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We who worship no material incarnation of any qualities, no person, may worship the Divine Humanity, the ideal of human perfection and aspiration, without worshipping any god, any person, any fetish at all.

—A. C. SWINBURNE.

Freethought and the Law.

Now that the latest "blasphemy" prosecution has become a matter of history, it may be well to review the existing situation.

The law of "blasphemy" was originally a law against Heresy and in support of the Christian faith. It was formerly applied through the Ecclesiastical Courts, which had unlimited power, and could excommunicate, fine, imprison, and put to death. In 1677 the death penalty was taken out of the hands of the clergy. Their functions were not taken away by the Act, but the offence of "blasphemy" gradually passed over to the secular tribunals. The laws against Heresy were abolished, but, under the Common Law, Heresy reappeared in substance as Blasphemy. For it is a mistake to suppose that Blasphemy meant "reviling or cursing" the name of God, as the etymology of the word might suggest. It was Blasphemy to deny the existence of God; it was Blasphemy to deny the divinity of Christ; it was Blasphemy to deny that Christianity was the one true religion; it was Blasphemy to deny the inspiration of the Bible. The theory that the law of Blasphemy was intended to guard the decencies of controversy came in during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the better sort of Christians were becoming ashamed of its primitive intolerance. Instead of abolishing the law, they tried to give it a new meaning and direction. Even in 1841 the Commissioners on Criminal Law, while deprecating all prosecutions for Blasphemy in cases where unbelief was expressed gravely and decorously, without any wanton and malevolent design to do mischief, had no doubt that "the law distinctly forbids all denial of the being and providence of God, or the truth of the Christian religion." Later still, in the seventies, Sir James Stephen, a well-known judge, in his *Digest of the Criminal Law*, under the head of "Offences Against Religion," gave this amongst other definitions of Blasphemy: "A denial of the truth of Christianity in general, or of the existence of God, whether the terms of such publication are decent or otherwise."

Judges held again and again, from the case of Woolston in 1730 to the case of Cowan v. Milbourn in 1867, that a hostile criticism of Christianity was not possible without Blasphemy. They would not suffer the truth of Christianity to be so much as questioned in their Courts. Even "an attack upon the Old Testament" was declared by Lord Chief Justice Denman, in 1841, to be "clearly indictable." That was how the Common Law of Blasphemy stood then. And why has it changed? Partly because of the growth of tolerance in the public mind, which made it more and more unlikely that twelve men in a jury-box would be unanimous in finding a verdict of Guilty against a prosecuted person merely on account of his unbelief; and partly because the

Freethinker case, in 1883, accidentally fell into the hands of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, who was a scholar, a thinker, and a gentleman, and who gave a bad old law a more respectable interpretation, with a view to making it more in keeping with the improved spirit of the age.

Lord Coleridge's policy, as Sir James Stephen pointed out, was a dangerous one. It substituted a vague for a definite law, and left it so that no man could be sure that he had committed Blasphemy until a jury had found him guilty of the offence; for the offence itself became one of taste and temper, which are proverbially uncertain. Moreover, the penalties under the new law of Blasphemy were sure to fall upon the least dexterous, or the boldest and liveliest, of the popular advocates of Freethought; while the clever and deadly critics who wrote for the readers of expensive books would go scot free. Moreover, the dull would be in no danger, and only the lively would be in any peril. "To say that you may discuss the truth of religion," Sir James Stephen remarked at the time, "but that you may not hold up its doctrines to contempt, ridicule, or indignation, is either to take away with one hand what you concede with the other, or to confine the discussion to a small and in many ways unimportant class of persons."

Before we go on to consider Lord Coleridge's judgment in 1883 more closely, it is perhaps advisable to look for a moment at the Statute Law of Blasphemy. There is only one Act to take into account—the Act of William III., 1694, which is described in the preamble as "An Act for the more effectual suppression of Blasphemy and Profaneness." There is not a single word in this Act about indecent language. The crime it was to punish is set forth in the following passage:—

"If any person or persons having been educated in, or at any time having made profession of, the Christian religion within this realm shall, by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or shall assert or maintain that there are more gods than one, or shall deny the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority"—

such persons were to be deprived, first of public employment, secondly of civil rights, and for a third offence to suffer three years' imprisonment.

Nothing could be clearer than that this Act was designed to suppress Freethinking. The very expression "advised speaking" shows that it was not directed against mere profane language. It was an Act of sheer naked persecution. But, for a curious reason, it has never been enforced. It was drafted so as to exempt the Jews without mentioning them, and thus created an obstacle to its own application. Proof had to be forthcoming that an offender had been educated in, or made profession of, the Christian religion, and this might obviously be very difficult to obtain. As far as a law can be obsolete, without being repealed, the Statute Law of Blasphemy may be considered so. The important thing is the Common Law of Blasphemy, under which all prosecutions have taken place.

Let us now return to Lord Coleridge's statement of the Common Law of Blasphemy at my own trial in 1883. It was my third trial for "blasphemy" within a period of two months. I was getting

accustomed to addressing the jury in my own defence. I thought of every point that I could press upon them. Amongst other points, I argued that Common Law was not only judge-made law, but jury-made law; that the jury had the right of giving a verdict without assigning reasons, and that they should give a verdict of Not Guilty in my case on broad grounds of reason and justice. I pointed out that Common Law necessarily rested on common opinion and sentiment. I drew their attention to the changes that had occurred since the old days when judges declared that "Christianity was part and parcel of the law of the land." The Christian oath had been abolished in parliament, and given place to a Theistic oath. The compulsory oath had been abolished in courts of law by Freethinkers being allowed to give evidence on affirmation. Jews had been admitted to parliament. How could it be maintained, in face of *that* fact, that Christianity was still part and parcel of the law of England? Lord Coleridge, after informing the jury that it was not their business to alter the law, but to take it from him as he laid it down to them, proceeded to offer them such a statement of the law as had never before been presented by an English judge from the bench of a court of justice. In other words, he did for the jury precisely one-half of what I had asked them to do for themselves. He adopted and amplified my argument as to the admission of Jews to parliament. He pointed out that the Master of the Rolls, Sir George Jessel, just deceased, was a Jew; that, but for an accident, he might have had to try a case of "blasphemy," with perhaps half-a-dozen Jews in the jury-box; and how could he tell them that it was a breach of the law to deny the deity of Christ, when he and they denied it themselves? It was no longer true, even if it ever had been true, that Christianity was part and parcel of the law of the land. People had as much right to disbelieve Christianity as others had to believe it. "I lay down as law to you now," Lord Coleridge said, "that *if the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without a person being guilty of blasphemous libel.*"

This was an entirely new departure. I asked the jury to say (by their verdict) that "blasphemy" was a dead offence. Lord Coleridge told them that it had died and risen again; or, in other words, that it had been completely transformed. A criminal action had become legal, but it could still be performed in an illegal way. The crime had been transferred from the *matter* to the *manner*. And what was this, I ask, but abolishing one crime and creating another? I respect Lord Coleridge's motive, and I really do not see what else he could have done in his position, which was different from mine; yet I cannot help agreeing with the criticism passed upon his judgment by Sir James Stephen:—

"There is one reflection which seems to me to prove with conclusive force that the law upon this subject can be explained and justified only on what I regard as its true principle—the principle of persecution. It is that if the law of blasphemy were really impartial, and punished blasphemy only because it offends the feelings of believers, it ought also to punish such preaching as offends the feelings of unbelievers. All the more earnest and enthusiastic forms of religion are extremely offensive to those who do not believe them. Why should not people who are not Christians be protected against the rough, coarse, ignorant ferocity with which they are often told that they and theirs are on the way to hell-fire for ever and ever? Such a doctrine, though necessary to be known if true, is, if false, revolting and mischievous to the last degree. If the law in no degree recognised these doctrines as true, if it were as neutral as the Indian Penal Code is between Hindoos and Mohametans, it would have to apply to the Salvation Army the same rule as it applies to the *Freethinker* and its contributors."

No friends of the Blasphemy Laws attempted to answer Sir James Stephen. They knew he was unanswerable. They felt in their heart of hearts that they *were* persecutors.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

On Advertising.

THE other day the President of the Wesleyan Conference said that a great deal of the talk in the churches carried with it more sound than significance. The comment was accurate enough, but it failed to take account of the kindred truth that sound, provided it be persistent, acquires a significance that does not by right belong to it. Like the wearing of a stone beneath the drip of water, the human mind does not seem able to withstand the effect of a statement constantly repeated. All the power—and profit—of advertising rests on this truth. A man sees a certain pill, or soap, or stove advertised. The first effect is inappreciable. But it meets him again on the covers of a magazine, in the columns of a newspaper, on a tramcar, on a hoarding, and in a score of other places. The effect produced is cumulative, and there grows up a conviction of the value of the article advertised that rests on no better basis than the continuous repetition of the same phrase.

There is no walk in life to which this reasoning does not apply. One of our novelists has written a story describing how a number of friends decided to build up a reputation for one of their circle, whose future was still well ahead of him. Allusions to his wit and wisdom were given in the course of correspondence, during speeches, and in articles. Occasionally he was quoted. Ultimately the conspiracy succeeded, and, without ever saying a wise thing or doing a useful one, the man was accepted as a profound genius and devoted worker. Much of this kind of thing is always going on around us. Men are accepted as being brave merely upon the strength of their having carefully advertised their own courage; as being wise because they have kept the public well informed as to the strength of their mental resources; or as being honest because they have never ceased to sing the praises of their own incorruptibility. And, on the contrary, reputations may be blasted, brave men marked as cowards, honest men branded as thieves, and wise ones stamped with the mark of folly because their enemies have kept this view of them before the public, and they have been too careless or too contemptuous to correct these wrong impressions. In business, in politics, in the world of popular reputation, in religion, the one thing before all others that is essential is to advertise.

In the religious world, a striking example of the power of advertising is seen in the career of General Booth and the Salvation Army. No one has a keener sense of the power of advertising than the titular head of the Salvation Army. The average person knows little or nothing of the workings of the Army, but he appears to have a conviction that it does a great deal of good. He does not know how, when, or where this good is effected, but this does not disturb his belief. Or, if pressed, he may cite certain "cases" which, on examination, usually turn out to be instances supplied by the Army itself for the use of the public. The manner in which the Salvation Army has for years supplied the press with details of its work, and then quoted the press statements as independent testimony, is in itself a tribute to the advertising efficiency of this organisation. The same thing is seen in reports of its meetings. Very early in its career its astute General supplied the Army with a model of the lines on which their reports of work should be drawn up. The result is that the *War Cry* has always been full of reports of enthusiastic meetings, accounts of impressive speeches, with audiences hanging breathlessly on the words of the speakers. The value of this is obvious. The public easily takes a man or an organisation at his or its own valuation, and reports of the kind noted have the inevitable effect of sending people to take part in future meetings. Even General Booth's own large meetings nowadays are due in no small measure to the many years' advertising of them in the *War Cry* and other channels.

Somewhat on the same lines is the self-advertising of Nonconformists of recent years. For a long time Nonconformists were content to base their claim to distinction upon a preaching of the pure and unadulterated "Word." Then it dawned upon some of them that Nonconformity had exerted a social and political, as well as a religious influence. Then its having claimed, what the narrowest and most bigoted have always claimed, liberty to disagree with others, was made the basis of a claim that it had been the champion of English freedom against an aggressive Episcopacy. Finally, the world is solemnly informed, more or less directly, that Nonconformity is the very backbone of the nation, and without it the British Empire would become a thing of yesterday. This is repeated from thousands of Nonconformist platforms with so much unctious earnestness that dissenters become convinced of its unimpeachable historic accuracy. But more wonderful still than this is the fact that the constant advertising of the power and value of Nonconformity impresses even Episcopalians, and many of them are beginning to echo the same claim in a diluted form. It is the old story of the power of advertising. What so many are saying must be true; such is the unconscious conclusion of the general mind. Only one here and there pauses to ask on what basis particular claims rest, and their voices are easily drowned in the general clamor.

During recent years we have had in our midst several carefully engineered revivals. For months beforehand, each has been lavishly advertised—far more so than is a new play at any of our leading theatres. The meetings were held, the proceedings reported with the usual tales of gigantic successes. The President of the Wesleyan Conference says:—

"Two or three years ago a great effort was made to reach with the Gospel of Christ, in its saving power, that type of humanity known as the Londoner. All that was possible in the way of men and money, preparation, organisation, advertisement, was done to make it successful. The result was a failure. Shortly after, another movement, in absolute contrast, manifested itself. The movement was remarkable for the absence in it of machinery, preparation, money. It possessed all the features of a mighty, mysterious work of God. The results at the time were marvellous, and something remains. Yet never in the history of religious revivals that opened with such manifestations of the Spirit's power, was the point so soon reached of exhaustion and reaction."

This is admitted now; yet with each engineered revival we meet with a repetition of the same tactics, the same stories, and the same result. People of a certain type of mind read the stories of these revivals; their behavior is marked out for them, and during the progress of the meetings themselves their conduct exactly corresponds with what has gone before. Yet, in spite of the admitted failure of these revivals, the power of advertising their benefits is such that there still remains a conviction that in some mysterious manner they contribute to a deepening and enriching of our religious and social life. The unconscious influence of the elaborate revival advertising—both preceding and subsequent—far outweighs the conscious effects of demonstrated failure and uselessness.

Most people have read those carefully concocted newspaper narratives which, commencing with a story of a hairbreadth escape, concludes with a testimony to the value of someone's ointment or nerve restorative. Usually America is given as the birth-place of this species of advertisement. As a matter of fact it is a very old invention, and quite Christian in character. Not a small portion of the literature of the last fifteen centuries has been constructed on this plan. Science and history have been so written as to become more or less disguised advertisements of Christian beliefs. What is known as works on Cardinal Newman poured such well-deserved contempt—have consisted of scientific teachings, hashed and mutilated in such a manner as to persuade people that they were gaining scientific information

while, in reality, swallowing Christian theology. Yankee advertisers might well take some useful hints from Christian theologians in this direction.

In historical matters the advertising of Christianity has been still more flagrant and deliberate. History has too often, in Christian hands, been nothing more than a gigantic advertisement of religious beliefs. The average Christian believes with an almost unshakable firmness in the complete corruption of the old Pagan world and in the spotless purity of Christianity, which gave the modern world whatever of value it possesses. The evidence for this is not a bit stronger than that for the curative value of somebody's blue pills for bilious subjects—not so strong as a matter of fact—but it is accepted in virtue of the widespread and systematic advertising to that end. So, too, with the conviction as to the civilising influence of Christianity. No one knows when, or where, or how, this influence has been exerted; the only authorities for it are Christians themselves; the evidence produced is only that which Christians have themselves provided in the first place. Still, it has been said so often that the constant reading of the advertisement produces conviction in the minds of uncritical readers.

In fact, no business in the world has ever had the long-continued and lavish advertising that Christianity has had. When the ordinary Christian blathers about the literary beauties of the Bible, when he talks of the moral purity of early Christianity or the moralising power of its later forms, when he tells us how much civilisation owes to his religion, when he talks of the scientific evidence in proof of his faith, he is only repeating the advertisements that have been prepared by Christian apologists for his instruction. The efforts of thousands of advertising agents over long centuries cannot be ignored in any estimate of the value of the persistence of Christian belief. As the President of the Conference remarked, there is in Christian talk much more of sound than significance, but let us not forget that significance may be attributed to sound if it is only sufficiently strident and sustained.

C. COHEN.

"The Vision of the Living Lord."

IN his official sermon as President of the Wesleyan Conference, the Rev. W. Perkins states that the first and chief need of to-day is a fresh vision of the living Christ as Savior and Lord of all who put their trust in him. The preacher conveniently takes for granted that there is a living Lord, and that a vision of him is possible. As a believer addressing believers he is doubtless justified in doing so; but there are believers and believers. Mr. Perkins himself admits that "there are always those to whom he (Christ) is only known by experience, and those to whom he is only known by report." He even quotes someone as saying that "multitudes of men at this hour would go down on their knees before any man who could say to them with the certainty of the Apostles, We have seen the Lord." That may be perfectly true, though by no means creditable to the people concerned. How the belief in the living Lord actually arose it is impossible to determine. The only available documents are so hopelessly involved in discrepancies and contradictions that it is impossible to learn anything from them. This is frankly conceded by several eminent divines. The Wesleyan President, however, plays fast and loose with the existing documents. While fully accepting the story of the Resurrection as related in them, he utterly ignores the oft-repeated prophecy of the Resurrection attributed to Jesus during the last few months of his life. He pictures the disciples, immediately after the crucifixion, as "a little band of sad, silent, fearful men," brooding over the loss that had befallen them, and mourning for the sun that had been quenched in their sky. According to him, they had no expectation of that which was about to

happen. But, if so, they must have had wonderfully short memories. In connection with the alleged incident of Peter's great confession at Caesarea Philippi, related in Matthew xvi. 13-20, we read the following significant words:—

"From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (Matthew xvi. 21).

The word "began" is emphatic, indicating that from that time the teaching about his death and resurrection was continuous to the end; and Mark tells us (viii. 32) that "he spake the saying openly."

We refer to this point to show how absolutely unreliable the documents are. Had Peter realised at Caesarea Philippi that his Master was a supernatural being, he could never have forgotten that the newly confessed Son of God had subsequently predicted his death and resurrection times without number. And yet the very documents which chronicle the predictions represent the disciples, immediately after the crucifixion, as being wholly unaware that they had ever heard them. They were in blank despair. His unexpected death had completely stunned them. Then, quite unexpectedly, they saw him again alive. He suddenly appeared to them as they were together in the Upper Room, and they recognised him. Such is the version usually accepted, though there are others which flatly contradict it. Well, it is on such slight, self-invalidating evidence that the Christian creed is made to rest.

"Does anything like this happen now?" the President asks, and we answer, "Yes, precisely the same thing takes place to-day, as testifies the sermon before us." Quoting from the late Dr. Dale he lays down a three-fold proposition—namely, "that Jesus Christ is *alive*, that he is *alive within our reach*, and that he is *alive within our reach as Savior and Lord*." This continued life of Jesus Christ is simply assumed. Not even a shadow of proof is adduced. "He lives in the completeness of his nature, in the fulness of his life," coolly asserts Mr. Perkins. The second fold of the proposition is likewise a gratuitous assumption. "Wherever I am, he is," exclaims the President. "Though I may not perceive him, he is within reach of me," he adds. He even waxes eloquent in emphasising the supposed fact that he is never lonely. That Mr. Perkins believes Jesus Christ to be alive and within reach is highly probable; but such a belief possesses no evidential value whatever. All we know is, that had there been a living Lord within reach of all there would have been no need of the Church and its ministers to announce the fact. The Church and its incessant labors are living witnesses to the non-existence of the Eternal Christ. The very reference to the need of "creating the consciousness of Christ as living," of "getting it back ourselves and of impressing it upon others," is sufficient evidence that the faith is vain and void, and that the consciousness is an artificial creation, and has no corresponding objective reality. Mr. Perkins does not seem to realise that when he affirms that "we Christians are, as I heard a man say a year ago, specialists in matters of faith," he gives his whole case away. He is extremely proud of the Church in which he is so conspicuous a missionary; he declares her to be "in her realm alone and supreme, the realm of the spiritual and the eternal, the realm in which Christ reveals himself and makes known the mystery of his presence and his name"; but it has never dawned upon him that in so describing the Church he discredits the Christ, and makes belief in him on grounds of reason an absurd impossibility. If the living Lord existed he would not permit himself to be fettered by any institution, nor allow any body of men to become his professional guardians, and to get their living by pretending to be the only people capable of rightly proclaiming him to the world.

Mr. Perkins treats the claims of the Catholic Church with insolent contempt. He is equally disdainful of the ritualistic party in the Church of

England. It is to him inconceivable that the presence of the Redeemer should be confined to certain sacraments which can be solemnised only by officially ordained priests. He laughs to scorn the idea of men being "taught to utter the Name as the precious thing which is himself is borne aloft on gold or silver vessel, beneath a silken canopy, with chant and song." The idea is absurd enough, in all conscience; but the same idea, somewhat differently expressed, holds sway in the Free Churches as well. They too maintain that God cannot reveal himself except through them, and that apart from them the Savior of the world can do nothing. Says the Wesleyan President:—

"Other realms we share with other men, the realm of the material, the social, the political; other work the community can do better than the Church can, work of educating the minds of men, clothing and feeding the bodies, building houses, regulating lives. But there is one thing the Christian Church alone can do, and must direct her supreme energy to doing, and that is, making Christ known to men, impressing upon men the reality of his presence, proving to men that he is alive, that he is alive within reach, that he is alive within reach as Savior and Lord."

That extract is at once true and false. It is true that the Church is the only organisation which endeavors to persuade the world that a man who died two thousand years ago is still alive and within reach of all mankind, and that faith in that man as still living and within reach is the one essential condition of individual and social salvation. It is true that this self-styled Body of the Head which that dead man come to life again is said to be, glories in the imaginary privilege of being the sole medium of communication between that redeeming Head and a perishing world. But it is also true that in thus characterising herself, the Church not only robs her so-called living Lord of all his glory by making him her slave, but also converts him into a hideous monstrosity by representing him as being at once irresistibly powerful and ignominiously impotent, omnipresent and yet cabined, cribbed, confined, free as the air, and yet imprisoned in an ecclesiastical cage. Thus the fundamental conception of the Church carries with it a direct and complete negation of her living Lord. "We are his witnesses," the saints boast; "he lives in and works through us alone." We reply: "Yes, you *are* witnesses, living and true, witnesses that he is not, and never was at all." Take the whole history of the Church from the beginning until now and it may be compressed into these words: "There is no God who loves and tenderly broods over the children of men; no Divine, Omnipotent Savior who died and rose again and ever lives for the redemption of a lost and ruined race." The total moral failure of the Gospel proves it to have been from the first a purely human invention which has wrought incalculable havoc on the earth.

"The vision of the living Lord" is the most disastrous of hallucinations. Far be it from us to dab all Christian believers vile hypocrites and liars. We know full well that many of them are transparently honest and sincere; but we are equally sure that the most genuine and true-hearted among them are nothing but vain dreamers and self-deceivers. They only see what they believe exists, and their vision is only as bright as their faith is intense: the former is invariably a reflection of the latter. Mr. Perkins pictures a mother kneeling at her bedside when she was accidentally seen by a loving child. She was alone in the room, and yet she seemed to be talking to someone who could not be seen. "Who was it?" asks the preacher. "Who was there? Was that mother a poor, self-deceived, deluded soul, peopling the place with some Being of her own emotional imagination?" To answer that question in the affirmative may sound, to a believer, brutal; but what other answer can we honestly make? There was no one there. We know of exceptionally pious parents who, for many long and weary years, prayed zealously and believingly for their eldest son who had received an evil inheritance from the past. Daily they spent much time on their knees in his behalf; and yet, in

spite of it all, their much loved first-born child was laid in a drunkard's grave before he was twenty-two. They believed that a God of love was present and heard them in the secret chamber; but Nature's inexorable law had its way with the child, as it always does have with all children and adults alike. Nature has never yet been outmanœuvred. The great law of cause and effect works out its results without interference from any source. Nature reigns supreme, while beyond and above her nothing has ever been either seen or heard, except in sheer imagination or waking dream.

J. T. LLOYD.

Civilised Cant and Christian Humbug.

"His eyes looked up—his mouth turned down,
His accent caught a nasal twang;
He oiled his hair—there might be heard
The grace of God in every word
Which Peter said or sang."

—SHELLEY, *Peter Bell the Third*.

If there is one thing pre-eminently characteristic of the civilised races it is cant, and if there is one thing inextricably bound up with Christianity it is humbug. Christian England, naturally, suffers from a superabundance of cant and humbug. It has become so accustomed to the cultivation of these traits that there is scarcely a point in English life and character that has not been contaminated by the one or the other. It has been frequently asserted that the development of sympathy and magnanimity is a certain augury of civilisation, and that these qualities are more marked in the dominant races than in the subjugated or decaying ones. One would naturally suppose that Britain stood prominently to the front in respect to civilisation. We have been told often enough that where the Union Jack waves all men are free, and, moreover, we firmly believe it. Again, from infancy, we have it drilled into us incessantly that we are the most enlightened people in the cosmos, thanks mainly to the humanising influence of Christianity, our thrice blessed religion. So potent is its influence for good, that we are oft constrained to put a penny in the missionary-box so that a few grains of comfort may be scattered over lands where the heathen lies howling in outer darkness. Our houses of legislation are the pride of the Empire and the envy of the universe. We are the inventors of magnanimity and the architects of progress. We build hospitals and infirmaries for the sick and poor, erect handsome buildings to the glory of God, and give our loyal support to the Salvation Army. We are an amazingly moral people, contented with the lowly positions into which it has pleased God to call us—and our priests are duly thankful.

It is only when one's mind has been relieved from the conventional pressure that the powers of observation become adjusted, and then the gilt begins to drop from the gingerbread with an astonishing rapidity. We see, for instance on the outbreak of a war, British magnanimity made manifest in the immediate despatch of a horde of truculent bravos armed with all forms of destructive machinery. They are fêted, cheered, and prayed for in almost every church throughout the country, and go forth on a blood-spilling expedition fully assured by bishop and parson that God is on their side. There is nothing incongruous in this. To some, the spectacle of the black-robed servants of God invoking supernatural aid in the shedding of human blood may seem decidedly humbug. In time of war the Prince of Peace becomes the God of vengeance and the non-resisting Jesus is transfigured into the malignant ruffian extolled by David in the Psalms. Patriotic people could not tolerate a war-hating God at any price. If it is the invariable custom of the British nation to assume that its army is led of God—and I cannot remember one instance where it wasn't so assumed—to what extent are we, as an advancing and progressive people, less crude and superstitious than the

tom-tom beaters of Timbuctoo? *They* howl to their particular Mumbo Jumbo to protect them from our kind endeavors to inculcate the lessons of humanity and civilisation with lyddite, and *we* smile in derision at their orisons.

James Russell Lowell once wrote:—

"Its a curu's Christian dooty
This ere cuttin' folks' throats."

But he was mistaken. Throat cutting has been, in the past, quite a *gentle* method of Christian propaganda. It is urged that our treatment of subjugated nations is an example to the world and a credit to our religion. A veracious history of colonisation would hardly confirm this claim. Six months ago the writer was in most of the large towns in East Africa, and looked for illustrations of our much vaunted justice and clemency in vain. Slavery is as rampant—though thinly disguised—as ever it was, and the flogging of natives is a matter of very little concern. One may observe the blacks limping by the dozens, with huge scabs and open sores on their ankles where the stick of the superior white man has fallen with its weight of argument. In Durban the curfew has been instituted, and the ringing of it is the precursor of a vigorous stampede to the compounds. The scornful idea—ridiculed by Mark Twain—is regarded by the white man in Africa with owl-like gravity—"Brother—to dirt like that."

So far as the writer could observe, Christian charity manifested itself in the generous presentation to the naked native of a pair of cast-off breeches, in order, I suppose, to shut from view as much of God's handiwork as aroused the giver's disgust. In this respect, the white man clearly evidences the canting frame of mind which springs from that product of Christianity,—an artificial morality. To the untutored savage nakedness is a perfectly clean and healthy state. To the Christianised white man it is unclean. Presumably his Christian armor is not of sufficient substance to safeguard him from prurient reflections when a nude form confronts him. In temperance and decency the civilised white can learn lessons from the black barbarian. It is the proud boast of Christians that we have evolved from a brutal promiscuity, in our sex relationships, to an exalted monogamy. Certainly it has been due to *their* mighty labors. They make their claim with delicious suavity, in spite of the fact that the Old Testament consistently advocates polygamy and the New Testament supports the practice of emasculation. Moreover, it is known that many animals are strict monogamists, and barbarian races have adopted and practised monogamy from time immemorial. It is quite sufficient for me to walk through the streets of any civilised city in the world—particularly in that portion of it known as Christian England—and to see a detestable, loathsome, and obscene promiscuity exemplified in the widespread existence of prostitution. It is prevalent everywhere—*under the very walls of the Christian fanes*. If the brutal hiring of the bodies of our unfortunate sisters is not promiscuity in its vilest form, then it will take a tremendous amount of argument to convince me that it is a testimony to the saving grace of Christianity. In sheer brutish sensuality and insensate lust of the most revolting kind, the Christian debauchee can give the uncivilised native points. Any casual intercourse among the sexes of savage races is entirely voluntary, and always accompanied by at least a measure of sentiment—so there can be no comparison between these matings and the purchasable satisfaction of imperious appetite common to Christian nations. Let the Christian apologists rid themselves of their aggressive cant and humbug. It is time they turned their backs on fancies and faced the realities. It is time they arose from their bended knees—an attitude of utter hypocrisy—and ceased thanking God for his hypothetical tender mercies. These idiotic antics only accentuate the agonies of the moment, they do not lessen them. It is *work*—hard, solid work—which will eventually bring light into the dungeons of life, not sickly prayer or sloppy devotion. Christians must

shun the prejudices of ignorance; they must be made to understand that the solution of life's problems is not to be found in the propagation of consummate cant. However judiciously their distribution of Bibles, breeches, and petticoats may be, *something more* will be required before the devastating influences of their great unmentionable disease can be eradicated, and that is, *sound, rational, scientific thought*. Let them fling from off their minds the trammels of superstition, take seriously to heart the lessons of civilisation, and drop playing at being barbarians.

JOHN S. CLARKE.

Acid Drops.

M. Clemenceau, the French premier who has just resigned, is a Freethinker. M. Briand, who succeeds him, is also a Freethinker. Nearly every statesman in France is a Freethinker now. These are facts not likely to be mentioned in the English newspapers.

There is probably more rascaldom to the square yard in the City of London than in any other part of the Kingdom. No wonder that the Lord Mayor's speech to Sir William May and the other Navy officers at the Guildhall opened with a pious sentence. "It is on the Navy," he said, "under the good providence of God, that our wealth, prosperity, and peace depend." This is extremely interesting. The Navy is no good without God,—and God is no good without the Navy; otherwise, we might leave our safety to God, and save ever so many millions a year.

"Let justice be done though the heavens fall." It is a glorious sentiment. But happily there is no danger of the heavens falling. There is nothing to fall. Something like this reflection is the mental and moral support of Christian Socialists like the Rev. R. J. Campbell. That gentleman wants England to go to war to set the Congo right. He knows that England won't go to war for it, so he is free to shout for war as loud as possible. Some other good Christians, of the same breed, are almost courting a quarrel with Russia over the Czar's visit to England. Our readers know our opinion of the pious head of Holy Russia, but we should be sorry to make it a danger to the peace of the world. Only people brought up on Christian sentimentalism could imagine that irresponsible impulse is a safe guide in international affairs. It is like smoking in a powder magazine.

Rev. R. J. Campbell calls himself a Christian, but he believes in nothing that has hitherto been understood as Christianity. In the last number of the *New Theology* weekly, he has the effrontery to say not only that the Fourth Gospel is not "literal history," but that it was "never meant to be taken as such." This is really entitled to a first prize in the competition of Christian shuffling.

Mr. Campbell lets the cat out of the bag at the finish. He says that "the Fourth Gospel is *not* literal history, and cannot be regarded as such without rejecting the others." The grammar of this statement is loose enough, but the meaning is sufficiently clear. Mr. Campbell feels that *some* historical character must be maintained for the Gospels; and as the fourth is now perfectly hopeless, he sacrifices it in order to tighten his hold on the other three. But they are just as unhistorical as the fourth. This is plain enough to students who have no interest in churches and pulpits.

Is baptism necessary? This is another question put to Mr. Campbell. He answers it in the negative. Nothing is necessary except attending the City Temple and contributing to its maintenance.

Rev. T. Rhonnda Williams is one of the lights of the *New Theology*—and he seems to be as good as Mr. Campbell at sweeping round a lamp-post. In a long article on "The New Testament and the Woman Question" in the last issue of the *New Theology* weekly, Mr. Williams had to make a significant admission, which he had also minimise. "There is no doubt," he said, "that in the Roman Empire the movement towards the emancipation of woman was well on the way when Christianity came. It is said that Christianity checked that movement, and there is a sense in which that is true; but we should have to maintain that the check was designed in the interests of morality." Even if this be honest, which we rather doubt,

it is nonsense, and contemptible nonsense. The world did *not* grow more moral with the spread of Christianity; it grew *less* moral; so much so that there is nothing in all history like the physical and moral filth of the "Dark Ages"—the name which the historians give to the period when Christianity triumphed over every opposing force.

People not hampered by Christianity have found no great difficulty in the woman question. The Wesleyan Church has refused again and again to accept women delegates at the Annual Conference. But can anybody imagine a Secular Society acting in that way? Women are welcome at the National Secular Society's Conference—welcome on its platforms—welcome on its Branch committees—welcome amongst its officers. There are women's names in the list of vice-presidents, and the Central Executive's secretary (for many years) is a woman.

Christians, *as* Christians, can never be sound on the woman question. The Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, teaches, and even emphasises, woman's hopeless inferiority; her inferiority of position, character, value, and significance. It is not a question of whether she should do this, that, or the other. It is a question of her rank in the scale of being.

It is somewhat surprising to see a man like the Rev. J. Page Hopps lauding the Pilgrim Fathers. Those old Puritans left England to avoid what they called persecution. They could not rule the Church of England in their own way. When they were the under dog, it was tyranny; when they were the upper dog, there was liberty; for by tyranny they meant *not* getting their own way, and by liberty they meant *getting* their own way. Simply this, and nothing more. Over in America they showed what liberty meant in their vocabulary. They were the sourest bigots and persecutors in the world. Indeed, an American humorist was led to declare, a few years ago, that he did not care to celebrate the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers on Plymouth Rock; it would have been better if Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers.

More "Providence"! Earthquakes in the province of Elis, in Greece, have destroyed several villages and killed many people. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

The Johannites in St. Petersburg are a crazy sect. They mortify the flesh to obtain salvation. They have also been mortifying the flesh of their children with the same object. The police made a raid upon the dens in which the poor young things were being prepared for kingdom-come. Children of all ages, from two to eleven, were found in indescribably filthy conditions. Eighty per cent. were suffering from eye disease, through being kept in dirt and darkness. Others had sore knees through much kneeling. Others bore marks of severe beating. And many were suffering from tuberculosis. Such are the benefits of religion unadulterated by freethought and humanity.

The Eskimo lad, Mene, who was brought to America thirteen years ago by Commander Peary's Arctic expedition, grew tired of "civilisation" and has gone back to his own people. He says he has learned some things which will be useful, and other things which he will be glad to forget. "I cannot adopt your Christian religion," he said to interviewers, "although I have tried to do so. The trouble is most of you don't really believe in it enough to live up to it." This truism "shocked many tourists on the *Rosalind*, who crowded about him." No doubt they flatter themselves that they do believe in Christianity. No doubt it is a good thing that they don't.

England forced the opium traffic on China at the point of the bayonet. This has been pooh-poohed by some Christian people who cannot admit any good qualities on the part of "the heathen." These people have asserted that the Chinese Government did not want to suppress the opium traffic, but merely to secure the profits for itself. This has been decisively confuted, however, by the Shanghai Commission. Even the Wesleyan Conference has had to admit that the inquiry of this Commission has "conclusively established the good faith and earnestness of the Chinese Government in suppressing opium smoking throughout the Empire."

The Wesleyan Conference passed a resolution against Sunday golf, which it cannot interfere with, and another in favor of Sunday Closing. Both were trade resolutions. Sunday Closing is no more justifiable than Monday Closing.

It is pure Sabbatarianism. The men of God are all Protectionists—in their own business.

In their recent articles on John Calvin the religious journals have dealt very leniently with all his faults. The brutal burning of Servetus the advice to "punish well by the sword the Catholics and fanatic Gospellers" in England, and many other cruel words and deeds, were described simply as characteristic of "the temper of the time." We agree; but to what or whom are we to attribute "the temper of the time"? To say that Augustin held wicked views, as well as Calvin, is not to justify the latter, and to ascribe cruelties to the spirit of the age is not to exonerate their perpetrators. It was God in Christ who was responsible for everything, for he was said to hold the Universe and all it contained in the hollow of his hand. In other words, "the temper of the time," Augustin, Calvin, Cranmer, and John Knox are irrefutable arguments against the Divine origin and power of Christianity, or against the existence of a God of love revealed in Jesus Christ.

Mr. A. J. Mundella takes a curious—some would say comic—view of the religious difficulty in elementary education. He appears to think that religious teaching prescribed by the State is tyranny, and that religious teaching prescribed by the local authorities is liberty. We venture to tell him that the tyranny, or the liberty, is precisely the same in both cases. Whatever the number of people concerned, however they are organised, or however they may make their will prevail, those who settle the religious teaching, both for themselves and for others, in the nation's schools, are employing public resources and public authority for their own sectarian purposes. There is no escape from this conclusion. And it is precisely this very essence of the whole matter that Mr. Mundella ignores or evades.

Mr. Mundella refers to "the old Liberal principle of the Liberal Party that religious matters are for the individual conscience." But that is the principle on which Secular Education is founded. Yet, strangely enough, Mr. Mundella is (or seems) opposed to Secular Education!

The Rev. Dr. John Woods is quite right in saying that between Christianity and Atheism there is no logical resting-place; but he is wholly wrong when he characterises Atheism as "blank." All the "blankness" of Atheism is expressed in the first letter of the word, and has reference only to the superstitious idea conveyed by the six letters that follow. As a Greek scholar Dr. Woods ought to know this. He is equally in error when he affirms that, according to Atheism, "the sense of moral obligation is an illusion." In reality, the sense of moral obligation is a contradiction in terms under any orthodox form of Theism.

For many centuries God has been fighting desperately for the possession of London. Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ purchased her with his own blood from the Grand Usurper, the Devil. But his Infernal Majesty, ignoring the bloody bargain, has steadily refused to hand the great city over to his Celestial Antagonist. It was authoritatively stated at the Wesleyan Conference just held at Lincoln, that London is still "Satan's Stronghold." The consequence is that, as one speaker put it, "London is rotten to the core." This statement is proved by the sad fact that "there are more people in London who never go into a Christian church than the whole population of England numbered in the days of Wesley." Poor old London! And yet, for upwards of twenty years, the Wesleyan Mission has been most active within her borders, vainly testifying to "the power of the Gospel to save drunkards, fallen women, and Agnostics." Who can any longer be in doubt as to the colossal impotence of the Christian religion?

Mr. John Edwards, President of the Liverpool Fabian Society, says that "the Socialist needs no better text-book than the New Testament." What texts did the gentleman have in mind when he made that statement? Was he thinking of these?—"Blessed be ye poor." "Resist not evil." "Take no thought for the morrow." "Labor not for the meat that perisheth." Perhaps the Fabian gentleman will explain.

"Angels" is the subject of an article by the Rev. J. D. Jones in the *Christian World*. Mr. Jones regrets that people have lost belief in angels, owing to "the materialist temper of this age." "We have subscribed," he says, "to the Sadducean doctrine that there is neither angel nor spirit, and so have impoverished our universe and emptied it of its glory and romance." This reverend gentleman is

to be pitied. He fancies that glory and romance go out of the world with ghosts. Some of us think that the glory of the world lies in human achievement, and its romance in human emotions. When all the gods are dead, and all the ghosts vanished, and all the angels buried with folded wings, men will give their lives for love, and friendship, and country, and the golden passion of Romeo and Juliet will beat in a thousand young hearts. Glory and romance dead, are they? Dead with Mr. Jones's theology? We advise the reverend gentleman to take medicine?

What is blasphemy? It is an ugly word, but what does it mean? It used to mean speaking evil of Christianity, its Book, or its God; and speaking evil of them was done by merely questioning their truth and value. But all that is changed since 1883, when Lord Chief Justice Coleridge delivered his famous judgment at the trial of the editor of the *Freethinker*. Lord Coleridge laid it down that the very fundamentals of Christianity might be attacked, provided the decencies of controversy were respected, without fear of a prosecution for blasphemous libel. This statement of the Common Law of Blasphemy was reaffirmed last year by Mr. Justice Phillimore. It therefore holds the field, and is never likely to be dislodged. What was once blasphemy is blasphemy no longer. Blasphemy now appears to consist in shocking Christian people's feelings; which is the most delightfully vague offence that it is possible to imagine. Almost anything might be brought in as blasphemy under that nebulous definition. We see that the Rev. Dr. Pierson, one of the speakers at the Keswick Convention, "expressed horror at the blasphemy of a statement made recently by the ministerial and professedly evangelical editor of a certain magazine." And what was that "blasphemy"? It was this:—

"Moral evil is not the antecedent but the consequent of cosmical evil. Whoever or whatever the power behind phenomena may be, He or It is primarily responsible even for 'Man's inhumanity to man.' Even sin cannot wholly be laid to the door of humanity; Deity or the cosmic process must be held responsible in the first instance."

According to Dr. Pierson, this is blasphemy. The reverend gentleman was "almost afraid to repeat it, as being near akin to the sin against the Holy Ghost." So that the writer of that objectionable, but perfectly polite, passage would soon be found guilty of blasphemy by a jury consisting of twelve Dr. Piersons; and if the judge on the bench were a Dr. Pierson too, the writer might easily get six months for his abominable offence.

A party of visitors to the Keswick Convention were accidentally thrown out of a coach-and-four, and some of them badly knocked about. Prayers were offered for them at the Convention. This was like locking the stable door when the horse had run away. Prayer, to be efficacious, should be before an accident, not after. What is the use of praying when the mischief is done?

Canon Horsley, replying on a postcard to a query by Mr. George Jacob, says: "Your question seems based on the assumption that the flood was other than local, which no one is required to believe, and few who have studied the question do imagine." We don't know what a man is required to believe, but we do know what the Bible says. It says that "all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered." It says that "all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." It says that "Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." Surely it is treating the Bible as an old wax nose (Erasmus's expression) to make out that the seventh of Genesis describes a local flood. We shall hear by-and-bye that it was a village flood, that carried off three blind pups and a couple of paralysed old hens.

The late Father George Tyrrell, who died in a state of excommunication on account of his "Modernism," was buried in the parish cemetery at Storrington without Catholic rites. It seems to us an extraordinary thing that the Catholic Church should be reproached for refusing its rites to excommunicate persons. Father Tyrrell had a right to leave the Catholic Church, if he chose; and the Catholic Church had a right to expel him, if it chose. Freedom does not mean the right to force yourself upon people who don't want you. Father Tyrrell should have gone outside, and that would have saved him from being pushed out.

What is called "a new Exeter Hall" is being erected in Tottenham-court-road, at the corner of Great Russell-street. It is to be the London home of the Young Men's Christian Association, and is to cost £175,000. Most of the money, of

course, will be supplied by well-to-do Christians; those who employ the Christian young men, and wish to keep them industrious and docile.

Revivalists seem to have a splendid field for profitable work in America. A revivalist rejoicing in the name of Billy Sunday, having finished his mission at Decatur, Illinois, was presented with a cheque for 11,572 dollars and 60 cents—equal to more than £2,300. The cheque was photographed, and a picture of it appeared in the *Literary Digest*. It was enough to make Judas Iscariot's mouth water. He never handled such a sum as Cashier of the First Salvation Army.

It seems to us high time that judges gave up, or were forbidden, the practice of addressing homilies to prisoners in the dock, and especially to persons on whom they are passing the extreme penalty of the law. The game is so very one-sided. The judge usurps the preacher's function, and the prisoner is an unwilling listener. We have always sympathised with the rough criminal who shouted to the judge, "Stow the bloomin' sermon, and give us the bloomin' sentence." Only he didn't say *bloomin'*.

The Lord Chief Justice should not have talked in that way to Madar Lal Dhingra in sentencing him to be hanged by the neck till he was dead—with the regulation (hypocritical) addendum, "May the Lord have mercy on your soul!" What was the use of telling the condemned man that he "had been found guilty of brutal, cold-blooded murder upon a perfectly innocent man"? Such language could not possibly make any impression on the prisoner in the dock. He looked at the matter from a totally different point of view. "I am proud," he replied, "to have the honor to lay down my humble life for my country." Of course he was wrong. Assassination will not help India to self-government. The young Indian is mistaken. He is scarcely sane. He is obsessed by a certain idea; instead of his having the idea, the idea has *him*. Yet, after all, he was giving his life to it; and the Englishman on the bench ought not to have preached as he did at the Indian in the dock. Besides, the "heathen" prisoner might have told the Christian judge, if discussion had been permitted, that the Bible justifies assassination, and that Englishmen still living have suffered imprisonment for bringing the Bible (as their indictment declared) into "disbelief and contempt."

Take the case of Ehud, who was "raised up" to deliver Israel. He paid a friendly visit to Eglon, king of Moab, and obtained a private interview. "I have a message from God unto thee," said Ehud. Eglon rose to receive it, and God's message was soon in his belly, in the shape of a dagger which Ehud had concealed on his person. Now, as the Lord "raised" up this "deliverer" of Israel, we are entitled to assume that the Bible deity instigated the assassination.

We were turning over the pages of one of Thomas Fuller's books only yesterday, and we smiled on coming across his pious reference to Ehud in a Christening Sermon. Fuller was a great writer; he was one of the men of genius in the history of the Church of England. He was wise and witty; he was also humane. But he was a Christian; he believed the Bible to be really the Word of God; and he regarded all its assassinations as entirely just and righteous. "Gaze, then, no longer," he exclaims, "on Ehud's hand, for that was lame; or on his dagger, for that was short; but look on God's finger in Ehud's hand, and that can work wonders." God's finger in Ehud's hand was a dagger! It is difficult to see how Dhingra could say anything worse than that.

We have the greatest respect for Mr. W. T. Stead's generous impulses, and we wish we could always have the same respect for his judgment. He argues that "consideration of justice, policy, and mercy justify the commutation of Dhingra's sentence." But why *mercy*? Mr. Stead himself says, in the very same letter, that "a life-long sentence of incarceration would be much more punitive than the short, sharp shrift of the gallows." Moreover, the argument that Dhingra should not be given the "crown of martyrdom" that he wishes is an admission that his crime was political. Mr. Stead is obviously arguing from various, and contradictory, points of view. The really sensible sentence in his letter is the statement that Dhingra is "politically insane." A treatment of the case as pathological may be the best policy, though it would be very foolish to suppose that this will stave off the ultimate problem of India, which is simply one item in the general relations between Christian Europe and Heathen Asia.

A Frenchman has crossed the Channel first on an aeroplane. "Infidel" France is well to the front again. She often is. British piety ought to go in for a day of humiliation. Or should it be a day of commination?

Considering the complexion of its readers, the *Daily Chronicle* can hardly help maintaining its reputation for Christian piety. But the members of its staff, being men of education and intelligence, cannot possibly share the superstition of the public they have to write for. Every now and then they ray out a gleam of their own mentality. In reviewing the second volume of Dr. Westermarck's *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, the writer refers to the diversity of sex conditions in various parts of the world, and under various economic conditions, and concludes: "But the conventional views which cannot penetrate beyond Eden and Cana of Galilee will hold the field until the ecclesiastical mind becomes impregnated with the facts so skilfully marshalled in this exhaustive and entertaining study." Eden and Cana of Galilee! In other words, Moses and Christ! And the final reflection is—though we make it, and not the reviewer—that Moses and Christ are both legendary characters.

We are glad to see Mr. John Dillon, M.P., protesting against priestly interference with politics. We should be still more glad if Mr. Dillon would make the same protest in Ireland. To make it at the Holborn Restaurant, with regard to the Dumfries election, is not sufficient. The Catholic Church has ruled Ireland with a rod of iron ever since the death of Parnell, who was hated by the priests, not for the disclosures in the divorce court, but because he had rescued the Irish Party from clerical control.

Lincoln Baptist Church, Cincinnati, has had forty canaries in cages helping the organ and the choir. "Compel them to come in" is a played out text. People have to be tickled into church nowadays.

The silly editor of a silly weekly paper says that he called at Smith and Son's, Strand, for his "usual" copy of last week's *Freethinker*, and could not be supplied; and he congratulates himself on his vaporings having induced Messrs. Smith and Son to cease supplying "Mr. Foote's blasphemous journal." On inquiry we learn that the silly editor could not get the *Freethinker* simply because it was sold out when he applied for it. So he will be able to get his "usual" copy in future if he applies for it in time.

We have heard of "Silly Suffolk," but they are now calling it "Holy Suffolk" because General Booth has started his new motor-car trip in that county. But "silly" and "holy" are, after all, not as different as they look. They have such a lot in common.

Several Baptist churches, in towns along the Brownsville and Mexico line, combined in a young people's picnic at Palacios, a seaside resort on Matagorda Bay, about seventy miles south-west of Galveston. An enormous refreshment tent was blown down in a sudden storm, and between fifty and seventy of the party were killed. More "Providence."

Father Costanzo Albasini, a Franciscan friar, was delivering a missionary magic-lantern lecture at Valle San Bartolomeo, near Alessandria, in Italy, when a side wall of the building gave way and the whole structure collapsed, burying 350 people in a vault fifteen feet below. Forty victims were removed to hospital with dangerous injuries, and nearly everybody sustained cuts, bruises, or broken bones. "Providence" again!

Right Rev. Thomas William Wilkinson, Roman Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, left £40,754. If there is any truth in the religion he taught, we pity him, for he is with Dives in a place where the temperature is high and water is very scarce.

Who cries that God
Hath damn'd to death one living soul He made,
And doom'd to penal torment without end
One Spirit for the evils wrought in Time,
Hath made of Him a Demon Infinite,
Compared with whom the blackest fiend below
Is a bright Angel! And who holds that God
Avenge wrongs, as though Himself were wrong'd,
With lightnings that afflict but not consume,
Crowns the All-wise with folly like his own.
—Frederick Tennyson.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

September 5, 12, 19, 26, St. James's Hall, London.
 October 3, Glasgow; 10, Leicester; 17, 24, and 31, St. James's Hall, London.
 November 7, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £229 5s. 6d. Received since.—R. P. Miles, 1s.; W. A. Yates, 3s.; Elizabeth Lechmere, 10s.

R. P. MILES.—Pleased to have such an encouraging letter from one who, eighteen months ago, was a Sunday-school teacher and "had salvation pretty badly."

S. E. STEVENS.—Quite well, thanks.

W. SUTCLIFFE.—Readers don't annoy us by sending suggestions; quite the contrary; only a fool thinks he knows and sees everything. Yes, Ward Beecher did introduce Ingersoll on that occasion as "the greatest orator speaking the English language."

G. JACOB.—See paragraph. Thanks.

J. E. COCKROFT.—Shall be sent as requested. It is impossible to answer your question.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. A. YATES.—Your good wishes are welcome.

E. B. FOOTE (New York).—It is good of you to remember the Freethought cause in old England so generously; you, who have so many claims upon you, in your own land.

T. J. WILLIAMS.—Tuesday morning is too late. In our next.

N. LEVY.—Mr. Foote will reply.

ELIZABETH LECHMERE.—Thanks for the postcards. The accession of women to our ranks is indeed a good omen.

G. F. H. McCLUSKEY.—Always pleased to see your handwriting. Will you tell friend Tucker that we shall be writing him after Board meeting on Thursday?

J. BAYCE.—Received.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street E.C.

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

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

London Freethinkers who attended Mr. Foote's course of lectures in April at the beautiful new St. James's Hall, and those who attended the Thomas Paine Celebration there on June 8, will be glad to know that this fine meeting-place has been secured by the Secular Society, Ltd., for Sunday evening lectures during September and October. Mr. Foote will try to work up good audiences during the whole of September. He will be away—at Glasgow and Leicester—the first two Sundays in October, and this will afford an opportunity for Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd to occupy the St. James's Hall platform, which, of course, they will do more frequently if the Sunday evening lectures there can be developed into a regular institution. Mr. Foote will return to St. James's Hall for the rest of the Sundays in October.

Concentration is one of the principal secrets of success. We have no hesitation, therefore, in trusting that the London Freethinkers will concentrate on St. James's Hall during September and October. Mr. Foote, on his part, will make the lectures as good as he can. He is, indeed, preparing a special course of lectures for the occasion. And he is quite sure that his colleagues will put their very best work into their share of the enterprise.

The St. James's Hall meetings will, of course, be extensively advertised. The Secular Society, Ltd., regards the extra advertising as an investment for the ultimate good of the movement. But this must not prevent the "saints" from doing all they can to secure a big success. We rely on their advertising the lectures among their friends and acquaintances. Neat printed announcements for general circulation will be obtainable from Miss Vance, at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

A Branch of the N. S. S. is being formed at Bishop Auckland. A lady is going to be the secretary. We understand that Mr. Wishart has been engaged to deliver two open-air lectures in Shildon Market Place, on Sunday, August 15.

"The names of great and well-known men are sometimes bequeathed to Freethought through some act in which they do not let their right hand know what their left hand doeth. Thus Edward Everett Hale contributed through the Paine Memorial Society to the rescue of the character of Paine from Christian obloquy; and George Meredith, England's foremost man of letters, gave his cheque and his name to the support of the most pronounced Freethought paper in that country."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A great Christian demonstration was advertised to take place on Parliament Hill Fields on Sunday afternoon, and a dozen clergymen, including an Archdeacon, were pressed into the Lord's service for the occasion. It happened that a Secular demonstration took place there at the same time, organised by the North London Branch,—Mr. Wilson lending a brake and a handsome pair of horses, and the speakers being Messrs. Allison, Ramsey, Saphin, Hyatt, Cook, and Farrier. Now it also happened that the Secular platform was surrounded by a vast enthusiastic crowd, while the Christian platform was nearly deserted.

We print in another part of this week's *Freethinker* an appeal which is being made on behalf of Mr. Harry Boulter. It appears that he is practically black-listed in his (tailoring) trade. We are not astonished at this display of Christian bigotry, although we regret it; and we should be glad to see Mr. Boulter set up in a small business of his own, which might enable him to earn a livelihood, and perhaps grow into something better. Whatever may be said of Mr. Boulter's style of advocacy, the fact remains that he would never have been prosecuted and imprisoned for it if he had not been a Freethinker. As a Christian, he might have used any language with perfect impunity. He is a victim of the Blasphemy Laws, and the Blasphemy Laws are in their very nature invidious and persecuting. On that ground, and on that ground alone, we trust that the appeal for Mr. Boulter will elicit a reasonable response. We may add that Mr. Evans, the treasurer of the fund, is thoroughly trustworthy as a Freethinker, and in every other respect.

There seems to be an impression that cheap editions of Paine's *Age of Reason* are novelties. Certainly no sixpenny edition of that immortal work was ever so well got-up and so well edited as the Twentieth Century Edition (with a really fine portrait of Paine on the cover) issued by the Secular Society, Limited. Another sixpenny edition was brought out some years afterwards, but the Twentieth Century Edition easily maintains priority in other respects as well as in point of time. Mr. Foote contributed several pages of Notes to it, and a sixteen-page Life of Paine, which the late G. J. Holyoake called "masterly." But that was, after all, not the first cheap edition of the *Age of Reason*. Paine published all his own writings at very low prices. Having other means of livelihood, he did not aim at making any profit by his pen, and therefore his publications were sold at a price which covered the cost of production. Richard Carlile published various editions of the *Age of Reason*. One of them was printed in fine large type at the price of several shillings. At the other extreme was a pretty little pocket edition, which contained both parts of that work, and the pieces that Eaton put together and called the third part, though it is really nothing of the kind. Carlile called this pocket volume *The Theological Works of Thomas Paine*. The type is very small, but readable, being well printed on good paper,—no bad paper being made in those days. The frontispiece is an exquisite engraving by G. F. Phillips of Romney's portrait of Paine. This is faced by a satirical picture of the Bishop of Llandaff (Watson, who answered Paine) walking off with a tithe sheaf of corn under one arm, and a tithe lamb under the other. As our copy of this edition is bound, we do not know what price, if any, was printed on the cover, yet we presume it was but little. The pages measure five inches by two and three-quarters. We have heard that a very large number of copies were sold. The little book is dated 1822.

The Narratives in Genesis—VIII.

THE GREAT DELUGE FICTION.

(Continued from p. 476.)

THE Bible story of the Flood, like that of the Creation, is nothing but pure fiction. The proof of this fact is contained in the narrative itself, and is therefore open to all unprejudiced readers endowed with a modicum of common sense. In considering this alleged event I shall take the two accounts as one, and will notice chiefly the manifest impossibilities involved—of which the writers apparently were serenely unconscious.

According to the story, "the wickedness of man was great in the earth," and "the Lord," in consequence, decided to destroy all living creatures by a flood. All the animal creation—except the fishes who preyed one upon another—were to be exterminated because the Lord found that man had turned out worse than he had expected. Only the family of one man, Noah, who had "found grace in the eyes of the Lord," was to be saved, and of the animals two of every kind of bird, beast, and creeping thing. For this purpose Noah was commanded to build an ark of three stories, each to be divided into numerous compartments for the accommodation of himself and the animals. Respecting the latter he received two contradictory commands, and, wonderful to relate, he executed both. Noah, at this time, was 600 years old; each of his sons was 100 years old, all three having wives, but no children.

When the ark was finished, Noah and his family and two of every kind of bird, beast, and creeping thing (male and female) entered; then "the Lord shut him in." The writer does not tell us how Noah got together a pair of every kind of animal, or how he managed to persuade them to go into the ark. Neither does he say how Noah selected the male and female of such small deer as lizards, snails, beetles, etc. Did that ancient patriarch know, for instance, that the male lizard had a broad and flat tail and the female a round and narrow one?

The sacred writer treats the Deluge as a perfectly natural event, though exceptional: he certainly did not know that his story, if true, would necessitate a succession of miracles such as the world has never witnessed before or since. The first of these is, as to where the immense body of water, rising to the height of $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles above the present sea level, came from. Nothing less than this quantity would be necessary. It is distinctly stated that "the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven, were covered," and that "all flesh that moved upon the earth.....died." Such language is too clear to be mistaken. The water, therefore, rose above the highest point of the Himalayas (*i. e.*, 29,000 feet, or $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles), and when after five months it had somewhat subsided, it left the ark resting upon Mount Ararat (17,260 feet)—that is to say, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles above the level of the sea. The last-named figure is the lowest at which the height to which the water rose can be placed; for the writer knew, or had heard of, a high mountain called Ararat. We thus get some idea of what he intended his readers to understand—and believe.

Many Christian apologists contend that the Bible Deluge was a local flood, and that only a small portion of the earth—which, they say, contained all the then inhabitants of the globe—was submerged. Such a position is, however, altogether untenable. Had such been the case, another miracle would be necessary—that of an immense body of water covering a comparatively small portion of land, standing up like a plateau or table land to the height of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, without anything solid surrounding it to keep it heaped up in that position. If, again, the Deluge was a local flood, the building of an ark was unnecessary; all Noah had to do was to take a journey, accompanied by his family and menagerie, beyond the limits of the doomed region.

The supporters of a local deluge, when driven into a corner by the evident impossibilities connected with such a theory, make a final effort to render it possible. Some of these perverters of the Bible story assert that the ground within a certain area, presumably where everybody lived at that time, was suddenly depressed a considerable distance below the surrounding land, and the hollow thus formed was somehow filled with water. At the end of the year the district under water was raised to its former level. Could anything be more simple? Nothing, surely—except, perhaps, a hydraulic lift. But, absurd as the idea is, this kind of a Flood would not destroy all animal life, even in that particular locality. Many of the people would, either by swimming or clinging to floating timber, manage to reach the edge of the lake, and clamber out. All quadrupeds, save perhaps the camel, can swim, and many of these—and nearly all the feathered tribes—would escape to land. The idea is really too ridiculous to be considered seriously. Moreover, as in the last case, no ark was required: Noah and his animals might have made an excursion to another district.

Setting aside this apologetic trifling, it is perfectly plain that the sacred writers were speaking of a universal deluge: the whole tone of the narrative proves this—and here we return to the question, Where did the water come from? All the oceans and seas of the globe represent a surface of about 145,000,000 square miles, with an average depth of 15,000 feet. But to cover Mount Ararat another body of water would have to be superposed upon these 145 million square miles of water, which should reach to the height of 17,260 feet (*plus* 15 cubits)—that is to say, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles; and, in addition, this second body of water would have to cover the 52,000,000 square miles of land to the same height. Hence, to supply the water required for the Biblical Flood, a fresh body of water of nearly twice the bulk of all the existing oceans and seas would have to be *created* or somehow brought into existence. Whence was such an immense body of water procured?

This difficulty, which to anyone with a grain of sense appears insurmountable, was no difficulty to the sacred writer. Were there not oceans of water stored above the firmament? Could not the restraints (Job xxxviii. 8-11) which kept the seas from overflowing the land be removed? What more was needed? Apparently nothing; for we read:—

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.....and the waters increased, and bare up the ark.....And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered.....And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days."

The inspired writer was not aware—it had not been revealed to him—that the rain alone could not raise the water a single foot; that after the small quantity of moisture held in solution in the atmosphere all over the earth had once been precipitated, no more could fall until a fresh supply had been taken up into the clouds; that this fresh supply could only be obtained by evaporation from the water on the earth; that, in fact, the quantity that fell from the clouds as rain was taken up again in the form of invisible vapor, and after returning to the earth as rain, once more ascended as vapor, and so on, throughout the whole forty days. He did not know that it was simply a question of circulation and the giving and taking of less than six inches of water over the whole surface of the globe.

The next difficulty connected with the Biblical Flood—but which was no difficulty to the sacred writer—was the getting rid of the great body of water which covered Mount Ararat (*viz.*, over three miles in height above the present sea level), so as to leave the oceans and seas at the same level as before the Deluge. The narrator of the story tells us how this was done.

"And Elohim made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged; the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; and the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of an hundred and fifty days the waters decreased.....And the waters decreased continually until the tenth monthon the first day of the month were the tops of the mountains seen.....In the six hundredth and first year [of Noah's life]in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month was the earth dry."

From the foregoing it will be perceived that the writer saw no difficulty in dispersing and causing to disappear the enormous body of water he had called into existence. The process was the simplest imaginable. First, the "windows of heaven" which had been open were shut closely, so that no more rain could fall from the reservoirs above the firmament. Next, "the fountains of the deep" were stopped, so that no more water could issue from the oceans. Lastly, a wind was made to pass over the surface of the waters. The result of the first two operations was that no more water was added to increase the height of the water that covered the earth; but none was taken away. Only by means of the last named—the atmosphere or wind—could the water be decreased at all. The writer had probably often seen slight depressions in the land transformed by rain into shallow pools of water, and had also seen the water of these pools disappear, chiefly by the agency of the wind. The dissipation of the water of the Flood was to him merely a repetition of the process, only on a very much larger scale.

The air, or wind, if moving over different parts of the earth would be of a different temperature—warm within the tropics, cold towards the poles, and temperate in the intermediate regions. The vapor absorbed by the atmosphere in each locality would be proportionate to its temperature, the warm air being capable of holding more moisture than the cold. Thus, air at a temperature of 113° can hold 1-20th of its own weight in solution; air at 86° can hold 1-40th; air at 59° can hold 1-80th; air at 32° (freezing point) can hold 1-160th. Taking the average temperature of the whole atmosphere at 59° it would be capable of holding 1-80th of its own weight of vapor in solution. I will first assume, tentatively, the average temperature to be over 90°, so as to contain 1-34th of its own weight of moisture. Now the weight of a column of air from the surface of the earth to the highest point (say, fifty miles) is exactly the same as that of a similar column of water 84 feet high: and since this air is capable of holding 1-34th of its own weight, it can take up by evaporation and hold in solution one solid foot of water—and no more. The wind, then, which the inspired writer says passed over the earth and caused the waters to subside, would, if over 90° and perfectly dry, reduce the water all over the globe by one foot only. The atmosphere, being then saturated, could receive no more moisture; it could only give back a portion (not the whole) to the ocean as rain, and then take it up again by evaporation. Putting the average temperature of the Biblical wind, however, at 59°—which is much nearer the mark—the water of the Deluge would be reduced by only a few inches. Thus, the difficulty of getting rid of this immense body of water remains. Yet the sacred writer tells us that by the means he has described (which we have just considered) the water continued to decrease until at last the earth was left dry, as before. A body of water about twice the capacity of all the oceans and seas of the globe is first called into existence from nowhere, and after it has stood covering the highest mountains of the earth for several months it is sent back to nowhere. And this clotted nonsense is said to be the inspired word of God!

The next difficulty is, as to how the ark was to get to Mount Ararat in order to rest upon it. Now, if the earth were entirely covered with water, with no land to break and change the direction of the atmospheric currents, there would be a constant and regular circulation of air resulting from the heat

within the tropics and the rotation of the earth. A north-east wind from the North Pole, and a south-east wind from the South Pole, would set in towards the Equator, assuming more of a westerly course as they approached the tropics. These would be balanced by Return currents of air, in the higher strata of the atmosphere, flowing back towards the poles. The Ark, then, starting from the neighborhood of Armenia or Mesopotamia, would have been carried by the surface N.E. wind in a S.W. direction towards the Equator, and would there have entered the belt of Equatorial calms—where the N.E. and S.E. winds met and neutralised each other. Here it would remain, stationary or drifting in a westerly direction, and coming into frequent collisions with trees, floating timber, and the wreck of cities, which had also been carried into this latitude. Without the power of steam, the Ark could never, in the face of an adverse wind blowing from the N.E., have got back to Armenia, and have rested upon Mount Ararat, as stated in Genesis: and, as a consequence, Noah and his menagerie would never have been heard of again.

As a simple matter of fact, if such a body of water had been brought into existence of the height or depth described in Genesis, nothing could get rid of it: it would be there to this day. ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

God and the French Revolution.

IN a lecture on "Parliament and the People," delivered at the House of Lords under the auspices of the Working Men's Educational Association, Professor Howard Masterman is reported to have said that—

"The real basis of the French Revolution, although it was largely founded upon a repudiation of religion, was, nevertheless, religious because the consideration of the equality of man meant that to God one man was of the same value as any other man—no less, no more."

If the Professor by these remarks wishes to imply that the Fathers of the French Revolution based their doctrine of the equality of man upon a theocratic idea of the kind he specifies, or of any other sort, his statement is absolutely incorrect. The leaders of this movement believed like Spinoza that in a state of nature every man has a right to all things in so far as he is able to obtain them, but that in a social state this individual right is sacrificed by covenant for the common welfare. It is true that Spinoza regarded the forces of nature as absolutely identical with the power of God, but he denied that these forces are ruled by intelligence and will, or obey any principle except their inward necessity. This fact excludes him from a place among the Deists, and although for reasons not difficult to comprehend he freely interlarded his lucubrations with the word "God," this subterfuge never for a moment misled the orthodox, who from the very first perceived with an unerring instinct that his pious phraseology concealed an irreconcilable opposition to their tenets, and it is doubtful whether the most unscrupulous hack that ever laid his gifts on the altar of a Christian Evidence Society has at any time ventured to cite him as a disinterested witness to divine truth.

On one point it is certain that the French philosophers differed from Spinoza, namely, in the assertion of certain rights as inalienable from the individual; and it was the recovery of these rights by a return to nature which formed the theme of their most impassioned declamations. The truth of the above remarks is so obvious to every student of the subject, that when Professor Masterman talks about the real basis of the French Revolution being a religious basis we can only suppose him to mean that although the leaders of the movement did not rest it upon such a basis as they might have done

so, had they desired. In his opinion, this basis is the doctrine "that to God one man is of the same value as any other man," by which he evidently wishes to imply by that as men are the children of a common Father in Heaven they must possess equal rights upon earth. We think the principle here enunciated would have afforded much innocent entertainment to the friends of Baron d'Holbach and other gentlemen whose instructions and exhortations were more or less responsible for the breaking up of the Bastille, though we do not deny that it might have found favor with certain simple-minded souls of a pietistic cast who, like Zavater, sympathized in fear and trembling with the march for liberty, and sought to bring it into line with their cherished beliefs by the discovery of a religious sanction; but sooth to say these persons counted for little or nothing in the tumultuous progress of that fervid time. As to the principle alleged, namely, the equality of man deduced from the fact that all men are the sons of God and therefore equal in his sight, it could never have imposed upon the clear and fearless thinkers to whom it is imputed, since they would have seen at once that although the offspring of a common Nature, using the word to mean the collectivity of intelligent forces, might claim equal rights, such a claim could not be urged on behalf of beings whose origin is referable to the activity of a power endowed with intelligence and will, qualities implied to the fullest extent in the idea of a Heavenly Father. For even earthly fathers are acknowledged to be under no obligation to deal in one and the same way with all their children, which they would be bound to do if the latter had equal rights, and the same discretionary faculty must appertain in yet larger measure to an all-wise progenitor. This fact did not escape the notice of some of the acutest logicians the Church has ever had, and from St. Paul downwards there have been those, and not a few either, who have boldly affirmed the partiality of the divine patronage as the best explanation of the difference in human destiny when interpreted by the theory of an over-ruling Providence. After all, why should God not love Jacob and hate Esau before either of them were born if it pleased him to do so; and what evidence have we that all men are of the same value in his eyes? Perhaps our Professor has been privy to the councils of the Trinity and can explain the matter.

Another point in this interesting discourse is a weighty distinction drawn between "the equality of man" and "the equality of man in the essential things that make him a man"—the former in careful avoidance of the latter being according to Dr. Masterman's opinion the fundamental principle of the French Revolution. We have no desire to appear irreverent to a learned and respectable pedagogue, but we cannot refrain from observing that the quibble just quoted irresistibly calls to mind a certain comment made by Mr. Shandy when a similar distinction was raised by his amiable spouse on the occasion of one of their beds of justice. For if the essentials of a thing constitute the thing itself, which no one doubts, then "the equality of man in the essential things that make him a man" must be the same as "the equality of man" absolutely, the question being one of essentials and not of accidentals. It seems that the Professor wished to make a distinction of some kind, and probably he meant that there is a difference between the absolute and the relative equality of man, or in other words between an equality unlimited in any respect and an equality existing only in certain respects. By a strange confusion of thought, whilst intending to set forth the latter as the true kind of equality, he establishes the former as the only logical variety. It would have been indelicate to teach in the House of Lords the startling doctrine of absolute equality, so this idea was put in masquerade as "the equality of man," and said to be something quite different from "the equality of man in the essential things that make him a man," the one being dismissed as false and dangerous, and the other accepted as true and whole-

some, whereas in reality they are simply different expressions for the very same thing.

The Professor is right in declaring that the French Revolutionists repudiated religion. The fathers of the movement knew that the clergy and the aristocracy are the natural foes of democratic progress, because the spread of knowledge, which is alike the condition and the effect of this progress, tends inevitably to undermine the authority of the priest and to curtail the privileges of the noble, whilst it impoverishes them both in various ways. Acting fearlessly on this perception, the leaders of the French Revolution laid the axe at encumbrances in a manner which has crippled all subsequent reactions and assisted all subsequent reforms in their native land, besides exercising a salutary influence throughout the world. This clarity of insight and foresight, and this breadth and thoroughness of method, is what has made the French Revolution of so much greater and farther-reaching benefit than was the English Revolution of the century preceding it. Cromwell and his compeers had no grasp of principles. They restricted their efforts to the remediation of what they called abuses, regardless of the fact that these alleged abuses were the natural outcome of a particular system which, if allowed to remain, would engender similar evils at a future date. The course adopted by them in reference to religion is a striking instance of this defective mode of treatment. They and their fathers had long suffered from the tyranny and extortion practised upon them by the officials and supporters of the Established Church, yet, despite the fact that the greater part of their suffering had been endured at the hands of men conspicuous for piety, zeal, and knowledge of divine lore, they never once surmised that the persecution inflicted by these saintly persons was the inevitable fruit of religious principles flourishing under the congenial influence of temporal power and authority. Hence, instead of making a formal repudiation of religion, accompanied and enforced by the withdrawal of State support from all churches, and the seizure and alienation of all ecclesiastical property of whatever kind, which would have gone right to the root of the evil and spared future ages a world of trouble and bitter strife, they contented themselves by ousting their oppressors, getting into the vacant offices and emoluments, changing here and there the forms of worship, and seeking to outvie their vanquished foes in godly austerity. This procedure, as is easy to imagine, caused an increase in the affluence of hypocrites, changed the rôles of the persecutors and the persecuted without improving either, and left a legacy of reprisals and contentions to the coming centuries.

In one affair, however, the Reformers of that period furnished an example of the beneficial effects of thoroughness. The dethronement and decapitation of Charles I., though followed by a violent monarchical reaction under his son, Charles II., did not lose its exemplary influence on future abusers of crown privileges, as plainly appeared when his other son, James II., took the warning to heart, and saved his head and a portion of his dignity by abdicating. The conduct of the French Revolutionists in the matter of religion, though frustrated through the intervention of Bonaparte, and stultified by various reactions, has, nevertheless, borne its proper fruit in the recent Disestablishment of the Church, with the profound disorganisation of religious effort thereby effected. The bread was cast with faith upon the waters, and it has been found again, nutritious as ever, after many days. Precept, example, and the prestige of a glorious tradition is the gift bequeathed by the French Reformers of the past to their posterity as a possession to be guarded and increased throughout the ages, and to-day their descendants show themselves to be no unvigilant or slothful stewards of that precious heritage.

ELIJAH GREENLEAF.

I never may believe these antique fables.—Shakespeare.

Mr. Harry Boulter: An Appeal.

THE effect of the publication by the newspapers, and the reproduction by the tailoring journals, of the particulars of the recent blasphemy trial and sentence, has been to practically blacklist Mr. Harry Boulter in his profession. This is far worse, of course, than his month's imprisonment, and is a serious matter for him and his family.

A few friends have started a fund to enable Mr. Boulter to open a small tailoring business, where, if boycotted by Christians, he may obtain the patronage of Freethinkers. The sum of £10 is already in hand, and the readers of the *Freethinker*, who are in sympathy with the proposal, are asked to leave or send subscriptions—which, by the kindness of the Editor, will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*—to

N. J. EVANS, *Honorary Treasurer.*

Estate Office, 122 City-road, E.C.

Correspondence.

WHICH NEXT?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—*Apropos* of your "Acid Drop" respecting the North London Police Superintendent and Gospel-shop runner sending his subordinates to Clapham Common to report Mr. Boulter, it may interest your readers to know that police reporters are present at all meetings that I address in North London, and I presume the same applies to other Free-thought advocates. The pious gentleman is evidently "out for blood"; having captured one victim, he is anxious for more; increase of appetite has grown by what it feeds on, and he will rub his hands with holy glee if he can lay a few more Freethinkers by the heels, his only regret being that the stake and the rack have gone out of fashion. And see how easily he can gratify his truly Christian propensity for persecuting the wicked Freethinker. A sympathetic Home Secretary (who is as much a canting humbug as his father was) has given him *carte blanche*, so he can send his emissaries to watch and report any Freethinker—at the public expense—to any part of London. Being his subordinates, they will naturally hear what he wants them to, and hopes they will hear, and there you are.

Once upon a time the duty of the police was to catch criminals; but succeeding grandmotherly governments have saddled them with the duty of looking after our morals, and seeing that we do not stray from the narrow path. Some dozen years ago they were instructed to catch stray dogs, then another law set them to stop betting, and we had the amusing spectacle of policemen dressed up as old women endeavoring to entrap some wretched "tuppenny ha'penny" bookie; and now, with the revival of the blasphemy prosecutions, the policeman is to be the judge as to what constitutes that offence. Just imagine a constable, detailed for this duty, with the Thirty-nine Articles in one pocket, the Westminster Confession of Faith in another, and the Prayer Book in his hand listening to a Freethought lecturer, whilst trying mentally to make sense of the damnation clauses of the Athanasian Creed, and deciding what is, or is not, blasphemy. No wonder they could not find the Camden Town murderer!

I wonder who will be the next victim. It is scarcely likely that all this preparation is for nothing. I hear that the Superintendent has received much congratulation from the pious, and as he can do it at other people's expense—a great consideration with the godly—no doubt some of us will have to "go through it."

W. J. RAMSEY.

Dodging the Last Day.

ACCORDING to the *Daily News* a certain individual (we will designate him Mr. Wellington Phibbs), solicitor and barrister-at-law, lately died. He left a considerable sum of money to be devoted to the burning of his body, and the safe—exceedingly safe—disposal of the "residue thereof." By the elaborate directions for safeguarding his "remains," it looks as though he wanted to dodge the physical resurrection and the judgment of sinners.

His ashes were to be sealed in a glass jar, and this jar, placed in a specially made porcelain vase, hermetically

sealed, were then to be deposited in a very substantially constructed vault of immense stability; a mass of Portland cement was to be used, and the whole block, in the words of the legal testator, to "remain there for ever." Matthew Arnold says:—

" 'Tis death! and peace, indeed, is here,
And ease from shame, and rest from fear."

But these were not the words chosen for the inscription, and the admonition that the ashes should remain there for ever will hardly be an accomplished fact if the Bible be true. On the last day even stone coffins, metal caskets, glass bottles, and cement graves will have to give up their dead. Doubtless when the last trump sounds the "Assembly" Mr. Phibbs, with the others, will have to come out and face the music in more ways than one.

At the resurrection, whoever may be deputed to collect the matter which originally composed our bodies, and put it together in the proper order to make us presentable to Jehovah, we don't know. In Mr. Phibbs' case, Moses, who broke the original tables of stone, may prove a handy man. We can imagine the clergy having been dealt with first, and the lawyers taken second, and Jehovah looking round, and, failing to see Mr. Phibbs in his place with the others, sending Moses once more to bring him to the Judgment Seat. Some such colloquy as the following seems to suggest itself:—

Jehovah.—Now then, Moses, where is Wellington Phibbs?

Moses.—Good Lord! I've only got part of him. The rest is inside several pots and jars, and there's so much cement I can't make him hear—or he's shamming, and won't come out.

Jehovah.—We will see that he does come out. Take the pneumatic sledge-hammers and the steam-picks.

[A great noise from the steam-hammers is heard in the distance, after which Moses returns triumphantly leading Wellington Phibbs, with a roll of papers tied with red tape under his arm, to the chair.]

Jehovah.—What do you mean by not coming out when you heard the horn, Phibbs?

Phibbs.—Well—er—your Lordship, I had been there so long, I—I—believed I had sole possession and the right of tenancy in perpetuity—I really thought it was the Salvation Army or someone practising the trombone—I—I—

Jehovah.—Don't prevaricate, Phibbs. Did you intend, or not, to come out of it?

Phibbs.—Well, I hardly thought your Lordship really meant it. Moreover, and notwithstanding (*yawning*), I'm hardly awake yet. A subject just awakened, as your Lordship will concede, cannot be legally responsible, and this gentleman (*a'hem*) evicted me so suddenly. With respect to the Court, if your Lordship will allow me to go back to prepare a draft—

Jehovah.—Go back to prepare a draft! Not a bit of it. Take him to the Electric Arc, Moses, and let him feel the draught there; when he is thoroughly awake, bring him back for judgment. Mind! I don't forget that Wellington Phibbs was a solicitor and barrister-at-law, and we don't stand any trifling with the Court here!

A. F.

The "Blasphemy" Defence Fund.

Previously acknowledged: £16 13s. R. P. Miles, 1s.; S. E. Stevens, 2s. 6d.; Birmingham Branch (collection at Mr. H. P. Ward's lecture, June 14), 8s. 6d.; Dr. E. B. Foote (New York), £2 2s.; R. Young, 6s.; W. H. Wise, 1s.; J. S. Barlow, 6d.; T. Taylor, 6d.; Mascos, 1s.; R. B. Harrison, 1s.; W. L. Rowe, 1s.; J. Ange, 2s. 6d.; W. Leeson, 2s.; S. Leeson, 1s.; W. Wilber, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Toll, 1s.; T. and J. Richards, 1s.; Clarke, 6d.; Mrs. Oldham, 6d.; Anonymous 6d.

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A very exciting match was played at Hanwell last Sunday *versus* Hanover C. C. The Iconoclasts, although winning eventually by 52 runs, had seven wickets down in their second innings for 22, when H. Blissett and G. Harvey made a fine stand, and put on 50 runs. Ford batted and bowled finely in the first innings. Scores: Hanover, 36 and 52; Iconoclasts, 65 and 75 for 9.—WM. E. MASTERS.

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Marriage is not far removed from fornication.—*Tertullian.*
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Woman is the root of all evil.—*St. Jerome.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.**OUTDOOR.**

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen, Lectures.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road). 11.30, F. Schaller, "Christian Inconsistencies."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, R. H. Rosetti, "The Sabbath."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, R. H. Rosetti, "The Sabbath."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spouters' Corner): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Where Angels Dwell."

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Berksford-square): 11.30, Howell Smith, B.A., a Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park): H. B. Samuels, 11.30, "The Authenticity of the Gospels"; 6.30, "Mormonism and Woman Suffrage."

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Christianity and Sex."

OUTDOOR.

BISHOP AUCKLAND (Sheldon Market Place): H. S. Wishart, 10.30, "Christ—a False Guide"; 6.30, "The New-Old Theology—a New-Old Fraud."

DALKEITH (High-street): Saturday, July 31, at 7, a Lecture.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY: Leith Links, 2.30, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Edge Hill Lamp): Wednesday, August 4, at 8, H. Percy Ward, a Lecture.

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market-square): Monday, August 2, at 8, H. Percy Ward, a Lecture.

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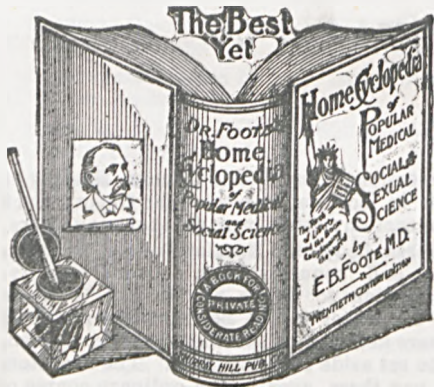
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