

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*Thought fights with thought: out springs a spark of truth
From the collision of the sword and shield.*

—LANDOR.

Mr. Birrell's Bill.—III.

WE shall have more to say about the Liberal and Nonconformist policy of "undenominational" religious instruction and "simple Bible teaching" presently. In the meanwhile we will look at the way in which, after abolishing the old "voluntary" and more recent "denominational" schools, Mr. Birrell brings them back again by a most extraordinary juggle. It looks as though he felt that he must abolish them nominally to please the Nonconformists, and retain them practically to please the Churchmen and Catholics. But in attempting this wonderful feat of political circus riding the right honorable gentleman comes signally to grief. The extreme Nonconformists cry out that he is too "generous" to the "sectarians"—meaning everybody but themselves; while Churchmen and Catholics cry out that he is maliciously seeking their destruction.

Mr. Birrell provides for two kinds of denominational education; the first under the heading of "ordinary facilities," the second under the heading of "extended facilities."

Ordinary Facilities.—In arranging for the transfer of existing "voluntary" or "denominational" schools to the Public Education authorities it may be arranged that children whose parents wish them to receive special religious instruction may receive it "on not more than two mornings a week." Such special religious instruction must not be paid for by the local education authority, nor must it be given by the teachers. It must be provided at the cost and responsibility of the denominations themselves, and is thus a part of what is called "The Right of Entry"—which the leading Nonconformists have repeatedly sworn they will never consent to.

Extended Facilities.—Under this clause a local education authority may permit special (denominational) religious instruction to be given in any "transferred voluntary school in an urban area," if they are satisfied "after holding a public local inquiry with reference to the application"

- "(a) that the parents of at least four-fifths of the children attending the school desire those facilities; and
(b) that there is public school accommodation in schools not affected by a permission given under this section for the children attending the school whose parents do not desire those facilities."

This special (denominational) religious instruction may be given by the teachers employed in the school, but "not at the expense of the authority." And in such schools the "simple Bible teaching" will be entirely superseded.

A permission given under this section is subject to withdrawal, or restoration, according to circumstances.

It is explained that "urban area" under this section shall mean "the county of London and any borough or urban district having in either case a population exceeding five thousand according to the last census for the time being."

Now let us see what all this means. Mr. Birrell first makes all schools "provided" schools and places them under "the local education authority." He devises arrangements for taking over the old "voluntary" or "denominational" schools and bringing them under the universal category. The "Cowper-Temple Clause" is to obtain everywhere, and "simple Bible teaching" is to be given by the school teachers, with the protection of a Conscience Clause for both teachers and children. Having done this, however, the right honorable gentleman proceeds to undo it. Denominational teaching, turned out at the front door, is let in again at the back door; only it has to creep and supplicate, and is left without any security of entrance. The whole arrangement is one of those elaborate subtleties that delight small minds. Real statesmanship is always frank and straightforward, and is always within easy reach of a definite principle of action.

We repeat that there is no principle in Mr. Birrell's Bill. We defy anybody to find one. He deals with parties and interests exclusively. His first care is to set a big succulent joint on the table for his Nonconformist friends, who very much like the look of it, though a few fanatics say it is underdone. His next care is to prevent the other Churches from disturbing and upsetting the feast. Accordingly he flings them something which he believes will keep their teeth occupied while the feast is progressing. Or, to drop metaphor, he has to please the Nonconformists without endangering his Bill, either at present or in the immediate future.

Mr. Birrell must have had little sagacity if he imagined that what he threw to the Anglican and Catholic Churches would keep them quiet.

It is easy to see that the Anglican and Catholic schools, even if they succeeded in establishing themselves at the outset, would always be living as it were from hand to mouth. The shadow of a great fear would always be resting upon them. They would be at the mercy of a thousand accidents. The effort to preserve themselves under the "four-fifths" clause would be a perpetual round of shuffling and finessing. It would be like toiling on a quicksand, with the possibility of being swallowed up at any minute.

All the security attaches to the "simple Bible teaching." All the insecurity attaches to the definite religious instruction.

How could the Church of England be satisfied with this peculiar arrangement? It had better have no schools than be fighting for their very

existence every day of the week. How could the Catholic Church be expected to give the slightest countenance to this arrangement? It simply *must* have its own day-schools. The matter is absolutely *vital*. Religion, as the Catholic Church understands it, can only be taught authoritatively. It cannot be used to fill up an odd half-hour. It cannot be taught as an addendum to anything. It is sovereign and supreme. It takes the first place, and not the last. We are opposed to the Catholic Church as the ultimate enemy of Freethought, but we are bound to respect the logic of its principles. We also have the logic of ours, and we stand by it in the struggle.

The Anglican position shares to some extent in the logic of the Catholic position. The Nonconformist position has no logic at all. And the Education Bill, which is a Nonconformist Bill, has naturally no logic either.

Those who say that this is *not* a Nonconformist Bill have to face this fact. Nonconformists are the only people who praise it. The Church party and the Catholic party have declared war against it. And the Secularist cheers them on to the battle.

A good many years ago when a Nonconformist deputation waited upon the late Lord Salisbury with respect to the Education controversy then raging, he told them plainly—some people said cynically—that he did not understand what they were complaining about, as it was Nonconformist religion that was taught in the Board schools, and what more did they want?

The Nonconformist reply to this contention is a characteristic shuffle. "Our doctrines, our standards," they cry, "are not included in simple Bible teaching." But if this is true in one sense, it is false in another. Nonconformist Churches have differences; they have also a fundamental agreement. They all accept, ultimately, the open Bible with the right of private judgment—subject to the penalty of everlasting hell for judging wrongly. And it is clear that "simple Bible teaching" is on the lines of this doctrine; while it is not on the double lines of the Bible and the Church, which both have their places, in varying proportions, in the theories of the Church of England and the Catholic Church.

Nor is that all. In practice, as apart from theory, the "provided" school religion is Nonconformist religion, because it is the religion that *suits* Nonconformists. It is what serves their interests in the circumstances. They know this, and the knowledge of it is the unavowed but active principle of their efforts and policy. If you want a clear perception of the issues in any struggle, penetrate through the rhetoric of controversy and ascertain the points of *interest* on which everything turns. Mr. Birrell's Bill, with its universal provided schools, and simple Bible teaching, is exactly what suits the Nonconformists in the present stage of their ecclesiastical fight with "Canterbury" and "Rome."

Mr. John Morley, who lies so low now that party interests dictate his action, had the candor to admit all that we are contending for in his *Life of Gladstone*. He puts it on record that John Bright, who was a true Nonconformist, in the sense of denying the right of the State to meddle with religion at all, called the Education Act of 1870 "the worst Act passed by any Liberal parliament since 1832." And he himself admits that:—

"At bottom the battle of the schools was not educational, it was social. It was not religious, but ecclesiastical.....In the conflicts of the old centuries whence Christian creeds emerged, disputes on dogma constantly sprang from rivalries of race and accidents of geography. So now quarrels about education and catechism and conscience marked the standing jealousy between church and chapel."

The standing jealousy between church and chapel. You have the whole matter there in a nutshell. Education is the ostensible object of the struggle; the real object is the ecclesiastical interest of the different Churches. And this view of the case is corroborated by what we have already pointed out; namely, that this so-called Education Bill does not contain a single word about education from beginning to end.

Mr. Chamberlain has said that it was the Nonconformists who destroyed the chance of Secular Education in 1870. He and a few Nonconformists, like Dr. Dale, made a gallant fight for it, but they were defeated by the great body of Nonconformists selling their birthright for a mess of pottage. They sacrificed their principles for a tempting advantage. They who protested against the establishment of religion in churches accepted the establishment of religion in schools. Their attitude raised disgust in the mind of Gladstone. In a letter to Bright, dated January 27, 1874, he observed that he had never been strong against the secular solution, which was at least impartial, and not necessarily unfriendly to religion; while the "unsectarian religion" favored by the Nonconformists was "glaringly partial"—"and I shall never be a party to it." Years afterwards Gladstone called School Board religion a "monstrosity." That is why the Nonconformists do not mention his name in the present controversy. Mr. Birrell carefully left it out of the long speech in which he introduced the Education Bill. He quoted a favorable opinion from the late Archbishop Temple. He quoted no word from the great Liberal "Chief."

Catholics we understand. Churchmen we understand. Nonconformists we despise. Catholics and Churchmen let us know what they want, and what they will get if they can. They may be ever so bigoted, but they are not liars and hypocrites. The Nonconformist professes all sorts of fine principles, and betrays every one of them when it serves his turn. We see swarms of them, going in and out of the Memorial Hall, not far from our office; and if physiognomy is to be trusted the majority of them are steeped in double-dealing.

In any case the battle of the sects has begun again. Mr. Birrell has once more opened "the purple testament of bleeding war" for them. And we rejoice at the spectacle. For the fight must some day end in a peace, and the only possible peace is on the lines of secular education. To this complexion it must come at last.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity and the Survival of the Fittest.

THE extension of the principle of the survival of the fittest from the biological to other fields was a natural and rapid outcome of the perception of its truth. And to recognise its truth only one thing was necessary—to understand it. For when properly understood the teaching associated with the names of Darwin and Spencer is seen to be much in the nature of mathematical demonstration. The survival of the fittest is true because we cannot conceive it as untrue. To say that the "fittest" does not survive is to make a statement that can only be accepted so long as we refrain from trying to understand clearly the terms of the proposition laid down. Once we do understand clearly the terms we use, it is realised that to say the "fittest" survive is almost, if not quite, axiomatic. Organisms survive because they are the fittest; their fitness is shown by their survival.

The extension of this principle to life in general was very rapid indeed. Ideas, institutions, customs, social forms, all could be seen to illustrate the same principle; and once the first shock of the conflict was over, religious apologists set themselves the task of revising their defences, and, as the new teaching was not to be defeated, to discover a defence which should be expressed, if possible, in terms of current science. The argument required was soon found. If things survive because of "fitness," then the survival of Christianity, it was and is argued, is a clear proof of it being the fittest to survive. In spite of attacks Christianity lives, and this being the case the freethinking evolutionist must admit that Christianity contains something of value to man in his life struggle, otherwise it would long since have dis-

appeared. Either the evolutionist must admit this or pronounce his own philosophy invalid.

So runs the argument, and it possesses a plausibility that commends it to many. It is to be met with in learned—often painfully so—magazine articles, in sermons, and in the popular superstition that the destruction of Christianity might involve some very disagreeable consequences. It is, indeed, curious that precisely those who argue that Christianity was indestructible in the past because it possessed qualities that demonstrated its "fitness" over all competitors and enemies are precisely those who fear most for its disappearance. Much of this state of mind may be accounted for by a misapprehension of the word "fitness." Most, if not all, of those who defend Christianity on the grounds of its fitness to survive, give to the term a moral or ethical significance to which it has no proper claim. What is actually the fittest in a given environment and what is the ideally best may be, and often is, two very distinct things. If we allow the possibility, Shakespeare among savages, or a primitive savage in a highly civilised community, would be equally "unfit," and would be crushed out. Whether the quality determining survival is an ideal quality or not is entirely a question of environment, and the Christian by no means demonstrates that the perpetuation of Christianity is a desirable thing, even though he is able to show that it has survived because it was the "fittest."

Further, if anyone will take a map of the world and note those places in which Christianity has undergone the least alteration—Abyssinia, parts of the South-East of Europe, or Spain—it will be noted that these are also the least progressive portions of the world. Here its survival has been quite in accordance with its own non-progressive character. If, on the other hand, we take the progressive portions of the world, it will be noted that there Christianity has only survived by so great a modification of its practice, and even teaching, as to hardly appear the same faith. Or, in other words, real Christianity has not survived at all. There has been a continuity of possession, even of formula; but to point to Christianity existing in England, America, France, or Germany as a proof that Christianity has demonstrated its survival value is simply absurd. Under civilised or progressive conditions its survival value is of the poorest possible kind. An organism or an institution that can only survive by some profound modification of its structure or character has really demonstrated that in its original character it could not have survived at all.

Yet again, the biological formula could only be properly applied to Christianity if the mental variations had been allowed to enter into a free competition with the normal type. But this never has, and is not even now, been the case. For many generations the Church weeded out all variations as carefully as it could, and, on the whole, far more successfully than has been done at any other time. And, at the same time, the environment was also kept, as far as possible, of a uniform character; or, to put it in another way, Christianity created and perpetuated an environment that placed a heavy premium upon the Christian type. And, under these circumstances, the survival of Christianity could be no more a proof of its social value than the existence of a heavily-subsidised commercial concern proves its ability to live amid the competitions of the open market. How small was the survival value of Christianity was shown by the fact that so soon as changes in the environment were affected, first by the influence of the civilised Mohammedan world, then by the revival of the study of classical literature, and later by various scientific discoveries, Christianity had either to be modified or disappear.

The same lesson faces us to-day. Christianity is so little able to maintain itself in a free environment that the energies of its professors are chiefly devoted towards the maintenance of an environment suitable to its continued existence. The maintenance of armies of preachers, the compilation of special

literature to encourage belief, the careful shielding of believers from all those influences that might unsettle their faith, the social influences that place a premium upon belief and attach a penalty to unbelief, are all examples of the creation of an artificial environment suitable to Christianity. The whole of the contest over education is but another example of the same kind. It is but the effort to surround the young with an atmosphere suitable to the growth of Christian belief; and all these efforts are so many confessions that, by itself, Christianity responds so little to the real and permanent needs of mankind, that if things were let alone it would soon disappear. Christianity has, as a plain matter of fact, continued to exist only because an environment suitable to its existence has been artificially perpetuated.

The fallacy, however, of attributing the continued existence of Christianity to its "fitness" in the struggle for existence will be seen more clearly when it is recognised that it has all along been exploiting the social qualities of humanity. In other directions the relation of organs and functions does not admit of question. No one questions the function of the eye, the ear, or any other organ, or that the destruction of any of these organs would mean a corresponding loss of function. But, in the case of religion, it by no means stands to any of the admittedly valuable things of life in the relation of organ to function. That all the functions of social, family, and individual life will continue in the absence of religion is proven by the fact that they do continue in its absence. But, while this is the case, those who have explained the perpetuation of Christianity on the grounds of its "fitness" have found this quality in those functions that do not properly belong to it. They have pointed to the good things taught by religious organisations, and the serviceable things done by them. But religions do not exist apart from those who believe in them, and it would be strange indeed if human beings, because they held Christian beliefs, relinquished all the qualities of human beings. Feelings that are shared, and actions that are performed in common by people of all religions, and of no religion, can hardly be claimed as the special characteristic of any faith. Social and moral qualities have accompanied all forms of religious belief, and religions have reaped the full advantage of the association. And the uncritical mind, mistaking a casual association for a causal one, draws the natural conclusion that, if religious belief dies out, social and moral qualities will suffer as a result.

An example from the Christian Mission world will illustrate the point more clearly. A Christian might argue that when a Christian missionary succeeds in gaining converts from a savage cult he has demonstrated the survival value of his faith. But those who note *all* the facts will see that the natives are attracted to the missionary by the desire for gifts of food, medicine, books, and other products of civilisation. Even the superior manners of the missionary are, in relation to less civilised people, inducements to conversion. Divest the missionary of these gifts of civilisation, send him out with nothing but his religion, and what amount of success would he meet with? Obviously but little. The uncivilised act under existing conditions exactly as do the civilised. They, too, confuse the casual with the causal, and credit the new creed with all the secular advantages with which it has become associated.

To sum up. An institution that does nothing to check competition, or to surround itself with a protective and artificial environment, may, if it then survives unaltered, claim to have demonstrated its fitness to survive in the struggle for existence. But an institution that cannot do this, and never has done this, that has always shrunk from competition and branded variation from the normal type as a crime, and that in spite of artificial protection is yet losing ground, can only be said to possess the quality of "fitness" in relation to a radically unhealthy environment.

Do We Need a Religion?—II.

(Concluded from p. 277.)

2. BEFORE considering the second benefit which religion is said to bestow upon human life let us once more refer to the claim that "in the concealment of the ugliness of Nature religion does something of consequence, independently of the question whether her statements are historically and objectively true." We admit the truth of the claim. "Religion does something of consequence" when it substitutes illusions for realities, or, in other words, when it teaches men to believe lies. The reality is, as Professor Margoliouth himself admits, that we are members of the animal kingdom, that our life begins and ends in the same manner as that of the beasts of the field; but religion covers up that reality with the fable that man is born of God and shall never die. Surely to treat a fable as if it were a historic fact is not to confer a benefit on humanity, and more surely still to exchange illusion for reality cannot be regarded as an act of ornamentation. Now, we are informed that "the second of the main purposes of religion is that of education and reform." By religion is meant here belief in God and immortality. But in what sense can belief in God be educative? Well, in the first place, we need the belief in God for the control of our inner, secret life. The inner life, of which the outer life is but an expression, is not under human surveillance. Parents and schoolmasters and governors cannot touch it. "But the religious education teaches the pupil of the existence of a Being whose power is not thus bounded, and within whose ken all the internal processes of the mind and heart are as completely as are the external and visible acts, and who therefore can both know and punish where the ordinary human governor cannot take cognizance."

In the second place, the belief in God supplies "the need for an authority, to which reference can be made when the reason for an order is demanded." Professor Margoliouth asserts that "whole series of offences are left unpunished by almost any code, and [that] there is reason for believing that of those which the law does punish, only a certain number come to light in such a way as to bring the culprit within the reach of the law. But in these cases the religious teacher can assure the criminal that his misdeeds neither remain unnoticed, nor will eventually escape punishment." Then we are told that "those who have to deal as missionaries with persons suspected of such misconduct, can as a rule ill spare the weapon which is furnished by the doctrine of another life," although "the doctrine that Divine vengeance is to be exacted in this life is not altogether contradicted by experience." The following sentence puts the Professor's position clearly before us:—

"Without religious teaching, without the possibility of preaching the doctrine that the world is morally governed, that an unseen power, potent where the ordinary government is weak or helpless, is interested in human conduct and in setting right the balance when it is disturbed, the reform of persons in whom the moral sense is weak is probably impracticable."

It is impossible not to infer from the above statement that, in Dr. Margoliouth's opinion, the reform of people in whom the moral sense is strong is practicable without religious teaching. But the fact to be faced is that religious teaching does not usually result in the reform of persons in whom the moral sense is weak. The majority of criminals do believe in God and another life, and the belief does not deter them from wrong-doing. It would be safe to affirm that ninety-nine out of every hundred criminals cherish supernatural beliefs and are not averse to joining in the services of religion; and it is also undeniably true that the number of criminals who are reformed as the direct result of religious teaching is extremely small. As John Stuart Mill says, "it is perfectly conceivable that religion may be morally

useful without being intellectually sustainable"; but it is not so easy to prove that religious teaching, *as such*, is productive of moral reform. Embodied in Christianity, for example, are numerous ethical elements, borrowed from Judaism and Heathenism; but these are not religious elements at all, though attached to religion. The unfortunate thing is, however, that when Christian ministers teach *morality* they teach it as *religion*, which it is not. Consequently, if they succeed in reforming bad characters they give the credit to religion, to God, to Christ, or to the Holy Spirit, when in reality the reformation ought to be attributed to their own personal influence and sympathy as teachers of morality. There are those who live good lives as long as they are surrounded by good people, and they thank the Lord for his goodness to them. But no sooner do they enter a new and different environment and are away from the sympathy and support of devoted friends, than their moral character begins to deteriorate. The bad environment eventually proves their utter ruin. Their belief in God, their hope of heaven and fear of hell, utterly fail to prevent their downfall.

3. And this leads me to the third service of religion pointed out in the essay under discussion—namely, that of strengthening human weakness. What is the fact, the reality? Professor Margoliouth tells us himself:—

"The facts of the world as given by Nature methodically studied, represent man as surrounded everywhere by abysses. What is behind him and what is before him are alike unknown, unexplored, stretching out into vast immensity. His own place appears fortuitous, his own destiny the result of accident. Methodical study constantly reduces the appearance of design in phenomena, accounting for that appearance by other causes; and of design and purpose in history, as a whole, the traces are yet more obscure."

That is a fine description of the reality. The Professor admits that "probably to strong minds, or to normal minds in times of quiet and prosperity, this uncertainty and ignorance occasion little inconvenience," but claims that "weaker minds need some support, or need to have the abyss concealed from them by some sort of screen, and a little adversity is shown by experience to bring strong minds to the same level." Of course, Professor Margoliouth writes as a religious man, and naturally ignores the fact that multitudes of people prefer to take things as they are. There are thousands of Atheists whose methodical study of Nature leads them, not down to despair, but up to the noblest type of courage and self-reliance. They know of no Being who rules the world on moral lines, and whom they may supplicate for a certain result under given conditions. They survey history and can see no traces whatever of design and purpose, and the lesson they learn is that their highest duty consists in making the most and best of things as they come, or in cultivating mental alertness and agility, or the capacity to avail themselves to the full of whatever advantages and opportunities which life brings to them. And surely this is a wiser course than the one recommended by the essayist. What is the use of believing in design and purpose when we cannot tell what they are? What is the good of affirming that phenomena has a meaning when we have not even the shadow of an idea what that meaning is? Why cherish "the belief that events are ordered by a wise will and intelligence," when the most methodical study of them leads to a contrary conclusion? Have we a right, or would it be manly on our part, to strengthen and console ourselves in adversity or calamity by believing and hugging what the methodical study of Nature declares to be a lie? And yet this is what Professor Margoliouth has the temerity to recommend:—

"By bringing man into some relation with the Ruler of the world, religion gives him by prayer or sacrifice, or some other mode, the power to interfere somewhat himself with the direction of events. To the council where the future is deliberated and arranged it introduces, if not his vote, at any rate his petition; into the causes which operate on the great world-machine, it

gives a place to his individual will and interest, his loves and hates. Whither the arm of the mightiest cannot reach, where the united forces of mankind are ineffectual, thither the voice of prayer penetrating can, it teaches, move the hand that moves the world. And if experience shows that the effectiveness of this force cannot be relied on, still the knowledge that events are arranged and directed, and not left to blind forces, gives the system which furnishes it the value for life with which we are now dealing."

The above shows the utter absurdity of the religious position. For example, where and how did Professor Margoliouth obtain "the knowledge that events are arranged and directed"? He has just stated that "methodical study constantly reduces the appearance of design in phenomena, accounting for that appearance by other causes," and that "of design and purpose in history, as a whole, the traces are yet more obscure": on what ground, then, does he speak of "the knowledge that events are arranged and directed"? Let him explain the contradiction. *There is no such knowledge.* Professor Margoliouth does not know that there is "a hand that moves the world," and much less that the voice of prayer has ever moved that imaginary hand.

Here is another equally injurious fallacy for which religion is responsible:—

"Nor should we overlook its value as compensating for the inequalities of life, and so inducing contentment and tranquility, where otherwise their might be discontent or repining. The need for a world that sets this right is at least to some extent felt in proportion to the degree in which the arrangements of the present dispensation fall heavily on individuals."

The idea of "inducing contentment and tranquility" under the inequalities of life is essentially immoral. In so far as the inequalities of life are unjust there ought to be such vigorous and clamorous discontent as will eventuate in their abolition here and now. Evil conditions have been perpetuated through the influence of religion. Mankind would have attained to a much higher and more perfect state than it is in at present had it not been for the religious delusion that we are not to expect to find ideal conditions till after death. This world is the theatre of suffering and sorrow, of wrongs and oppressions and cruelties which we are to endure with patience, in the conviction that they are employed by God as the means of our sanctification. This is one of the most damnable of heresies, and it has worked inconceivable mischief in the world.

Professor Margoliouth has signally failed to prove the utility of religion. He has only succeeded in showing that, on the whole, it is productive of more harm than good. He even admits that society may be purged of all its evils without religion; that the need for it, even as "a moralising and reforming force," is not of infinite duration, and that the time may come when the world will be able to get on without it altogether. I now close in his own words:—

"That vicious inclinations may be stamped out as diseases are stamped out seems not impossible; and according as the effort of inculcating morality becomes less, and the need for reformation diminishes, there will be the less need for calling in the aid of belief in unseen forces to make men virtuous. There are those who think the time for this has already come, and that morality can be best taught without promises and threats, and without authorisation."

J. T. LLOYD.

Ingersoll's Lecture on Superstition.—III.

(Continued from p. 269.)

IV.

Now no man in whose brain the torch of reason burns, no man who investigates, who really thinks, who is capable of weighing evidence, believes in signs, in lucky or unlucky days, in lucky or unlucky numbers. He knows that Fridays and Thursdays are alike; that thirteen is no more deadly than twelve. He knows that opals affect the wearer the

same as rubies, diamonds or common glass. He knows that the matrimonial chances of a maiden are not increased or decreased by the number of leaves of a flower or seeds in an apple. He knows that a glance at the moon over the left shoulder is as healthful and lucky as one over the right. He does not care whether the first comer to a theatre is cross-eyed or hump-backed, bow-legged, or as well-proportioned as Apollo. He knows that a strange cat could be denied asylum without bringing any misfortune to the family. He knows that an owl does not hoot in the full of the moon because a distinguished man is about to die. He knows that comets and eclipses would come if all the folks were dead. He is not frightened by sun dogs, or the Morning of the North when the glittering lances pierce the shield of night. He knows that all these things occur without the slightest reference to the human race. He feels certain that floods would destroy and cyclones rend and earthquakes devour; that the stars would shine; that day and night would still pursue each other around the world; that flowers would give their perfume to the air, and light would paint the seven-hued arch upon the dusky bosom of the cloud if every human being was unconscious dust.

A man of thought and sense does not believe in the existence of the Devil. He feels certain that imps, goblins, demons and evil spirits exist only in the imagination of the ignorant and frightened. He knows how these malevolent myths were made. He knows the part they have played in all religions. He knows that for many centuries a belief in these devils, these evil spirits, was substantially universal. He knows that the priest believed as firmly as the peasant. In those days the best educated and the most ignorant were equal dupes. Kings and courtiers, ladies and clowns, soldiers and artists, slaves and convicts, believed as firmly in the Devil as they did in God.

Back of this belief there is no evidence, and there never has been. This belief did not rest on any fact. It was supported by mistakes, exaggerations and lies. The mistakes were natural, the exaggerations were mostly unconscious, and the lies were generally honest. Back of these mistakes, these exaggerations, these lies, was the love of the marvellous. Wonder listened with greedy ears, with wide eyes, and ignorance with open mouth.

The man of sense knows the history of this belief, and he knows, also, that for many centuries its truth was established by the Holy Bible. He knows that the Old Testament is filled with allusions to the Devil, to evil spirits, and that the New Testament is the same. He knows that Christ himself was a believer in the Devil, in evil spirits, and that his principal business was casting out devils from the bodies of men and women. He knows that Christ himself, according to the New Testament, was not only tempted by the Devil, but was carried by his Satanic Highness to the top of the temple. If the New Testament is the inspired word of God, then I admit that these devils, these imps, do actually exist and that they do take possession of human beings.

To deny the existence of these evil spirits, to deny the existence of the Devil, is to deny the truth of the New Testament. To deny the existence of these imps of darkness is to contradict the words of Jesus Christ. If these devils do not exist, if they do not cause disease, if they do not tempt and mislead their victims, then Christ was an ignorant, superstitious man, insane, an impostor, or the New Testament is not a true record of what he said and what he pretended to do. If we give up the belief in devils, we must give up the inspiration of the Old and New Testament. We must give up the divinity of Christ. To deny the existence of evil spirits is to utterly destroy the foundation of Christianity. There is no half-way ground. Compromise is impossible. If all the accounts in the New Testament of casting out devils are false, what part of the Blessed Book is true?

As a matter of fact, the success of the Devil in the Garden of Eden made the coming of Christ a necessity, laid the foundation for the atonement, crucified the Savior and gave us the Trinity.

If the Devil does not exist, the Christian creeds all crumble, and the superstructure known as "Christianity," built by the fathers, by popes, by priests and theologians—built with mistakes and falsehoods, with miracles and wonders, with blood and flame, with lies and legends borrowed from the savage world, becomes a shapeless ruin.

If we give up the belief in devils and evil spirits, we are compelled to say that a witch never lived. No sensible human being now believes in witchcraft. We know that it was a delusion. We now know that thousands and thousands of innocent men, women and children were tortured and burned for having been found guilty of an impossible crime, and we also know, if our minds have not been deformed by faith, that all the books in which the existence of witches is taught were written by ignorant and superstitious men. We also know that the Old Testament asserted the existence of witches. According to that Holy Book, Jehovah was a

believer in witchcraft, and said to his chosen people: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

This one commandment—this simple line—demonstrates that Jehovah was not only not God, but that he was a poor, ignorant, superstitious savage. This one line proves beyond all possible doubt that the Old Testament was written by men, by barbarians.

John Wesley was right when he said that to give up a belief in witchcraft was to give up the Bible.

Give up the Devil, and what can you do with the Book of Job? How will you account for the lying spirits that Jehovah sent to mislead Ahab?

Ministers who admit that witchcraft is a superstition will read the story of the Witch of Endor—will read it in a solemn, reverential voice—with a theological voice—and will have the impudence to say that they believe it.

It would be delightful to know that angels hover in the air; that they guard the innocent, protect the good; that they bend over the cradles and give health and happy dreams to pallid babes; that they fill dungeons with the light of their presence and give hope to the imprisoned; that they follow the fallen, the erring, the outcasts, the friendless, and win them back to virtue, love and joy. But we have no more evidence of the existence of good spirits than of bad. The angels that visited Abraham and the mother of Samson are as unreal as the ghosts and goblins of the Middle Ages. The angel that stopped the donkey of Baalam, the one who walked in the furnace flames with Meshech, Shadrack and Abednego, the one who slew the Assyrians and the one who in a dream removed the suspicions of Joseph, were all created by the imagination of the credulous, by the lovers of the marvellous, and they have been handed down from dotage to infancy, from ignorance to ignorance, through all the years. Except in Catholic countries, no winged citizen of the celestial realm has visited the world for hundreds of years. Only those who are blind to facts can see these beautiful creatures, and only those who reach conclusions without the assistance of evidence can believe in their existence. It is told that the great Angelo, in decorating a church, painted some angels wearing sandals. A cardinal looking at the picture said to the artist: "Whoever saw angels with sandals?" Angelo answered with another question: "Whoever saw an angel barefooted?"

The existence of angels has never been established. Of course we know that millions and millions have believed in scraphim and cherubim; have believed that the angel Gabriel contended with the Devil for the body of Moses; that angels shut the mouths of the lions for the protection of Daniel; that angels ministered unto Christ, and that countless angels will accompany the Savior when he comes to take possession of the world. And we know that all these millions believe through blind, unreasoning faith, holding all evidence and all facts in theological contempt.

But the angels come no more. They bring no balm to any wounded heart. Long ago they folded their pinions and faded from the earth and air. These winged guardians no longer protect the innocent; no longer cheer the suffering; no longer whisper words of comfort to the helpless. They have become dreams—vanished visions.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

Sir Oliver Lodge seems quite in love with the rôle of defender of the faith. He is continuing his religious articles in the *Hibbert Journal*. The current number of that publication contains the second of his articles on "Christianity and Science." There is a good deal about Christianity in it, but the scientific part must be printed in invisible ink; and if the Christian Churches go on acclaiming this sort of thing we can only conclude that they know their case is desperate and feel that they must have the support of some man of science, whatever price they may pay for it.

What the great Sir Oliver Lodge is really doing is this. He publishes certain pious ideas of his own, which have no more to do with science than they have to do with painting, music, sculpture, or poetry. These he passes off as contributions to the scientific study of Christianity. And he does not even take the trouble to be decently accurate on plain matters of fact. For instance, he refers to Jesus Christ as "that Syrian Carpenter" who was executed as "a criminal blasphemer." Now this is nonsense according to the Gospels, and we don't understand that Sir Oliver Lodge has access to any other sources of information. Jesus was indeed arrested as a blasphemer, and charged before the High Priest as a blasphemer, but he was not executed as a blasphemer. Pilate, the Roman governor, alone had the power of life and

death in his hands, and it was no use charging anyone with blasphemy before his tribunal. Jesus was therefore charged with *sedition*. He was accused of attempting to subvert the Roman power by setting himself up as the King of the Jews. To this accusation he practically pleaded guilty, and as guilty he was sentenced to the Roman punishment of crucifixion. Over his cross, we are told, it was inscribed that he was put to death as "King of the Jews." There was no "blasphemy"—"criminal" or otherwise—in the matter.

Sir Oliver Lodge finds that "the most essential element in Christianity is its conception of a human God." We hope he is not so simple as to fancy that this is unique in Christianity. The idea of the incarnate God was common and ancient in the East long before the Christian era. Nor is Sir Oliver Lodge anything but rather impertinent in observing that this conception of the human God "has been seized and travestied by Comtists." There are no Comtists, to begin with. Comte was not a god and did not claim to be inspired. He founded a religious philosophy or a philosophical religion, call it which you will. That system is called Positivism, when viewed from one side, and the Religion of Humanity, when viewed from the other. His disciples, if you like to use the term, are therefore not Comtists, but Positivists; and to assert the contrary is either shallowness or insolence. All we need say of the rest of Sir Oliver Lodge's article is that it should have been delivered from a pulpit.

We should like further details of the case of George Valler Rankin, aged twenty-six, a City clerk, who was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for "maliciously publishing a false and defamatory libel" concerning his father, a schoolmaster at the Napier-street Schools, Hoxton. The libel was on a postcard which was not read in court. We do not know, therefore, what it was. But, whatever it was, the young man said that he interfered on behalf of his mother, and that "it was a case for the divorce court." Of course he may have been mistaken, and even badly mistaken, but a good deal ought to be forgiven a young man who really believes he is fighting his mother's battle. And six months' imprisonment is certainly a hard sentence for what seems to be an incident in a family quarrel. It would appear that the young man was partly punished for avowing himself an atheist and a disciple of George Bernard Shaw. Mr. Justice Jelf indignantly talked about the prisoner's defence, after that avowal, as being "offensive to the mind of every right-minded person in court." By right-minded persons he obviously meant Christians, and the young man was apparently asking whether there were any real, as distinguished from nominal, Christians in court. Such a question would naturally be shrewd enough to be offensive, and it probably had a good deal to do with the sentence passed upon him.

Mr. Justice Jelf directed the prison doctors to inquire into the state of the prisoner's mind. On the face of it this looks like adding insult to injury. If the state of the prisoner's mind needed inquiring into, it would have been more merciful to carry on the inquiry before sentence instead of after.

Ann Wyman, of Gornal Wood, Staffordshire, was heard singing "Abide with Me" in her bedroom. She was afterwards found dead on her knees by the bedside in the attitude of prayer. The jury brought in a verdict of death from heart failure. If she had died while reading the *Freethinker* the jury might have considered it "a visitation of God."

The Aberdeen *Evening Express* has been printing some correspondence on Non-Churchgoing. Under the description of "Major and Elder, E.C.," one writer made a suggestion about young ladies volunteering to sing sentimental songs before or after the sermon. "Elder No. 2" deprecated this suggestion, and went to refer to the free distribution of dangerous literature that had been going on in the city—leaflets from the writings of Ingersoll and Huxley. "I also understand," he said, "that a movement is at present being carried out to bring Mr. Foote, editor of the *Freethinker*, to Aberdeen to deliver an address. I hope the whole of the Aberdeen clergy and church going community will do their utmost to put a stop to that movement. I also think the shareholders and directors of the various halls should be approached with a view of making it impossible to procure a hall for such a purpose. I hope abler writers than I am will take this matter up, and do their utmost to make the coming of Mr. Foote an impossibility." This is a compliment to Mr. Foote, though it was not meant to be so. It represents him as a terror to the Aberdeen Christians; as a most dangerous enemy to the Christian faith. "Union Grove" pointed out (after defending Huxley and Ingersoll) that "Elder No. 2's"

suggestion would be a good advertisement for Mr. Foote. "No Elder" even remarked that "Elder No. 2," besides being a prize bigot, was one who "must have very little faith in his Doity if he is so afraid of Mr. Foote's visit to Aberdeen."

The Olympic Games are all very well in their way, but modern Greece has other things to learn before she can claim to be civilised. The *Tribune* does well to call attention to the fact that Greek journalism rejoices over the exploits of the Greek mercenary bands in Macedonia. The *Acropolis*, for instance, boasted that one band, consisting mainly of Cretans, "sowed terror" among eight Bulgarian villages in the Morichovo district, and "forced them to return to the bosom of the mother Orthodox Church," taking "about forty peasants as hostages for the fulfilment of their promise to abjure the schism" (that is, the Bulgarian Church). These murderous outrages have been going on for years, but the European Powers don't trouble as long as the perpetrators are Christians. Nevertheless, the Greeks and their King may be reminded that running and jumping matches do not compensate for these shocking barbarities.

Dr. Torrey claiming protection against liars is an amusing spectacle. He says that he was credited in England with having said that his aunt was in hell, whereupon a young man got up to go out of the meeting, and on being told that he was going straight to hell replied: "All right; shall I take your love to your aunt?" Dr. Torrey says that this story was told of Moody and other evangelists long before it was told of him. "It is wonderful," he adds, "how the devil lacks in originality." Perhaps so. But those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. There was no originality in Dr. Torrey's lies about Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. He only borrowed them from previous liars.

How they scratch one another! Rev. Dr. Meyer says that Rev. Dr. Clifford will some day have a statue not far from Cromwell's. Well, one thing may be "not far from" another without belonging to the same company. Dustbins and lavatories are often "not far from" kitchens and parlors. Perhaps the comparison is a little "odorous," as Mrs. Malaprop would say, but it was challenged by Dr. Meyer's mad paenegyric.

The road to heaven is uphill—and few there be that find it. Darlington vicarage labors under the same disadvantage. Besides being most uncomfortably big, it is fifteen minutes' uphill walk from the church, and there is great difficulty in finding a man of God to accept the benefice.

According to a speaker at the annual meeting of the Church Missionary Society at Exeter Hall motor-cars are worshipped in some parts of India as "incarnations of the spirit of the age." England could well spare India some of these deities—and also their drivers.

Lot, the incomparable father of those two incomparable daughters, is called a just man in the Bible. But the Rev. J. Gascoigne, addressing a Sunday School Union meeting at Wakefield, said that he didn't suppose that Lot would be admitted into decent society to-day. No, nor in any other day, if his unspeakable adventure in the cave were once known.

By the way, the Rev. J. H. Horn, pastor of the Baptist Church, Teddington, who has started a Blackboard Bible Class, and is going through the Blessed Book with the aid of a piece of chalk, should find the blackboard undergo a San Francisco earthquake when he comes to that Lot story.

According to the Rev. O. Rodes, vicar of Woodhorn, Jesus Christ celebrated the first Holy Communion "in his best tunic and cloak." The matter is not of much importance at this time of day; otherwise we should wonder how a poor preaching tramp, who had not where to lay his head, managed to have a Sunday suit for swell occasions.

Rev. Meredith Morris, curate in charge of Garth Church, Maesteg, claims to be able to tell when people are going to die. One of seven gamblers, so he says, died according to the reverend gentleman's prediction. Why doesn't Morris to the Scer get a good job under a Life Insurance Company or an Annuity Office? His occult powers would be very valuable to such enterprises.

Pastor Howton, who has been holding a mission at Llanelly, boasts of his healing powers and his ability to cast out devils, in which he appears to excel Jesus Christ himself. "I was

wired for a short time ago to London," he said, "and I had to visit one of the asylums to see a young doctor, twenty-three years of age. I remained with him and commanded the demons to leave him in the name of Jesus, and in seven days they were cast out." He added that the young doctor had left the asylum and was a Christian. But the wonder to us is, not so much that they let the young doctor out, as that they did not keep Pastor Howton in. He may visit asylums once too often.

Being asked by Dr. D. J. Williams, of Burry Port, for the name of the asylum at which he drove out the young doctor's devils, Pastor Howton declined to give it publicly and said that "he would have a private interview with the doctor." This seems to have been too much even for a Welsh revival meeting.

The dear *Daily News* likes to be enterprising within the limits of the Nonconformist Conscience. It gave space to a nice report of a lunatic lecture by Miss Bridey O'Reilly on the occult virtues of precious stones. Some stones, she said, were lucky, and others brought misfortune. Opals were sometimes one and sometimes the other. Those to whom they were favorable derived gain and the love of those they desired. When opals were unfavorable they caused quarrels, separations, and even deaths. With such stuff the *Daily News* can fill its columns, while steadily refusing fair play or common courtesy to parties and persons more "advanced" than itself.

There was an article on "The White Slaves" in the *Daily News* of May 2, with reference to the Sweated Industries Exhibition which was to be opened in the afternoon. One of these sweated industries is Bible-binding, and the writer of the article drew the following anticipative picture:—

"There may be a woman engaged in book-folding, and visitors will note that her toil is being directed to the production of Bibles and prayer-books—pious industry, as one would think, and conjuring up inspiring thoughts. But note the underlying facts, making for a hateful discord in the imagination! Her husband is out of employment, and she has six children. By working twelve hours a day she manages, during only six months in the year, to make from 9s. to 10s., of which 8s. 6d. is required as rent for the three rooms. For one penny per 100 sheets is the price she is paid, with an extra farthing for some Oxford Bibles. Until one realises that three of the children earn a little money, the housekeeping problems of that family seem insoluble."

Could there be a more damnable impeachment of Christianity than this? The very Christians who print copies of their Blessed Book by the million, and run expensive societies for exporting countless copies to the heathen in all parts of the world, actually sweat the life-blood of poor working women in the process.

Princess Henry of Battenberg inaugurated that Sweated Industries Exhibition at Queen's Hall. As she saw women working at trades that bring them in a few shillings a week she exclaimed "Terrible, terrible! Shocking, shocking!" Then came the following sweet passage from the reporter's pen: "Having seen the process of making Confirmation wreaths at 1s. 9d. per dozen, her Royal Highness asked to be shown the Bible folding, at which employment the worker had, to secure 9s. a week, strained her heart." Straining the hearts of English women to save the souls of distant heathen! Such is present day Christianity.

The Bible Society has just held its annual meeting at Exeter Hall under the presidency of the Marquis of Northampton. In the report it was boasted that the Society had issued 5,977,453 Bibles or parts of Bibles last year. It was not stated how many women and girls were "sweated" in the binding of all these books. We suggest that a note of the price paid for their labor should be printed inside every volume the Bible Society issues.

The petition of the Armenian women of the town of Shusha to the Czarina is an awful document. It sets forth how they and their husbands, fathers, and brothers suffered from the Cossacks being turned loose upon them. They say it is the worst persecution in all their history, even "during the reigns of the Mussulman sovereigns." After relating the wanton murder and torture of their men, they refer to their own special sufferings. "They," the Cossacks, "pollute that which is most sacred to woman—her purity. Before the eyes of husbands, brothers, and fathers are violated wives, sisters, daughters, from the woman of sixty years old to the girl of eleven. Even the woman who has just lately been delivered of a child does not escape." It is enough to make a strong man shake his fist at the silent heavens. These Armenian women are not foreigners; they are the

Czar's subjects. They are not Mohammedans, but Christians like the Czar himself. And the Cossacks are Christians too. That is the most memorable fact of all. It shows us what a wonderful blessing Christianity is without the aid of civilisation and humanity.

Amongst a lot of pious directions published in the *New York Herald* is the following: "If you feel chilly, get the beloved disciple to put his arms round you." Some of the ladies are asking where he lives.

A Young Men's Christian Association at the antipodes has what it calls a rambling branch. "This evidently refers," a local paper says, "to the rambling utterances of the Y. M. C. A. orator."

Native boys in Central Australia are initiated into the society of men with much ceremony and great talk about a certain "great spirit Twanyirika." When they are full-grown men they are informed that Twanyirika "is merely a myth, an invention of the men to frighten the women and children." There seems to be more honesty in these matters in Central Australia than there is in England. Our mystery-men keep the game up all the time.

Enterprising Christians get up missions—with staffs and salaries, of course—for all conceivable objects, and some of them pretty nearly inconceivable. We see a report of the Racing Stables Mission meeting at Exeter Hall. Its work is to carry the Gospel to racing stable lads. How much is carried to them, and how much is accepted, does not appear. But there is the usual whine about inadequate subscriptions.

The Poor Law Conference at Malvern afforded General Phelps (King's Norton) an opportunity of saying that "a test in his union showed that twenty per cent. of the vagrants were seeking work," and that "if 1900 years ago the proposals of the committee had been directed against the apostles they would all have been sent to labor colonies, except St. Paul, who was a tentmaker." We suppose this was said facetiously, for some of the apostles, according to the record, were fishermen—and might have been sent to Yarmouth. We mean the Yarmouth of those days.

Pastor Cuff, of Bethnal Green, told the Baptist Union Conference that he would send loafers to some place where they would be compelled to work or be flogged twice a week. All right, Mr. Cuff, but see you start with the white-chokered ones.

The Anglican Church in America is trying Dr. Crapsey for heresy. He challenges the miracles of Christ, the Immaculate Conception, and even the Trinity. He calls the Resurrection a tradition and not a history. No wonder America is convulsed, for they still take these things seriously over there. Dr. Crapsey's principal supporter is Mr. Seth Low, the well-known reforming mayor of New York.

News from the Front, a pious military paper, publishes a long list of "Bequests for Prayer" at various Army stations. We count thirty-three of them in all—and there is something very comical about their circumstantiality. Below is printed a list of bequests for "Praise" for prayers answered. Thirty-three petitions and four replies. A poor percentage.

Does anybody know what the great "Tay Pay's" religious opinions really are? Hearing him speak on the Education Bill you would believe him a Roman Catholic. Reading one of his sentimental articles you would fancy him a weary-headed philosopher. Is he simply, after all, the Kerry boy on the make that he was thirty years ago?

Having declared before the general election in favor of "the secular solution" and gone over after the election to "simple Bible teaching," the dear *Daily News* seems to be lurching back to the former policy. "The only effect," it says of the Church attack on the Education Bill, "has been to make multitudes of converts, not to sectarianism, but to the view that the State must have no part in the teaching of religion."

Mr. Lloyd-George goes on repeating the old Nonconformist twaddle about Nonconformist victims of persecution. At the City Temple annual meeting of the Liberation Society he declared that "In 14,000 schools Nonconformity was as much a disqualification for head teachership as though it were an offence against law and morals." Yes, and in all those schools, and in as many thousands more—

about which the right honorable gentleman was silent—Freethought is a disqualification for head teachership. Religious disability of this kind does not disturb Mr. Lloyd-George; on the contrary, it appears to have his warm approval.

The Anglican Bishops are promoting prayers on behalf of the success of their policy in regard to the Education Bill; in other words, they are trying to capture God. The following is the supplication that is recommended by the Bishop of Ely: "Almighty God, who always watchest over Thy Church, we beseech Thee at this time so to guide the counsels of all those in authority that the children in the schools of this land may ever be taught the true faith which Thou hast revealed to us in Thy Son, and that as a nation we may be stedfast in Thy fear and in obedience to Thy holy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." This pious rigmarole will probably never reach its address.

At a Lambeth inquest on Monday a member of the "Peculiar People" called Cook, who has belonged to that sect for twenty years, explained why he had not called in a doctor to his seven-year old daughter, Dorothy May Cook, who had died of measles, bronchitis, and congestion of the lungs. He simply obeyed Christ's commands and relied upon Christ's promises. He believed the Bible to be God's Word and he had carried out its express injunctions. Nevertheless the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter, and he was committed for trial.

This happened on the very day that Mr. Birrell's Bill came up for its second reading. "Simple Bible teaching" is provided by that Bill for all the nation's schools—and a man who believes the Bible by doing what it says is guilty of felony. What a lot of fools or hypocrites the people must be who maintain such a state of things.

OUR ORIENTAL BIBLE.

This oriental Bible is at utter variance with the vital beliefs, the political and social tendencies, and the ethical aspirations, of the present age. Science has destroyed its naive supernaturalism; reason has placed its personal God—the magnified, non-natural man—in his own niche in the world's Pantheon; philosophy has carried us far beyond its primitive conceptions of human society; our morality has outgrown its hardness and insularity, however we may still appreciate its finer ejaculations; even the most pious Christians, with the exception of a few "peculiar" people, only pay a hypocritical homage to its clearest injunctions; and the higher development of decency and propriety makes us turn from its crude expressions with a growing sense of disgust, while the progress of humanity fills us more and more with a loathing of its frightful wars and ruthless massacres, its tales of barbaric cruelty, and its crowning infamy of an everlasting hell.—G. W. Foote, "The Book of God."

I have all my life been on my guard against the information by the sense of hearing; it being one of my earliest observations, the universal inclination of human kind is to be led by the ears; and I am sometimes apt to imagine, that they are given to men, as they are to pitchers, purposely that they may be carried about by them. This consideration should abate my wonder to see the most astonishing legends embraced as the most sacred truths, by those who have always heard them asserted, and never contradicted; they even place a merit in complying in direct opposition to the evidence of all their other senses.—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

THEN A CHURCH FAIR.

The pastor of a church in Virginia made an urgent appeal to his congregation for funds necessary to pay for repairs. The result of this appeal was disappointing, for not more than half the money needed was given.

The next day at a meeting of the vestrymen the pastor referred to the discouraging returns and asked advice in the matter of securing funds.

"Well," said a vestryman, "we have failed to get the money honestly; so I suppose we'll now have to see what a church fair will do for us."

"Which is the first and most important sacrament?" asked a Sunday-school teacher of a girl preparing for confirmation. "Marriage," was the prompt response. "No, baptism is the first and most important sacrament," the teacher corrected. "Not in our family," said the pupil, haughtily; "we are respectable."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

June 3, N. S. S. Conference, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—May 13, m., Dalston; a., Victoria Park; 20, m., Brixton; a., Brockwell Park; 27, a. and e., Victoria Park. June 3, Birmingham.
- J. BRYCE.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- G. H. BALLS.—Pleased to hear you liked the specimen copies of the *Freethinker* and are now ordering it through your newsagent. You wish that other papers "wrote in the same impartial strain." So they would if they valued truth before commercial success.
- G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.
- A. PETERS.—Glad to hear that you still look forward every week for the *Freethinker* after taking it for a number of years.
- W. CALDER.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks. Mr. Foote is writing you *re* your query.
- C. W. S.—Cuttings are welcome.
- H. L. F.—We noticed the matter in both your cuttings last week, though you could not have got that number of the *Freethinker* when you sent them. Thanks, all the same.
- A. G. LYE.—Your letter arrived on Tuesday afternoon last week, too late for the *Freethinker* then just going to press.
- C. R. NIVEN (Liverpool).—Thanks for telegram. The judge's decision is a set back for those who have been pursuing you with such ill-feeling.
- F. MEADOWS.—"Socrates" in the *Harrow Observer* must be an impudent person to assume so great a name. And to write such twaddle too! There is no cheek on earth like the cheek of your good Christian.
- W. C. SCHWEIZER.—Duly and safely received.
- W. MARTIN.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- A. J. PROSS.—We understand that the delay arose through an accident. A fresh supply of the book you mention is in the binder's hands, and a copy will be forwarded to you, completing your order, as soon as possible. Pleased to hear you so much enjoy "Acid Drops."
- J. BROUGH.—Glad you relished Mr. Lloyd's evening lecture so highly. Thanks for address, etc.
- W. RIBBY.—We had already seen and noticed it. Thanks all the same.
- T. H. STARK.—Order attended to. Thanks for cuttings.
- J. LACK.—The information is interesting and may be useful. We are glad to see that the Islington Trades and Labor Council is so decisively in favor of secular education.
- F. WILSON TEMPLE.—The matter has been dealt with in our columns already. Why not write a letter yourself to the paper from which you take the cutting? Write us on the other matter, by all means, if you wish.
- M. COLE.—There is no Branch of the N. S. S. at Middlesbro'.
- ALGERN.—We are unable to enlighten you on the point. Thanks for cuttings.
- E. ANDERSON.—See "Sugar Plums."
- C. F. COOKSON, 62 Sunny-hill-road, Streatham, S.W., will be pleased to hear from local Freethinkers willing to co-operate in establishing a Branch of the N. S. S. there.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 8d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had a splendid crowded meeting in the big Picton Hall, Liverpool, on Sunday evening, and his lecture on "Simple Bible Teaching: Mr. Birrell's Recipe for Children" was enthusiastically applauded. The size of the meeting is

frankly admitted in the excellent summary report that appeared in Monday's *Liverpool Post*. None of the other papers, however, seem to have thought it worth a mention. They were all so busy with P. S. A. reports and betting news. Mr. Schweizer, the N. S. S. Branch president, who occupied the chair, cordially invited questions and discussion; but there was a dead silence for some time until the lecturer assured would-be questioners that they would all be welcomed and answered courteously; then someone began, and plenty of questions were put afterwards. Altogether the meeting was a magnificent success, and the Branch is delighted with such an encouraging close to the winter's propaganda.

Owing to the crowded state of the hall, the sudden warmth of the weather, and, we regret to all, the miserably bad ventilation, a good number of Mr. Foote's audience were glad to get away as soon as the applause was over on his resuming his seat. This induced the *Post* reporter to say that there was a considerable exodus on the announcement of the collection. We suppose he had to put in a little disagreeable qualification somewhere. But, as a matter of fact, the exodus took place before the collection was announced.

Mr. Cohen started the open-air lecturing for the Bethnal-green Branch in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon. He had a large audience and we are told that he was "in fighting form on the Education question," much to their enjoyment. We are also informed that "more *Freethinkers* could have been sold"—which is good news in one sense and a pity in another.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place at Birmingham on Whit-Sunday. There will be two business meetings, morning and afternoon, and a public meeting in the great Town Hall in the evening, addressed by Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Cohen, J. T. Lloyd, and F. A. Davies. On the Monday there will be an excursion to Stratford-on-Avon. Delegates must have their credentials ready in good time; and this means that the general secretary, Miss Vance, must have notification of their appointment within a day or two of the date of this week's *Freethinker*. It will also be necessary to know what delegates and what individual members are coming to the Conference in order to make hotel and other arrangements. Information should be forwarded to Miss Vance immediately. It must be distinctly understood that no one will be admitted to the Conference without a proper delegate's or member's ticket.

The East Ham Branch of the National Democratic League has resolved: "That we view with satisfaction the quarrel between the leaders of the various religious sects over the so-called Education Bill, and trust the result will be the adoption of Secular Education."

The Hon. J. G. Jenkins, Agent-General and formerly Premier for South Australia, lecturing to the London Society of Arts on "Social Conditions in Australia," said that: "Fortunately Australia's educational advancement had not been delayed by sectarian interference. Efforts had been made from time to time to incorporate religious instruction with education, but the majority of the people had always been opposed to any form of State aid to religion."

The letter of Mr. George Meredith's (published in the *Tribune*), eulogising the late Mr. George Jacob Holyoake declared that: "Much is owing to him that England is no longer regarded on the Continent as the backward country in relation to Freethought, and that the term 'Freethinker' ceases to imply a holy reproach, a warning to infants and the craven." "Such men as he," Mr. Meredith said further on, "are the backbone of our land. They are not eulogised in monuments; they have a stouter memorial in the hearts of all who venerate a simple devotion to the oppressed, the labors of a clear intelligence, contempt of material rewards, and unflinching courage." We value this tribute chiefly as showing where Mr. Meredith still stands. He may not have known, and probably did not, that the words "Freethought" and "Freethinker" would not fall too gratefully on the ears of some of those to whom his letter was addressed.

Stephen Girard, the American "infidel," who founded the famous Girard College in Philadelphia, training and educating a thousand orphans, stipulated that the institution should be purely *secular*. "I enjoin and require," his will says, "that no ecclesiastic, missionary, or minister of any sect whatsoever shall ever hold or exercise any station or duty whatsoever in the said college, nor shall any such person ever be admitted for any purpose, or as a visitor, within the premises appropriated to the purposes of the said college."

In making this restriction I do not mean to cast any reflection upon any sect or person whatsoever, but, as there is such a multitude of sects and such a diversity of opinion among them, I desire to keep the tender minds of the orphans, who are to derive advantage from this bequest, free from the excitement which clashing doctrines and sectarian controversy are so apt to produce; my desire is that all the instructors and teachers in the college shall take pains to instil into the minds of the scholars the purest principles of morality, so that, on their entrance into active life, they may from inclination and habit evince benevolence towards their fellow-creatures and a love of truth, sobriety, and industry, adopting at the same time such religious tenets as their mature reason may enable them to prefer."

Sophia Neate, of Heatherside, Woking, referred to this part of Stephen Girard's will in a recent number of the *Tribune*, and called its provisions wise. She does not appear to be aware that the trustees of Girard College, with the connivance of the American authorities, carry out their trust in the interest of Christianity, by teaching religion and appointing a theological faculty. This infamous perversion is chuckled over by the very bigots who are always asking what "infidelity" has done for the world.

The Coventry Clarion Fellowship, at a crowded meeting in St. Mary's Hall, passed a resolution calling upon the local member of parliament "to be in his place in parliament on the second reading of the Education Bill and support the Labor Party's amendment declaring that all the education provided from public funds in school hours shall be in secular subjects only." An admirable resolution! Although, unfortunately, the Labor Party caviled in before the second reading, and decided to risk everything on the chance of doing some good while the Bill is in committee.

The Coventry Branch has held its annual meeting and elected Mr. James Shaw president, Mr. W. Cartwright treasurer, and Mr. A. G. Lye secretary. A good year's propagandist work, with an income of nearly £30, left the Branch nearly £8 in debt. But two concerts have since brought in about £4, and a grant of £3 has been received from the N. S. S. Executive; so that the Branch will begin next season's work in better spirits. After three new members were admitted, the annual meeting passed a resolution inviting Mr. Mason, M.P., to vote for an amendment in favor of secular education.

Forward.

O FRIENDS! whoever does a noble deed,
Himself is noble! The task, long since begun,
Others shall see accomplish'd. Amid the fret
Of jarring factions, and the little breed
Of apellike men, and bigots' watchful eyes,
That look with wrothful mein, shall we not speed
With the swift wheels of Progress, under skies
Of azure blue, and ponder well the creed
Which is of Christ; whose followers but heed
The crude theolatri, ferocious, blind,
The gospel babel, and the brazen lies
Of warring sects that come between the sun,
Making this earth a waste of winter wind,
For Reason hath not vanquish'd Faith as yet!

Ours is no war of blood! We do but war
Against religion's curse. Too long mankind—
Led by the priest, that jailer of the mind—
Has clung to baleful creeds which tend to bar
Man's upward path. The good is surely wrought,
For Liberty in her triumphal car
Moves ever thro' the widening spheres of thought,
Nor shall the smoke of hell her brightness mar!
But slowly are we to perfection brought;
Yet someday, those who never felt the lead
Of the world's canker-blight, and hideous scar,
Shall come with strength and dare to look abroad,
And, in the light of Truth's refulgent star,
Behold the Promised Land for which we fought!

WILLIAM EMSLEY.

For half an hour every Sunday we expect a man in a black gown, supposed to be telling us truth, to address us as brethren, though we should be shocked at the notion of any brotherhood existing among us out of church.—*Ruskin*.

From Fiction to Fact;

OR,

HOW I CEASED TO BE A CATHOLIC.—II.

BY FRED. BONTE

(Late a Prison Minister.)

(Continued from p. 284.)

SOMETIMES also the official clerical conference raised knotty points of doctrine and gave me occasion for theological disputes which brought me into trouble. The Bishop heard of them and gravely censured me several times. At a certain Christmas dinner in a layman's house I had referred to two articles in *The Month*, setting forth that recent geological discoveries in America, added to other reasons, such as the non-extinction of the volcanoes, had rendered belief in the universality of the deluge untenable. The Bishop met me casually afterwards and taxed me with the matter. I replied that I only stated what anyone could read in *The Month*, the organ of the Jesuits. "Never mind," was the frowning reply, "you must not talk about such things before the laity." This system of burking the truth grated harshly on my sense of honesty. Hiding facts and quenching discussion seemed to me a tacit acknowledgment that the Catholic system could not bear examination, and that it would collapse if light and reason were brought to bear upon it. Cardinal Newman admits that all free and independent inquiry must lead to the destruction of belief. That is the reason why Catholics are strictly forbidden to read heretical books, or even have them in their houses. They scrupulously boycott every book or paper that might tell against their tenets. A system conducted on those lines is simply an organised hypocrisy. Yet this system of burking facts was common. At a conference it was urged that there is no certainty of the application of suffrages to the souls in purgatory. That may be so, said a grave member, but we must not let the people know it. In a certain church were two paintings, one representing Our Lady giving the rosary to St. Dominic, the other her giving the scapular to Simon Stock. On my remarking to the priest that these were not historic facts, he made this characteristic reply: *Piè creditur*—it is piously believed. Thus dreams and fables grow into facts, and people live in illusions. The priests know one thing and the people, in their simplicity, believe another. The Church has her arcana, an esoteric belief, which it is forbidden to divulge. How different is the case in the field of science! There the only object sought after is truth. It is impossible to imagine a professor of geology or astronomy concealing facts or forbidding his pupils to discuss, to investigate, to throw light on scientific subjects. The scientist has no secrets, the theologian lives in an atmosphere of secrets, and ever dreads being found out. The one aims at truth, the other at concealment.

Among the books I used for my instructions was *The Catechism of Perseverance*, a considerable and important work. All through the volumes the author describes the struggles and triumphs of religion in the old dispensation and in the new; showing how in every emergency of peril to the Jewish or Christian polity, God had provided champions or deliverers. If the Albigenses threatened the Church, God raised up St. Dominic to ward off the danger; if Luther undermined the Papacy, God raised up Loyola to support it. In observing this see-saw of peril and deliverance, I came at last to ask myself: If God raised up Loyola, who then raised up Luther? And what of the many cases in which God had raised up no deliverer, and the gates of hell had visibly prevailed against the Church? God raised up no one to prevent the vast defection of Islam, God raised no champion to save the Church from the disastrous Greek schism; nor did anyone appear to arrest the secession of England from Rome, though England had been for centuries credited with

being Mary's dowry. But the Catechism gave no countenance to this view of the matter, neither did it dwell on the Inquisition, or the terrible persecutions the Catholics had waged against Pagans, Jews, and heretics, while it emphasised at great length the much lighter sufferings the Catholics had been subjected to.

Early in the eighties a friend lent me Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*, a book it is impossible to read without feeling that Catholicism has many weak points in its system and many dark spots in its history. The *History of Rationalism* by Lecky and his *History of European Morals* travel over similar ground, and while they enlighten the reader and widen his views, they tend to relax his hold on many dogmatic positions. The critical writings of Arnold and Renan advocate the tenets of the new time-spirit without abandoning the ancient positions. They put the new wine into the old bags.

At this juncture a fellow priest put into my hands a production whose very existence I was ignorant of—a copy of the *Freethinker*. I devoured its pages, and in reading them I experienced an altogether new sensation. I seemed for the first time in my life to be walking on *terra firma*. Hitherto I had walked in the clouds, now my footing was firm, here nothing was concealed, every statement was frank and straightforward; no conventionalism, no sitting on the fence, no fear of letting out the secrets, but fearless speech and above board from start to finish. Soon after I made the acquaintance of the *Literary Guide*, a journal of the same outspoken character. These two productions I have read pretty regularly ever since, deriving from them incomparably more information than ever I had drawn from my ponderous volumes of that old-world divinity which is based on groundless assumptions and lives in a world of illusions.

Other literary productions of the same fearless nature I read were Ingersoll's eloquent lectures and Inman's *Ancient Faiths*, a noble monument of learning and research. All this unorthodox reading did not tend to confirm my belief. My trust in the authority of the Bible was profoundly shaken, although I continued to read and expound it to the prisoners. I saw clearly that many of its narratives had small historical value, and that none of the so-called prophecies could bear examination. Matters were not likely to improve when I bought in a second-hand book-shop *Colenso on the Exodus*. I had read how courageously the noble Bishop had advocated the rights of the South African natives, and what frantic efforts had been made to counteract the influence of his writings, to depose him, to deprive him of his income, and how he had been excommunicated. The perusal of the book soon revealed the cause of all this fierce antagonism, and must prove a genuine revelation to every reader. As the writer could not be answered he was anathematised and covered with odium.

From the proface we learn that when the Bishop was translating the Bible into Zulu, a young native who helped him in this work asked him if the events related in the Scripture had actually happened. This question gave rise to anxious reflection in the Bishop's mind, and eventually led to his famous work on the Pentateuch, a forerunner of the Higher Criticism which is now playing such havoc with the traditional views of the Bible and with the most revered tenets of the Christian scheme of salvation. The book proves to demonstration that the Exodus is unhistoric and impossible. The ten plagues, the passover, the departure of millions of Israelites headed by 600,000 fighting men in battle array and passage of the Red Sea, the giving of the law, the establishment of the tabernacle, the wanderings in the desert—all alike clearly belong to the realm of fable. We may well doubt whether the Jews were ever in Egypt at all, the Egyptian monuments being silent as to any such stay, departure, or pursuit.

Matters of Catholic interest discussed in the press or at Catholic conferences led me more than

once into a train of heterodox thought. The preponderance of Catholics among the criminals of Liverpool was a frequent topic of remark. They form scarcely one-quarter of the inhabitants, and have the majority in the prisons. The same phenomenon presents itself in other large towns, as well as in Australia and in the United States. How could this fact be reconciled with the blatant pretensions of the Catholic Church that her education and religion are the sole safeguards of sound morality? All the religious and moral instruction imparted in Catholic schools, and the regular attendance at mass and confession, were inadequate to maintain among them even the average standard of morality. Then I thought that the vast amount of time spent in learning the fabulous histories of semi-barbarous Semitic Patriarchs, Judges, and Kings was a sheer waste, and that the weekly attendance at the Latin mass became a barren routine. Morals are not necessarily connected with religion, even if that religion be Christian. Abyssinia, with fifteen centuries of Christianity, is barbarous and corrupt; Japan, without Christianity, is a pattern of civilisation. Secularism furnishes a practical code of instruction and a sound basis of morality. The rudiments of science for boys and of household duties for girls would be far more useful in after-life than the long course of "sacred history."

In reading to the prisoners a new thought would sometimes present itself. There is not a more striking and appalling chapter in the Scriptures than Deuteronomy xxviii., where the rewards of obedience to the law and the punishments of disobedience are detailed. The long catalogue of miseries, diseases, and disasters is truly terrifying. On one occasion it dawned upon me that these rewards and punishments were purely temporal, and that no allusion was made to after-death retribution; further, it was apparent on reflection and inquiry that such awards were unknown among the Jews till the time of the Machabees, when, from sheer despair, they turned to a future life for justice. Not only are future awards ignored, they are even denied, as in Ecclesiastes. "The dead," the writer says, "know not anything, neither have they any more a reward. One thing befalleth men and beasts, as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence over a beast." The whole book is secular in tone, and urges us to make the most of this life, ignoring any other. The conclusion derivable from this was as follows: as the Old Testament recognises no future conscious existence, and such existence is the basis of all revelation, the Old Testament loses all right to the title of Revelation.

Another disillusion encountered in a similar way was in regard to original sin. After reading the story of the Garden of Eden, I consulted *The Catholic Dictionary*, and read to my amazement that only one statement in reference to the alleged fall occurs in the entire scripture, viz., in Romans v. The account in Genesis has not a word about Adam's disobedience affecting anyone but the offenders. What confirms this is the startling fact that the Jews have no knowledge of such a sin, or remedy for it, and never had. If Adam's sin had involved the race, the Jews would surely have known of it, and often insisted on it in their scripture. Christ himself said not a word about the Fall or his coming to undo it. The doctrine rests on the sole authority of Paul, and that authority is very doubtful. He does not assert that we are born in sin, but only that Adam brought sin into the world and death with it. Nor does scripture assert that baptism was conferred to wash away that sin; a notion which comes only generations later. The conclusion was that there is no warrant whatever in scripture for the doctrine. Yet this imaginary sin is the foundation of the entire Christian scheme of salvation. It is also puzzling how Christian parents, who are, of course, free from original sin, can communicate it to their children. How could children inherit from their parents a sin which these have not? On the stain of this supposed

sin rests the necessity of baptism, and the awful notion that all the unbaptised are damned for ever.

On reading the history of the brazen serpent one is apt to revert in thought to the law forbidding the making of images. How singular that Javeh should issue such stringent injunctions against the worship of idols and, in flagrant violation of his own law, order a brazen image of a serpent to be made, to be put up on high and to be looked up to for salvation, like a common Pagan idol! And what increases the wonder is that the image remained an object of public worship for seven hundred years; and for this long course of idolatory Javeh himself is answerable. The inconsistency of the whole story is so glaring that it is impossible to view it as anything else than a fiction—like the whole of Exodus.

A portion of this book deserves special mention; it is the making of the tabernacle with all that belongs to it, the sanctuary and its furniture, the holy of holies, the altar, the appointment and garments of the priests and the numerous sacrifices—a grand and imposing pageant. Unfortunately, when we turn to the first book of Samuel, the whole phantasmagoric spectacle vanishes into thin air. The ark is found in the meanest possible circumstances, first in Siloh, then in the houses of Abinadab and Obedom, without even one priestly attendant. It is clear that no tabernacle was ever set up in the desert at all. To account for this singular contradiction we consult the higher critics and learn that the Pentateuch, which had been thought to be the work of Moses, is now known to have been compiled from a number of anonymous documents, and that the compilation could not have been made before the exile, eight hundred years after Moses. The book of Exodus and the four following books have very little historical value. They were composed to kindle the gratitude of the Jews, returned from captivity, by the memory of the alleged benefits bestowed upon them by Javeh in delivering their fathers from the bondage of Egypt, giving them the law and instituting the worship of the tabernacle.

Experiences of this kind in reading and studying the scripture could not fail to undermine my confidence in it as a divine revelation, and to make me regard it as in no way different from other ancient writings.

But of all the books of scripture none has caused me more disappointment than Daniel. At College we had spent months in the study of its famous prophecies, only to learn ten years later that the book is a pure fraud. Instead of being the work of Daniel in Babylon, it was composed in Jerusalem in his name some four centuries later to encourage the Jews during the Machabean wars and enable them to bear the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. The prophecies have no reference at all to Christ or his death, but to the murder of the high priest Omias. The fiery furnace, the lion's den, the handwriting on the wall, the various dreams, being all pure fiction. Great was my indignation on learning how we had been imposed upon at College by those false interpretations, and sad were my reflections on learning how those spurious documents had furnished the chief inspiration of Christ, his title *Son of Man*, and much of the phraseology of his mystic and prophetic oracles. Christianity was evidently built upon the illusive interpretation of a fraudulent composition.

(To be continued.)

NATURAL SOCIETY.

Man in general has always been what he is now. This does not mean that he has always had fine cities, cannon with twenty-four pound balls, comic operas, and nunneries. But he has always had the same instinct of self-love in himself, in the companion of his pleasure, in his children, in his grandchildren, in the works of his hands. That is what never changes from one end of the world to the other. The foundation of society always existing, there has always been some form of society. For we were not made to live like bears.—*Voltaire, "Essai sur les Mœurs."*

Correspondence.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Jacob's last letter shows that he is quite unteachable. His suggestion that I had to "extricate" myself from "a difficult position" could come only from dishonesty, or lunacy. The obvious, and achieved, object of my rejoinder was simply to eject Mr. Jacob from the illogical position into which he had "rushed"—and "where," unlike the "angels," he did not "fear to tread."

Mr. Jacob asks me to show him my "note-book," and "to disclose the name and address (sic) of some of the friends to whom" I "reported Mr. Holyoake's declaration within ten minutes of the event." (Mr. Jacob evidently imagines that the "some of the friends" have only one "name and address" for the lot) I am willing to produce them, but only to a rational man—not to Mr. Jacob—say, to Mr. Foote (if Mr. Foote wishes). Mr. Jacob would not understand such quasi-evidence; he apparently fancies that it would have some value, whereas it would, of course, have none. The testimony of my friends would only prove that I told them something; not that the something was true. The "note" in the note-book would not prove that the "note" was true. Besides, as Mr. Jacob has said, implicitly, that I am a liar, it would be easy for me (a liar) to "cook" my note-book, especially as the entries in all my—fifty or sixty—note-books are in pencil. Mr. Jacob does not think. My last letter made perfectly clear (what was clear enough before—to all but Mr. Jacob) that proof, or disproof, of my conversation with Mr. Holyoake is impossible. Mr. Jacob does not think.

The "friends" referred to were my office colleagues (architects and engineers), of whom six still remain, and are willing to testify in writing, or in the flesh. But, if Mr. Jacob would be satisfied with such testimony, he must be even sillier than I take him to be; and if he would not be satisfied with it, he must be superlatively silly to ask for it. Verily, Mr. Jacob does not think.

Our gifted friend also inquires if I have "asked Mr. Holyoake's relations (sic) and friends to verify" my statement. Of course not! What have they to do with the matter? They were not present during the conversation, and I was. Mr. Jacob does not think. Moreover, how could I ask a "relation"? A "relation" is an abstraction. Perhaps Mr. Jacob means a relative. Mr. Jacob is not exact. If Mr. Jacob takes any further interest in this matter, he will simply have to accept my bare statement, or—as the well-known Holy Ghost says in his celebrated Romance—"go down quick into hell." Mr. Jacob offers to send "a sovereign" to Mr. Foote if I, or my friends, can show that Mr. Holyoake "called himself an Atheist in any of his writings down to 1891." As I never undertook to do anything of the sort—the question being not what Mr. Holyoake wrote to others, but what he said to me—it is clear that I have not only ejected Mr. Jacob from his untenable position, I have actually compelled him to run right away from its neighborhood.

With regard to the "sovereign": Mr. Jacob can afford to give it, because in my two letters I give him more than a sovereign's-worth of instruction in logic and syntax, free of charge—in the language of the prophet: "without money, and without price."

I now bid Mr. Jacob farewell, in order to escape from his embarrassingly complimentary attentions; for, surely, dispraise from the irrational is the height of flattery.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

[Mr. Mackenzie's rejoinder must end this correspondence, which does not seem a very profitable one, from any point of view.—EDITOR.]

Matter, in relation to vital phenomena, has yet to be studied, and the command of Canute to the waves would be wisdom itself compared with any attempt to stop such inquiries. Let the tide rise, and let knowledge advance; the limits of the one are not more rigidly fixed than those of the other; and no worse infidelity could seize upon the mind than the belief that a man's earnest search after truth should culminate in his perdition. Fear not, my friend, but rest assured that as we understand matter better, mind will become capable of nobler and of wiser things.—*John Tyndall.*

What is real and universal cannot be confined to the circle of those who sympathise strictly with his [Swedenborg's] genius, but will pass forth into the common stock of wise and just thinking. The world has a sure chemistry, by which it extracts what is excellent in its children, and lets fall the infirmities and limitations of the grandest mind.—*Emerson*

Rather Rough; or, The "Infidel" Interrupter.

A BANGER of Bibles was banging like mad
 In a park on a fine Sabbath Day;
 In the praises of God, the Omnipotent Dad,
 Was haranguing and banging away.
 Thanking God that His "only" had suffered and died
 For the people His Devil enticed.
 (But an "infidel" voice in the audience cried,
 " 'Twas a little bit rough upon Christ.")

Said the banger, "He clothes and supplies us with food,
 For His mercies are over His works."
 (Said the voice, "And especially over the brood
 That palavers to people for 'perks.'")
 "Who doubts His design, His beneficent plan,
 Is a lunatic, staring and stark."
 (Said the voice, "He was rough on the seafaring man
 When He shaped the ship-shadowing shark.")

To a mining disaster the pastor referred
 In a Stiggins-Pecksniffian tone;
 And he showed how the prayers of a few had been heard (?)
 By the Lord on His Heavenly Throne.
 "Thank God, they were saved" (*the majority died*)
 "For his heart with compassion is filled."
 (But that "infidel" voice in the audience cried,
 " 'Twas a little bit rough on the killed.")

"Come all ye backsliders, repent and return
 Like a wandering sheep to the fold;
 A lesson," said he, "you can all of you learn
 From the prodigal sinner of old."
 And he showed what a sumptuous feast was supplied
 On that "stony" backslider's behalf.
 (But that "infidel" voice in the audience cried,
 " 'Twas a little bit rough on the calf.")

Said the spouter, "That shouter who stands over there
 Is an infidel, wicked and coarse;
 A blatant blasphemer, he'd better beware,
 Or in Hell he'll be filled with remorse.
 For all the rejecters of Jesus who died
 Will be damned in the Devil's domains."
 (But that "infidel" voice in the audience cried,
 "Rather rough on the people with brains!")

ESS JAY BEE.

Angry Father Hunts Priest.

REVEREND BRUTE GOES ASTRAY WHILE EXTOLLING JESUS AS
 AN "EXAMPLE" FOR MEN. WOULD NOT HAVE KNOWN
 GOODNESS AND VIRTUE WITHOUT IT.

FATHER KNIPPER, a man of God, and of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, as the name implies, is a fugitive from justice. This holy man who took Christ for an example, and who was given to saying, let little children come unto me and forbid them not, abused four little girls of his flock, and when it was found out, he fled to escape the anger of one of the parents, who was after him with a big gun.

The scene of the crime was in Troy, Ohio. One of the little girls became peculiarly ill, and innocently told her mother of the actions of Father Knipper, and implicating also three other little girls. News of the crime scattered widely, and on the priest learning that it was out, and the father of one was after him to kill him, and a mob forming to hang him, he fled and at once came to Cincinnati, going immediately to the Archbishop of the diocese for protection.

If there is one thing more than another that the Catholic Church will lend all its powers to, it is to shield the crimes of priests from the law. With any poor devil of the church, the law may take its course, and in such instances, the church parades itself as the "upholder" of the law.

But in a case of murder like that of Agatha Reichlin at Lorain, Ohio, two years ago, by a drunken, licentious brute of a priest, the church at once sets its political wires to work to shield the sacred criminal, and he was never punished in the least.

Or again, like the murder of Mary Gilmartin, a poor Irish girl, who was shot down in cold blood on the streets of Cincinnati a few years ago, by another licentious brute of a priest who had ruined her when a child. When she grew older and realised her relations with the priest, she fled to this country to escape him. He followed her, and when she refused longer to be criminal with him, he shot her down on the street, and kicked her dead body.

* The "open air cure" of souls is suspended on wet days!

He was apprehended and sent to an insane asylum, and after talk had died out in a year or so, he was permitted to escape.

Now comes Father Knipper, guilty of a heinous crime. No one knows where he is. Somehow, the detectives can't find him. They can find any one else guilty of crime, no matter how small, but they can't find this saintly corrupter of innocence. They will never find him. If a poor negro had done anything so bad, he would have been caught and strung up in two days.

The Catholic Church poses as the supreme sponsor of morality, yet bends every effort to shield its leprous teachers from the punishment retreats, nuneries and monasteries, their example. Again I ask, what was and make them safe. They have secret places which the sharpest eyes could not discover. To it, the priest is above and superior to the law, and the hold that this superstition of mediæval ages has upon American politics, may be reckoned by its ability to shield its corrupt priesthood from punishment for their crimes.

If all the cases like this of Father Knipper came to light, it would appall society. It is safe to say that not one in a thousand come to light.

What are we to think, too, of the law, when it permits the escape of such criminals? Is it any wonder men are ceasing to have respect for government? Is it any wonder that a general contempt prevails for those interested with authority?
 —Dr. J. B. Wilson, "Blue Grass Blade," (Lexington, Kentucky).

HEROISM.

No soldier's uniform he wore.
 He had not heard the wild acclaim
 That sounds for him who draws his sword
 In battle, mad for human blood.
 And yet his was a hero's soul.

Fearless he dared to speak the Truth—
 Defend the Disinherited—
 And those who once had called him "Friend"
 Now pass him by. And still he dared,
 With bleeding heart, to speak the Truth.

And one whom he had loved and called
 Him to her side and in the eve
 Had sung to him sweet songs of Love,
 Clung in a fond embrace; pressing
 Her tear-wet lips against his face,
 Had pleaded with him thus: "The Mob!
 How canst thou love it, vulgar, base?
 My lips are sweet against thy brow.
 Oh, stay! Go not among the throng.
 I cannot bear this heavy cross,
 This strange disgrace thou bringest on me.
 So must thou choose—the mob or me!
 Sweet, stay with me, Love may be thine,
 Its kiss and tender words. Oh, stay!"

And agony the while his soul
 Had grappled with. He faltered—yet
 But one brief moment; then had sighed.
 "Good-bye, sweet Love, Good-bye for aye,"
 And forth into the night had strode,
 Unconquered, though with bleeding heart,
 To mingle with the mob and rouse
 In slaves the love of liberty.

—Reuben Borough.

HIGHEST AND BEST.

The appeal to what is highest and best in men does not pay; a seeming appeal to what is highest and best does. I suppose the wealthiest corporations in the world are the Roman, the Greek, the Lutheran and the Anglican churches. As a trade, as an art, Religion pays; but whenever there is an actual attempt to transcend, the crucifix and the stake are ready: ostracism for the man of independent means, death by starvation for the poor man, are prompt and inevitable.—John Davidson.

Obituary.

WE have to record the death of Mr. W. Dowling, of Oak Lodge, Horsford-road, Brixton-hill, London, S.W. It happened most peacefully. His last words, before bidding his wife good-bye, were: "I'm exquisitely happy." He died as he had lived, a convinced Secularist. His remains were cremated at Brookwood, and the ashes laid next to Charles Bradlaugh's grave. Mr. Dowling was a staunch admirer of that heroic man. He was also an admirer of the editor of this journal.

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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, J. W. Marshall, "Christianity before Christ."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen; 6, G. Aldred.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Opposite "Prince of Wales," Brixton-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "The Bible in the Schools"; Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. A. Davies.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, J. Rowney, a Lecture.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, Andrew Allison, "Is the Bible the Word of God?"

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, A. E. Killip, "Some Solar Myths."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, Lecture or Impromptu Discussion.

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, Noah Ablott, "The Abolition of Money under Socialism."

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