

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Enthusiasm and hypocrisy are by no means incompatible. The wildest fanatics I ever knew, were real sensualists in their way of living, and cunning cheats in their dealings with mankind.—TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

Murderous Bigotry.

AMONG the press cuttings we have received this week is one from a Manchester paper, reporting an address by Bishop Welldon to a "men's meeting" at St. John's Church, Cheetham. Bishop Welldon has said some foolish things about "unbelief" before, but this time he was positively ill-conditioned. "A man sought to contend with him," he said, "that an Atheist could be a good citizen. In two weeks that man was locked up for breaking windows in the city. He had answered his own question."

Now the folly of this argument, if it can be called so, is really unspeakable. It is astonishing that an educated man is allowed to talk such stupidity even in a church. Bishop Welldon would be one of the first to deride it if we were to turn the tables upon him. He forgot that an argument, like a motor-car, goes backward as well as forward. Suppose, then, that we were to say: "A man sought to contend with us that a Christian could be a good citizen. In two weeks that man was locked up for a criminal offence. He had answered his own question." If we were to talk in that way Christians would call us idiotic, and they would be quite right. One Christian's crime cannot prove that no Christian is a decent member of society. Neither can one Atheist's crime prove that all Atheists are blackguards and scoundrels.

We cannot believe that Bishop Welldon is quite such a fool as to believe that there is any force whatever in his argument. He *must* know better. We conclude, therefore, that he was deliberately playing the bigot in order to mislead the peculiar "men" who were listening to him. He would never dare to talk like that where he could be answered. We venture to say that if he had told even that audience that "Charles Bradlaugh was an Atheist, and, being an Atheist, was not a good citizen," he would have been soundly hissed.

We repeat that Bishop Welldon is simply ill-conditioned. A gentleman always respects the mental and moral rights of others. He does not assume that they are wicked because they differ from him. He recollects that he has differed from himself. He does not utter lies and slanders against his intellectual opponents. He treats them as honorable men until they are proved to be otherwise. He claims no infallibility. He is not dogmatic. He agrees with Douglas Jerrold that dogmatism is poppyism grown to maturity. He does not thirst for the blood of those who withstand him in discussion. He does not even wish to destroy their characters. He concedes to them every right which he claims for himself.

The spirit displayed by Bishop Welldon is, in its degree, the same spirit that is displayed by Christian bigots in Spain. The little bigot stabs characters; the great bigot destroys lives. There is a difference, but it is not one of kind; it is simply a difference in size. Bishop Welldon strikes a poor,

nameless, obscure Atheist, apparently amongst the wretched army of the unemployed. The Spanish bigots seek to slay a distinguished Atheist like Professor Ferrer.

The Spanish bigots, alas, seem to be both more ambitious and more successful. As we write, at the very last moment before going to press, Professor Ferrer's fate is trembling in the balance. According to reports which are too circumstantial to be wholly untrue, the travesty of justice which is called his trial is over; he has been found guilty and sentenced to be shot within forty-eight hours; and his doom appears to be sealed unless an arresting order comes from King Alfonso or his Ministers. That such an order will come we cannot believe. The clerical party, which really governs Spain, is not likely to let its coveted victim escape. Priests and soldiers (the eternal allies!) are dancing upon the helpless body of liberty in the classic land of the Inquisition.

Martial law, as Wellington said, is no law at all. It is the personal will or caprice of military officers. What sense, justice, and honor there is in it the world saw in the Dreyfus case. It is naturally worse in the Ferrer case,—for Spain is so much worse than France. French officers took their orders from priests; and Spanish officers are, of course, rather more than less obedient to the mandate of God's representatives.

Only a besotted or a gagged people could tolerate this parody of justice. We are glad to see that popular protests have been made in countries where the grip of the priest is not so suffocating. At Paris, at Rome, at Geneva, at Amsterdam, the "mob," as hireling journalists call them, have created "scenes" outside the Spanish Embassies. We are delighted that the "mob" have so much honest life in them. It is well that somebody should wax indignant when bigoted scoundrels are preparing to wade in the blood of honest thinkers. It is just this "vulgar" indignation that saves the world from utter infamy.

All accounts agree that Professor Ferrer has borne himself nobly. "He sat in quiet dignity," the *Daily News* correspondent says, "with an occasional smile of kindly scepticism." We are not surprised that "his tired eyes bore the marks of the sleepless nights." We know what happens in Montjuich and elsewhere. Gethsemane goes before Calvary with Ferrer as with Christ; only the Atheist does not faint or fail. Reuter's telegram says that when driven from the court of trial to Montjuich he "looked cheerful and smiling." Thus do heroes face their fate; heroes who look for no reward beyond death, except perhaps a little gratitude from a more enlightened posterity.

Should Francisco Ferrer be shot, as he probably will, London Freethinkers should come to St. James's Hall on Sunday evening and register their solemn protest against this iniquity. Their ticket-money will not make a farthing difference to the lecturer. We invite them purely in the name of the great cause. The dead cannot be brought to life again; a great crime cannot be undone; but the stern condemnation of it before the world helps to keep alive the conscience of humanity, and pledges those who resent it all the more deeply to the battle for freedom and righteousness.

G. W. FOOTE.

Under New Management.

It is not at all unusual to see displayed in a shop window the notice, "This establishment is now under entirely new management." Presumably it is an indication that the old management left much to be desired, and that things will be more satisfactorily conducted in the future. As a confession of past faults the notice is praiseworthy; as a promise of better conduct in store it is admirable. Pessimists may regard such notices with suspicion, but others of a cheerier disposition will feel inclined to give the new-comers a trial, and will hope that new management will mean new methods. At any rate, they will feel that if a business is not conducted with satisfaction to the public, it is entirely the fault of those who have it in charge, and so far optimism has a basis in common sense.

Differently worded, but the same in substance, this notice is now being conspicuously displayed by all those Christians who delight in calling themselves "Progressive." Generally they admit that business has been bad; but this, they hasten to explain, is because the public taste has not been consulted and the wrong kind of goods has been kept in stock. So they announce that certain branch establishments of the soul-saving business have had their stock overhauled; much of it has been rejected as unsuitable and unsaleable, and a new management has been installed. Quite a large assortment of new goods are now kept on hand; if people do not see what they require they are requested to ask for it; and so they hope to be favored with a continuance of public patronage. Unfortunately—for particular firms only—many of the old customers have transferred their patronage elsewhere, while others have learned to use quite another class of goods. So it may happen that the new management may find itself drifting towards bankruptcy instead of arriving at ease and affluence.

It is not, however, quite as easy for the Christian Churches to revise their methods and to restock their premises as it is for the ordinary business concern. In the ordinary way supply depends upon demand, and the man who opens a business depends upon the existence of a particular taste for success. He has not to create, but merely to satisfy. In religious matters things are the other way about. It is not the taste that creates the supply, but the supply that develops the taste. Left alone, the clergy are constantly lamenting, man's "spiritual" nature atrophies. He loses all interest in, and finally all taste for, the goods supplied by these "spiritual" salesmen; and, like the reformed smoker or drinker, often becomes quite intolerant of their presence. And while the appetite for this particular class of wares needs constant stimulation, the wares themselves do not admit of very great change. The labels may be changed on the articles, but that is about all that ever takes place, or can take place.

From the Freethinker's point of view the attempts of the Christian Churches to revise their teachings and reconstruct their doctrines is a pleasing spectacle. It is an admission that Christianity is unfitted to the times, and also that Freethought criticism contained at least *some* truth. And it is possible that the Freethought attack evidenced much more wisdom and justice than Christians are at present prepared to admit. Still, it is pleasing to find *advanced* Christians taking up with the more elementary of Freethought teachings, even though these are propounded with an air of reckless heroism calculated to make one smile. To find Christians recoiling from the charge of orthodoxy as people once did from that of Atheism is strong evidence of the change that has come over a part of the religious world. New Theologians look down upon other believers with all the conscious superiority of a fourth standard schoolboy watching an infant's first attempts at pithooks and hangers. Baptists and Methodists protest that the time has gone by for demanding a literal acceptance of time-honored doc-

trines. Prominent members of the Church of England are emphatic in their assertion of the necessity of reconstructing Christian beliefs. From one quarter or another nearly every specifically Christian teaching is being either rejected or modified almost beyond recognition. Very soon the only people who will be receiving the pure light of orthodox Christian teaching will be those who provide the material on which our missionary societies operate.

Let us do the clergy justice. They were not, and are not, in any great hurry to revise Christian teaching. It is not they who discovered the falsities of Christian teaching—at least, it is not they who made these falsities public. The step is never taken save as a desperate resource, and the reasons for so doing are fairly accurately stated. The most "progressive" of them say plainly that the reason for revising Christian teaching is that people are not satisfied with them as they are. If the people were satisfied the doctrines might be as false as hell, the clergy would go on teaching them. It is not a question of what is true, it is a question of what is safe, of what is profitable. At their conferences and congresses the clergy warn each other that if the rising generation do not hear the truth from Christian teachers it will from unbelievers. Some of the truth must be told; and there will be a world of difference between the whole truth as told by the unbelieving teacher, and the carefully watered down version that may be given from the pulpit. "Gentlemen," they say, "science is abroad and criticism is active. We have tried to crush the enemy and failed. We have tried ignoring the enemy and failed also. Let us then take the bull by the horns, let us pose as impartial and scientific inquirers, and by conceding a little, save the remainder from destruction." To each other they say, let us be as honest as we must be; it will prove more profitable than obstinate adherence to detected dishonesty. To the public there is exhibited the announcement that a new management is inaugurated; a new stock laid in that is calculated to please the modern taste and suit modern requirements.

The uninitiated may well inquire, Why is it necessary to revise Christian teachings? The correction to Christian teaching must come from secular science, secular ethics, secular sociology. There is positively no other direction from which correction can come, revelation and inspiration being both out of fashion. And if we have to learn what is the truth from secular science and secular sociology, why waste time in getting exactly the same things served up again as religious doctrines? The only sensible reason for revising and for retaining a religion would be that it contained some important thing that could not be discovered elsewhere. But to revise Christian beliefs with the avowed object of making them square with scientific teaching, places us in the ridiculous position of underpaying scientific men for their admittedly valuable work, and overpaying religious preachers for offering to the public a faint and distorted presentment of truths that owe nothing to them for their existence. And it must not be overlooked that it is the clergy alone who are vitally interested in a re-interpretation of Christian beliefs. Their existence as an order depends upon the people having the truths they must have, dressed in a religious garb. The laymen who take part in the movement are, when honest, simply pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for the benefit of their "spiritual masters."

One would be more impressed by these attempts at reconstruction if the clergy ever set themselves honestly to work to discover what the people who elaborated Christian beliefs really meant by them. But none of them essay *this* task; the consequences would be too disastrous. It is, with the revisers, not a question of what the creeds mean, but of what they may be made to mean. And, of course, the human mind is ingenious enough to make them mean anything. Just as it was once the fashion to make the "day" of Genesis mean a geologic period, or a chance

expression in the Psalms teach the whole of the Copernican astronomy, so we now find men like Mr. R. J. Campbell attributing to a simple Galilean peasant, views of life that are the products of modern civilisation. The crude and savage superstitions upon which such beliefs as those of the Resurrection, the Atonement, the efficacy of prayer, etc., are based, and without which they would never have existed, are completely ignored. It is enough that mis-directed ingenuity can twist them into agreement with current ethical ideals and social theories. Apparently it never dawns upon these reconstructors that there is scarcely a piece of ancient legend or mythology that could not, by the same method, be converted into a forecast of exact science. Still less is it recognised that social and ethical ideals are no more miraculously created than are forms of life; human ideals are born of the surroundings amid which men and women have their being, and it is as sensible looking for modern theories of life among primitive peoples as it would be to search for a Beethoven or a Wagner among the inhabitants of Central Africa.

The best of it, or the worst of it is, that the efforts of these reconcilers are all in vain. The most that can be done is to postpone for awhile the date of the downfall. The "new management" sign may be conspicuously displayed, but the old methods, and much of the old stock, remain. For a time people may be deceived, and then the awakening comes and the day of reckoning arrives. Rooted as it is in the past, dependent upon the survival of primitive modes of thought for its being, it is the fate of religion in civilised countries to always linger in the rear of the best and most exact thought. But every now and again the gap between faith and fact, between practice and theory, becomes too large, and then it is discovered that religion needs adapting to "the requirements of modern criticism," and, with all the air of daring pioneers, a portion of the new truth is admitted in order that the balance of the old falsehood may be retained. Meanwhile, the area of life dominated by religion becomes steadily smaller, religious beliefs become more and more attenuated, with a more certain promise of their ultimate dissolution. To recur to our original metaphor, the firm's premises may be redecored, and the stock refurbished, but the custom is drifting in other directions. Tastes are altering, and other commodities are in demand. And the famous old firm is left with a stock of unsaleable goods on hand, watching its former customers hastening to patronise a more up-to-date establishment.

C. COHEN.

The Growth of Legends.

IN last week's article on "The Four Gospels," it was stated that fairy tales grew so rapidly in credulous ages that "they often sprang up round about a man's name while he was yet alive." A few days ago, the Rev. Dr. Marshall, in his address from the chair of the Baptist Union, endeavored to heap discredit upon that statement by claiming early dates for the Gospels, and by assuming the existence of earlier documents still. Here are his own words:

"Some years ago, scholars assigned our Gospels to the second century, and even now no one places them earlier than about 60 A.D. But if it is proved that there are Aramaic documents written for the early Palestinian Church, lying behind our present Gospels, and that our Gospels are compilations from several earlier sources, we get so much nearer the time of the actual occurrence of the events, and there is less possibility of error, or the formation of myth and fable. Sir W. M. Ramsay and Dr. Salmon have both maintained recently that Christ's discourses were written down during his own life-time. If that is rather too optimistic, there is no doubt whatever that the 'sayings' of Jesus were collected very early by one or more persons who actually heard them."

Dr. Marshall may rest assured that the existence of his Aramaic documents will never be proved, nor

that of any other documents prior to our Gospels; and it is equally impossible to demonstrate that the Synoptics were in use before the close of the first century. But the point to be emphasised now is that, even if the Gospels could be assigned to as early a date as 60 A.D., the case for their historicity would not be strengthened in the least. We go further still and assert that, even if it could be proved that portions of them were written during Jesus's own lifetime, and the remainder immediately after his death, the truth of their narratives would be quite as open to challenge as it is now. We have no hesitation whatever in declaring that the credibility of the birth-stories would not be established even if it were a fact that Matthew and Luke received them from the lips of Joseph and Mary themselves. Dr. Marshall's argument on this point is positively absurd. He says: "The Jews were incapable of inventing such a story, contravening as it does their theology and moral preferences. Therefore, being ancient and not invented, it must be true." How does the reverend gentleman know that the Jews could not have invented such a story? A great German scholar, Dr. Wilhelm Soltan, says (*The Birth of Jesus Christ*, p. 43) that "not only in form, but also as regards matter, may the conception of a Virgin Birth be traced back to Biblical ideas," while "those elements drawn from heathen mythology can be detected which promoted the transformation of Christian ideas and the development of a wrong conception."

It is interesting to find two Christian scholars like Dr. Marshall and Dr. Soltan flatly contradicting each other's statements, and expressing views diametrically opposed on a subject which, for the former, is of vital importance. The strange thing is that Dr. Marshall, while utterly disbelieving "the stories of children begotten from divine fathers" with which Greek mythology "swarms," pronounces a similar story told of Jesus entirely true; and he pronounces it true on two grounds—namely, the inability of the Jews to invent it, which is a highly debatable point, and the alleged fact that Luke i., ii. "is essentially the most archaic thing in the whole New Testament," which is another fundamentally disputable statement. Dr. Soltan, on the contrary, contends that theologians like Paul had paved the way for the introduction of myth into the Gospels. He says:—

"Here, then, the myth-making imagination of Christians, roused to religious enthusiasm, settled, and sought to remodel in a form intelligible to the senses, what had been puzzled out by the brains of philosophers and dogmatists; and in this task widely diffused fables again came to their assistance."

Dr. Marshall admits, however, that "the evidence for the Virgin Birth is not so strong as for the Resurrection," that the Gospel of Mark makes no allusion to it, that it "did not form part of the early apostolic evangel," and that "it is definitely recorded only in Matthew i. and Luke i." Then he adds: "When we come to examine these chapters we find there a sober, dignified, circumstantial narrative, bearing on its forefront the elements of verisimilitude; such that we may confidently say that if it had not been for the two verses (i. 34, 35) containing the 'Annunciation' no one would ever have questioned its authenticity." The Principal must have panned that curious sentence in his sleep. Had he been awake he would have remembered the serious discrepancies between Matthew and Luke, and how the one account of the birth and its attending events makes the other impossible. Apart from the mere virginity of the birth, there is nothing in common between the two narratives. According to Matthew, Jesus was born when the air was alive with peril and persecution, when Herod was on the watch for the appearance of a powerful rival king, and when, to insure its safety, the new-born babe had to be suddenly snatched away into Egypt. According to Luke, the birth occurred at a time of general expectancy, when there was, on all hands, an eager desire to welcome the child as the Lord's anointed, and when there took place, neither the

flight into Egypt nor the massacre of the innocents by Herod, but the happy visit of the shepherds, the angels' song of praise, and the peaceful presentation at the temple on the eighth day, and then the quiet return to Nazareth. And yet, in spite of these glaring contradictions, Dr. Marshall has the effrontery to say that here "we find a sober, dignified, circumstantial narrative, bearing on its forefront the elements of verisimilitude."

Principal Marshall was anxious to convince his audience that "the aloofness of the Jews from other nations made them averse from borrowing anything from their heathen neighbors, much less their religion"; but he forgot that Christianity was never truly a Jewish religion. Indeed, there are scholars to-day who aver that Jesus himself was not a Jew. In any case, before any Gospel came to be written the Christians had practically ceased to be Jews. They had thrown off what they called the yoke of bondage to the law of Moses. But they retained the Jewish Scriptures and the various stories of the birth and childhood of Jesus, borrowed from Pagan sources, owed their final form to the Old Testament. "But the idea that the Holy Ghost begat Jesus can have had no other than a Hellenic origin," because in Hebrew the Spirit of God is generally feminine, on which account he appears in the Gospel of the Hebrews as the mother of Jesus." After referring to these significant facts, Wilhelm Soltan draws the following conclusion, in which we fully concur:—

"There was a tradition which transferred the birth-place of Jesus from Nazareth to the town of David, but in doing so allowed the fact that Joseph was the father to stand. In the earliest recast of this a few fabulous elements of *Hellenistic origin* were inserted towards the end of the first century A.D. All these insertions, which were three in number, referred what had been handed down and proclaimed in honor of the Roman Emperor, especially of Augustus, to the true Savior of the world. Thus the announcement of blessing in the case of Augustus (cp. p. 68) was made use of in Luke ii. 14; the supernatural birth of Augustus was in Luke i. 5 f., Matthew i. 19 f., transferred to Jesus; and finally, the journey of the magi with the intention of seeking out the new light of the world in the West became an ovation on the part of the wise men to the child Christ" (*The Birth of Jesus Christ*, p. 49, 50).

Now, according to Dr. Marshall, what are groundless myths and legends in Pagan religions are become historical facts in Christianity. Jesus was actually born of a virgin and actually rose from the tomb; but these incidents in the history of the true Savior of the world are but empty fables as related of all others. If you ask the reverend gentleman for his evidences he has none to furnish. He can only play the dogmatist and exclaim, "Christianity was the fulfilment and historic realisation of Hebrew forecasts and Pagan foregleams; but it did not grow out of them."

We maintain, on the contrary, that Christianity is but one of the religions in the world, and is neither better nor worse than the average of them. There is in it as great an accretion of the mythical and fabulous elements as in the most superstitious among them. Jesus was a miracle-worker, a magician, a superhuman being, an incarnate deity. He never appears on the canonical page as a mere man, and the impression conveyed is that all who came into touch with him took him either for a god or for a devil, but never for an ordinary human being. What we claim is that this is what fable made of him. But, cries the theologian, there was no time for fable to do its work between the death of Jesus and the writing of the first Gospel. That is sheer nonsense. Legends spring up as speedily as Jonah's gourd. It was not his successors that called Alexander a son of Zeus; that was his characterisation of himself. Augustus had such a high opinion of himself that he unblushingly assumed the exalted position of a son of Apollo. Plato was scarcely cold in his grave before he was deified by his admirers. Between sixty and seventy years ago there arose a new religion in Persia called Babiism, the founder of which was almost immediately crowned with divinity. There

is, therefore, nothing unreasonable or improbable in the statement that Jesus was from the first a more or less mythical character—so mythical, indeed, that it is quite impossible to determine, even if he ever really lived at all, what he was like. Of the Christ eulogised in the latter portion of Dr. Marshall's address, there is no risk whatever in saying that he is a pure creation of the theological imagination, and that the sooner he disappears the better it will be for the genuine progress of the race.

J. T. LLOYD.

St. Anne de Beaupre.

THIS famous basilica and shrine, situated on the River St. Lawrence, twenty-one miles below Quebec, was recently visited by the writer, who, thinking it would interest readers of the *Freethinker* to learn how deeply rooted superstition is in that part of the world, ventures to supply the following particulars concerning the same.

First as to the saint. Tradition says she was the mother of the Virgin Mary; this being so, it follows that she was grandmother to Jesus—the grandfather being Joachim, or Eli-achim. Of the latter very little is known, his prestige or glory—if ever he had any—being completely eclipsed by that of his better half. As to St. Anne's connection with this part of the world, tradition again relates it was brought about in this wise: In the early part of the seventeenth century some Breton mariners, overtaken by a violent storm while navigating the St. Lawrence, solemnly vowed to St. Anne that, if delivered from the danger which encompassed them, they would erect a sanctuary in her honor on the spot on which they should land. The saint obliging, they built a small wooden chapel in fulfilment of their vows and called it by her name. This was over 250 years ago, since which time it (and the succeeding structures erected on the spot) has become the Mecca of devout pilgrims seeking restoration of health and miraculously obtaining it. It is claimed that great miracles are wrought there, even as of old times, and that the sick are healed, the blind made to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk with ease, and those nigh unto death have strength and vigor imparted to them—and that, too, suddenly—through the intercession of the Virgin Mary's mother. The primitive little church was replaced by a larger structure in 1660, which, subsequently rebuilt and enlarged, finally gave way to the present magnificent edifice, which was raised to the dignity of a basilica by Pope Pius the Ninth in 1887.

It is a fine specimen of Corinthian architecture, and is of immense proportions. A colossal statue of St. Anne, of great beauty, surmounts the facade, between twin towers rising to a great height. The interior rivals the most famous cathedrals in the world in imposing grandeur. The beautifully carved and decorated statue of the saint, with the Virgin in her arms—both crowned and richly bedizened with jewels—stands in the centre of the middle aisle, a few feet from the communion rail, on an elegant polished column of Mexican onyx.

On each side of the principal entrance are large pyramids of crutches and walking-sticks and splints left by former owners as mute testimony of the saint's intervention on their behalf. These pyramids, in addition to the many scores of crutches and walking-sticks, contained a few abdominal trusses and supports, leg and ankle irons, shoes and boots of club-footed persons whose short limbs had been lengthened so as to enable them to do without these artificial aids, and, some distance away, in glass cases placed on walls, were a host of spectacles and eyeglasses with plain and colored lenses, also other cases filled with tobacco-pipes, mostly of wood, though a few homely clays were noticed among them—all presumably gifts bestowed by the faithful in grateful acknowledgment for relief from their sufferings and infirmities received through the

powerful intercession of the saint. An invalid chair was also in evidence near to the pyramids, but whether as a memento of past sufferings relieved and cured is not known.

Another statue of the saint rests on a column of white marble, to which some deeply venerated relics are attached—a fragment of her finger bone, a part of the saint's wrist sent by Leo XIII., and a portion of the rock from the grotto in which the saint gave birth to the Virgin Mary.

The church, if anything, is over-decorated, magnificently carved marble being much used wherever possible; the pews have richly carved ends, the stained glass windows are very handsome, and the votive offerings have apparently been so lavishly bestowed that the authorities have had no other recourse than to expend the easily acquired wealth in this manner.

The building is electrically lighted, and from the arrangement of the lamps it was easy to see that the principal objects of interest could be brilliantly illuminated, and thus shown to advantage when required.

Collecting-boxes are everywhere, with either the words "Pour les âmes au purgatoire" (for the souls in the purgatory) or "Tronc les pauvres" (poor-box) placed upon them.

A bazaar for the sale of relics, crucifixes, rosaries, beads of many kinds, and souvenirs of the visit to St. Anne, is in a portion of the church building, and does an enormous trade, as all pilgrims are expected to, and do, patronise the store for these articles.

Thousands of tourists visit St. Anne's de Beaupré, impelled by the curious scenes witnessed there and the costly works of art possessed by the sanctuary; and the high esteem in which the saint is held is shown by the remarkable increase in the perennial pilgrimages to her shrine. In 1874 there were 17,200 visitors; in 1884, 61,000; in 1889, 100,000; in 1893, 130,000; 1902, 150,000; and 1907 1,399,008—which number will be largely increased, it is expected, this year.

The Redemptorist Fathers in charge deliver their sermons in German, Italian, Dutch, Flemish, and Spanish, as well as in English and French.

The Juvenat and Convent of the Redemption Sisters are in the rear of the church.

F. SMALLMAN.

Hold the Fort.

EVERY poor man longs for heaven,
Underneath the skies.
Not when he's in the graveyard,
But before he dies.
Every poor man knows that idlers
Ought to work somehow;
He knows eternal life is here;
The judgment day is Now.
Kings and creeds have crushed the people
Everywhere we go;
Little children walk bare-footed
Through each winter's snow.
Politicians still divide us
As they have of yore,
But when men learn that they are brothers
They'll divide no more.
Then speed the battle, fast and faster,
Fight for life and peace,
Men must triumph over masters,
Slavery's blight must cease.
When the sentinel in the watch tower
Answers back, "All's well,"
This earth will be a human heaven,
And not a poor man's hell.

J. F. S.

The old argument that if Christianity is a human fabrication its authors must have been either good or bad men, takes it for granted that there are but two classes of persons—the good and the bad. There is at least one other class—the mistaken, and both of the other classes may belong to this.—Ingersoll.

Acid Drops.

The Church Congress has decided that the Church ought not to be disestablished and disendowed. Shoemakers will soon be deciding to support the leather trade.

The members of Bournemouth Town Council hate Sunday tramcars. They have decided by thirty-one to ten to have nothing to do with them. They hate the referendum too—and perhaps are afraid of it. By a majority of twenty-five to seventeen they have decided not to take a poll of the rate-payers.

Sunday Concerts caused trouble recently at Portrush. Now a fresh trouble is caused by Sunday Golf. The Sabbatarians are making a dreadful fuss about it. But they are not having all their own way in the *Northern Whig*. One pious gentleman, who assumes to represent both religion and morality, is told by another correspondent that he "has no more right to interfere with Sunday golf because he does not like it than golfers have to object to his Church." A reasonable truth politely but firmly expressed.

Of course the Coleraine Presbytery had to have a say in the matter. The reverend gentlemen were not going to allow competition with their business on the Lord's Day without a struggle. They therefore met and passed a series of trade resolutions—which had the usual value of such things. One of these resolutions was really funny, although it was probably not meant to be so. Sunday golf was declared to be "a gross and unwarrantable outrage on the conscientious convictions and the prevailing sentiments of the local community." One would think that the Sunday golfers wanted to make the general community play golf on the blessed Sabbath, whereas they only want to play the game themselves. How on earth can one man who plays golf on Sunday outrage the conscientious convictions of another man who doesn't want to play golf on Sunday? One man cannot possibly outrage another man's convictions. Convictions are personal. A man may outrage his own—but not his neighbor's.

The *Northern Whig's* leaderette on the matter is also amusing. Without discussing Sunday golf on its merits, our contemporary holds that "there is always harm in doing that which offends the religious feelings of the people who believe that Sunday recreation is wrong." According to this principle, the people whose "religious feelings" are against any proceeding have the right to call upon all their fellow citizens to abstain from it—no matter what their "feelings" may be on the subject. Our contemporary does not even say how many people with "religious feelings" have the right to rule the rest. By the argument as presented, one man could say to a whole nation: "You musn't do that; it offends my religious feelings." Now, as our old friend Euclid says, this is absurd.

The Church Congress discussed Socialism. Some of the parsons were for it, more were against it. Nobody paid Jesus Christ the compliment of considering what he taught. Jesus Christ was a Communist. His earliest disciples had all things in common. This would suit the poor curates. It would never suit the bishops. "Share and share alike" is always most appreciated by those who don't stand to lose by it.

If the Church fails to inspire Socialism with her spiritual faith, says the Bishop of Southwark, the tragedy of the modern world will be at its height. Probably this is only his lordship's sly way of hinting that the comic element will be absent.

The President of the Baptist Union has curious ideas of what constitutes proof. He believes that the Resurrection of Jesus was necessary "to clear up the awful mystery of Calvary." So the way to clear up one absurdity and make it rational is to assume another. Mystery-mongering is like lying. Tell one lie, and there is needed a score to back up that one. Give an absurdity lodgement in one's mind, and a host of its relations will immediately claim, and receive, hospitality. If instead of "awful mystery" Principal Marshall said awful muddle or awful nonsense, his language would offer a closer approximation to the facts.

Dr. Marshall also says of the Virgin Birth that this "must be true," because the Jews were incapable of inventing it; and also the early dates accepted for the authorship of the Gospels did not give time for myths and legends to grow up. Which shows the utter worthlessness of critics writing or

speaking on Christian origins, and confining themselves to matters of textual criticism. Dr. Marshall may have the Gospels as early as he pleases; it did not need time for legends to grow up; in certain atmospheres legends are already there, full grown, and all that is needed is a peg to hang them on. Divine birth has been asserted of more than one ancient personage during his lifetime. Miracles have been recorded of scores and hundreds of people who walked and talked with the very people who credited them with miraculous powers. Dr. Abbot, in his *Life of Beckett*, has given us an account of this process of miracle manufacturing, related in all sincerity by people who were contemporary with Canterbury's murdered hero. The Virgin Mother myth was a widespread belief in the Pagan world, with an elaborated system of worship. The time element is really not of much importance in such investigations; it is the culture element that is significant. And in a certain culture the marvel is not that stories are told such as those associated with the name of Jesus, but that they should be absent. Textual criticism is a very interesting study, but one is inclined to think that its importance is vastly overrated—often for interested reasons. It is certainly less dangerous to the Christian Churches that attention should be focussed on the precise date or composition of certain documents than that it should be directed to the mental conditions amid which religious beliefs take their rise, and the conditions that aid their perpetuation.

Principal Marshall told the Baptist Union that "the most impressive argument to his mind to prove the Divinity of Christ is the influence which he exerted on those who were willing to learn from him." Well, in that case the Divinity of Christ will never be proved. His disciples, whom he is supposed to have taught and trained for nearly three years, understood him so little at the end that, as soon as his great trial came, they forsook him and fled. "He gave them new light on everything," said the Principal; and yet immediately after his death they appear to have returned to their former avocations in Galilee. Would they have so easily and so totally lost confidence in him had he ever given them the impression that he was God tabernacling in human flesh, and after he had so often and so emphatically assured them that his death would be followed in a few days by a glorious resurrection?

The Divinity of Christ is not a historical fact, but a distinct creation of theology. The disciples followed a man whom they simply believed to be called of God to deliver Israel from the galling yoke of Rome. There are numerous traces in the Gospels, especially in the Fourth, of the process of deification; but any impartial student of the New Testament can see plainly that originally Jesus was not a God, but originally became a God under the treatment of his followers, the inventors and framers of his cult.

Sir George White, M.P., has discovered a new argument for the Budget. He told a Free Church meeting at Halstead that the Budget was in strict accord with the teaching of the New Testament. Liberal Christians may endorse the statement. Conservative Christians will deny it. Our own opinion is that it doesn't matter either way.

Pastor Wise, of Liverpool, has been preaching on "Jesus: a Miracle." Is this a reference to the Virgin Birth? Pastor Wise had better leave that to his Catholic friends.

Mr. Arthur Roope Hunt, of Torquay, has excited the anger of the local Nonconformists. He wrote a letter to a Torquay paper complaining of the "audacity of fruit robbers" in the town. Two boys, in broad daylight, had actually tried to steal some of his peaches. That boys should go after forbidden fruit struck him as awful; although he probably did the same thing, or something very much like it, when he was a boy himself. What, he asked himself, could be the cause of such enormous wickedness? He decided that it was the result of the Nonconformist crusade against the Church Catechism. Such silliness, of course, only called for a laugh; but the Nonconformists, who were never strong in humor, have taken the "insult" with great seriousness, and the local Free Church Council has called upon Mr. Hunt to withdraw his "disgraceful and slanderous statement." As they take it in this serious fashion, they have our sympathy. But are they not guilty of the very offence which they resent—when it is directed against themselves? Do they not too often say or suggest that human virtue depends upon Christian belief? And is not that the same sectarian bigotry which they denounce in Mr. Hunt?

"J. L. J.," of Hampstead, who is a retired minister, believes that he still proves useful by devoting his time to

petitioning the Lord on behalf of people in whom he is interested. He prays for the ministers of Hampstead individually, and for every Congregational minister in London. He has also prayed for every member of the church to which he belongs. Now, assuming, for the sake of argument, that God does what in these prayers he is asked to do, it follows that he does it out of respect for an old servant, or in response to reminders of his duty; but does it not strike "J. L. J." as passing strange that an all-good and all-loving Father has to be repeatedly implored to do good to the offspring of his own heart? Intercessory prayer, any prayer at all, implies a radical defect in the Lord's character, and a radical defect in the Lord's character implies his non-existence.

The Christian Endeavor Topic for last Sunday was "Missions to Backward Races." Which are the backward races? One man of God locates them in the East, where "there is no home." O! the "hard beastiality of the heathen world. Poor creatures! their conscience is almost totally lost, and the missionary is almost obliged to make a conscience in order to reach their dark souls." A man who talks like that is either unfathomably ignorant or malignantly prejudiced, or both. To show that he is both, this servant of the Lord exclaims, "What a difference between the man of to-day and man standing on the pinnacle of sinless purity 6,000 years ago! What an abyss between the degraded fetish-worshiper and stainless Adam!" And all this in the twentieth century!

The Pope's real name is Sarto, which is Italian for Taylor. Miss Sarto, a niece of his Holiness, has committed suicide at Milan in an attack of religious mania. She was possessed by the idea that she must purify herself with fire; accordingly she steeped herself in petroleum and set light to herself. When assistance arrived she was bathed in flames and crying "Leave me alone; I am going to Paradise." We wonder if the Pope will put this amongst the blessings of religion.

Rev. J. E. Rattenbury describes as "a lie" the assertion that the Free Churches of England no longer produce saints, but politicians. There seems to be a good deal of ground for a difference of opinion on the point, and the word "lie" is in the circumstances rather violent. But in these cases there is always one measure for the orthodox Christian and another for the wicked sceptic. Some years ago Mr. Foote had to describe the late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's story of the converted Infidel Shoemaker as "a lie"—and proved it to be so, after giving that eminent Wesleyan an opportunity of defending or withdrawing it. Christians held up their hands in holy horror at the word "lie," and they got the late George Jacob Holyoake to hold up his hands with them. Some time afterwards we called Holyoake's attention to the use of the word "lie" by public friends of his, and asked why he didn't rebuke them. But he never answered. Of course it was all make-believe when he joined the Christians in denouncing our "bad manners." Any stick is good enough to beat a fighting Freethinker with. To borrow the language of an old proverb, a Christian may steal a sheep, while a Freethinker mustn't look over the hedge.

Perhaps the cream of that "Atheist Shoemaker" comedy lay in the fact that "lie" and "liar" are excellent Bible words. There are 181 references to "lie" in Cruden's Concordance, and 20 to "liar"—to say nothing of "lying" and "lyeth."

A Theosophist is said to have "remembered" that in one of his previous incarnations he was a camel. "I'm inclined to believe it," said a candid friend, "you've always had the hump."

Mrs. Besant is luckier in her remembrance. She is reported in the American papers to have had it revealed to her that in two of her previous incarnations she was Hypatia and Giordano Bruno. There is no false modesty about this.

The blending of the spiritual with the financial is one of the strongest features of current Christianity. Theoretically every clergyman has a "call" to his profession, and only goes in obedience to the "divine will." Still, Dr. C. F. Aked, who had a call from God, *via* Rockefeller, says that if the churches want better preachers they must pay more money. The greatest reform, he says, would be to double the salary of every preacher. Then they will get better men. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: pounds, shillings, and pence. Divine calls and higher salaries. How beautifully they run together!

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, writes: "It is becoming recognised in physiology that function precedes structure.In other words, it is the soul that makes the body." In other words, it means nothing of the kind; and preachers should either leave scientific terms alone, or, if they do use them, pay some little regard to their meaning, and not mislead the less informed of their readers. All that is meant by those who take up the position that function precedes structure is that the properties of the materials composing a body determine its form or structure. Thus the structure of a crystal is the product of atomic constitution plus their mutual relations. It does not mean there is a "soul" in the crystal determining its shape. And whether we take crystal or man, that is all that scientific men mean by such a statement. If only our preachers of honesty would begin by practising it in their speech, one might forgive them a deal. But that is, perhaps, expecting too much; and so we must content ourselves by putting the evil-doer in the pillory of public notice.

A weekly prayer-meeting is held in one of the rooms of the House of Commons for the benefit of pious members of Parliament. It is an old custom that goes back to 1833. Mr. George Nicholls, M.P., says the room will hold about eighty, so a crowd is not expected. Usually about twenty attend, so its promoters are not disappointed. But twenty out of six hundred and seventy! It is worse than the percentage of church attendance amongst the rest of the people.

In the course of one of his talks to children, the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams informed his young readers that Abraham and his associates did not know very much about God. We think this is rather misleading. In our opinion, Abraham knew as much about God as any man that ever lived—including Dr. Williams.

The *Baptist Times* solemnly warns the Government that in the event of a dissolution it must not expect the Nonconformist support given to the Liberal Party at the last election. This is because many of them believe that neither courage nor resolution can be looked for from the Liberal Party in dealing with the Education question. Well, we do not expect it either; but it is rather too bad after the Government's making itself an annual laughing-stock to try and please its religious supporters for them to show so much ingratitude. Courage and resolution would be shown by the Government if it decided to deal with the Education question along lines of justice and reason. But if they were decided on the *Baptist Times* would doubtless denounce the Government for turning religion out of the schools. The *Baptist Times* remarks that it wants a policy that will not inflict injustice on any section of the community. So do we; and the only policy that does this is that of keeping the State absolutely neutral in matters of religion.

The *Baptist Times* also believes that the old dictum "Miracles do not happen" no longer holds good. With a little reserve it cites two pieces of newspaper evidence as indications of the miraculous. One is an account of a wife who had dreamed her husband would die suddenly, and he did die from heart failure a few hours later. The other of how a minister discovered, in a dream, the key to a hitherto unreadable cipher of John Wesley. Both instances indicate, we are told, that we are surrounded by a spiritual world, whose laws, etc., etc. Both instances seem to us only proofs that those who expect the marvellous are very likely to find it. There are probably many thousands of wives who dream every night that some stroke of good or bad fortune has overtaken their husbands. In one case out of these many thousands the event coincides with the dream, and we are told it is a proof of the existence of a spiritual world all round us. The cases in which no such coincidences occur are ignored as of no consequence. Or, again, a man has been studying for years to find the key to a certain cypher. During sleep, or rather in that half-conscious state between sleep and waking, a solution suggests itself. The gentleman in question felt sure the suggestion was due to an angelic voice, and never having heard an angel's voice, he recognised it immediately. For our part, we see in this incident that the brain functions independently of the will. We see the same thing in our waking moments when, after having puzzled in vain over something, the problem solves itself while we are consciously thinking of something entirely different. We do not suppose for a moment that this explanation will satisfy the *Baptist Times*. Those who really want the marvellous and the supernatural always have discovered it, and we suppose always will.

Orthodox people can no longer pool-pool Shelley. He has taken his place among the great English poets. They

must therefore try to explain his "unbelief" away. The favorite plan is to argue that he was misled into Atheism in his youth, but was developing into a Christian when death cut short his career. There are other plans which we cannot specify at present. But the latest calls one for a special word of recognition. A lady writer in *T. P.'s Weekly*—a paper in which one does not look for profound views—takes six columns to explain that Shelley "pretended" to be an Atheist out of fun. This view of Shelley as a humorist takes the cake. We don't think it is likely to be beaten. It is another case of *place aux dames*. Elizabeth Quantock wins the first prize, and Mr. T. P. O'Connor is the very man to hand it over to her.

Rev. Canon David Reith, vicar of St. Andrew's, Watford, was preaching a sermon in the parish church of St. Alphege, Greenwich, on Tuesday evening, October 5, when he suddenly fell back in the pulpit—dead. There is no moral, except that "Providence" does not discriminate between the clergy and laymen. But what an extensive moral there would be if a Secular lecturer fell dead on the platform in the middle of his discourse!

Coastguard Maurice Miller, of Dover, if there is any truth in Christianity, is full of original sin,—from top to toe a reeking mass of spiritual corruption, who can do no good of himself, and fully deserves everlasting hell. That is the Christian theory about him. But how does it square with the facts? He was engaged with other coastguards in trying to save the crew of the brigantine *Osprey*, which was ashore between Shakespeare Cliff and the Admiralty Pier. Heavy seas were running, and something went wrong with the rocket line after two of the crew were safely landed. The three men still on the wreck were apparently doomed, when Coastguard Miller volunteered to swim out to the ship with a rope attached to the breeches buoy. A large crowd watched his brave fight with the foaming sea, and when at last he reached the ship and went up hand over hand on the line thrown over to him, the roar of cheering rose high above the wind and waves. All the men were got safely ashore, and their heroic deliverer with them. We take off our hat to him. If there is a decent God, who keeps a decent heaven, Coastguard Miller will get there in front of most of the clergy.

Lord Shuttleworth, addressing a Missionary meeting at Liverpool, wished his countrymen were "more deeply interested in missions to those who were sunk in false religions, in degrading superstitions and vices." But why go out of Liverpool to find such objects of missionary attention? Catholics and Protestants both think each other to have "false religions." Protestants regard Catholics as sunk in "degrading superstitions," and Freethinkers look upon Protestants in just the same light. And as for "vices," it would be difficult to find more to the square yard in any other city in the world.

Henry Benson, who has just been sentenced to five years' penal servitude for frauds in connection with Feltham's Bank and the International Securities Corporation, tried the pious dodge with the jury. He shed tears and invoked the name of the Deity. He expatiated on his "rescue work" in America, and declared that many prisoners went on their knees every night and exclaimed "God bless Bembro"—which is apparently his real name. Benson-Bembro appears to be "of the circumcision," for he became a rabbi in America in order to carry on these pious labors. Yet he had to admit under cross-examination that he had been convicted at Boston under the name of Phillips as "a common and notorious thief." Most of the Benson-Bembro tribe go in for religion. And the police know it. Yet they cling to their old tradition that Freethinkers are the "wicked" people.

How is it, by the way, that Inspector Jenkins, of Islington, is allowed to carry on a police "infidel crusade" all over London? His agents are sent to Freethought open-air meetings over the whole metropolis, with orders to take down "warm" passages in the lectures, and to get the names and addresses of the lecturers. This espionage is worthier of Russia than of England. The explanation of it is that Inspector Jenkins is a Christian fanatic who preaches and runs a mission hall; that the Chief Commissioner of Police, who sanctions Inspector Jenkins' anti-infidel crusade, is another Christian fanatic; and that the Home Secretary is—what everybody knows he is.

The *Catholic Times* doesn't believe that "the Spanish authorities" would torture prisoners. It says that they are "too humane to indulge in such practices." Too humane! In the classic land of bull-fights and the

Inquisition. In the laud that produced Torquemada, Alva, Cortes, and Pizarro; the butchers of the Netherlands, of Mexico, and Peru. Our Catholic contemporary must be joking.

We have ourselves seen the marks of torture on the bodies of Spanish prisoners who suffered in Montjuich. We believe the evidence of our own senses rather than the assurance of "the Bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Valencia." Bishops!

Mr. J. N. Withers, the Blackburn County Court Registrar, has been saying some hard things about the Family Bible business. He had before him the case of a poor woman who could not read. She had been persuaded to buy a Family Bible at something like double its real value; she had paid £1, and was sued for £1 8s. more and costs. The Registrar lectured the agent, and told him: "You would not canvas me for this class of goods. If you did, I should be tempted to kick you downstairs." A verdict was given for the defendant. We like to hear a judge talking like a man.

Rev. J. Stett Wilson, described as "the well-known Socialist orator" in the local press report, lectured lately in the Prince's Theatre, Blackburn, with Councillor Higham in the chair, on "The Impending Social Revolution." Amongst other things, the reverend gentleman told his audience that "when Christ came the world, intellectually, morally, and politically, was bankrupt." Gibbon, the greatest of modern historians, fixes that very "bankrupt" period, and a hundred years after, as the time when the human race was most prosperous and happy. Why on earth do Socialists allow their cause to be represented in this piously offensive manner by clerical ignoramus or charlatans?

"Every word of the creeds," says the Bishop of London, "can be proved by Holy Scriptures." Probably; but what is to prove Holy Scriptures? The world rests on the back of an elephant, the elephant rests on the back of a tortoise, and the tortoise — ? Here we reach the regions of irreverence and blasphemy, and it is vain to expect an answer.

The Bishop also says that he has been able to tell poor people in the East End of London, in the very depth of trouble and anguish, that there must be love behind it all. Now we see the inestimable benefits of Christianity, and we hope those in the depths of trouble and anguish were duly comforted by the message. Starvation and disease become quite pleasant bedfellows if we only feel convinced that they are sent by a loving God for our personal benefit. There must be something morally unsound about a person who does not appreciate the honor of such divine attention.

Stands Scotland where it did? Not exactly. The Scotland of Robert Burns is encroaching on the Scotland of John Knox. Here is Duncan Macgregor, College Principal, writing to the *Glasgow Herald* from Dunoon, and asking: "Can we ever win back the lost love of the masses?" What he says afterwards is very little to the point. The real answer to his question is "Never." The very fact that it is asked speaks volumes.

The Glasgow U. F. Presbytery is getting pessimistic. At its last meeting Rev. Professor Denny, who reported on the Central Fund, had to lament a decrease of £17,588. Rev. John Buchan, reporting for the Sabbath Observance Committee, deplored that "a great change was coming over people's views in regard to the Sabbath." The Sunday coast trains would go on because they paid. Sunday motor-ing and Sunday golf were increasing. The Church "should warn her wealthier members of the inevitable moral deterioration that must follow those who put their own pleasure before the Lord's Day." Moral deterioration! What's become of hell?

Sir Robert Perks, speaking at the Foreign Missionary Demonstration in the Leysian Hall, City-road, London, asked: "Were they quite sure that this country was not more rapidly drifting towards paganism than the heathen countries towards Christianity? Were they right in neglecting the pagan nations at home for the pagan nations abroad?" Sir Robert Perks might have suggested that the Christian missionaries should concentrate on "infidel" France. They would find all their work cut out there.

Amongst the "howlers" lately published by the *Westminster Gazette* is the following—one of the results of a recent historical examination: "Mary firmly believed in the Act of 'de heredito comprehendo.' Mary's disposition was soured, so she became very religious and burnt many people."

This is not such a "howler" after all. Bigotry and biliousness have always been closely related.

Dr. Stephen Paget treated the Church Congress to a fierce diatribe against Christian Science. Here is a sample of his unflattering eloquence:—

"They bully dying women and let babies die in pain; let cases of paralysis tumble about and hurt themselves; rob the epileptic of their bromide, the angina cases of their amyl nitrite, heart cases of their digitalis; let appendicitis go on to septic peritonitis; watch day after day while a man or a woman slowly bleeds to death. To these works of the Devil they bring their one gift—wilful and complete ignorance—and their nursing would be a farce if it were not a tragedy."

Dr. Paget went on to sneer at the Society of Emmanuel, which is conducted by a number of half-baked clergymen, including (we believe) the Bishop of London. He accused this society of countenancing exorcism, and publishing miracles that never happened. One case was that of a man who was healed by laying on of hands and anointing "after one lung had sloughed away and the other had half gone," so that he is now "in perfect health with two good sound lungs." "Can you wonder," Dr. Paget asked, "that we doctors laugh at spiritual healing, if *this* be spiritual healing?" It did not occur to him, or to the men of God who cheered him, that exorcism and faith-healing are both distinctly taught in the New Testament. Jesus and his apostles cast devils out of the people, and the last chapter of Mark still stands in the Gospels. Moreover, as a matter of fact, the seventy-second Canon of the Church of England has never been repealed; and that Canon provides that no clergyman shall cast out devils without the written permission of his Bishop.

Talking of miracles, Mrs. Pankhurst seems to be in love with them. Addressing the big Albert Hall meeting of Suffragists before going to America, she referred to the Birmingham hunger strike, and remarked: "I say here deliberately that this is a modern miracle, which makes those who may have doubted the miracles of the past believe in the possibility of their being true." After this sort of talk, it is not surprising to read that before Mrs. Pankhurst rose a hymn was sung to the tune of "Rock of Ages," with the refrain—

"These, Thy children, Lord, defend,
To their help Thy spirit send."

We hope this doesn't mean more brickbats and roof-tiles—to say nothing of hatchets. But you never know what men (or women) will do with the spirit of the Lord in them.

Mrs. Pankhurst is a widow. We knew the late Dr. Pankhurst as far back as 1871 or 1872, when he was a leading spirit in the Republican movement at Manchester. His views on religion were very much like our own, and we don't know that he ever changed them. We believe he would be much astonished if he could listen to some of Mrs. Pankhurst's pious utterances. Can it be that she thinks piety is a good line of business with the majority of women? Or is the constant excitement arousing the old inherited religious emotions?

The *Liverpool Evening Express* prints a "miraculous" story of the recovery of Miss Ellen Warren, of 33 Bridgewater-street, Runcorn, from a grave and dangerous illness by means of "a wonderful relic in possession of one of the Roman Catholic clergy of St. Marie's, Widnes." The relic is "a tiny piece of bone from the wrist of St. Gerard Majella." It cured Miss Warren in a night. The *Express* says that, according to its correspondent, the "circumstances have been well investigated, and there appears no reason what-ever for doubting them." This is beautifully precise and delightfully satisfactory. We suggest that the nameless priest to whom it belongs should lend it to the nearest public hospital; and, after curing all the patients there, it might be taken round the country—if the doctors will tolerate such a dangerous rival.

Rev. Sylvanus T. H. Saunders, having accepted the living (a good one, we believe) of St. Helen's, Bishopgate, has sent out a printed circular to his parishioners, in which he addresses them as "Dear Brethren in Christ," and refers to himself as "Having been called by God's Providence to minister among you." We did not know that the patron of the living was called God.

James Berry, the "converted hangman," was engaged to conduct a week's evangelistic service at Belfast, but the local Methodist Council interfered just in time to "prevent a scandal," and stopped the program by indemnifying all the parties concerned. Times are altered since there was more joy over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine honest men.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 17, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, London, W.: at 7.30, "False Gods: a Criticism of Mr. Tree's New Play."

October 24, and 31, St. James's Hall, London.

November 7, Manchester; 14, Liverpool; 28, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 17, Glasgow; 24, Victoria Park; 31, Birmingham. November 21, West Ham. December 5, Liverpool; 12, Manchester; 19, West Ham.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 17, Liverpool; 24, Glasgow; 31, Canning Town (Minor) Hall. December 19, Leicester.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £252 19s. Received since.—Dundee:—Robert Stirton and Friends (quarterly), £1 16s. 6d. Leicester:—S. Leeson, £1; W. Wilber, 10s.; H. Weston, 5s.; W. Leeson, 5s.; J. Ainge, 5s.; A. Leeson, 2s. 6d.; H. Hopkins, 1s.; D. Winterton, 2s.

F. R. CHARTRY, 38 Clarence-street, Nottingham, referring to the complaint of one of our correspondents of the difficulty in obtaining the *Freethinker* in that town, says that he will see that a copy is delivered regularly to any address sent to him. He would also like to hear from local "saints" willing to join in forming an N. S. S. Branch.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—Thanks for cuttings.

R. H. ROSETTI.—See paragraph.

C. W. GEDDES.—We cannot recommend literary "stew-downs" of any description. An extract could not possibly give an idea of Mill's *Logic*, for instance. There is no royal road to education, and no democratic road either. The only way to know an author is to read him; and the really great books of the world can now be bought very cheaply.

F. WYKES.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.

J. W. R.—Lady Cardigan's book would not interest our readers. It would not interest us, anyhow. We never cared about the wretched little vices of the wretched little "great." What the world calls "education" does not alter human nature—not even in women. Scratch the veneer and you soon come to plain "Liza" and "Sal."

G. R. BALLARD.—Thanks, though it is hardly worth returning to. A printer's blunder, of course.

A. KNIGHT.—A Freethinker is one who thinks freely. Historically, the word has been used in England to denote the members of the party opposed to the Christian religion (or superstition). Anthony Collins, who first used it, was a Deist; at least ostensibly. A Secularist is one who holds that the philosophy of life should be based on knowledge of the only world we are sure of. An Atheist is without God. An Agnostic knows nothing of God.

NORTH LONDONER.—The Christian Evidence people's reports in the *Islington Gazette* are obviously "contributed," and ought to have that intimation at the end. The notion that Freethought can be successfully fought by references to the smallness of its income is worthy of the advocates who are always boasting that "poor men" won the way for their own faith in the Roman Empire. Thinking people will reflect that the smaller our financial resources are the more wonderful is our work.

ALBERT.—We cannot afford to supply newspapers with free copies of the *Freethinker* for sale. You are on the spot. Couldn't you see to it yourself? That would really be helping us. You say you prefer "Materialist" to "Atheist" as less offensive. You forget the reverse of the poet's remark that "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." For our part, we believe "Materialism" is more "offensive" than "Atheism."

J. HECHT.—(1) Kindly see Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, about the proposed Branch at Edmonton. Mr. Foote will, of course, render what assistance he can. (2) We do not understand your friends having to "go away" from St. James's Hall because, having paid a shilling in travelling, they could not afford sixpence for a seat. There are free seats at all the St. James's Hall lectures—and good seats, too.

C. BALDING.—Glad you find your "P. S. A." in reading the *Freethinker*.

W. SANCEL.—We also were glad to see that excellent leaderette in the *Morning Leader* on "The Fate of Senor Ferrer." Thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for welcome cuttings.

C. W. STYRING.—We knew of it, but you can't have everything in one paragraph. Thanks, all the same.

W. VILE.—The lady's mere word is not good enough. A competent committee should watch what, if it was done once, can be done again. We hope to publish the articles you refer to in January. The pamphlet you mention is still in stock.

R. STIRTON.—Accept our thanks for your generous efforts. We quite understand that Freethinkers are frequently associated with other advanced movements which are all in want of funds; also that money is not too plentiful just now. We should be happy, of course, to meet the Dundee "saints" personally, if it could be managed.

"ABRACADABRA" writes us that he thinks Mr. Bryce's article last week was "really good, and very cleverly written." "I have never laughed so much over anything, he adds, "for a long time."

W. PARKER.—Glad to have: "Thanks for useful information obtained weekly from your valuable paper."

R. CHAPMAN.—Will find a corner for it.

F. ROBBINS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

T. M. DAWSON.—The disturbance of *bonâ fide* public meetings cannot, in our opinion, be justified on any ground; but you are free to think otherwise.

W. P. ADAMSON.—Too late for this week; in our next.

F. WOOD.—Thanks.

L. BRANDES.—Your suggestion shall be laid before the committee, but you must remember that there is only one room for the "social."

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.

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.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote returns to St. James's Hall, London, this evening (Oct. 17) and will lecture on "False Gods: with Reference to Mr. Tree's New Play." This is a short way of putting it. The play, of course, is produced by Mr. Tree, but written by a Frenchman, M. Brioux, and "adapted" by an Irishman, Mr. Fagan. The play is causing a good deal of excitement. It pictures a conflict between an ardent young Freethinker and the astute leaders of the national religion. Mr. Foote's lecture on this subject should be of sufficient interest to induce Freethinkers to bring some of their Christian friends to hear it.

Mr. Foote had a large and most appreciative audience at the Leicester Secular Hall on Sunday evening, including visitors from Chesterfield, Rugby, Nottingham, and a small town, little more than a village, named Fleckney, from which a dozen "saints" came over in a brake, under what may be called the leadership of one who is very active and successful in pushing the Freethought cause generally, and the circulation of the *Freethinker* in particular, along in that locality. Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, the Society's president, occupied the chair, and said how much pleased they all were to welcome Mr. Foote again and to see him looking in such good form. The lecture (a long one) on "The Religion of Shakespeare" was listened to with the closest attention throughout. The meeting was a very good beginning of the winter season, and the Society hopes it will lead to gratifying meetings during the rest of the winter; especially to-day (Oct. 17), when there will be a Thomas Paine Centenary meeting at the Secular Hall, with Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner and Mr. J. M. Robertson as the principal speakers.

Glasgow Freethinkers will please note that Mr. Cohen lectures at the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, to-day (Oct. 17). We ask them also to apprise their more orthodox acquaintances that a Freethought lecturer of Mr. Cohen's calibre is visiting their city.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd had a good audience at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening, in spite of the rain coming on at a very awkward time. His lecture was highly appreciated, and very warmly applauded at the finish. Miss Kough occupied the chair,—which was a welcome change from the ordinary program.

Liverpool Freethinkers should give a hearty welcome to Mr. J. T. Lloyd to-day (Oct. 17). He lectures afternoon and evening at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, for the N. S. S. Branch.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place, as usual, on the second Tuesday in January, at the Holborn Restaurant. The date happens to be the President's birthday this time.

An Indian student at a Scottish University (we don't think we ought to be more precise than that) sends us addresses of persons in India to whom we might send

specimen copies of the *Freethinker* with advantage. "I am a subscriber to your paper," he writes, "but not direct from your office. I need not tell you how much I enjoy it. I wish you a most prosperous future."

A Nottingham correspondent writes us encouragingly. He proves to be the gentleman who spoke to us at St. James's Hall after our lecture on "Shakespeare's Testing of Religion," telling us that he had travelled over a hundred miles to hear it and was well repaid. "Just over a year ago," he writes, "I was a preacher and a Christian, but will be such no more. Almost the only commendable bit of learning during my school days was the memorising of the *Merchant of Venice*. Your lecture increased my admiration for the Master tenfold."

Mr. F. Bonte's eight-page Tract, *Thaumaturgics: or, Wonders Ancient and Modern*, can be had from our publishing office for judicious free distribution. The verses are spirited and pointed, and make a most effective antidote to the popular superstition. They have been closely revised and considerably amplified since their first appearance in the *Freethinker*. Branches of the N. S. S. might circulate them with much advantage to the movement. The Birmingham Branch is having 500 copies for a start. Individual Freethinkers can be supplied also. Mr. Bonte bears the cost of production himself. The only charge to recipients is the postage or railway carriage.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti is making an interesting experiment. He is going to give a Freethought lecture this evening (Oct. 17) at the Nightingale Hall, Laindon, Essex—by kind permission of Mr. H. Foulger. His subject is "Christianity Before Christ," the lecture starts at 7.30, and the admission is free. Any of our readers who live within easy distance should try to support Mr. Rosetti on this occasion. Miss H. Pankhurst, daughter of the West Ham Branch's treasurer, has promised to take the chair. We hope they will both survive the attempt on the bucolic mind.

A writer called Leslie Toke is contributing a series of articles to the *Catholic Times* on "The Rationalist Plague." Of the N. S. S. he says:—

"The 'National Secular Society' for more than thirty years has carried on a campaign of public lectures and debates. Its great leader was Charles Bradlaugh, and it used to publish a twopenny weekly paper called the *National Reformer*, of which the program was announced as 'Atheism, Republicanism, and Malthusianism,' or, as an irreverent critic translated it, 'No God, no King, and as few people as possible!' The early history of this society was stormy: thirty years back the general public was not so ready for the secularist gospel as it is now. But the propaganda, essentially popular in its methods, was carried on devotedly in spite of persecution, and its present-day successors are entering into their kingdom."

This is very good, in its way; but why do these Christian writers shudder at the idea of mentioning Mr. Foote and the *Freethinker*? We have our own answer to the question. They don't want to advertise our "infidel" factory. They don't so much mind advertising other establishments, but they know that ours is too dangerous. And the Catholic Church, just like other Churches, can't afford any more losses. "Even in our own ranks," Mr. Leslie Toke says, "the 'leakage' is so appalling, that too often many of us, in despair, try to hide its real extent from ourselves."

The Committee of the Humanitarian League have passed a resolution expressing their cordial sympathy with the protests that are being made against the proposed trial of Senor Ferrer by court-martial, and in condemnation of the barbarous methods employed by the Spanish Government in its treatment of political prisoners.

We have received a welcome letter from an old friend, Captain Otto Thomson, of Stockholm, whom some of our oldest readers will recollect in connection with the "blasphemy" prosecutions in Sweden during the eighties. Captain Thomson is one of the true stalwarts. Age impairs his strength but not his love for Freethought; and his latest letter shows that he still takes a lively interest in the progress of freedom in all parts of the world. He desires to convey his "last" good wishes to all who know of him in England, and to Messrs. Macdonald and Washburn, and other American Freethinkers whom he has got to know through the *Truthseeker*. We have never seen Captain Thomson in the flesh, but we made his friendship "in the spirit" during that far-off time of storm and stress in Sweden, and we have kept in touch with him ever since. He is true steel. When he pays the debt of nature the world will lose a man.

Captain Thomson tells us that bigotry is reviving old laws in Sweden. Professor Knut Wickell, for instance, having openly, at a public meeting, denied the truth of the virgin-birth story in the Gospels, and declared its scientific impossibility, has been found guilty of "blasphemy" in spite of his brilliant and fearless defence, and sentenced to two month's imprisonment and a fine of 300 crowns. Is it any wonder that Voltaire cried "Crush the Infamous"? We accept that motto. History is its justification.

The October number of the *Humanitarian*, the organ of the Humanitarian League, contains a number of interesting items, especially a beautiful one by James Buckland on "The Plumage Bill," and a fine translation, presumably by Mr. H. S. Salt, from Virgil's third *Georgic*, in which the great Latin poet describes with such profound tenderness the death of a laboring ox. We note that the *Humanitarian* has the courage to do what most advanced organs are afraid to do; it quotes two passages from the *Freethinker*—the first being our "Acid Drop" on the Home Secretary's refusal to let Dhingra see his friend Mr. J. S. Masters before the execution, and the second a large portion of our late article on "Vivisection." We have said enough to show that our little *Humanitarian* contemporary deserves the support of all Secularists.

We are clearing out a considerable remnant of old stock from our publishing office, as we want the room for new publications. We make the following offer of them to our readers for distribution on their part as an act of propaganda. We will send them parcels of pamphlets by Foote, Ingersoll, and other writers, to the face value of one shilling for one penny. That is to say, an assorted parcel of six shillings' worth will be sent for sixpence, or twelve shillings' worth for a shilling. The carriage to be paid in addition, if sent by post or rail, will be at the rate of threepence for each sixpence remitted in payment. A sixpenny parcel, that is, will cost threepence, and a shilling parcel sixpence. We will take that figure at a venture.

My Prayer.

BATHED in the blood and tears of thy creation,
God of the Past and God of the Present, die!
Hear thou the song of every clime and nation
That hymns the death of all the Powers on high.

Ye Powers on high, and priests who chant their praises,
Chapmen grown fat soul-saving in the mart,
The priestly hand the fiery torch that raises
Not to light eyes, but wound and sear the heart

Is palsied unto carrion, a craven's strumpet
Nerveless at dawn after night's lusty wine;
The blast is blown, thou God, from horn and trumpet,
Pronouncing doom of death on thee and thine.

With lies full-measured, lying hopes and fears,
The minds of men and women ye've undone,
But not for aye reign ye, the morning nears
When Man turns East again to greet the sun.

We called upon thee, God, to give a sign
Unto thy worshipers on bended knee,
Who worshiped thee at holy font and shrine,
And thy deaf ears were stony to our plea.

We prayed that thou who sentst thy sole-begotten
Son to redeem us, wouldst thyself redeem;
Our prayer was turned to cankered fruit and rotten
Drift-seum that floats upon a Dead-sea stream.

No longer stand we trembling at thine altar,
Nor worship at thy shrine, nor bend the knee;
Before thy face we tremble not nor falter,
"Hasten thy death," we pray, "and leave us free."

Thy face! o'en now on every form and feature
Death feeds apace and marks thee for his own;
And thou wouldst die, O God. Hath man the creature
Surcease from all his world of ache alone?

Where are thy tortures grim and thy threats dire
Now, when thy priests, unrobed, shamofaced, stand by
In guilty nakedness, and thy hell-fire
Is as a thing men jeer at and defy?

Where is the light upon thee, God, the vaunted
Light without light of sun on land or sea
Now, when Man looketh on thy face undaunted,
Biddeth thee die, thou God, and cease to be?

A. D. McLAREN.

Religious Instruction in Schools.

A SHORT NOTE FROM GERMANY.

It is unnecessary to emphasise the prominence given to religious instruction in the German State-schools. Every student of German institutions has noted the fact, and most high officials seem determined at all costs to maintain religion in its pride of place. The Kaiser's own views on the subject were vigorously expressed as far back as 1890, when he declared that, as King of Prussia and Chief Bishop of his Church, he would regard it as his "most sacred duty to take care that the religious sense and the spark of Christian spirit is cared for and increased in the school." These sentiments of his Imperial Majesty excite no wonderment. Religion has always received unstinted support from every form of monarchy, and the support has been faithfully earned. Of more immediate interest to us than the view of Kaiser or Minister, or of that curiously inexpansive thing, the official mind, is the question whether the system of religious instruction in the schools works smoothly in practice. The answer must be an unequivocal negative. Wherever religion interferes in State institutions friction must arise, unless the inhabitants of the country are unanimous in religious beliefs and ceremonies. Germany, as regards her State-schools, is no exception to that rule. Whether the discord is due to sectarian rivalry or to disagreement between the religious bodies and the teachers, it is an ever-present element, and the children suffer.

In many districts in Prussia where Protestants and Catholics are about equal in numbers, *Simultanschulen* have been established. These are sometimes referred to by English writers as "undenominational schools"; but the term is quite misleading. *Simultanschulen* are schools where Protestant teachers give religious instruction to Protestant children, and Catholic teachers to Catholic children, while the history lessons are said to be so arranged that they cannot give offence to adherents of either faith. The system has never worked well. The position in regard to these schools is correctly summed up in the ably written chapter on "Children and Education" in the 1909 edition of *Our German Cousins*, published by the *Daily Mail*:-

"There is always a quarrel going on between the two great Churches. The Catholics demand the erection of dual confessional schools where they have not previously existed, and Lutherans demand the abolition of the dual confessional school where it already exists. The last educational law in Prussia practically left the subject untouched except by decreeing that in districts where dual confessional schools have already existed they shall continue to exist, and may, when necessary, be increased. Except under very special circumstances they are not in future to be erected. The Act hardly satisfied either party."

In fact the Act "amended" nothing. It tried to go all round the sore point without touching it, and has been about as useful as some of the English Education Bills.

While the supporters of the two great factions of Christendom have been thus at death-grips in Prussia, in Saxony a fierce fight between parson and pedagogue has been raging for months. "The Conflict Concerning Religious Instruction" has not only formed the subject of columns of matter daily in the local press, but the question has been debated at public meetings and in numerous pamphlets. The following is from a recent review of the situation by the *National Zeitung*:-

"As was to be expected, the Evangelical County Synod has taken part in the discussion, and its views do not accord with those of the teachers. The latter claim the complete control of spiritual affairs in the school, and they want to shelve dogma in favor of a system of instruction which, while based on the Christian view of life, will, nevertheless, remain free and not bound down to the letter. They further want to relegate to the background those parts of the course of instruction committed to memory, and to substitute the Bible Reading Book, or the so-called School Bible, for

the whole Bible. The teachers admit that the person of Christ must, as before, form the central point of religious teaching, but they object to the emphasis laid on the so-called truths of salvation, and they desire to set before the young the personality of Christ more as a religious-ethical standard."

Most of the arguments put forward by the clerics are hoary veterans that have already seen much active service in England and elsewhere. In answer to the teachers, the men of God assert that all instruction to children must at first be dogmatic—that the child must accept without question the statements made by his instructors. A specious instance of the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*. The reply is simply that the assertion is false. All scientific exponents of educational theories, whatever may be their differences on some questions, admit that the child should be encouraged to discover facts for himself, and should be asked to take as little as possible on the authority of his teachers. When he is told that five times four are twenty, he is given cubes that he may prove for himself, by further calculation and re-arrangement, the truth of the statement. And in geometry and other subjects, practical proof is now regarded as an essential preliminary to the theoretical parts of the study. Those who are supporting dogmatic teaching on the ground that all the child's instruction must at first be taken on trust, know themselves that, so far from their dogmas being capable of subsequent verification, they are rejected by some of the best thought of the age.

There are other points of resemblance between the contest here and that in England and Australia. Most important is the assertion that morality is endangered if religious instruction is withdrawn. Vague phrases, of course, are made to do duty for facts. Professional advocates who have graduated at world-famous universities, who have passed no end of examination papers in "Biblical Criticism," "Apologetic Theology," "Systematic Theology," "Ontology," and so many other ologies that it would take a senior wrangler to count them, may be left to make the most of words and phrases. After all, the sum of their objections is simply that there is "no substitute" for the religious lesson, and that its withdrawal is a "menace." The statement is true. In the same way, to the skilful burglar there is no substitute for a good jemmy, and the policeman is a menace most infamous, to be resisted to the bitter end.

A. D. McLAREN.

The Narratives in Genesis.—XV.

THE BATTLE OF THE KINGS.

(Continued from p. 646.)

WE come now to chapter xiv. which, according to Professor Driver, is the composition of neither the Yahvist, the Elohist, nor the Priestly writer, but was derived by the compiler from some special unknown source. The chapter commences:-

"And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Nations, that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar)."

Twelve years, it is stated, had the five kings of Canaan served Chedorlaomer; in the thirteenth they had rebelled; in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer and his three allies into Canaan to punish the rebels and bring them again into subjection. A battle was fought in the Vale of Siddim—"four kings against five"—which resulted in a victory for Chedorlaomer and his allies.

"Now the Vale of Siddim was full of slime pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountains."

The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah being dead, and their armies destroyed or scattered, the four vic-

torious kings plundered the two cities named, and carried away many of the people captive. "And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram *the Hebrew*." The latter patriarch—who is here credited with a name that was given long afterwards to the Jewish nation—upon hearing that Lot was a captive, armed his men-servants, 318 in number, and, accompanied by three chieftains of the land, set off after the conquerors, whom he defeated and "pursued as far as Dan." Then, returning, "he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people." Thus were the combined armies of four great kings defeated by a mere handful of armed herdmen—a story almost incredible. It may also be remarked that there was no place named "Dan" in Abram's time (Judg. xviii. 29); but that is, of course, a mere detail.

Next, we are told, as soon as the conquering hero had returned, "the king of Sodom went out to meet him," and this resurgent king "said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself": to which offer Abram replied "I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet, nor ought that is thine, lest thou should say, I have made Abram rich." This king would seem to have been restored to life in order that Abram might show his disinterestedness and independence by refusing to share in the lawful spoils of war, which, in the age in which he lived, he had a perfect right to. It may also be noted that this patriarch was not quite so particular about being "made rich" when his wife was in Pharaoh's house, nor did he refuse to take presents on another similar occasion (Gen. xx. 14-16).

But, besides the resurrected king of Sodom, Abram was met by another wonderful personage, respecting whom a New Testament writer says that he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (Heb. vii. 3). The account of this remarkable and impossible individual reads as follows:—

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of El Elyon. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be El Elyon, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all" (xiv. 18-20).

This paragraph is inserted in the middle of the account of the meeting of Abram and the king of Sodom, and interrupts that narrative. The word *melchizedek* means "king of righteousness," and *salem* means "peace"; so that a king of righteousness and peace blessed Abram for having slaughtered a large number of his fellow-men. The name *El Elyon* is translated "God Most High." *El* is the common Semitic name for "god": *Elyon* is said to mean "high" or "exalted"; but, apart from the meaning, *Elyon* was the name of a Phœnician and Canaanite deity, having no connection with Yahveh, Elohim, or El Shaddai—the three names of the Hebrew god.

The priest of El Elyon naturally ascribed Abram's victory to the assistance rendered him by his own god, and Abram appears to have believed him: at any rate he gave the priest a tenth of all the goods he had recovered from the four kings. This he did in accordance with the command in Num. xviii. 21-24, that tithes should be given to the priests and Levites. As the narrative stands the tithe was paid before Abram swore to the king of Sodom that he would not take so much as "a thread nor a shoe-latchet" of the spoils. Possibly this is the reason why the Melchizedek incident was inserted just before the refusal above mentioned.

With respect to the confederation of kings (named in verse 1) who are stated to have invaded Canaan, Assyriologists and Christian apologists have spared no pains in the laudable endeavor to discover and identify them as historical characters named in the cuneiform inscriptions. Amongst these reconcilers may be named the Rev. Marcus Dods, D.D., Professor

of Exegetical Theology, New College, Edinburgh, who says in his short commentary on Genesis:—

"The idea that this vivid chapter is an invention for the purpose of exalting Abram is gratuitous, and is refuted by the evidence borne by the narrative itself."

This is exactly what I was about to say after reading the chapter; but I will withhold my opinion until after looking at his evidence. He continues:—

"The names of the kings engaged, their alliance, their route, are all in agreement with the historical facts recorded in Assyrian inscriptions."

This is something like evidence; there can be no getting over "historical facts," more especially when "recorded in Assyrian inscriptions." From the foregoing introductory statement it would seem that the names of the four confederated kings, and a full account of their expedition against the five kings of Canaan, had been found on one or more of the Assyrian monuments. That such should be the case I very much doubt. However, let us hear what Dr. Dods has to say. Taking the four confederate kings in the order named in Genesis (which is alphabetical) our learned Professor says:—

"*Amraphel*, or, as the lxx. gives it, *Amarphal*, is an Akkadian proper name; Lenormant has found the name *Amarpal* on two cylinders."

"*Arioch*, probably *Eriaku*, a name borne by at least one Chaldean prince, the son of Kudur-Mabuk, who received as his capital the town of Larsa (*Ellasar*) on the east side of Euphrates."

"*Chedorlaomer*, transliterated by lxx. into *Chodol-logomor*, which is in appearance, but not in pronunciation, somewhat like its original *Kudur-lagamar*. *Kudur* is a common component in the names of Assyrian kings, and is stated by Rawlinson to mean 'son of'; *Lagamar* is known to have been the name of one of their deities, so that Kudur-lagamar is son of Lagamar. He is styled *King of Elam*."

"*Tidal*, in lxx. *Thargal* = *Turgal*, 'great chief,' described as *king of nations*, a doubtful title, but possibly meaning that he ruled over the Semitic tribes to the north of Babylon. The same title occurs in an inscription translated in the *Records of the Past*, vii. 4."

Here endeth this historical evidence, and, as will be seen, there is no account of the "alliance" of the four kings, or of "their route," or even of their making war with the kings of Canaan. In replying to the foregoing, I will commence with Chedorlaomer, for he was obviously the head of the confederation, though his name appears third in the list.

1. "Chedorlaomer, king of Elam." The first half of this name is undoubtedly *Kudur*; for the Hebrew is *Kedar* and the latter form was evidently intended for the former. Two kings of Elam have been found on the monuments whose names are compounded with *kudur*. These are *Kudur-Nakhunte* and *Kudur-Mabuk*. Also, among the many gods of Elam named in the inscriptions we find one bearing the name *Lagamar*. That is all. "*Kudur-lagamar*" is, no doubt, a very appropriate name for a king of Elam; but, up to the present, no king of that name has been discovered on any of the monuments. "*Kudur-lagamar*" is simply an imaginary name and person. It should be noted that Dr. Dods is careful not to say that this hypothetical appellation is found in the inscriptions: he only refers to an "*original Kudur-lagamar*," but, as far as we know, there was no original *Kudur-lagamar*. Moreover, when he says that the latter is "styled King of Elam," he refers to the Bible account, not to the monuments.

2. "*Amraphel*, king of Shinar." *Shinar* is the Hebrew form of *Sumir*, South Babylonia. One of the ancient kings of Babylonia was *Kammurabi*, son of *Sin-muballit*. Both of those names have been transformed, by changing or altering the syllables, into *Amar-pal*. As to the last-mentioned name, which Professor Dods says Lenormant has discovered "on two cylinders," it must first be shown that it was borne by a king of Babylon, and next that this king lived several centuries before the Israelites had entered Canaan. Until these points are established Lenormant's "find" is worthless.

3. "*Arioch*, king of Ellasar." One of the names found on the monuments is that of *Rim-Agu*, who

styles himself "king of Larsa." This name and place, when properly manipulated, answers admirably. All that need be done is to change *Rim-Agu* into *Eri-aku*, and *Larsa* into *Ellasar*. In this way we get "Ari-och king of Ellasar." Could anything be more simple?

4. "Tidal, king of Nations." In this case we first change *Tidal* of the Hebrew version into *Thurgal* of the Septuagint; then, after striking out the "h" and altering a vowel, we get *tur-gal*, "a great chief"—a title found in one of the inscriptions, though of what country or date is not stated. There remains now but to show that this nondescript "great chief" was the "Tidal, king of Nations," of the time of Abram. When this has been done, we shall have found one of the four kings named in Genesis.

Having now examined the "evidence" adduced by Dr. Marcus Dods of New College, Edinburgh, I cite once more his positively amazing statement respecting the four confederate kings.

"The names of the kings engaged, their alliance, their route, are all in agreement with the historical facts recorded in Assyrian inscriptions."

Taking into consideration the fact that neither "the names of the kings engaged," nor "their alliance," nor "their route" are so much as once mentioned in any cuneiform inscription, how can it be affirmed with any semblance of truth that the unsupported Bible story is "in agreement with the historical facts recorded in Assyrian inscriptions"? This question I leave professional Christian-evidence-mongers to answer.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

The Cleric at Work.

THE peculiar thing about the average clergyman is that he does not or cannot throw off, except for a brief holiday, the badges of his profession. The suggestion apparently is that he is always at work and never plays—that he must always be about his Master's business. Is there anything more ludicrous than the special provision that has to be made for persons by haberdashers and hatters? A light flannel suit or white straw hat would evidently grossly violate the sanctity of the clerical office. Consequently we see perspiring black-coated gentlemen wearing black straw hats and stumping round golf links or decorously receiving, with that smile and bow which is peculiarly their own, ices or cups of tea from muslin-frocked ladies at garden parties. The clergyman's work is certainly never done, but nineteenth-twentieths of it apparently consists of lecturing people, telling them how to behave, and attending all kinds of social functions.

It is amusing to observe the jealousy which exists, particularly in country districts, between the clergy of different sects. One would suppose that a clergyman would rejoice to see stray sheep returning to the fold, no matter which particular shepherd they ran to for safety. Not so. The green-eyed monster finds his way even into the sacrosanct atmosphere that the man of God carries about with him, and seldom meets with a repulse when a brother's flock increases in number. The principle of competition finds its place in the House of God as well as outside. The tests of success in the religious life are big congregations and big subscription lists. Let a brother injudiciously poach upon the preserves of another brother, and the fat is in the fire with a vengeance! Lawyers and doctors have laws of etiquette which, if broken, call for expressions of personal feeling; but the clerical laws of etiquette are more stringent than any. The petulance and childishness of clergymen is proverbial. Dissent from any opinions expressed by them is not treated according to the recognised laws of controversy, but as a personal affront. Their knowledge of life is in the main purely theoretical, and neither practical nor profound. How could it be from the nature of their so-called education?

Their limited and inaccurate ideas of life make them unreliable teachers and very difficult men to co-operate with in business matters affecting the "temporalities" of their churches. Lest it may be suggested that the writer has had an unfortunate or exceptional experience of the clergy, or that his comments are dictated by personal pique, I should like to say that there is not one clergyman who is my personal enemy, that I have known and observed the "work" of numerous clerics of different denominations, and that I have

had the advantage of the opinions of numerous laymen who have taken an intimate and active interest in church work. Their opinions corroborate what I say. The clergyman is usually chairman of the bodies charged with the management of individual churches; and though laymen attend the meetings of these bodies, often at considerable personal inconvenience, they are for the most part expected to simply give unquestioning assent to and approval of proposals made by the clergyman. I can speak with most familiar knowledge of Presbyterian churches, and I have actually known of a church manager who got so disgusted with the pettishness displayed by his minister when he ventured to question the mere expediency of suggestions which commended themselves to the clerical mind, that he ceased attending the meetings of managers altogether. Instances could be furnished which, to those who have no experience of the inside administration of Christian Churches, would seem incredibly childish.

Disputes arise from, and the foundations of perennial personal feuds are laid by, trumpery occurrences as insignificant as to be far too unimportant to be noticed by anyone who has any practical knowledge of everyday life. The hanging of a map on a schoolroom wall, or the position of certain furnishings, may be objected to by a minister and lead to the resignation of the School Superintendent. This becomes a nine days' wonder, and is on the lips of every lady member of the congregation. Sides are taken, and the issues involved are dismissed *ad longum* and with the utmost seriousness. Picnics, choir trips, Sunday-school treats, the painting of the church, the questions of general or individual Communion-cups, the introduction of flowers, instrumental music, and the like, are discussed and debated, with the minister in the chair, as if such matters were of national or worldwide interest and importance. In all such matters the minister must claim and maintain his authority, for does he not hold a commission from Almighty God? In any event, he is always a Pope at heart whatever his qualifications as a business man may be. But the inevitable result to a mind continually engaged in considering such trifling details cannot be other than narrowness and enfeeblement.

If people have any desire to elevate their ideals and to widen their horizons, they cannot hope for any help to these ends from the clergy. Human nature has great potentialities, but they cannot be awakened or brought into play by a clerical system, either adopted by people themselves or imposed upon them by a king or state. The clergy have a discolored, distorted, and utterly grotesque view of human nature. During their so-called education they are secluded, and are always too much given to introspection. In theory they are supposed to follow a systematised code of duties under supervision. In practice they only work if they choose, and when and how they choose. Long intellectual training is not essential to enable anybody to read prescribed "services" at births, marriages, and deaths.

Fully developed and healthy people do not need to place reliance on the clerics at any stage or in any relationship in life. The employment of their services is merely a confession of ignorance, weakness, and a diseased imagination. The clergy exist because of human wistfulness and fear about the future. The clergy profess to have a special knowledge of the future which the rest of men have not. That profession has been exploded more than once, but it will take a while to convince all men that the explosion has taken place.

As regards the part played by the clergy in the ceremony of admitting new Church members, times have sadly changed. The advance of Freethought, and the consequent reductions in the number of those who attend church, have caused clergymen to welcome all and sundry without requiring a high standard of "religious" knowledge, or, indeed, demanding any compliance with tests. You nowadays stop a clergyman, whom you have previously spoken to, on the street and tell him you intend to join his church. He shakes hands and beams on you, and says: "Oh, all right; delighted, I am sure. Just leave your name and address in the vestry." And the thing is done.

SIMPLE SANDY.

VIRGINS.

As it happened, however, the five foolish virgins were observed, in their perplexity, by five wise men.

"Permit me!" quoth each of these, and stepped up and filled a virgin's lamp for her, adding: "Now, you just about need somebody to look out for you, don't you, eh?"

And the five foolish virgins, blushing violently and looking shyly down, the five wise men lost no time in procuring licences, and they all lived happily ever after.

As for the wise virgins, they sniffed some when they heard the news, animadverted with considerable acerbity on the ancient mystery of the way of a man with a maid, and let it go at that.

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.

INDOOR.

ST. JAMES'S HALL (Great Portland-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "False Gods: a Criticism of Mr. Tree's New Play."
ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 7.30, J. Rowney, "Let Us Pray."
WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Hall (Minor), Barking-road, Canning Town): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "False Gods."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, A. B. Moss, "False Gods."
CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, F. Schaller, a Lecture.
ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S.: Highbury Corner, 12, Sidney Cook, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Bull Ring Coffee House): Thursday, Oct. 21, at 8, W. H. Wood, "Aerolites, Meteors, and Comets: their Nature and Origin."
BISHOP AUCKLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Musgrave's Tea Rooms, Spennymoor): 3, Members' meeting.
BLACKBURN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spinners' Institute, St. Peter's-street): Monday, Oct. 18, at 7.30, H. Percy Ward, "Why I Deny the Existence of a God."
LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Buddha or Christ: Which?" 7, "God, Man, and the Devil."
MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Wm. Arthur, "Who Was Jesus Christ?"

OUTDOOR.

NOTTINGHAM (Great Market-place): 7.30, J. Long, "Christianity and Morality."

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This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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