

THE Freethinker

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*Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security.*

—WORDSWORTH.

"The Brave Days of Old."

A LETTER reached me a few days ago in a black-edged envelope. It came from a widow informing me of the death of her husband. I will speak of him again presently. In the meanwhile I wish to say something about his father: for he bore a name that Freethinkers should always hold in the highest respect.

The far West of England has never been barren of brave men. Three hundred years ago its boldest were fighting the Spaniards on far-off Atlantic seas, sailing the ocean in boats that would be considered impossible now, and performing prodigies of valor that stir the blood like the sound of a trumpet blowing to battle. Sir Richard Greville, who conducted that immortal defence of the little *Revenge* against the whole Spanish fleet, was a Devonshire man. Drake was a Devonshire man. In more modern times, and in very different fighting, Richard Carlile, who spent nine years and seven months in English gaols for the right of free publication, was a Devonshire man. George Odger, the first really working-class leader in this country, was a Devonshire man. And I who knew George Odger well, and have always honored Carlile since I first heard his name, and had read about West country heroes before I knew of the heroes of Freethought—I also, humble treader as I am in the footsteps of my betters, sometimes say to myself, as I think of the great fraternity, I am a Devonshire man too. For the poorest cadet of the house shares the family blood.

It was fitting that one of Bradlaugh's toughest early fights should be in Devonshire. It happened at Plymouth—my native town, although I was too young to know anything about it. Yet the name of one man who stood by Bradlaugh's side is one of my early recollections. He was called Steer; he was the only Atheist I heard of in those days, and he was a chimney-sweep. When I saw him in the street I used to get on the opposite side, and look at him from a safe distance. I knew the Devil was black, I was taught that an Atheist was a devil, and this man looked the part to perfection. Yet many years afterwards, when the little boy had grown into a young man and had entered the army of Freethought himself, I returned to Plymouth and delivered Atheistic lectures there; and on the platform sat that Atheist devil who had frightened me in the days of my ignorant simplicity—a devil no longer to my instructed intelligence, but a good son, a good husband, a good father, and a good citizen.

In March, 1861, Bradlaugh paid a second visit to Plymouth. During the former visit, in the previous December, he had been arrested and prevented from lecturing. This time he meant business; and when Bradlaugh meant business something was sure to

happen. Bills announced that he would deliver an address on Sunday forenoon near the Devonport Park Lodge "to vindicate the right of free speech." Twenty-eight policemen were ready to deal with "Iconoclast," and the military were in reserve. Bradlaugh appeared upon the scene, the police followed him, and the people followed the police. Directly he opened his mouth he was to be arrested. He did not open it. He walked right down to the water. Was the wicked Atheist going to drown himself? Nothing of the sort. He got into a boat which was in readiness to receive him. Strong arms pushed her off a few yards. She was the platform. Bradlaugh stood up in the boat and delivered his address to the audience (including the police) who stood on the shore. He had discovered that the water was under the jurisdiction of Saltash, a little old town a few miles up the Tamar, which, in the rotten-borough days used to return two members to parliament. The police were helpless, and naturally they were savage. They expected to make a victim of the licensed waterman who had helped Bradlaugh to trick them. But there was no licensed waterman. A brave Freethinker, Captain Trenaman, had found the boat for Bradlaugh, and had manned her with his own crew.

Perhaps it doesn't sound very much now. But think of what it was then. Realise the risks that such a brave Freethinker ran in that period of bigotry and persecution. And then take your hats off to Captain Trenaman.

Bradlaugh is dead, and Captain Trenaman is dead, and it was the son of that Captain Trenaman whose death I was notified of by that letter in the black-edged envelope.

Captain Trenaman wrote to me early in the year. He had just touched English soil again, and was going home for a week or two before taking command of a fine new ship belonging to the Company he served. He asked me a question; and would I mind writing him a letter? I wrote it, and said a few words straight from the heart. He wrote again, saying how proud he was to receive such a letter from me; he declared it was worth framing. I smiled not unpleasantly as I read his honest sailor epistle. And I have sometimes pictured him looking at it now and then on his long voyage to South America. I did not know that he had already sailed his last voyage. He caught a bad cold, and died of double pneumonia at Antwerp on February 26. His widow brought his body home for burial. She would have written to me before, but she "hadn't the energy"—which I can well understand. It must be a terrible blow to lose such a husband. I cannot say how much I feel for her in this great sorrow.

One by one the brave men come into the world—one by one they leave it. They are the salt that keep it from stinking in its own corruption. The first virtue is courage, and the second virtue is courage, and the third virtue is courage. The world has always felt this. That is why it ever gives the highest place to the hero. And this must be said of Bradlaugh, that he had a way of finding brave men, as brave men had a way of finding him. For like runs, or walks, or drifts to like; and as the eyes of the true men meet each other they speak the unworded secret of the lofty brotherhood.

G. W. FOOTE

The Blessed "Sawbath."

SPECIAL efforts are being made at present to secure a united effort by all Christian bodies for the revival of the blessed "Sawbath." Alarmed at the growing "desecration" of Sunday, which, by keeping people from church and chapel threatens all alike, high church and low church, chapel and meeting-house, are for once found on the same platform, all alike prophetic of disaster unless some steps are taken to restore the "Sabbath" with something of its old time glory. It may, therefore, be of interest to many to get a connected account from a book I have just been running through, of what the Sabbath used to be like before modern thought laid its destructive hands upon it, and in a society—New England—where Christianity had things pretty much its own way. Not that it was a specifically New England Sabbath institution. The Puritans took with them the Sabbath as they took witch-burning, slavery, and other Christian institutions, but in New England they were less interfered with, and so one can see there the Puritan Sunday in its ideal condition.

Among all the gloomy institutions that human nature has ever groaned under, the New England would easily take the first place. Every detail, from the bare, gaunt meeting-house—ill-ventilated in summer and bitterly cold in winter—with its rows of long, narrow, uncushioned and uncomfortable seats, down to the innumerable regulations governing human relationships, seemed to have been designed for the express purpose of making people miserable. And if the Puritan Sabbath did not quite succeed in doing this, it must have been because human nature is so constituted that the conscious pursuit of the uncomfortable defeats its own object by developing a species of comfort in the realisation of its opposite. To escape the Sabbath was impossible. It was all-embracing and all-compelling. Legally everyone—child and adult—was compelled to be at church. As late as 1760, Connecticut passed a law inflicting a fine of 10s. on anyone staying away from public worship on the "Lord's Day."

Once in church there was no escape until the very long service was concluded. The doors were locked; and at Salem three constables were placed "to keep ye doores fast and suffer none to goe out before ye whole exercise bee ended." Even a quiet "snooze" during service was prohibited. An official "awakener," armed with a long knobbed staff, was there to rap on the head or over the knuckles or prod in the ribs anyone who availed himself of nature's last refuge against droary sermons. In some towns where the regulations were more than usually severe it was ordered that "A cage be made or some other means invented for such as sleepe on the Lord's Daie." All things considered, he must have been a man of courage who, being awakened by the preacher, answered, "Mind your own business, and go on with your sermon."

Sabbatarian regulations must have pressed very heavily on the younger members of the community—boys being regarded with special suspicion, not to say dislike. The boys were seated in a group by themselves, with a special man told off to keep them in order, and "use such raps and blows as is in his discretion meet." Playing on Sunday was, of course, forbidden; but, then, so it is by our own London County Council, which, in order not to shock this same Puritan Conscience, closes its park gymnasiums on Sunday and forbids cricket and football. Young men were brought before magistrates and charged that they "sported and played, and by indecent gestures and wry faces caused laughter and misbehavior in the beholders." Tabatha Morgan was charged with laughing and playing on the Lord's Day, and fined three shillings and sixpence. Deborah Bangs, in 1775, was fined five shillings for a similar offence; and a boy at the same time was fined ten shillings. In another case, "His Majesties Tithing man entered complaint against Jona. and Susan Smith, that on the Lord's Day, during Divine Service, they did

smile." It all reminds one of the truth of the old saying that the objection of the Puritans to bear-baiting was not that it hurt the bear, but that it pleased the people.

The nature of the regulations governing the older people will be best illustrated by a description of some of the offences and their punishments. Thus a wicked fisherman was fined for catching eels on Sunday. Two sweethearts, John Lewis and Sarah Chapman, were tried for sitting together on the Lord's Day under an apple tree in Goodman Chapman's orchard. Elizabeth Eddy was fined ten shillings "for wringing and hanging out clothes." A Plymouth man was set in the stocks for attending to his tar-pits on Sunday. A Wareham citizen for pulling apples was fined five shillings. More horrible still was the offence of Captain Kemble of Boston. He was guilty of "lewd and unseemly behavior" inasmuch as he kissed his wife "publicly" on the Sabbath Day on the doorstep of his own office. It is true he had just returned from a three year's voyage, but the authorities were clearly of opinion that having waited so long he should have waited a day longer. The New Haven code of laws, more severe still, ordered that "Profanation of the Lord's Day shall be punished by fine, imprisonment, or corporal punishment; and if proudly, and with a high hand against the authority of God—with death."

There is nothing new under the sun. The other week the *Church Times* pointed out that a deal of non-attendance at Church was caused by people playing tennis, cricket, football, or riding bicycles on Saturday afternoons and evenings, and so tiring themselves too much to get up on the following morning. It solemnly advised ministers of religion to attend to this aspect of the subject. The pious New Englanders were quite alive to this evil. Instructions were given that all labor was to cease at three o'clock on Saturday, and the rest of the day was to be spent in "Chatechizing and preparaceon for the Sabath as the Ministers shall direct." The master of a vessel, who had just landed in Boston, was followed to his lodgings by a constable, seized by the hair of the head and dragged to prison. His offence was that he had walked about after sunset on Saturday night. Nor was Providence behind hand in endorsing these regulations. Thus a man worked at repairing a mill dam after sunset on Saturday. The next day his child fell into an open well and was drowned, and the father "in open congregation did acknowledge it the righteous hand of God for his profaning his holy day." How Dr. Horton must sigh for a return of these glorious times!

The minister's person was almost as sacred as the Sabbath. A Mistress Oliver was forced to stand with a cleft stick on her tongue for "reproaching the elders." A New Haven man was whipped for saying "I would rather hear my dog bark than Mr. Bellamy preach." Philip Ratcliffe had his ears cut off and was whipped for "speaking against the Churches." Two wicked women were punished for answering a question with "The Devil a bit"; while William Hawes and his son were fined fifty shillings each for saying, with more judgment than discretion, that such as sing in the congregation were "Fooles."

Not that the ministers were beyond reproach; it was only unlawful to say so. Human nature will out in some form or other, and the ordination services in various towns seems to have often given rise to a good deal of ministerial jollification. One excerpt from the diary of a minister runs: "We had a pleasant journey home. Mr. L. was alert, and kept us all merry. A jolly ordination. We lost sight of all decorum." Despite prohibitions against speaking disrespectfully of ministers, there were numerous complaints as to the intemperance and disorders of these gatherings; but the following account for "keeping the ministers" at an ordination in Hartford in 1784 is illuminating:—

	£	s.	d.
To Keeping Ministers	...	0	2 4
2 Mugs Tody	0	5 10

	£	s.	d.
5 Segars	0	3	0
1 Pint Wine	0	0	9
3 Lodgings	0	9	0
3 Bitters	0	0	9
8 Breakfasts	0	5	6
15 Boles Punch	1	10	0
24 Dinners	1	16	0
11 Bottles Wine	0	3	6
5 Mugs Flip	0	5	10
3 Boles Punch	0	6	0
3 Boles Tody	0	3	6

There is but a small amount of bread to "this intolerable deal of sack," but it is, after all, as healthful a piece of human nature as anything that has gone before.

C. COHEN.

"Revelation by Visions and Voices."

SUCH is the title of Essay No. 15, by the Rev. Edwin A. Abbott, M.A., D.D., in the series known as *Essays for the Times*. In this brief treatise Dr. Abbott is seen both in his strength and in his weakness; in his strength as a man of clear common sense, and in his weakness as a prejudiced religious advocate. In two-thirds of what is advanced in this essay we heartily concur; with the remaining third we are at complete and inexorable variance.

Dr. Abbott frankly admits that to half of the world visions are "all alike false," while to the other half of the world they are "all equally true," though practically useless. This is equivalent to admitting that all visions alike, whether regarded as true or as false, are, to the whole world, without any value whatever. Unless the world is composed of more than two halves, it follows, from Dr. Abbott's own admission, that visions are only "efficacious in shutting our eyes against God's revealed truth."

Of course, in such an admission, our essayist is not to be taken literally. He does not mean what he says. But he *does* make admissions which are to be taken seriously. He tells us that visions often come to madmen, visions which "are very often the consequences of intemperance and sin, either in the madman himself or in his ancestors." The drunkard has strange visions while under *delirium tremens*: he sees repulsive, monstrous things which are merely the creations of his disordered nervous system. If you doubt his report he cries out, "But I saw them; there they are now, look at them." You look; but there is nothing there. Such visions, Dr. Abbott concedes, are "almost always accompanied by 'delusions,' and being a kind of vengeance exacted by Nature for the infraction of her laws, may reasonably be called delusions, and regarded as punishments." Sins are of two kinds, we are told, ancestral or inherited, and acquired, and both "may issue in the curse of madness," and the curse of madness may issue in visions which are pure delusions.

Next to the visions of madmen come those of poets. Dr. Abbott insists that "the maniacal sight" must be distinguished "from that poetic sight which is generally implied by the term 'imagination.'" But is it not a recognised scientific fact that every genuine poet is more or less mad, or that genius itself is a form of insanity—a freak or sport of Nature? Is it not Shakespeare, the prince of poets, who says that

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact"?

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a fascinating love-story. Hippolyta says:—

"'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of."

and Theseus answers:—

"More strange than true. I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends."

Then he continues:—

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
And, as imagination bodies forth [heaven,
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear?"

According to Shakespeare, then, the visions of the poet, however beautiful and noble, are not objectively, but subjectively, real. It is to "airy nothing" that the poet gives "a local habitation and a name." The utility of poetry, therefore, does not lie in its literal truthfulness, but in its artistic veracity. *The poet is not a describer of what is, but a creator of what is not.*

Up to this point we are in agreement with the essayist; but at the next point we are obliged to part company with him. In addition to the maniacal sight, and the poetic sight, he asserts the existence of a spiritual sight. This is the ascending series: lunatics, lovers, poets, prophets, these four, and the greatest of these are prophets. Now, observe, Dr. Abbott admits that the maniacal sight is false, and that the poetic sight is imaginary. "It is true," he says, "that the poet, as Bacon tells us, has an insight above ordinary men into a more exact goodness, and a more absolute variety than can be found in the nature of things. But the poet, though he has this insight, has too much of art, too much of the plastic work upon his hands, to give himself up so completely as the seer to the influence that possesses him." The seer, the prophet is to be distinguished from the poet in that he "gives himself up completely to the influence that possesses him"; and in consequence what he sees is to be accepted as revelation. What the poet sees does not exist except in his own fancy, but what the prophet sees is objectively real. Dr. Abbott illustrates this distinction by the following description of George Fox's Vision of the Cloud:—

"One morning, as I was sitting by the fire, a great cloud came over me, a temptation beset me, and I sat still. It was said, 'All things come by nature'; and the elements and the stars came over me, so that I was in a manner quite clouded with it. But, as I sat still and said nothing, the people of the house perceived nothing. And, as I sat still under it and let it alone, a living Hope and a true Voice rose in me, which said, 'There is a living God, who made all things.' Immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away, and life rose over it all: my heart was glad, and I praised the living God."

According to our essayist here is "an instance of inspiration as pure, and expressed in language as beautiful as anything in Isaiah," and with this we fully agree; but what is there to show that any revelation came by the vision? The vision, even granting that it actually occurred, does not prove the existence of "a living God who made all things." George Fox's parents were eminently pious people. With all their hearts they believed in God as the Creator; and it was in this same faith that their famous son was brought up. George Fox was a firm and fervent believer in God from infancy; and the vision was only a reflection of his faith, not the cause of it. *An unbeliever has never yet had an immediate vision of the Divine Being, and in consequence of it become a believer.* This is a fact of immense importance, but Dr. Abbott totally ignores it. Dr. Abbott asserts that there is no "feigning" in the seer; that "it is all plain seeing, no 'working up imagination' to the level of seeing"; but this is nothing but the bald assertion of a Christian believer. I am second to none in my admiration of the marvellous genius of William Blake; but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that his interpretation of the vision of sunrise was based upon his supernatural belief. "I assert for myself," he said, "that I do not behold the outward creation. 'What,' it will be questioned, 'when the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea?' Oh! no, no, I see an

innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.' Blake saw and heard just exactly what he was prepared to see and hear. There was no *revelation* whatever in the vision: it was simply an expression or embodiment of the faith that was in him. To be a *revelation* a vision must communicate to the seer some fact or truth that was previously unknown to him; but in no recorded instance has a vision done such a thing.

Even this also is virtually admitted by Dr. Abbott. While vainly contending that "the great majority of the Old Testament visions seem to indicate a complete subordination of the will of the seer," and that "many are preceded by bodily prostration, during which the mind is made a passive recipient of the divine revelation," he is yet bound to add that "even in the visions of Israel there is to be noticed, not only a progress in the character of revelation from generation to generation, but also a correspondence between the vision and the seer which shows that, even in the visions of Israel, human nature is not excluded." No, in these so-called visions human nature is not excluded, nor is human nature ever transcended. Take the highest and noblest of all the visions recorded in the Old Testament, and you will perceive that there is absolutely nothing to indicate that the Word of the Lord in them was any other than the word of the prophet himself. The God of Isaiah, for example, was nothing but an objective embodiment, or an imaginative projection in the form of poetic personification, of Isaiah's own idea of individual and national Righteousness. The two Isaiahs were men of undoubted genius. They saw life clearly as well as accurately, and they saw it whole. They saw it as it was, with its possibilities of confusion and disaster and suffering, and they saw it as it ought to be, with its brilliant promises of prosperity and blessedness. And their vision of life is of profound interest and practical value for us of to-day. My only contention is that there is nothing to show that the visions of ancient prophets brought to their contemporaries or bring to us any superhuman or supernatural message, and that they are of value to us chiefly as aids to trace the evolution of the idea of God and of the moral sense among the Hebrews of pre-Christian times.

One of the strangest of the many remarkable admissions made by Dr. Abbott in this essay is, that "even in the writings of the prophets of Israel it is impossible to discriminate what they set down verbatim as the result of mere passive hearing from what they themselves composed, having once received the divine impulse." In that case, how can the essayist assert that anything was ever "set down verbatim from passive hearing"? How does he know that the prophets did not themselves carefully compose all the visions attributed to them? How can he tell that the seeing and the hearing were not purely imaginary? He speaks of "the visions of departed friends which have been manifested to survivors," and adds the following luminous note:—

"I assume that every educated person believes that there have been, and are, such visions; and that many of them are not the mere effect of material external objects converted by preoccupied imagination into some other appearance, as a sheet or coat may be hurriedly mistaken for a human form. Years ago, a physician, who had no religious belief of any kind, and who was one of the most truthful of men, assured me that he had seen his mother's face, stooping over his bed at night, shortly after her death. 'I was as much awake as you are now; and I saw her as clearly as I see you. But of course I knew it was a mere optical delusion.'"

In that italicised last sentence is to be found the scientific explanation of all visions whatsoever, unless they are mental visions elaborately composed by the seers themselves. But no visions have ever transcended human nature, and so proved the existence of a supernatural realm.

J. T. LLOYD.

Smiles are as catching as tears.—Maeterlinck.

Christianity and Woman.

[A new Chapter in the Fourth Edition (1906) of *A New Catechism*, by M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago.]

1. Q. Is it true that Christianity has helped the cause of woman more than any other agency in the world?
 - A. It is not. Christianity has rendered no direct service to woman. The most it has done for woman has been to consent to the reforms which other agencies secured for her.
2. Q. How, then, do you account for the fact that the position of woman is more advanced in Christian than in non-Christian countries?
 - A. By the same way that we explain, for instance, the fact that the stage, notwithstanding the bitter opposition of the Church, is more prosperous in Christian than in non-Christian countries. The same may be said of science and political and social reforms. The church has simply been unable to suppress the progressive energies of European races.
3. Q. But is there any reason why Christianity should be prejudiced against woman?
 - A. Christianity, as already stated, being Asiatic, both in its sympathies and antipathies, announces no original position on the question of woman, but confirms the prevailing prejudice against woman in oriental countries. Besides, Christianity as an offshoot of Judaism, which is an Asiatic institution, accepts the latter's attitude on all great questions as infallible.
4. Q. What is the position of woman in the Bible?
 - A. In the Old Testament she occupies a decidedly inferior position. The rights which men prize the most are denied to her. She is excluded from religion as well as from politics, and is placed on a level with a man's slaves or chattels.
5. Q. Quote some instances from the Bible showing the treatment accorded to woman.
 - A. The Jew was required to repair to Jerusalem once a year, he and all his belongings, but the wife was not privileged to accompany her husband. Again, the Lord discriminates against women when he says: "Three times in the year all the *males* shall appear before the Lord thy God." Again, a mother who gave birth to a daughter was required to abstain from religious services for a time twice as long as was required for the mother of a boy. Once more, it was considered unclean for a woman to become a mother. "She shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary," says the Bible. Only after she had made atonement for the sin of motherhood by offering a lamb or a pair of pigeons, etc., was she forgiven. And again, in demanding offerings of beasts and human beings, the money value to the Lord, represented by the male was twice that represented by the female.
6. Q. In the "story of creation" is not Eve, the first woman, on an equality with Adam, the first man?
 - A. No. Adam, or man, is represented as the end of creation. Eve, or woman, only as a means to this end—as necessary to the happiness of man. Besides, the first words addressed to her by the deity announce her perpetual bondage to man, "And he shall rule over her."
7. Q. What was the position of Jesus on this question?
 - A. There is no proof that the question interested Jesus at all. His Apostles were all men; he abstained from marriage; rebuked his mother, and made no protest whatsoever against the deplorable and degraded subjection of woman which in his day and country was at its worst.

8. Q. Has the failure of Jesus to appoint women as his apostles influenced the Church?
 A. It certainly has. Both the Catholic and the Protestant churches have stubbornly refused the ministry to women. A masculine priesthood has been represented as alone being acceptable to God.
9. Q. What was the Apostle Paul's attitude respecting woman?
 A. He was unusually unjust to woman; for he suggests that there is as much difference between man and woman, as between man and Christ.
10. Q. Are there any great female characters in the Bible?
 A. The author of the *History of European Morals* remarks that the women of both the Old and the New Testaments are of a low order and certainly far inferior to those of Roman history or Greek poetry.
11. Q. What was the attitude of the early Christian church toward women?
 A. Tertullian addresses women in these words: "Thou art the devil's gate, the betrayer of the tree, the first deserter of the divine law." The same theologian sees no reason for her existence, and he adds: "How much better two men could live and converse together than a man and a woman." St. Ambrose says "Remember that God took a rib out of Adam's body, not a part of his soul, to make her." Other Christian teachers agree with Paul that she must veil her head because she is not, as is man, in God's image.
12. Q. Has not the Christian church in our day championed woman's interests?
 A. On the contrary, it is a regrettable fact that the Church has been an hindrance to her emancipation.
13. Q. In what way?
 A. For a long time, both in England and in America, to ask rights for women was associated with infidelity. A pastoral letter in 1837 referred to the "degeneracy and ruin" of the female sex because it demanded equal rights with man. The poet Whittier wrote an eloquent poem in answer to this clerical attack.
14. Q. Who have been the friends of the cause of woman?
 A. In all countries her deepest sympathisers have been those whom the clergy brand as "heretics."
15. Q. Sum up the attitude of Christianity toward woman.
 A. (1) Christianity, like Judaism, in representing woman as the first sinner who conspired with the Devil to bring about the fall and ruin of man, has placed woman in a false light.
 (2) This theological prejudice against woman has influenced the conduct of the State toward woman, and made her a victim of unjust laws.
16. Q. What was the position of woman before Christianity?
 A. While in all countries and at all times woman, representing the weaker sex, has been more or less enslaved, still it appears that in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, she enjoyed greater privileges. In no pagan faith, for instance, is she represented as the accomplice or the instrument of the Devil. This in itself is a tremendous distinction between Judaism and Christianity on the one hand, and the pagan faiths on the other.
17. Q. State in a few words the story of woman's emancipation.
 A. (1) The first step forward came with monogamy.
 (2) Then the right to hold property in her own name, vastly increased her importance,

and provided her with leisure and independence.

(3) This led to the conquest of new educational advantages; and one after another, schools and colleges opened their doors to her.

(4) Finally, we may mention the general decline of religious belief, which carried away with it the greater part of the prejudices against woman.

18. Q. How do you account for the fact that in spite of the injustice of all religions to woman, she continues to be their mainstay?

A. That is a singular, but by no means an inexplicable phenomenon. Her attachment to institutions which exploited her, and which, while exacting the greatest sacrifices from her, denied to her the rights which belong to her, is the result of training. The new education has provoked her to protest against the long slavery of the past. The number of women who are breaking away from the Church is daily increasing.

Aphorisms.

ALL religions are founded on fiction, encouraged by fraud, propagated by interested persons, and supported by superstition.

For proof of this, read the Bible, the Koran, and the Vedas. Jew, Christian, Mohammedan and Buddhist, as well as savage and uncivilised races, are all under the influence of supernaturalism, the force of superstition, the power of dogmas, and the effect of so-called miracles and supposed supernatural agencies. These agencies are mostly delusions.

The falsities of Biblical narratives, prophecies, and miracles; the assertions of the Koran; the inventions and occult speculations of Buddhism, and the numberless fancies of other forms of belief demonstrate these undoubted facts.

Reason and the truths of Materialism appeal to the thinkers, if not to the theological or religious minds.

In every one of these religions, notwithstanding frauds, and falsities, and extravagant pretensions, there have been good men, heroes, saints, lofty teachers, whose work for human benefit may be acknowledged and revered. But to regard any one religion as superior to all others, or of divine origin, or infallible, is a very great and grave error. Good lives may be lived even if much that these religions teach is a fiction. And we come to see, as we observe, that in many things Christianity is surpassed by Buddhism and Mohammedanism, and has much to learn from them. And the influence of any one religion, dominated by its clergy, is not to be desired for human welfare or for liberty of thought. And all religions, with the exception of Buddhism, to its honor, have been notoriously guilty of persecution of the most cruel kind and rivers of blood shed, to which Christianity has contributed in overflowing measure.

"There is no religion higher than truth" say the Buddhists in the family motto of the Maharajahs of Benares. But can they prove that their religion, or any other, possesses the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? They cannot. They have not.

The tangible, the visible, the actual, the provable, the demonstrable, these are the tests of reality. Outside these lie delusions, snares, falsehoods, impositions. Therefore reject them.

And reject the supernatural totally. Do not be influenced by any person or class dealing in it, or forms or claims related to it.

Observing this, the mind will be unfettered, the conduct natural, and the life free indeed.

GERALD GREY.

Acid Drops.

A statue of the late Sir William Vernon Harcourt has been unveiled in the members' lobby of the House of Commons. All the old political performers were present at the ceremony; which was quite fitting, for Sir William Harcourt was an old political performer himself. We never could understand what particular good he was to the British nation. The chief thing we remember about him is that he lied infamously about us when we were "doing" twelve months in Holloway Prison for the artificial crime of "blasphemy"—or, as our indictment said, bringing the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt. A memorial, signed by leading men in science, art, and literature, was presented to the Home Secretary for our release, but Sir William Harcourt made no sign, and it was an open secret that his "Chief," the "G.O.M.," was dead set against any mercy to the "blasphemers." At length a question was asked in the House of Commons by Mr. Peter Taylor, a brave Radical with a long and honorable record of service in the cause of progress. Mr. Taylor asked what the Home Secretary meant to do. What reply was he going to make to the remarkable memorial that had been presented to him? Sir William Harcourt was fairly cornered, but he rose to the occasion. He declared that what we had been guilty of was "in the most strict sense of the word an obscene libel." And in the circumstances our punishment was just.

Sir William Harcourt lied. He lied deliberately. And as we were helpless in prison he lied basely. We were prosecuted for *blasphemy*. There was not a word about *obscenity* or *indecent* from the beginning to the end of our indictment. Moreover the Lord Chief Justice of England had handsomely helped us to repel the odious insinuation. Our attacks on Christianity were called "indecent" by the bigots; then they developed "indecent" into "obscene"—and it was this vile word that the Home Secretary caught at in his extremity. When we denounced those who used such language, in our speech before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in the Court of Queen's Bench, he lent us his powerful assistance. These were his words to the jury:—

"Mr. Foote is anxious to have it impressed on you that he is not a licentious writer, and that this word does not fairly apply to his publications. I should say that he is right. He may be blasphemous, but he certainly is not licentious in the ordinary sense of the word; and you do not find him pandering to the bad passions of mankind."

That is what the Lord Chief Justice of England said from the bench about me. Yet in the face of it Sir William Harcourt had the impudence to stand up in the House of Commons and call me "obscene." And he was a Liberal, mind you; yes, and the "G.O.M." was a Liberal too.

"One of the Jury," as well as many others, wrote to the papers about this. He pointed out that nothing had been said by the prosecution about any "indecent" on our part at the trial. Even the *Daily News* felt it necessary to censure Sir William Harcourt's tactics. "It is not usual," that journal said, "to keep Englishmen in gaol on the ground that they committed an offence of which they have not been convicted, and against which they have had no opportunity of defending themselves." Sir William Harcourt was invited to release us on the charge of "blasphemy" and prosecute us afresh on the charge of "obscenity." But he only grinned. And to tell the truth we could cheerfully spit upon his statue.

There has been a National Peace Congress at Birmingham. Several reverend gentlemen were present, and so was Mr. J. M. Robertson. We wonder how he liked some of the pious statements he listened to. Mr. W. A. Appleton, for instance, according to the *Daily News* report, "pleaded for an extension of the peace propaganda to the workers. Hitherto it had been confined to the religious bodies, while the great millions of the people had been left untouched." Mr. Appleton does not know what he is talking about. The opposition to militarism began amongst the thinkers and the workers. The Churches never took it up till they thought it profitable to do so. Any bone that they get hold of is sure to have meat on it. Many years ago we heard Mr. Cremer say at St. James's Hall, when Bradlaugh was opposing Gladstone's Egyptian war almost single-handed, that a circular had been sent round to all the Nonconformist ministers in the London district and only some few of them—less than half a dozen, if we recollect rightly—had taken the trouble to reply. Mr. Foote's pamphlet, *The Shadow of the Sword*, was first published some twenty years ago. None of the religious papers said a word in its favor until the Humanitarian League asked Mr. Foote to let it issue the pamphlet

in its series of propagandist publications. By that time anti-militarism was getting more popular, and several Christian ministers—for instance, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes—were beginning to patronise the Humanitarian League. Then a few words of praise were given to *The Shadow of the Sword*. But even these words were not too honest, for the writers pretended that when Mr. Foote wrote that pamphlet he was a very good Christian without knowing it. Which, as our old friend Euclid says, is absurd.

Sir Charles Warren has been presiding over a meeting of the Palestine Exploration Society. He seems to be very fond of exploring in "the Holy Land." He wasn't quite so fond of exploring about Spion Kop.

Stands Scotland where it did? Not exactly—but that is no fault of the Chief Constable of Dundee. This gentleman, giving evidence before the Parliamentary Committee in favor of Lord Avebury's Sunday Closing Bill, deplored that the practice of keeping open shops on Sunday had increased. In Dundee it was chiefly due to the ice-cream shops, frequented by young people who ought to be at Church or Sunday-school, and contributing to the funds of those institutions, instead of supporting the ice-cream business. The household of faith in Scotland is sadly divided, but there ought to be a temporary reunion for the purpose of presenting Mr. Dewar with a family Bible and an illuminated address.

Ingersoll once said that religious people prayed for quite impossible things; for instance, he had heard the chaplain ask God to give Congress wisdom. There is another chaplain now, but he seems to be tarred with the same old brush. On June 14, at the opening of the House of Representatives at Washington, the chaplain referred to the American flag in his opening prayer, and said: "God grant it may wave in triumph until every people of every clime shall feel its influence, and rest, secure in their sound rights, under its graceful folds." This is a sweet American-Christian way of hoping that America will boss the world; for the world's good, of course; that must be distinctly understood. It doesn't occur to this Washington praying-machine that "every people of every clime" may prefer to have flags of their own.

There will be more trouble in France. The Pope has definitely declared against the lay associations clause of the Separation Act—and we really don't see how he could do otherwise. The Catholic Church has a constitution of its own, which cannot be altered without a total change in its character. The Republic wants the Church property to be in the hands of laymen, and it does not require much sagacity to see that this is dead against all the history and traditions, and even the very essence, of the Catholic Church.

In dealing with the Catholic priests we think the Republic has shown great generosity, which is also wise statesmanship. They will continue to be paid by the State, more or less, for the next nine years, so as to give them time to adjust themselves to the new condition of things; and the older priests will have a life pension straight away. This is excellent, and can hardly be praised too highly. But in the matter of the places of worship, and their paraphernalia, we think the Republic has not been generous enough. It might have said to the Catholic Church something like this: "You are practically the Christian Church in France; the religious edifices, and what they contain, are really of no use for any other purpose than yours; take them, then, and worship in them as you please; the only condition stipulated is that the State must have guarantees for the safety and accessibility of historic buildings like Notre Dame." This would have secured all that was necessary, and have avoided a lot of bad blood.

Mr. W. Pett Ridge told a good story yesterday at the annual meeting of the Factory Girls' Country Holiday Fund of how a bishop was taught a point of etiquette. A party of factory girls were being taken through St. Paul's. Two of them lagged behind, whereupon his lordship, who was the guide, took one by the arm, saying impatiently, "Come along, my dear, come along!" The girl wiped the sleeve whereon the episcopal hand had been laid, and remarked to her companion, "Ain't he free!"—*Tribune*.

"Providence" has not been kind to the garden-county of Kent. The long-continued cold winds have played the deuce with the fruit crop. There will be only a quarter crop of cherries, and plums are almost a total failure. Of gooseberries there will not be more than a half crop. Black currants are also a failure. What apples will be is still open

to question. Altogether the growers will suffer a great loss. But then—"He doeth all things well."

Father Bernard Vaughan has been denouncing the vices of fashionable society. This is an old clerical game, and nothing ever came of it; for, at bottom, fashionable society and its clerical denouncers understand each other perfectly well. But there was a true thing said incidentally by Father Vaughan. "Society," he stated, "has discovered that it can get on very well without prayer—that when it does pray nothing comes of it." That's true enough. And its application goes a great deal beyond "society."

Canon Rhodes Bristow, rector of St. Olave's, Tooley-street—one of the City churches—admits that he gets £600 a year out of it for doing nothing. He sub-lets his rectory at £120 a year and lives at Lewisham. Sometimes there are two people at the morning service and six in the evening. That is when business is brisk.

How the shade of Judas Iscariot must yearn over such news! £600 a year and a nice residence at Lewisham—for doing nothing. Fancy! The cashier of the first Salvation Army actually had to "rat" in order to raise the wind; and all he got by selling Christ was thirty shekels—about £3 15s. Selling Christ is more profitable now.

The following extract is from a recent number of the *Daily News* :—

"At Edgware Sessions, yesterday, Frederick Foster Craddock, of Pinner, was charged with 'unlawfully using certain subtle craft, means, or device by palmistry, or otherwise, to deceive Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Mayhew and others.'

It was stated that he held seances where charges were made for admission. He was a medium who professed to call down the spirits of certain dead persons. One apparition was that of a child who was not dead, another was an uncle who did not exist, and a third a woman who was alive and well. On the 18th of March Colonel Mayhew and Captain Carlton attended a seance, and while the spirit of a brother officer still living was before the company, Colonel Mayhew seized the apparition and Captain Carlton turned on an electric light, with which he had come provided, and disclosed the fact that Craddock, the defendant, was acting as medium and apparition.

Counsel added that the seances were opened with prayer and hymn singing. The hymns used were 'Lead Kindly Light' and 'Nearer my God to Thee.'

The "medium" business seems one of the greatest impostures of the day. But we dare say the people in it only envy the earnings of the impostors in the regular old firms called Churches.

Pastor Main, of the Evangelical Mission, Wood Green, was troubled with a stomachic growth, and the doctors gave him up. Then the Christian Scientists had a go at him. They anointed him with oil, and offered up earnest prayers on his behalf, and his friends expected he would recover. But they were mistaken. He is buried.

Rev. Dr. Aked, of Liverpool, has been addressing a meeting of Wallasey Free Churchmen. Wallasey is a place, we believe, where the Free Library refuses admittance to the *Freethinker*. No doubt this act of tyranny is supported by Dr. Aked's friends, the Free Churchmen; at any rate, we have not heard of one of them saying anything against it. It was amusing to us, therefore, to read how Dr. Aked rejoiced with these Wallasey liberty-lovers over the Education Bill as "a charter of emancipation" for Nonconformists. Whether it is a charter of emancipation, or something very different, for others, doesn't matter. Indeed, the reverend gentleman lectured the Catholics very severely. What did they mean by demanding more than the Nonconformists chose to give them? If they did not mind what they were doing they would get nothing at all. Dr. Aked rated the Churchmen too. "The Church," he said, "cared nothing for education, and never had done." Well, how much have Nonconformists cared for it? This new Education Bill, which they are so enraptured with, does not contain a word about education from beginning to end. What they are fighting for is not better education for the children, but the control of the religious instruction that shall be given them.

General Booth suffers more and more from megalomania—or what in the vernacular is called swelled head. He is now arranging—so it is announced—for the exportation of 10,000 aliens (if they will go!) from London to some country which is not named, but which is "not within the limits of the British Empire." Suppose the "General" went with them, and stopped there, what real loss would it be to England? Can anybody tell us?

How these Christians love one another! Catholics, Churchmen, and those who are facetiously called Free Churchmen are just now expressing the most delightful sentiments about each other. Yet in spite of the love which is *not* lost between them they have something in common, and that something is a detestation of the freedom of the human mind. We are forcibly reminded of this by the letter which Dr. Waller, the secretary of the Wesleyan Education Committee, has written to the Bishop of Exeter. Just look at the following :—

"I am glad that the defects of the Bill are being shown up, and I hope that the final outcome will not be so disastrous as we might fear. It is a matter of thankfulness that the House of Commons has declared in favor of religious teaching, and against secularism, and although there can be no ecclesiastical tests, yet surely, apart from such tests, means must be taken to ascertain the character and fitness of teachers generally to fulfil their duties, including the giving of religious instruction. I certainly think the members of the staff ought to be allowed to give special religious instruction in denominational schools, if they are willing to do so, and also that under a Conscience Clause religious instruction should be given in school hours, and that it should be compulsory."

Could anything be more truly Christian than this? Down with secularism! That is the first step. Down with tests! That is, theoretically, for the sound of the thing; but practically they must be kept up—for it is necessary, after all, to find out how the teachers stand affected towards our religious teaching. Finally, the religious teaching must be given in school hours, and must be compulsory, so that no child shall be exempted from it without a lot of trouble on his parents' part and a lot of discomfort on his own. On these points the Catholic, the Churchman, and the Free Churchman are united in one glorious Trinity.

"On the whole," the *Westminster Gazette* says, "we think opinion is ripening in favor of making attendance compulsory during the time of the religious lesson." This is an invitation to Mr. Birrell to sacrifice the only logical provision in his Bill—and to swallow the only words in his speech introducing it which betrayed any real feeling. Well, if Mr. Birrell can do this, and if the Ministry support him in it, we may dismiss all idea of honor amongst politicians.

Mr. Birrell distinctly said that the Conscience Clause was a farce while the odium of withdrawal from the religious lesson was thrust upon the child. His new Conscience Clause was meant to protect the child against that martyrdom. The *Westminster Gazette* and a lot of others, Liberal as well as Conservative, beg him to let that martyrdom continue. And these people are Christians! They make the very name of Christian stink in the nostrils of Non-Christians.

Under the heading of "a Bishop's Threat" a Liberal morning paper reports a statement made by the Bishop of Newcastle to a large meeting of Churchmen in the Town Hall. "They were determined," he said, "to see that if the Bill should pass it should never work." This was greeted with loud cheers. And we believe the Bishop meant it. The Nonconformist gang who are running this country just now will have their fill of "Passive Resistance" when their Education Bill is carried.

Mr. Asquith's speech at Northampton was spoiled, as far as it could be, by the feminine terrors who are pledged to make him miserable, and may finish by having his blood—for nobody knows where hysterics will stop. It does not appear, however, that the nation lost much by the interruption of the flow of Mr. Asquith's eloquence. Most of what he said was about the Education Bill. He trotted out again the hackneyed statement that the great majority of parents preferred "Simple Bible Teaching" for their children. No proof was offered; the statement was, as usual, allowed to be its own evidence. And the right honorable gentleman's peroration was worthy of it. "Bring up your children in the fear of God," he exclaimed. But he did not explain what "the fear of God" has to do with politics, and why the Liberal leaders have taken to religious preaching.

The impossibility of the secular solution was asserted by Mr. Asquith. Here again he offered no proof. Yet the dear *Daily News*, which has boxed the compass on this question, ventured to speak of his "praiseworthy courage" in doing this, especially "in the city so long represented by Bradlaugh and Mr. Labouchere." Evidently a very little political courage goes a very long way. In any other sphere of life it would hardly be worth mentioning.

Religion is looking up. A correspondent favors us with the following press cutting :—

"Is the time not now ripe for the grave reconsideration of Mr. Birrell's Education Bill, which threatens to sow the seed

of Socialism—the taproot of Anarchy? The Anarchist has no religion—neither has this Bill. Destitute of religion, there can be no law, without law Anarchy reigns. In years to come the name of Birrell may still live in the cellars and the attics.”

This pious passage is from a sporting paper called *The Winning Post*. One of the editor's "bookie" friends ought to do a little business with the Bishop of London now. The previous paragraph denounces legislation against street-betting as not much short of blasphemy. Yes, religion is looking up.

Mr. Birrell's masters are keeping a watchful eye, and intend keeping a firm hand if they can, on their Parliamentary servant. On Monday last the Minister of Education was visited by two deputations of Nonconformists, amongst whom was, of course, the inevitable "Dr." Clifford. The deputations told Mr. Birrell very plainly that they demanded the withdrawal of Clause IV., and threatened to withdraw their support from the Government if the obnoxious clause was maintained. This, they said, would mean the return of the Conservatives for a long tenure of office. Mr. Birrell, who appears to have taken his drubbing in quite a meek and lowly spirit, said that he quite appreciated the gravity of the situation; he would not fail to lay the position before the other members of the Government, and that whatever view was taken ultimately it would be with a full view of the danger incurred.

The position is quite clear. These men do not ask, they "demand." The government, in their opinion, exists to carry into law the resolutions of the Free Church Council. And nothing else is of importance at the side of the religious question. If the Nonconformists get the religious teaching in schools they want there is no objection to the government trying its 'prentice hand on other subjects. If the religious question is not settled to the satisfaction of the Free Churches every other question in the country may go to the dogs or the Devil for all they care. We hope all those members of parliament who are interested in these other subjects, and all those people outside who are similarly interested, will note the significance of the Free Church threat. For our part if we had to choose between the religious tyranny of the Established or the Free Churches, we should—while detesting both—have little hesitation in coming to a decision.

The good Christians have had another beanfeast at Bielostok, in Russia. As the Corpus Christi procession was passing a fool of a fellow, a Jewish Anarchist—unless it was an agent of the police—hurled a bomb into it, killing and wounding many persons. This was a signal for a general massacre of the Jews. Hundreds were slaughtered, with the usual details of such performances, which may be left to imagination. Gentle Jesusites!

Since the previous paragraph was written we judge from the reports of English newspaper correspondents that no Jewish Anarchist threw a bomb at all. The story was got up by the authorities, who are themselves responsible for the massacres at Bielostok. More massacres are being arranged, and will doubtless follow in due course. Sir Edward Grey, on being asked whether the British Government could not make some representation to Russia, or, at any rate, cancel the order for the British fleet to visit Kronstadt, replied that the Government could do neither one nor the other. Which is, again, as usual. We can act decisively in the case of Turkey. We can withdraw our representatives from Servia when a king and queen are killed. But these at Bielostok are not kings and queens; they are only poor women and children, gathered into courtyards and shot and bayoneted by the Christian soldiers of a Christian Czar. What a price the Jews have paid, and are paying, for giving Christendom its God!

The *Tribune* correspondent states that many of the Jewish victims at Bielostok are quite unrecognisable, so savagely were they maltreated. Most of them were mutilated obscenely. What sweet creatures these Christians are when they get a good chance of letting themselves loose.

"Can religion be taught?" is a question that is exercising the writers in a certain weekly periodical. We feel inclined to answer the question by another: "Do people in a civilised country get it in any other manner?" Suppose children were left severely alone, so far as religion is concerned, how much religious belief would they have by the time they reached maturity? They would be quite destitute of it, and this is a fact the churches know quite as well as we do. Deaf mutes it may be noted, are without

any religious ideas until some form of communication—that is, of instruction—has been established between them and others. Then religious ideas begin to express themselves, but solely as the result of instruction received. The truth is, then, that not only can religion be taught; but in a civilised society it is the only way of making anyone religious. Only in this case one must commence early. One must secure the pupil before it has had a chance of getting anything that will act as a preventative. Even then you may not be able to keep a person religious, but to secure him (or her) when very young is the only chance of starting them on the religious road, and to seclude them from all antagonistic influences is the only chance of keeping them there.

One of the contributors to this discussion expresses an opinion that reads like a careful piece of sarcasm, although it is obviously not meant for such. The most religious moment of a man's life, he says, is that in "which he says 'goo-goo,' and reaches out his little hands blindly to the star," and then goes on to say that the object of religious education is passionately to preserve the attitude of goo-goo and the blind reach to the star." Without knowing it, the writer has hit on a truth—not quite of the kind he imagines. If we could preserve for ever the "goo-goo attitude," no doubt religion would be secure from attack. But we cannot; nor ought we to wish to do so. The frame of mind that is admirable in the child becomes revolting in the man. Nothing is more charming than the open-eyed wonder and simple credulity of childhood; but it is charming because it is a characteristic of childhood. Put in the place of a child an adult, and credulity becomes almost a vice—certainly a harmful characteristic—while open-eyed wonder is often the sign of an undeveloped intelligence or of an ill-informed mind. Certainly it is the mental state favored by religious teachers, because it is one that lends itself to their purpose. But there is a time and a place for everything, and much may be good in a condition of innocent ignorance that is far from good when we have left that condition far behind us. Even the reaching out to a star may be overdone. To recognise our limitations is an essential condition of realising all the good that may be realised within those limitations; and a man is neither admirable nor serviceable because he is filled with vague yearnings, and is eternally seeking the unattainable, but only as his ideals are solidly based, and carry with them at least the *promise* of realisation. Religion admires the child state of mind because it properly belongs to the infantile stage of human development.

According to Sir Lewis Dibdin, the Church of England derives from minding royalties in Durham and estates in London no less a sum than £2,172,450 annually. "Blessed are ye poor!"

Catholics talk about "toleration" in England. That is because they want it. But they grant no "toleration" when they rule the roost themselves. Malta, for instance, although a British possession, has a Catholic population; and quite recently the Rev. John McNeill, the well-known Protestant evangelist, held mission meetings in the Theatre Royal there; whereupon the Catholic Archbishop called upon the Governor to "at once prevent this outrage on Catholic sentiment"—and the Protestant evangelist had to go home.

Turkey will not send a representative to the new Geneva Conference. The Sultan notified the President of the Conference that the cross was a Christian emblem, and that he could not guarantee that the Turkish soldier would respect it on ambulances and hospitals. This is one of the mischiefs of a religious—that is to say, a sectional—emblem. As the "heathen" nations come into the comity of civilisation the Christian nations will find that something more catholic than the cross will be necessary.

Another poor professional Christite. The Right Reverend the Honorable Alwyne Compton, D.D., of St. Martin's House, Canterbury, Lord Bishop of Ely from 1886 to 1906, left estate valued at £19,128. This is following Jesus.

Greece and Roumania have broken off diplomatic relations. The row began over the question whether the Vlachs should take their religion from Greek priests or not. In the course of it unspeakable barbarities have been committed. And both sides are Christians.

It is said that Bambaata's chief induna, who was killed in the Morne Gorge, wore round his neck a crucifix, which he regarded as his war-god. And he wasn't far wrong either; for the Cross has gleamed over more bloodshed than any other emblem on earth.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

- D. J. D.—We shall have pleasure in referring to your very encouraging letter next week. Meanwhile, thanks.
- E. PINDER.—We were as sorry that we could not be at Stratford on Whit-Monday as you were to miss us there. A conflict went on in us between duty and inclination, and duty carried it; but we should have been very glad to meet you again, and the Leicester friends you brought over with you. Thanks for the old *Daily Mail* cutting. The notion of the Rev. Gertrude von Petzold "coping with the growing scepticism of the present day" is indeed comical.
- NEWPORT (Mon.).—Thanks.
- YOUNG FREETHINKER.—Duly to hand. Thanks.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- J. HOCKIN.—Thanks. The book you mention is one that we read many years ago. We should not have time to read it again.
- F. ROGERS.—We hope all your good wishes will be realised. Thanks.
- W. P. ADAMSON.—Shall be posted as desired. See also next week.
- G. BARNES.—Not in the New Testament, but in Judges ix. 13.
- J. G. FAULKNER.—Is it worth while advertising a Freethought lecturer as a "Bishop"?
- R. J. HENDERSON.—Thanks. We are always glad to receive cuttings on which we can find a readable paragraph. Our friends up and down the country may help us a good deal in this way.
- F. RICH.—Thanks for good wishes.
- C. A. BARTON.—The subject of Prophecy is partly dealt with in Meredith's *Prophet of Nazareth*. The explanation of fulfilled prophecies—such as those in Daniel, and that relating to the fall of Jerusalem—is that they were written after the events. The prophecy of the return of the Jews to Palestine had nothing to do with events more than two thousand years later; and even if large numbers of the Jews do go there from all parts of the earth, which is very doubtful, it must be remembered that a strong expectation, if it is at all feasible, naturally tends to realise itself.
- A. MARTIN.—We shall print an extract from your letter (with others) next week.
- J. A. McCALLUM.—Sorry we did not get your letter in time. Whenever you wish for free literature to distribute at such meetings, in future, will you kindly write direct to the N. S. S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.
- G. ROLEFFS.—Your cuttings are generally useful. Thanks.
- A. SEAFORTH.—We are preparing Mr. Bonte's articles "From Fiction to Fact" for publication in pamphlet form. He has revised what appeared in the *Freethinker* and made considerable additions.
- TWO YEARS' FREETHINKER.—We quite understand. There is a chapter on the Crusades in our *Crimes of Christianity*, which might give you all you require; and the footnotes contain references to the best literature on the subject. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* is now being issued in the "World's Library" at a shilling per volume. There are to be six volumes in all, we believe. A much better edition is Professor Bury's in seven volumes at 3s. 6d. each.
- A. E. J. MOHR, of the National Seamen's Union, asks us to have his *Freethinker* sent on to Baltimore, U. S. A., where he is going for the organisation. Mr. Mohr wishes us to note his kind regards to all old friends. He has ours wherever he goes.
- LONDON CABMAN.—You say that we "must have the heart of a lion" to keep on as we have done for so many years. But you yourself have evidently done your bit of work for the cause. So we will congratulate each other.
- OWING to Mr. Foote's leaving London on Monday some correspondence necessarily stands over till next week.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

Sugar Plums.

There are few "Sugar Plums" this week. It is the dead season as far as Freethought propaganda is concerned, and Mr. Foote is trying to take life a little easier than usual for a brief while. In the interim the "Acid Drops" are sustained, and they are agreed to be a very distinctive feature of the *Freethinker*.

Several friends who have responded to Mr. de Caux's appeal, printed in the previous two numbers of this journal, have written very interesting letters in doing so, and we

propose to publish some extracts from them in our next issue. Most of our readers, we believe, will be glad to see these extracts in print.

We have just received the following letter from Mr. Joseph Symes, dated May 5:—"Dear Foote,—At last my affairs are so far settled that I have booked for England in the *Runic* (White Star line) which leaves Melbourne June 19, due in London, August 5. Hoping to find you at your best and the cause flourishing." We shall be mightily glad to get hold of Mr. Symes's hand again. The last time we saw him we could not do that. There were bars in front of us and bars in front of him. He was several feet distant from us, and a warder stood between. It was in Holloway Gaol—in 1883.

Tynesiders will please note that Mr. Cohen will again deliver the "Race Sunday" lectures this year on the Town Moor, Newcastle, at 11 o'clock. The lecture will be delivered near the North-road entrance, and at 7 o'clock Mr. Cohen will speak from a platform near the Military Sports Stand. Fine weather being obtained, these lectures are always a huge success; but, in order not to depend altogether on the state of the elements, an evening lecture (7.30) will be given in the Cordwainers' Hall, Nelson-street, should open-air oratory happen to be out of the question.

The June number of the *Review of Reviews*, which we suppose our readers know is edited by Mr. W. T. Stead, contains an interesting article on "The Labor Party and the Books that Helped to Make It." A number of letters are printed from Labor members in response to Mr. Stead's invitation to them to send him "some notes or memoranda, no matter how rough and hasty they may be, as to the books which you found by experience most useful to you in the early days when your battle was beginning." In his concluding observations Mr. Stead says that, "The first and most striking feature of all this series of lectures is the frank manner in which many of the members express their indebtedness to the Bible as their most helpful book." But does he not make too much of this? The Bible just happened to be the book that came in the way of most of them. They read it because it was there, and were indebted to it simply as they would have been indebted to any other piece of world-literature that attracted their attention.

Mr. Thomas Burt, a man of good mind and superior character, in returning his proof to Mr. Stead, added the following:—

"I have struck out your entry under 'Religion,' as it might mislead. I am not a member—nor have I ever been—of the Primitive Methodist body. My father and mother were Primitives. I went to the P. M. Sunday school and chapel as a boy and youth. From the travelling preachers—who often came to our house—I derived intellectual stimulus, and benefit in other ways; but as I have said I never was a member of the denomination."

This is a careful and guarded statement. Those who can read between the lines may easily see how far Mr. Burt is from the orthodox religion of England.

Mr. John Burns comes next, and of him Mr. Stead writes: "In his youth he was a Church choir boy. He has now no connection with any other religion than that which Paine said was his, 'To do good.'"

Mr. Keir Hardie is described as belonging to the "Evangelical Union of Scotland." But the honorable gentleman's own references to the New Testament are rather enigmatical. Mr. F. W. Jowett is described as "a Christian unattached to any sect." He mentions a number of books that influenced him, but is silent about the Bible. Mr. James Rowland says nothing about his old Hall of Science days, when he sat under Bradlaugh. We must do him the justice, however, of saying that he also says nothing about religious literature. Mr. Will Thorne states how he used to "tramp miles to listen to lectures by Bradlaugh, Hyndman, Quelch, Mrs. Besant and other advanced thinkers." "I belong," he says, "to no religious denomination at all." A very quaint observation is made by Mr. J. Wilson, the Durham miners' representative. Before manhood he had "read the Bible from end to end; but this was when I was at sea and could not get any other book." Delicious! We will end there.

The Freethinkers of South Wales are requested to communicate with the secretary of the Mountain Ash N. S. S. Branch with a view of forming fresh Branches in other parts of South Wales, and organising Freethought lectures in towns where there is a likelihood of obtaining good results. Address—Mr. George Garrett, 46 Albert-street, Miskin, Mountain Ash.

The Making of the Gospels.—II.

(Continued from p. 380.)

HAVING satisfactorily placed the dates of the Gospels "within the possible lifetime of the men whose names they bear," Canon Scott in his second lecture comes to the main subject to be elucidated—"the making of the Gospels."

When we compare the writings of the four evangelists "we find," he says, "that there is a certain similarity between the first three (the Synoptical Gospels), while the fourth is a complete contrast to the rest." This fact is, of course, obvious to anyone who has examined the Gospels. Next, after referring to the circumstance that the Synoptical Gospels have a great deal of matter common to the three, our lecturer notes the proportion of Mark's Gospel contained in the other two. "St. Matthew embodies in his Gospel nearly the whole of the subject matter of St. Mark, and St. Luke includes about four-fifths of St. Mark." Assuming the three Synoptical Gospels to be independent histories, this very remarkable fact will need some explanation. Moreover, the First and Third Gospels, being much longer than the Second, it is found that "all the material from St. Mark forms rather more than half of St. Matthew's Gospel and rather less than two-fifths of St. Luke's Gospel." This fact, again, is no news to those who have examined and compared the first three Gospels.

The next matter to which the lecturer draws attention is the well-known verbal agreement, in a large number of cases, found in the narratives common to the three Synoptics. The following is cited as an example:—

Mark ii. 9-11.—"Whether is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house."

If we now compare the accounts in the other two Synoptics—Matt. ix. 5-6; Luke v. 23-24—we find them almost identical, even to the parenthesis "he saith to the sick of the palsy," and the latter inserted in the same place. The conclusion to which our Canon is led, after comparing the foregoing and numerous other passages of verbal agreement, is the only one at which any impartial critic could arrive: "We feel that St. Matthew and St. Luke must have had a written copy of St. Mark lying before them. It would be impossible otherwise that the unimportant words should all be exactly reproduced." Here is plainly and openly admitted a fact to which I have several times drawn attention—the interdependence of the first three Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not write independent histories: two of them, at least, took all the main facts, as well as the words ascribed to Jesus, from a written source. This is stated, even in plainer terms, by Canon Scott in his third lecture. "Scholars," he says, "are now of the opinion that the likeness between the Synoptic Gospels is due to the fact that St. Matthew and St. Luke wrote with St. Mark's Gospel before them, and embodied in their Gospels such portions of St. Mark's Gospel as they deemed suitable for their purpose." And, as we have seen, Matthew embodies nearly the whole of Mark's Gospel (that is to say, 96 per cent.), and Luke not less than 80 per cent. We used to be told that the three Synoptical Gospels were independent histories: that Matthew, being an apostle, drew up a narrative of all he had seen and heard when following Jesus; that Mark, a companion of Peter, committed to writing all he remembered of that apostle's preaching; and that Luke, a colleague of Paul, wrote down all the Gospel events and circumstances narrated by the Apostle of the Gentiles in his teaching. This plausible theory is now quietly dropped. It is at last openly admitted that only one of the three Synoptics is an original composition—that "according to" Mark. Of course, after this admission it becomes more than ever necessary to strenuously maintain the authenticity and credibility

of Mark's Gospel: and this is done. Mark is said to have been the companion and interpreter of Peter, an apostle who must have known all the sayings and doings of Jesus. Mark's Gospel is therefore held to be the Gospel of Peter, and to be substantially the work of a witness who vouched for the truth of all it contains. "Tradition tells us that St. Mark was St. Peter's 'interpreter' at Rome, and that he was the author of a Gospel which contained the substance of Peter's teaching.....When all is taken account of, it seems tolerably certain that St. Peter is the authority for the main part of St. Mark's Gospel."

The tradition here referred to, I have already shown, took form after the time of Irenæus (A.D. 185), and can be traced to a statement made by Papias (A.D. 150) recording what he had been told by a presbyter of his acquaintance. It has further to be noticed that Peter is only said to be the authority for "the main part" of Mark's Gospel, not for the whole. Canon Scott admits that "modern scholarship is practically agreed that the last twelve verses are an addition borrowed from another source than the rest of the Gospel." And, with regard to the matter found in Mark xi.-xvi. 8, our Canon says: "In this part of the Gospel there are indications that St. Mark made use of a written record of our Lord's discourses." Here it is admitted that Peter was not the source of Mark's inspiration; neither can it be shown that that apostle was the authority for anything contained in the Second Gospel. We thus arrive at the fact that Mark's Gospel, like each of the other Synoptics, is not an original document, but was derived from earlier writings.

We come next to the use made by Matthew and Luke of Mark's Gospel. These two editors, we are told, "prune the narratives of St. Mark very considerably.....St. Matthew cuts them down by one-eighth, and St. Luke cuts them down by a quarter.The first thing we learn about the making of the Synoptic Gospels is that St. Mark wrote his Gospel before the other two Evangelists; and that, while not slavishly copying him, or even always making use of his account, St. Matthew and St. Luke wrote with St. Mark's Gospel before them. And as they made use of his narrative, they sometimes abbreviated it, sometimes adapted, and sometimes substituted the narrative of a first-hand eye-witness for it." The Canon's statement is perfectly correct, except upon one point. We have no evidence that Matthew and Luke, when they did not follow Mark's narrative, "substituted the narrative of a first-hand eye witness for it." This is a pure assumption, and our reverend apologist, further on, appears to have forgotten he had made it.

With regard to the source of the narratives in the First and Third Gospels which were not taken from Mark's Gospel, Canon Scott says: "Generally it is believed that St. Matthew and St. Luke made use of a Gospel or fragment of a Gospel that is now lost. But St. Matthew and St. Luke use it very differently. St. Matthew's Gospel is not in chronological order, and he takes his St. Mark and his other document, and fits the portions of the other document into his St. Mark, so that the parallel passages and similar incidents are grouped together. When we turn to St. Luke the result is quite different; he has apparently had the same St. Mark and the same other document before him, but he has pieced them together so as to form a continuous and accurate narrative, with the events all in their proper order." The theory here propounded is, no doubt, substantially correct; for only by some such process can the nature of the contents of the Gospels be accounted for. But where is the "narrative of a first-hand eye-witness"? As a simple matter of fact, the author of the "other document" used by Matthew and Luke is unknown, as is also the exact nature of that document. If guessing be permissible, I should say that this "other document" was the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel used by the earliest Christians—the Ebionites and Nazarenes. And this Gospel I take to be the source of all three Synoptics, the Gospel of Mark included.

I will now, in a few words, suggest what appears to me the most probable process of "the Making" of the Synoptic Gospels.

About the year 120, Matthew (or Matthias), the Hebrew bishop of the church at Jerusalem, collected and committed to writing for the use of Jewish Christians a large number of sayings attributed to Jesus (the Sermon on the Mount, a set of parables, etc.), and, about the same time, some other members of the sect also committed to writing, a number of anecdotes and legends then in circulation respecting the doings of the Christian Savior. The last named "history" was the Gospel "according to the Hebrews," and both it and the "Sayings" were written in Hebrew—that is to say, in Aramaic.

About A.D. 135, Mark, the first Gentile bishop of Jerusalem, made a translation of what he considered the most important events and circumstances narrated in the Hebrew Gospel, for the use of Greek-speaking Christians. This was the Greek Gospel "according to Mark."

About A.D. 145, a new Christian compiler set to work to make a Greek version of nearly the whole of the two Hebrew documents. This task he carried out by taking the Greek Gospel of Mark, and making additions to it from the "Sayings" (the Sermon on the Mount, etc.), and from the Hebrew Gospel. This was the Greek Gospel "according to Matthew."

About A.D. 150, the great heretic Marcion compiled a new Greek Gospel, made up by additions from various sources to the Greek Gospel of Mark.

About A.D. 155-160, Luke, a presbyter of Antioch, compiled a new Gospel for the use of a distinguished Gentile convert, Theophilus (Luke i. 1-4), who afterwards became bishop of Antioch. This was done by revising Marcion's Gospel and adding new matter from the Gospel of the Hebrews and some apocryphal Gospels. The result was the Greek Gospel "according to Luke."

The foregoing is given subject to slight revision both as to dates and sources; but, I feel justified in saying, it is the only theory with which all the evidence we possess can be brought into anything approaching agreement.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be concluded.)

What do They Believe?

MR. ASQUITH is credited with saying that "Secular teaching is not suited to the genius, and is contrary to the predominant opinion, of the vast majority of the English people." It would be interesting to have Mr. Asquith's definition of genius; it must be rather curious. It would be more correct to say that a large number of people in this country are too prejudiced or too ignorant or too indolent to understand what Secular Education really is. A sensational murder suits them better. They go on blindly like a lot of sheep, and when a new idea is brought before them they regard the innovator as a crank, look on him with suspicion, and ridicule him. Evolution is a fact, and would-be statesmen cannot ignore it. No evolutionist can consistently advocate sectarianism. Perhaps even Sir Oliver Lodge the mystic, and Mr. A. J. Balfour the dilettante, and the "pious" *Daily Mail*, will some day recognise this fact. Perhaps Mr. Asquith the lawyer, who professes to speak for the people of this country, will kindly tell us what he believes. Does he believe the story of man's creation and fall as related in Genesis? Does he believe in the Virgin birth? Does he believe in miracles, in prayer, or the doctrine of eternal punishment? What does he believe? A public man's beliefs should be known nowadays when parties are taking sides. It seems to be a waste of time to argue with some people. Lawyers, however, should know something about evidence; and if the Christian doctrines are not tenable, have statesmen-lawyers like Mr. Asquith, Mr. Birrell, and Mr. Lloyd-George, any right to direct that they be foisted on

innocent children simply to please their temporary supporters? If the doctrines are false, they must necessarily be mischievous. These men oppose the doctrines of the so-called Church of England, but, in order to please the precious "Nonconformist Conscience," a religious curriculum, founded on "simple Bible teaching," is to be instituted. Simple Bible teaching! Can any Bible teaching be simple? The Bible, which is supposed to give peace, has created more friction, more heart-burning than any other book. It requires encyclopædias to interpret it, and "scholars and divines" to enable people to swallow it. And nobody really understands theology, nor ever will.

We have had enough of it, and we Secularists are not going to be regarded as social outcasts any longer. Why should minorities, whose tenets are based on facts, suffer for the ignorance of the majority whose beliefs are based on fiction?

The man who should be the Minister for Education in this country is Mr. John Morley; but he appears to be muzzled now. Still, his Freethought opinions are known to all; they will be found in his *On Compromise*, a masterpiece of its sort, though to-day people who cannot digest the Christian lies and legends are not prepared to remain silent any longer. We need a religion, but one which is devoid of superstition. The Christian religion is nothing more or less than a species of superstition, which does more harm than good; and people who profess to be educated should really have the common honesty and moral courage, if it requires it, to inquire into the tenability of those doctrines when they are challenged, as they undoubtedly are. We ask, What is this so-called "Word of God"? Who or what is God? A myth—a creature of our imaginations! And that is the sort of thing innocent children are to sing and pray to. Religion in the best sense should be the highest truth. Talk about morality! To propagate lies and legends in the name of religion is surely immorality if anything is. How long can the farce go on?

Professor W. K. Clifford remarks: "Religious beliefs must be founded on evidence; if they are not so founded, it is wrong to hold them. The rule of right conduct in this matter is exactly the opposite of that implied in the two famous texts: 'He that believeth not shall be damned,' and 'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.' For a man who clearly felt and recognised the duty of intellectual honesty, of carefully testing every belief before he received it, and especially before he recommended it to others, it would be impossible to ascribe the profoundly immoral teaching of these texts to a true prophet or worthy leader of humanity." What have the bishops to say to such a doctrine? What do sophists like Mr. A. J. Balfour say? What can they say? Mr. Balfour has been a philosophic doubter, but he seems now to have comfortably acquired the peculiar mental abilities which will allow a person to accept fantastic doctrines controverted by science and common sense. But what Mr. Balfour believes is of no particular consequence. He has had his day. Politics and philosophy (of a sort) must have been fairly remunerative to him, and doubtless they have amused him. But we want politicians and philosophers who can arrive at logical conclusions. Mr. Balfour seems unable to do so. But he is quite satisfied with himself. An evolutionist who is a sectarianist is a philosophic curiosity.

Professor Clifford rightly says that "if a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down and pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call in question or discuss it, and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it, the life of that man is one long sin against mankind."

Does anybody seriously believe in the doctrine of eternal punishment nowadays? Do those who profess to do so understand what it means? Apart from that, if man is immortal the lower animals

must be, seeing that man has evolved from the brutes. What an awful menagerie such a future existence would be! Some people's heaven would be hell to others. Certainly, most people would get tired if they had to sing praises for ever and ever. The whole thing is preposterous and absurd. How can consciousness exist apart from the brain? To once more quote the distinguished Professor Clifford, whose writings might be commended to a much lesser luminary with a similar name, now living (the Rev. John Clifford): "If a thing is true, let us all believe it; rich and poor, men, women, and children. If a thing is untrue, let us all disbelieve it; rich and poor, men, women, and children. Truth is a thing to be shouted from the house-tops, not to be whispered over rose-water after dinner when the ladies are gone away."

The old creeds are dead or dying, and we want a new religion which will appeal to the intellect as well as to the emotions, and it is time that professional advocates of impossible dogma realised that fact. It is here where we have our hells and our heavens. We know of no other. People must learn to be good without being bribed with promises of an imaginary heaven or threatened with an imaginary hell.

Let us endeavor to cultivate a religion of self-respect, intellectual and moral.

J. A. REID.

Ingersoll's Lecture on Superstition.—V.

(Continued from p. 333.)

VI.

WHAT harm does superstition do? What harm in believing in fables, in legends?

To believe in signs and wonders, in amulets, charms and miracles, in gods and devils, in heavens and hells, makes the brain an insane ward, the world a madhouse, takes all certainty from the mind, makes experience a snare, destroys the kinship of effect and cause—the unity of nature—and makes man a trembling serf and slave. With this belief a knowledge of nature sheds no light upon the path to be pursued. Nature becomes a puppet of the unseen powers. The fairy, called the supernatural, touches with her wand a fact, it disappears. Causes are barren of effects, and effects are independent of all natural causes. Caprice is king. The foundation is gone. The great dome rests on air. There is no constancy in qualities, relations, or results. Reason abdicates and superstition wears her crown.

The heart hardens and the brain softens.

The energies of man are wasted in a vain effort to secure the protection of the supernatural. Credulity, ceremony, worship, sacrifice and prayer take the place of honest work, of investigation, of intellectual effort, of observation, of experience. Progress becomes impossible.

Superstition is, always has been, and forever will be, the enemy of liberty.

Superstition created all the gods and angels, all the devils and ghosts, all the witches, demons and goblins, gave us all the augurs, soothsayers and prophets, filled the heavens with signs and wonders, broke the chain of cause and effect, and wrote the history of man in miracles and lies. Superstition made all the popes, cardinals, bishops and priests, all the monks and nuns, the begging friars and the filthy saints, all the preachers and exhorters, all the "called" and "set apart." Superstition made men fall upon their knees before beasts and stones, caused them to worship snakes and trees and insane phantoms of the air, beguiled them of their gold and toil, and made them shed their children's blood and give their babes to flames. Superstition built the cathedrals and temples, all the altars, mosques and churches, filled the world with amulets and charms, with images and idols, with sacred bones and holy hairs, with martyrs' blood and rags, with bits of wood that frighten devils from the breasts of men. Superstition invented and used the instruments of torture, flayed men and women alive, loaded millions with chains and destroyed hundreds of thousands with fire. Superstition mistook insanity for inspiration and the ravings of maniacs for prophesy, for the wisdom of God. Superstition imprisoned the virtuous, tortured the thoughtful, killed the heroic, put chains on the body, manacles on the brain, and utterly destroyed the liberty of speech. Superstition gave us all the prayers and ceremonies; taught all the kneelings, genuflections and prostrations; taught men to hate themselves, to despise pleasure, to scar their flesh, to

grovel in the dust, to desert their wives and children, to shun their fellow-men, and to spend their lives in useless pain and prayer. Superstition taught that human love is degrading, low and vile; taught that monks are purer than fathers, that nuns are holier than mothers, that faith is superior to fact, that credulity leads to heaven, that doubt is the road to hell, that belief is better than knowledge, and that to ask for evidence is to insult God. Superstition is, always has been, and forever will be, the foe of progress, the enemy of education and the assassin of freedom. It sacrifices the known to the unknown, the present to the future, this actual world to the shadowy next. It has given us a selfish heaven, and a hell of infinite revenge; it has filled the world with hatred, war and crime, with the malice of meekness and the arrogance of humility. Superstition is the only enemy of science in all the world.

Nations, races, have been destroyed by this monster. For nearly two thousand years the infallible agent of God has lived in Italy. That country has been covered with nunneries, monasteries, cathedrals, and temples—filled with all varieties of priests and holy men. For centuries Italy was enriched with the gold of the faithful. All roads led to Rome, and these roads were filled with pilgrims bearing gifts, and yet Italy, in spite of all the prayers, steadily pursued the downward path, died and was buried, and would at this moment be in her grave had it not been for Cavour, Mazzini and Garibaldi. For her poverty, her misery, she is indebted to the holy Catholic Church, to the infallible agents of God. For the life she has she is indebted to the enemies of superstition. A few years ago Italy was great enough to build a monument to Giordano Bruno—Bruno, the victim of the "Triumphant Beast";—Bruno, the sublimest of her sons.

Spain was at one time owner of half the earth, and held within her greedy hands the gold and silver of the world. At that time all nations were in the darkness of superstition. At that time the world was governed by priests. Spain clung to her creed. Some nations began to think, but Spain continued to believe. In some countries, priests lost power, but not in Spain. The power behind her throne was the cowed monk. In some countries men began to interest themselves in science, but not in Spain. Spain told her beads and continued to pray to the Virgin. Spain was busy saving her soul. In her zeal she destroyed herself. She relied on the supernatural; not on knowledge, but superstition. Her prayers were never answered. The saints were dead. They could not help, and the Blessed Virgin did not hear. Some countries were in the dawn of a new day, but Spain gladly remained in the night. With fire and sword she exterminated the men who thought. Her greatest festival was the *Auto da Fe*. Other nations grew great while Spain grew small. Day by day her power waned, but her faith increased. One by one her colonies were lost, but she kept her creed. She gave her gold to superstition, her brain to priests, but she faithfully counted her beads. Only a few days ago, relying on her God and his priests, on charms and amulets, on holy water and pieces of the true cross, she waged war against the great Republic. Bishops blessed her armies and sprinkled holy water on her ships, and yet her armies were defeated and captured, her ships battered, beached and burned, and in her helplessness she sued for peace. But she has her creed; her superstition is not lost. Poor Spain, wrecked by faith, the victim of religion!

Portugal, slowly dying, growing poorer every day, still clings to the faith. Her prayers are never answered, but she makes them still. Austria is nearly gone, a victim of superstition. Germany is travelling toward the night. God placed her Kaiser on the throne. The people must obey. Philosophers and scientists fall upon their knees and become the puppets of the divinely crowned.

VII.

The believers in the supernatural, in a power superior to nature, in God, have what they call "inspired books." These books contain the absolute truth. They must be believed. He who denies them will be punished with eternal pain. These books are not addressed to human reason. They are above reason. They care nothing for what a man calls "facts." Facts that do not agree with these books are mistakes. These books are independent of human experience, of human reason.

Our inspired books constitute what we call the "Bible." The man who reads this inspired book, looking for contradictions, mistakes and interpolations, imperils the salvation of his soul. While he reads he has no right to think, no right to reason. To believe is his only duty.

Millions of men have wasted their lives in the study of this book—in trying to harmonise contradictions and to explain the obscure and seemingly absurd. In doing this they have justified nearly every crime and every cruelty. In its follies they have found the profoundest wisdom. Hundreds of creeds have been constructed from its inspired passages. Probably no two of its readers have agreed as to

its meaning. Thousands have studied Hebrew and Greek that they might read the Old and New Testament in the languages in which they were written. The more they studied, the more they differed. By the same book they proved that nearly everybody is to be lost, and that all are to be saved; that slavery is a divine institution, and that all men should be free; that polygamy is right, and that no man should have more than one wife; that the powers that be are ordained of God, and that the people have a right to overturn and destroy the powers that be; that all the actions of men were predestined—preordained from eternity, and yet that man is free; that all the heathen will be lost; that all the heathen will be saved; that all men who live according to the light of nature will be damned for their pains; that you must be baptised by sprinkling; that you must be baptised by immersion; that there is no salvation without baptism; that baptism is useless; that you must believe in the Trinity; that it is sufficient to believe in God; that you must believe that a Hebrew peasant was God; that at the same time he was half man, that he was of the blood of David through his supposed father Joseph, who was not his father, and that it is not necessary to believe that Christ was God; that you must believe that the Holy Ghost proceeded; that it makes no difference whether you do or not; that you must keep the Sabbath holy; that Christ taught nothing of the kind; that Christ established a church; that he established no church; that the dead are to be raised; that there is to be no resurrection; that Christ is coming again; that he has made his last visit; that Christ went to hell and preached to the spirits in prison; that he did nothing of the kind; that all the Jews are going to perdition; that they are all going to heaven; that all the miracles described in the Bible were performed; that some of them were not, because they are foolish, childish and idiotic; that all the Bible is inspired; that some of the books are not inspired; that there is to be a general judgment, when the sheep and goats are to be divided; that there never will be any general judgment; that the sacramental bread and wine are changed into the flesh and blood of God and the Trinity; that they are not changed; that God has no flesh or blood; that there is a place called "purgatory"; that there is no such place; that unbaptised infants will be lost; that they will be saved; that we must believe the Apostles' Creed; that the apostles made no creed; that the Holy Ghost was the father of Christ; that Joseph was his father; that the Holy Ghost had the form of a dove; that there is no Holy Ghost; that heretics should be killed; that you must not resist evil; that you should murder unbelievers; that you must love your enemies; that you should take no thought for the morrow, but should be diligent in business; that you should lend to all who ask, and that one who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel.

In defence of all these creeds, all these contradictions, thousands of volumes have been written, millions of sermons have been preached, countless swords reddened with blood, and thousands and thousands of nights made lurid with the faggot's flames.

Hundreds and hundreds of commentators have obscured and darkened the meaning of the plainest texts, spiritualised dates, names, numbers and even genealogies. They have degraded the poetic, changed parables to history, and imagery to stupid and impossible facts. They have wrestled with rhapsody and prophecy, with visions and dreams, with illusions and delusions, with myths and miracles, with the blunders of ignorance, the ravings of insanity and the ecstasy of hysterics. Millions of priests and preachers have added to the mysteries of the inspired book by explanation, by showing the wisdom of foolishness, the foolishness of wisdom, the mercy of cruelty and the probability of the impossible.

The theologians made the Bible a master and the people its slaves. With this book they destroyed intellectual veracity, the natural manliness of man. With this book they banished pity from the heart, subverted all ideas of justice and fairness, imprisoned the soul in the dungeon of fear and made honest doubt a crime.

Think of what the world has suffered from fear. Think of the millions who were driven to insanity. Think of the fearful nights—nights filled with phantoms, with flying, crawling monsters, with hissing serpents that slowly uncoiled, with vague and formless horrors, with burning and malicious eyes.

Think of the fear of death, of infinite wrath, of everlasting revenge in the prisons of fire, of an eternity, of thirst, of endless regret, of the sobs and sighs, the shrieks and groans of eternal pain!

Think of the hearts hardened, of the hearts broken, of the cruelties inflicted, of the agonies endured, of the lives darkened.

The inspired Bible has been and is the greatest curse of Christendom, and will so remain as long as it is held to be inspired.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

RELIGIOUS CRUELITIES IN INDIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Religious Brutalities” is an appeal to English Humanitarians by Mr. Labhshankar Laxmidas, who has done a great public service by the courage and persistency with which he has exposed some of the horrible cruelties practised in India under the sanction of religious rites. It is to be regretted that, as appears from the correspondence printed in his pamphlet, the Indian Government is disinclined to give the subject the attention it deserves. There is a class of Brahmins, Mr. Laxmidas informs us, who annually offer animal sacrifices, and the victims are killed, in some cases, by a slow process of excruciating torture. Here is an instance:—

“First, the animal is worshiped with a Vedic hymn, and gods are invoked to dwell in every part of its body. It is then sent into the slaughter-room, where its four legs are tied, and its mouth is filled with husked rice and then tightly bound with a string. After this, the animal is repeatedly struck with fists by Sudra Brahmins like dough, and when it is all but dead, and moving a little, its body is cut up into several pieces, which are then brought out for use in the sacrifice.”

It is evident from Mr. Laxmidas's statement that the ordinary law cannot be trusted to deal adequately with such cases; for in the Indian Act which deals with cruelty to animals there is a passage (Section xi.) which runs as follows:—

“Nothing in this Act shall render it an offence to kill any animal in a manner required by the religion or religious rites and usages of any race, sect, tribe, or class.”

It is for the repeal of this Section of the Act that Mr. Laxmidas has again and again petitioned the Indian authorities, but without receiving any but the most evasive official replies. We venture to hope that the new Secretary of State for India will look into the matter; for though the principle of toleration in all that relates to religious ceremonial is in itself a wise one, it can hardly be made to cover such atrocious brutalities as those which the pamphlet describes. Well may Mr. Laxmidas ask “How long will British Government allow such satanical deeds to be perpetrated under the protection of its law?”

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

Humanitarian League, 53 Chancery-lane,
London, W.C.

Sacrificial Murder.

A REMARKABLE story of Indian superstition and murder is disclosed in an appeal which has just been heard in the Punjab Courts, where the judge confirmed a sentence of death passed upon three natives, named Pirbhu, Lekhu, and Sita Ram. Another man named Kishnu, and a woman named Mussammot Mansa, were found guilty of being accessories in the revolting crime, and were sentenced to transportation for life.

The charge was that of abducting and killing a child in order that its blood might be used as a bath by the woman. Her children had all died, and she believed that if this awful sacrifice of another woman's infant were carried out, her next child would live.

The first suspicion of the murder was aroused at Umballa, when the boy was missed from his home. A search was made, but without avail; and two days later a skeleton and the remains of what was supposed to be the body of the murdered boy were found half a mile away.

Sita Ram confessed to the Umballa District Judge that the boy had been strangled by two of the other men, and that they then stabbed him in the feet and wrists, and drew off the blood in a brass vessel.

The body was afterwards taken to the house of the woman's husband, where certain incantations were said. The woman Mansa then smeared her body with the blood, and bathed herself under a bamboo-tree in the garden, while the other two removed the corpse.

For his part in the murder Sita Ram said he received three rupees.

This confession he afterwards retracted, and alleged that it was obtained by police torture; so the case was sent for trial. The sessions judge, however, accepted the man's original confession, ignored its retraction, and pronounced guilty all the parties to the crime.

The murder itself (adds the *Calcutta Englishman*) he characterised as a most cruel and barbarous one. The unfortunate boy was kept, probably gagged or drugged, for thirty hours in confinement before being sacrificed.

—Morning Leader, May 28.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.
OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., 3.15, "The Bible: its Origin and Nature"; 6.15, "The Resurrection of Jesus."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Rushcroft-road, Brixton, 11.30, James Rowney; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6, James Rowney.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, Mr. Davies.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.15, F. A. Davies, "Was Jesus a Trade Unionist?" 6.30, H. S. Wishart.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Bible Immoralities."

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION: Kirkintilloch Temperance Hall, Friday, June 29, at 8, Ignatius McNulty, "The Crimes of Christianity."

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (No. 9 Lodge Room, Trade and Friendly Hall): Tuesday, June 26, at 8. New Members welcome.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, Arnold Sharpley, "Ibsen's Women."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, W. Denby, "Is God Just?"

OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION: Motherwell Cross, 4.30, Ignatius McNulty, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?"

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Square): H. Percy Ward, 11, Foolishness of Prayer"; 3, "The Inquisition"; 7, "Charles Bradlaugh, Atheist." Tuesday, June 26, at 7.45, "What Has Become of the Devil?"

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