a majority to a more straightforward bigot.

One of the straightforward replies to our questions *re* the Blasphemy Laws was that of Mr. G. F. Rowe at Hampstead. Answering Mr. G. Davoy, he said: (1) "I am in favor of equal rights and liberties for all forms of belief in matters of religion." (2) "I am in favor of giving Freethinkers the same freedom of expression for their views as Christians."

Mr. Stephen Miall, the Liberal candidate in Holborn, writing to Mr. John Lark, answered both the Blasphemy Law questions with a "Yes."

Mr. H. Reckitt, the Liberal candidate at Grimsby, writing to Mr. M. Hatchcliff, said: "I shall always favor equal rights and full religious liberty to all irrespective of what their views on religion may be: and if the question of the Blasphemy Laws is raised in the House I should deal with the question from that standpoint."

Mr. J. Burrell, questioning Mr. Mallick in the St. George's Hanover-square division, was told that the candidate had never heard of the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. Burrell explained how men had been imprisoned under them as late as 1883. "Oh," was the reply, "that was over twenty years ago"—as though that made it all right. Mr. Burrell subsequently interviewed Capt. Hobart at Westminster. After an explanatory conversation the candidate said: "I should certainly vote for those laws to be taken off the Statute Book."

Mr. Hubert Beaumont, Liberal candidate at Eastbourne, replied to a correspondent: "I am not completely conversant with the Blasphemy Laws, but I strongly object to any legislation which subjects any citizen to persecution, fine, or imprisonment for disseminating his opinions, provided he does so in an orderly and proper manner." Yes, but the "proper manner" ought to be the same all round, just as it is in political, social, and all other discussions, except religion.

Mr. F. E. Smith, Conservative candidate in the Walton division of Liverpool, replying by letter to a correspondent

in regard to the Blasphemy Laws, said that he agreed that "it was not desirable in the interest of religion itself that any law should survive which would make it criminal for even atheistical views to be published." This sounds very well, but it is really a most miserable piece of bigotry. The writer never alludes to justice and fair play; he considers everything in the light of the interest of his own religion; and if he approves of toleration for the moment, it is merely an accident of the present situation. In the very next sentence he shows the cloven hoof; for he provides that atheistical views shall be "couched in decent and considerate language." This, of course, is to apply to "infidels" only. Christians may be as "indecent" and "inconsiderate" in controversy as they please. And it is *they* who claim the right to try, judge, and punish the "infidel" for not being considerate enough to *them*. What topsy-turvy brains these bigots have!

Mr. E. G. Jellicoe, the Liberal candidate in the Walton division of Liverpool, answered the same correspondent more manfully. "I have great pleasure," he wrote, "in subscribing to each of the questions you put to me, and I will even go further and say that I am prepared to advocate in the Council of the State the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws."

Mr. Atherley Jones, Liberal candidate for the North-West division of County Durham, being asked if he was in favor of Secular Education, answered, "Yes, decidedly." Although a K.C. he said that he did not know much about the Blasphemy Laws, but he was decidedly in favor of full and equal freedom of expression.

Mr. Baird (Conservative) in Central Glasgow was opposed to Secular Education but "regarded with favor the proposal to abolish the Blasphemy Laws." Mr. Torrance (Liberal) "was assured that the Blasphemy Laws are in disuse, and did not think the matter of importance." Mr. Laidlaw (Liberal) in East Renfrewshire promised to support a measure for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and also to support Secular Education if the rival religions could not agree.

Mr. J. E. Batten wrote to both the candidates in South Bristol *re* the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. Walter Long, the Conservative candidate, did not deign to reply. Mr. Howell Davies (Liberal) replied to both questions: "Decidedly yes." Mr. Davies got the seat.

Mr. Kenneth Foster (Conservative) at Coventry could "see no reason for amending the Blasphemy Laws." In reply to a further letter from Mr. A. G. Lye, he said: "I do not see my way to do anything which would prevent the publishing of blasphemous or seditious libels." Of course he meant the opposite—but we suppose he was in a hurry. Mr. A. E. W. Mason (Liberal) promised to support both Secular Education and the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

Mr. C. Williamson Milne (Liberal) at Paddington, writing to Mr. Thackray, boldly said: "I am absolutely in favor of religious liberty to all parties." But he soon whittled this down by adding: "I have no acquaintance with the Blasphemy Laws, so that I cannot express any opinion on them. I am bound, however, to state that as a professed Christian I would, in considering the abolition of any such laws, have to put Christianity before politics." We quite understand. The gentleman means to keep all the privileges he can for his own religion. We believe that he represents the Nonconformist Conscience.

Mr. T. C. Taylor (Liberal), at Radcliffe-Farnworth, being asked our two Blasphemy Law questions, answered: "Yes. You cannot make a man religious by law." Would it be right if you could?

Heathen Japan goes one better than Christian England. About £7,500,000 of her new loan of £43,000,000, is to go to the widows and orphans of soldiers and sailors who were killed during the war. Christian England leaves hers to the workhouse.

M. Armand Fallieres, the new President elect of the French Republic, if we may judge by his portrait in the English newspapers, is a good deal like our esteemed friend Mr. J. W. de Caux, of Great Yarmouth, who, as his name indicates, is of French extraction, being descended from one of the Huguenot exiles from France—men who contributed some of the best blood and brains to our English stock. If M. Fallieres is as like Mr. de Caux as he looks he will be good enough for the Presidency even of France.

The Book of the Acts.—VIII.

ITS UNAUTHENTIC AND UNHISTORICAL CHARACTER.

(Continued from p. 28.)

HAVING noticed a few of the strictly historical matters referred to in the Acts of the Apostles, I will now briefly examine some of the narratives recorded in this remarkable work.

1. We are told in Acts I. that forty days after the alleged Resurrection the apostles beheld Jesus ascend to heaven from Mount Olivet, and that while gazing heavenward "two men stood by them in white apparel" who informed them that "this Jesus" should at some future unstated time return "in like manner." Now the question naturally arises, where did such a late writer as Luke get the account of this circumstance? There is not a word about these two angels in the narrative of the ascension in the same compiler's Gospel. In the last named book, in fact, Luke has made Jesus ascend to heaven on the night of the day on which he rose from the tomb. The explanation of these two conflicting accounts is simple: Luke was merely a compiler and reviser of pre-existing narratives, and the two stories were taken from different documents. If one account was flatly contradicted by another that was not Luke's affair; readers were at liberty to take their choice—or to believe both.

Again, if we assume the First and Fourth Gospels to have been written by apostles, then the Acts' account must, of course, be fictitious; for neither of these evangelists says one word about the "two men in white apparel," though they are both implied to have been present, nor does either record an ascension of Jesus at all. It is significant that the last named event is found only in the two Gospels which are admitted to have been compiled by men who were not witnesses of what they relate, and one of these compilers even goes so far as to say—what neither he nor anyone else could possibly know—that Jesus, after reaching heaven, "sat down at the right hand of God."

2. It is recorded in Acts II. that on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were met together at Jerusalem, there came "a sound as of a rushing mighty wind" which "filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost [or holy wind] and began to speak with tongues." One of the effects of this inflation was that they were now able to speak all known languages, without any previous acquaintance with them. As a consequence, strangers in Jerusalem "from every nation under heaven" heard them speak in their own tongue—"and they were all amazed," as well they might be. Then Peter, addressing the multitude, declared that the marvellous phenomenon they had witnessed was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, which said:—

"And I will pour forth my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," etc.

Thus twelve men represented "all flesh," feminine as well as masculine.

We find, further, that these first recipients of the "holy wind" were not only able to speak all foreign languages themselves, but possessed the power to impart the gift to new converts by the simple process of laying their hands on them.

Acts viii, 17.—"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

Acts x, 44, 46.—"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the wordFor they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."

Acts xix, 6.—"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

Is it necessary to ask whether the story of the descent of the Holy Ghost is true? Were the apostles able to speak all known tongues without having been

at the pains to learn them? Even to orthodox Christians the fabulous character of the narrative should be apparent; for, according to the Fourth Gospel, the disciples had already received the gift of the Holy Ghost—and from Jesus Christ himself before his flight to heaven.

"As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he *breathed on them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx, 21-22).

Of course, after their Lord and Master had "breathed on them," the apostles were all fully inflated with "holy wind"; though nothing is said about tongues. The originator of the Acts' story had evidently not seen the Fourth Gospel.

Again, it is clear from what Papias says of the writer of the Second Gospel—"Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatever he remembered," etc.—that neither he nor his friend John the presbyter had heard the story of the gift of tongues; for it goes without saying that if Peter possessed the power to speak the languages named in the Acts, he would not have needed the services of an interpreter.

Furthermore, reading between the lines, it will easily be seen from what Paul says of the speaking with tongues (1 Cor. xiv.) that the so-called "tongue" was not a language at all, but merely the utterance under excitement of unintelligible gibberish.

"If therefore the whole church be assembled together, and all speak with tongues, and there come in men unlearned or unbelieving, will they not say that ye are mad?"

As to Luke's wonderful story, it would seem that that compiler misapprehended the nature of what was called "speaking with tongues," and made up his narrative in accordance with his erroneous view.

3. Having been fully inflated with holy wind, Peter, as we have seen, made a grand oration to the assembled multitude (Acts II.), the result being that "there were added to the church in that day about three thousand souls." Shortly afterwards, on the occasion of healing a cripple (Acts III.), Peter made another oration, with the result that the number of believers "came to be about five thousand."

Now, in the book of the Acts we have several long speeches which are represented as delivered by Peter, Stephen, and Paul, the most notable being the following:—

- Acts ii. 14-40.—Speech by Peter on day of Pentecost.
- Acts iii. 12-26.— " " " after healing cripple.
- Acts vii. 1-53.— " " Stephen.
- Acts xiii. 17-41.— " " Paul at Antioch.
- Acts xxii. 1-21.— " " in Jerusalem.
- Acts xxvi. 2-22.— " " before Agrippa.

Each of the foregoing professes to be a verbatim report of an address delivered by the person to whom it is ascribed. Now, bearing in mind that Luke was not present upon any of the occasions mentioned, and that he did not even live in apostolic times, the question arises as to where he obtained the reports of these speeches. The answer is obvious: Luke piously composed them all himself—out of his own head. This fact is certain. The author of *Supernatural Religion* has shown by an exhaustive linguistic analysis that "the whole of Stephen's speech is the same as that of others in different parts of the work. Stephen speaks exactly as Peter does before him, and Paul at a later period.....There is so much in common to them all that community of authorship cannot be denied." The same fact is noticed by Renan, who says that "Luke's persons resemble each other. Peter differs in nothing from Paul, nor Paul from Peter. The discourses which Luke puts in the mouths of his heroes, though admirably appropriate to the circumstances, are all in the same style, and belong to the author rather than to those to whom he attributes them." Thus are these verbatim reports accounted for. We may therefore strike out of Luke's veracious history the speeches just named, and the imaginary events which are alleged to have led up to them, as being, one and all, nothing more nor less than pious fabrications.

4. In Acts v. we have an account of the death of two persons, Ananias and his wife Sapphira, caused by the direct instrumentality of Peter. According to the story, these two converts sold their possessions, and brought only a portion of the proceeds as a contribution to the general fund. Peter then taxed them separately with keeping back some of the money, and when he had finished speaking each fell dead at his feet. It may, of course, be contended that the death in each case was a punishment inflicted by God, and that Peter was in no way responsible for what occurred. But such a plea fails to take into consideration the wondrous miraculous powers ascribed to that apostle. Judging from the character of the narratives in the book, it is clearly evident that had any other save this great thaumaturgus reproved Ananias and his wife for the deception practised, nothing would have happened. It is further plainly implied that Peter knew what would follow from his rebuke. Speaking to the murdered man's widow he is represented as saying:—

"Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out."

Assuming the story to be true, the death of these two persons would certainly (and rightly) have been laid at the door of Peter, who would beyond all doubt have been charged with causing it—probably by the aid of magic, in accordance with the belief of the times. Had such an event really occurred, it would be known to all who lived in Jerusalem, and tidings would soon reach the ears of the high priest and Sanhedrin, who, according to the story, were at this very time seeking for some plausible pretext to put an end to the preaching of the apostles, but "finding *nothing* how they might punish them" (iv. 21), contented themselves with threatening those fire-brands. A little later—shortly after the double murder committed by Peter—"the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, and they were filled with jealousy, and laid hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward;" then, after holding a consultation, they "called the apostles unto them, and beat them, and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go" (v. 17, 18, 40). Here it is plain that nothing was known of the two murders perpetrated by Peter; the apostles had been beaten simply for preaching. Now, were it an undoubted fact that the leader and chief spokesman of the hated Christian sect had wickedly caused the death of two persons, presumably land-owners, then, beyond the smallest shadow of a doubt, the Jewish authorities would not have allowed such a crime to pass unpunished. And this punishment, it is needless to say, would be nothing less than death to all the leaders of the new superstition, either as principals or accessories, and thus would once and for ever affectually be repressed all public preaching in Palestine. But, unfortunately for the cause of humanity, no such event as that recorded in the Acts ever occurred; the story is a pure invention, concocted by pious second century Christians for the glorification of the great apostle Peter.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Ingersoll's First Lecture.—II.

(Continued from p. 45.)

LAWs equally unjust, bloody and cruel were in force in all parts of Europe. In the sixteenth century a man was burned in France because he refused to kneel to a procession of dirty monks. I could enumerate thousands of instances of the most horrid cruelty perpetrated upon men, women and even little children, for no other reason in the world than for a difference of opinion upon a subject that neither party knew anything about. But you are all, no doubt, perfectly familiar with the history of religious persecution.

There is one thing, however, that is strange indeed, and that is that the reformers of those days, the men who rose against the horrid tyranny of the times, the moment they attained power, persecuted with a zeal and bitterness never excelled. Luther, one of the grand men of the world, cast

in the heroic mould, although he gave utterance to the following sublime sentiment: "Every one has the right to read for himself that he may prepare himself to live and to die," still had no idea of what we call religious freedom. He considered universal toleration an error, so did Melancthon and Erasmus, and yet, strange as it may appear, they were exercising the very right they denied to others, and maintaining their right with a courage and energy absolutely sublime.

John Knox was only in favor of religious freedom when he was in the minority, and Baxter entertained the same sentiment. Castalio, a professor at Geneva, in Switzerland, was the first clergyman in Europe who declared the innocence of honest error, and who proclaimed himself in favor of universal toleration. The name of this man should never be forgotten. He had the goodness, the courage, although surrounded with prisons and inquisitions, and in the midst of millions of fierce bigots, to declare the innocence of honest error, and that every man had a right to worship the good God in his own way.

For the utterance of this sublime sentiment his professorship was taken from him, he was driven from Geneva by John Calvin and his adherents, although he had belonged to their sect.

He was denounced as a child of the Devil, a dog of Satan, as a murderer of souls, as a corrupter of the faith, and as one who by his doctrines crucified the Savior afresh. Not content with merely driving him from his home, they pursued him absolutely to the grave, with a malignity that increased rather than diminished. You must not think that Calvin was alone in this; on the contrary he was fully sustained by public opinion, and would have been sustained even though he had procured the burning of the noble Castalio at the stake. I cite this instance not merely for the purpose of casting odium upon Calvin, but to show you what public opinion was at that time, when such things were ordinary transactions. Bodinus, a lawyer in France, about the same time advocated something like religious liberty, but public opinion was overwhelmingly against him and the people were at all times ready with torch and brand, chain, and fagot to get the abominable heresy out of the human mind, that a man had a right to think for himself. And yet Luther, Calvin, Knox and Baxter, in spite, as it were, of themselves, conferred a great and lasting benefit upon mankind; for what they did was at least in favor of individual judgment, and one successful stand against the church produced others, all of which tended to establish universal toleration. In those times you will remember that failing to convert a man or woman by the ordinary means, they resorted to every engine of torture that the ingenuity of bigotry could devise; they crushed their feet in what they called iron boots; they roasted them upon slow fires; they plucked out their nails, and then into the bleeding quick thrust needles; and all this to convince them of the truth. I suppose that we should love our neighbor as ourselves.

Montaigne was the first man who raised his voice against torture in France; a man blessed with so much common sense, that he was the most uncommon man of the age in which he lived. But what was one voice against the terrible cry of ignorant millions?—a drowning man in the wild roar of the infinite sea. It is impossible to read the history of the long and seemingly hopeless war waged for religious freedom, without being filled with horror and disgust. Millions of men, women and children, at least one hundred millions of human beings with hopes and loves and aspirations like ourselves, have been sacrificed upon the altar of bigotry. They have perished at the stake, in prisons, by famine and by sword; they have died wandering, homeless, in deserts, groping in caves, until their blood cried from the earth for vengeance. But the principle, gathering strength from their weakness, nourished by blood and flame, rendered holier still by their sufferings—grander by their heroism, and immortal by their death, triumphed at last, and is now acknowledged by the whole civilized world. Enormous as the cost has been the principle is worth a thousand times as much. There must be freedom in religion, for without freedom there can be no real religion. And as for myself I glory in the fact that upon American soil that principle was first firmly established, and that the Constitution of the United States was the first of any great nation in which religious toleration was made one of the fundamental laws of the land. And it is not only the law of our country but the law is sustained by an enlightened public opinion. Without liberty there is no religion—no worship. What light is to the eyes—what air is to the lungs—what love is to the heart, liberty is to the soul of man. Without liberty, the brain is a dungeon, where the chained thoughts die with their pinions pressed against the hingeless doors.

WITCHCRAFT.

The next fact to which I call your attention is, that during the Middle Ages the people, the whole people, the learned

and the ignorant, the masters and the slaves, the clergy, the lawyers, doctors and statesmen, all believed in witchcraft—in the evil eye, and that the Devil entered into people, into animals and even into insects to accomplish his dark designs. And all the people believed it their solemn duty to thwart the Devil by all means in their power, and they accordingly set themselves at work hanging and burning everybody suspected of being in league with the Enemy of mankind. If you grant their premises, you justify their actions. If these persons had actually entered into partnership with the Devil for the purpose of injuring their neighbors, the people would have been justified in exterminating them all. And the crime of witchcraft was proven over and over again in court after court in every town of Europe. Thousands of people who were charged with being in league with the Devil confessed the crime, gave all the particulars of the bargain, told just what the Devil said and what they replied, and exactly how the bargain was consummated, admitted in the presence of death, on the very edge of the grave, when they knew that the confession would confiscate all their property and leave their children homeless wanderers, and render their own names infamous after death.

We can account for a man suffering death for what he believes to be right. He knows that he has the sympathy of all the truly good, and he hopes that his name will be gratefully remembered in the far future, and above all, he hopes to win the approval of a just God. But the man who confessed himself guilty of being a wizard, knew that his memory would be execrated and expected that his soul would be eternally lost. What motive could then have induced so many to confess? Strange as it is, I believe that they actually believed themselves guilty. They considered their case hopeless; they confessed and died without a prayer. These things are enough to make one think that sometimes the world becomes insane and that the earth is a vast asylum without a keeper. I repeat that I am convinced that the people that confessed themselves guilty believed that they were so. In the first place, they believed in witchcraft and that people often were possessed of Satan, and when they were accused the fright and consternation produced by the accusation, in connection with their belief, often produced insanity or something akin to it, and the poor creatures charged with a crime that it was impossible to disprove, deserted and abhorred by their friends, left alone with their superstitions and fears, driven to despair, looked upon death as a blessed relief from a torture that you and I cannot at this day understand. People were charged with the most impossible crimes. In the time of James the First, a man was burned in Scotland for having produced a storm at sea for the purpose of drowning one of the royal family. A woman was tried before Sir Matthew Hale, one of the most learned and celebrated lawyers of England, for having caused children to vomit crooked pins. She was also charged with nursing demons. Of course she was found guilty, and the learned Judge charged the jury that there was no doubt as to the existence of witches, that all history, sacred and profane, and that the experience of every country proved it beyond any manner of doubt. And the woman was either hanged or burned for a crime for which it was impossible for her to be guilty. In those times they also believed in Lycanthropy—that is, that persons of whom the Devil had taken possession could assume the appearance of wolves.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

INFIDELITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—In the *Freethinker* for January 7, which was sent to me to-day, I notice under the head of "Correspondence," and entitled "Infidelity," a letter in reference to an address given by myself at Westbourne Park P.S.A., on Sunday afternoon, December 31.

It is far from my intention to discuss the subject at any length, but I shall be glad if you will give me space to say one or two things regarding your correspondent's letter.

In the first place, the writer who signs himself "A Casual Visitor" is surprised to find that the P.S.A. is for men only. If he has been before, surely he should have been aware of this.

He is further surprised that I did not attempt to answer the difficulties "which abound in every book of the Bible." It would be a surprise to me if any sane man really attempted to answer the so-called "mistakes of the Bible" in twenty-five minutes, which was the time allotted for my address.

Moreover, he considers it unfair that I did not invite discussion. May I remind "A Casual Visitor" that I was

the *speaker* and not the *chairman*, and it was hardly within my province to invite open discussion; but I may mention one circumstance which my friend has evidently forgotten, viz., that I invited any to whom the objections to which I did refer, were real difficulties, to meet me after the meeting, and I also challenged infidelity to tell me what was offered me in place of my belief in a risen Savior, whom I have personally tested and found for twenty years to be my best friend.

Whether I am deceived in my belief does not affect the question; the point is, why did not the writer, if he be a consistent man, seeking as Freethinkers assert, to uplift humanity, accept my challenge and put me right where he saw me to be wrong.

Apologising for the necessary length of this reply.

RUSSELL R. SMITH.

P.S.—I regret "A Casual Visitor" does not give name and address. I enclose my card and should be obliged if you kindly forward same to him, may be he will give me an opportunity of seeing him personally.

DR. FOOTE'S COUNTRY HOME LOST BY FIRE.

About three a.m. of December 28, 1905, Dr. E. B. Foote's Larchmont cottage went up in a great blaze, which began in a large boarding house near by. The local fire department found it impossible to save the doctor's house, but willing hands got out books, papers, and considerable furniture. The doctor and his house-servants all made a quick and easy escape, and the old doctor himself was so well cared for by kind neighbors that he bore the ordeal very well; but of course he mourns the loss of his home for twenty years and his fine view of the Long Island Sound. He is now with his son's family in the New York city house, where he is likely to remain till next summer. Of course many letters of condolence are coming to him, and while all are read and appreciated, he pleads inability to acknowledge every one. —*New York "Truthseeker."*

JESUS LEGENDARY.

The mighty and supreme Jesus, who was to transfigure all humanity with his divine wit and grace—this Jesus has flown. To my mind this fact has no terror. I believe the Legend of Jesus was made by many minds working under a great religious impulse—one man adding a parable, another an exhortation, another a miracle story. And so Jesus represents for us, not a man, but the aspirations of many hearts. If one age can create a Jesus, another can. Our age can. You and I can help in the creation. We can join in making not a legend, but a new idea of humanity, the figure of a new man, a new message, a new prophecy. All our better thoughts, all our wiser speech, and all our truer deeds shall form parts of this creation, which shall be a gospel to those who come after us.—*Professor Goldwin Smith, in the New York "Sun."*

About the only person that we ever heard of that wasn't spoiled by being lionised, was a Jew named Daniel!

THE GODLESS HENS OF KENTUCKY.

Down yonder in Kentucky,
Where the women are so fair,
Their loveliness is sweeter
Than the picture of a prayer,
There are hens which are so thoughtless,
In an egg producing way,
That they lay them on a Sunday,
Same as any other day.

And the women, bless their goodness,
Are neglecting now the men's
Shortcomings and are turning
Their attention to the hens;
They know they can't reform them,
But they feel it is a sin
To spend the tainted money
That those Sunday eggs bring in,

Unless for some good purpose;
So the women have decreed
That the hallelujah hen eggs
Shall contribute to the need
Of foreign missionaries,
And in this way make amends
For the direful desecration
Of those Sabbath breaking hens.

—*Sun (New York).*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Guy Aldred, "Secularism and Women."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Morality without Religion."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, A. Barber, "Freethought versus Priestly Dogma."

FAIRFORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Manchester Clarion Choir.

FALKIRK (Co-operative Hall): Monday, Jan. 29, at 8, C. Cohen, "Christianity on Trial."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen, 12 (noon), "The Shadow of the Gods"; 6.30, "Christianity at the Bar." Committee meets at 1 p.m.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 3, W. C. Schweizer, "The Iniquity of Interest"; 7, C. R. Niven, M.B., C.M., "The Inutility of Temperance Reform."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote, 3, "Robert Blatchford and the Under Dog"; 6.30, "Winston Churchill's Father and Bradlaugh." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, Feb. 1, at 8, Jas. Reid, "South African Problems."

PAISLEY: Tuesday, Jan. 30, at 8, C. Cohen, "Christianity at the Bar."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, W. Jones, "Christ and Our Neighbor."

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The Council of the Malthusian League, Dr. Drysdale, Dr. Allbutt, and others, have also spoken of it in very high terms.

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