

# THE Freethinker

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When once we gain some real notion of the extent and the unconquerableness of our ignorance, it is a very broad and restful thing to depend upon; you can throw yourself upon it at ease, as on a cloud, to feast with the gods. You do not thenceforward trouble yourself, nor anyone else, with theories, or the contradiction of theories; you neither get headache nor heartburning; and you nevermore waste your poor little store of strength, or allowance of time.—JOHN RUSKIN.

## A New Note on the Blasphemy Laws.

WHEN the last Blasphemy prosecution was proceeding, and Sir Atherley Jones, K.C., was engaged by the National Secular Society for the defence, I placed in his hands, at his request, the verbatim report of my own trial before the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in 1883. He read my address to the jury very carefully, and remarked: "It is all there. There is nothing to add. You said all there is to be said." I was very much of the same opinion then. I am not now. I see that I omitted one very important point. Whether it would have done me any good with the jury, or even with the judge, is another matter; but from a purely dialectical point of view it is of the highest value. Nobody has ever recognised it before, to my knowledge; and I have only thought of it myself after all those years. How strange it is that the obvious is so commonly overlooked!

Mr. Justice Stephen, in writing on the Blasphemy Laws, pointed out that the strongest proof that they were based on the principle of persecution was that they were only directed against Freethinkers, and that no one ever thought of putting them into operation against Christians, who were quite as capable as other people of "shocking the susceptibilities" of those who did not agree with them. He was very near my new point then, but he did not stumble upon it, which he might have done so easily as he was a Freethinker himself.

My new point is this. Christians argue that the Blasphemy Laws are not for the persecution of Freethinkers but for the protection of the "decencies of controversy." The "decencies of controversy" cannot very well mean anything else than the use of decorous or "parliamentary" language. The idea that Freethinkers have ever used any other kind of "indecent" language is at present confined to the baser sort of Christians. Now such "decencies of controversy" could hardly have been meant to be guarded by the Blasphemy Laws, which must, in that case, be grounded on pure bigotry. Nor can Christians logically and honestly claim the right to enforce the use of decorous or "parliamentary" language in religious discussions. *Why?* The answer is very simple. It is this. Jesus Christ is their great exemplar. What he did they ought to do. What he did not do they ought not to do. Certainly they cannot, without the grossest hypocrisy, make it a crime for anyone to follow in his footsteps. Consequently they have no moral right to punish anyone for using indecorous or "unparliamentary" language—for Jesus Christ himself used it, and to all appearance habitually.

Here are a few samples of Jesus Christ's controversial style. He is either addressing or apostro-

phising his religious opponents. It will be noticed that his ready vocabulary of vituperation argues long practice in that kind of eloquence. I give his words exactly as they are reported in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew—not to roam over the whole of the four gospels; I have printed some words in italics in order to make them prominent to the eye.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

"Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?"

"Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

These are samples of the public language of one whom the hymn calls "gentle Jesus." They would surely have created great astonishment in the minds of Christians if they had not been accustomed to them from childhood, and if they had not always regarded the speaker as above criticism. At any rate, there the words of Jesus Christ are; and they are of such a character that I do not believe they were ever equalled by the most "vulgar infidel" on any Freethought platform in England. My purpose, however, is not so much to censure the Prophet of Nazareth for his savage speech as to emphasise the fact that he did not trouble himself at all about the "decencies of controversy." He appears to have simply said what he meant, and was utterly careless whether it pleased or displeased his religious adversaries. Their feelings were nothing whatever to him. It is arguable, of course, that this was a virtue in him. I cannot stop to debate that question; I am only concerned to maintain that Freethinkers, in following his example, if they rose or condescended to do so, ought not to be charged with "blasphemy" by his followers.

While these expressions of Jesus Christ's stand in the Gospel it is idle for Christians to pretend that Freethinkers should be punished for "outraging the feelings" of the religionists around them. They may say that Freethinkers are in a minority; true,—and so were Jesus Christ and his disciples; the event proved that they were only a handful. The "outrage" is to the majority in both cases.

Jesus Christ's favorite word "hypocrite" is fairly applicable to every Christian who supports the Blasphemy Laws on the modern ground of protecting the "decencies of controversy." It is especially applicable to men like Mr. Justice Phillimore and Mr. Justice Darling, who express abhorrence of a rough Freethinker's language, and treat him with the most supercilious contempt as an inferior and criminal being, when they are perfectly aware all the time that infinitely worse language than any alleged against him occurs frequently in the Bible, and that Jesus Christ himself used the fierce language I have quoted, not in private conversation, but openly to the crowd in places of public resort.

The foregoing argument amounts to a demonstration that the Christian talk about the "decencies of controversy" is entirely hypocritical, and that the

real ground of their maintenance of the Blasphemy Laws is one of sheer bigotry. When the Blasphemy Laws originated the Christians were so overwhelmingly numerous and powerful, and such earnest believers in the divine character of their faith, that they used perfectly straightforward language, being under no temptation to dull the edge of hostile criticism. Not a word did they say then about the "decencies of controversy." It was *the controversy itself* that they objected to and meant to suppress. They were protecting their religion by means which they considered perfectly proper. People who denied it, and, above all, people who attacked it, were to be fined, imprisoned, tortured, or killed,—whichever was necessary to silence them. But that plain, and in its way honest, motive is no longer avowed. Christians are ashamed of it; and the fact shows the growth of unbelief, for toleration is the child of doubt. Hence it is that the Blasphemy Laws are now defended by sophistry and hypocrisy.

G. W. FOOTE.

### A Study in Christian Lying.

DURING Mr. Foote's recent regrettable absence from the *Freethinker* office I received a circular from the Methodist Publishing Office informing me that a book was to be issued on *Christianity and Woman*, in reply to some recent sceptical assertions. I was asked to kindly notice its appearance, and as I did not then see fit to do so, particularly as a copy of the book was not sent, I am giving the book a notice now—after purchasing a copy. I trust the publishers will be duly grateful for the advertisement.

The author of the book is a Rev. J. E. Gun, lecturer for the Christian Evidence Society—a title and a function that does not carry on their surface any very strong guarantee of either accuracy or truthfulness. Nor is Mr. Gun likely to enhance the reputation of the Society's advocates in either respect. Far from this being the case, if Mr. Gun only displayed a little more intelligence in his dishonesty, and a little more good fortune in his inaccuracies, one might compliment him on having gained laurels in a field where distinction cannot be easy of attainment. Plainly, it is a long time since I came across—even in a Christian Evidence production—a more shameless sacrifice of truth to sectarian interests, and a more scandalous misrepresentation of an author who appears to have provided the writer with all the information on the subject he seems to possess. There is an introduction to the volume by Mr. Frank Ballard, the accredited Infidel-slayer of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, who gives Mr. Gun all praise for his "noble work," and adds, "all blessing be with him." The commendation places Mr. Ballard upon precisely the same level as the man whose work he endorses.

I have no intention of following Mr. Gun through the whole of his ninety-five pages. I have several times dealt with the whole question of "Christianity and Woman," and do not think there is any need now to repeat the operation. What I desire is to place on record a sample of Christian evidences, and of Christian intellectual ethics in A.D. 1910. And to do this I shall confine myself, except incidentally, to Mr. Gun's citations from Lecky and the use he makes of them. Mr. Gun appears to derive all his information concerning Greek and Roman women from Lecky, even following that author in his misstatements of fact. And as he describes Lecky as an "impartial" historian, he cannot well question the testimony I shall have to cite.

One or two comments of a general character may be made at the outset. Mr. Gun has the common ignorant method of referring to what things were like in Rome, as though life and manners were the same right through the whole period of Roman history—a procedure that is as intelligent as though one were to deal with the England of William I. and that of George V. as representing the same state

of society, of ideas, and of morals. This being the case, one can hardly expect Mr. Gun to show any appreciation of the fact that a society of two thousand years ago might well present many features that our own day would not tolerate, or question whether—allowing for the lapse of time between the Romans and ourselves—the improvement effected is sufficiently great for us to be proud of. Next, "Rome" is referred to always as though the state of affairs at any time in Rome, the city, and even among the luxuried classes in Rome, was a faithful reflection of the state of affairs with all classes, and in every village, town, and city throughout the empire. Again, a procedure as intelligent and as honest as it would be if one were to refer to British manners, and lump together indiscriminately all classes, and every town under British dominion in every part of the world. And naturally, with such a type of advocate, the facts presented as illustrating Roman life are carefully selected with a mingling of malice and stupidity, characteristic of the lower kinds of religious advocacy. From Lecky, Juvenal, and Lucian, similar writers are quoted, quite ignoring Lecky's presentation of other aspects of Roman life, and, of course, never giving readers a hint that a Christian scholar like Principal Donaldson, and historians like Professor Dill, have emphatically protested against such examples being taken as representative of Roman life. With much moral indignation, Mr. Gun mentions that certain Roman emperors kept concubines. Such conduct is, of course, unheard of among Christian monarchs, English and foreign.

It would, perhaps, be absurd to expect Mr. Gun to realise that his borrowed citations from Roman satirists and moralists prove the exact opposite of what he is trying to establish. When such writers lash particular vices their castigation not only proves their own dissatisfaction, it also proves the existence of a public to whom such writings appeal. When Mr. Stead published his exposure of certain vices in Christian England, under the title of *The Maiden Tribute*, no one imagined that he condoned the vices he depicted. And it is certain that he would never have written had he not felt that there existed a public of a sufficiently developed moral nature which would feel towards these evils much as he did himself. One may, indeed, lay it down as a general law that the castigation of a vice will generally be severe in proportion as the vice is uncommon. Vices that are general rouse but feeble protests. Finally, if one were to take portions of the evidence given before the Royal Commission on Divorce, add the proceedings of our Divorce Courts, Police Court cases of child desertion and ill usage, ill-treatment of wives, with the columns of records of general evils served up in our Sunday newspapers, and hold the combination up as a true picture of the whole of English life in the year of Our Lord, 1910, one would be acting exactly as Mr. Gun acts in dealing with Roman and Greek civilisation. And the picture would be equally faithful in both cases.

Now let us take Mr. Gun's proofs. In this I shall keep to Lecky, as he appears to have supplied, as I have already said, our author with all the information on the subject he possesses; my chief aim being to show Mr. Gun's falsification of Lecky's statements. So far as the mere wording of the quotations go they are accurate. But in quoting a sentence here and there, without the least regard to either context or qualification, Mr. Gun succeeds in telling a falsehood every time he writes what, so far as the quotation is concerned, is a truth. Thus, Lecky says, referring to the time of the Cæsars:—

"There has probably never been a time when vice was more extravagant and uncontrolled."

This is exactly one-half a sentence, the preceding portion of which reads:—

"There has certainly been many periods in history when virtue was more rare than under the Cæsars."

This sentence Mr. Gun was not honest enough to cite, since had he done so his case would have been

spoiled. Lecky is obviously pointing out that vice in certain classes, during a certain period, assumed a brazen front (as in England under Charles II.) without destroying as fine examples of virtue as are to be found in all history. In addition to this Lecky points out, in the preceding paragraph, that in general—

"It is probable that the Roman matron was from the earliest period a name of honor; that the beautiful sentence of a juriconsult of the Empire, who defined marriage as a lifelong fellowship of all divine and human rights, *rightly expressed most faithfully the feelings of the people, and that female virtue had in every age a considerable place in Roman biographies.*" (Italics mine.)

A still more awkward sentence—awkward for Mr. Gun—follows this one, but that will best follow a further specimen of Mr. Gun's method. Lecky tells us, he says, that women in Rome had at first been "in a condition of absolute subjection or subordination to their relations." "At first," Lecky is dealing with Roman society in its earliest stages. The words immediately following are:—

"They arrived, during the Empire, at a point of freedom and dignity which they subsequently lost and have never altogether regained."

And on the next page comes this:—

"With the exception of her dowry, which passed into the hands of her husband, she held her property in her own right; she inherited her share of the wealth of her father, and she retained it altogether independently of her husband.....A complete revolution had thus passed over the constitution of the family. Instead of being constructed on the principle of autocracy, it was constructed on the principle of coequal partnership. The legal position of the wife had become one of complete independence, while her social position had become one of great dignity."

This at a period concerning which Mr. Gun, by dishonest quotations, is seeking to produce the impression that a wife was the mere slave of her husband, and both given over to unbridled immorality.

Once more. From Lecky Mr. Gun quotes thus:—

"In Imperial Rome there can be no question that the tone of the sex was extremely low, lower, probably, than in France under the Regency, or in England under the Restoration—and it is also certain that frightful excesses of unnatural passion, to which the most corrupt of modern courts present no parallel, were perpetrated with but little concealment on the Palatine."

Lecky clearly has in mind the corruption of a court circle during a particular period. The words immediately following prove this, and also that there were notable exceptions even in that circle. Immediately following the last word of the sentence quoted comes this:—

"Yet there is probably no period in which examples of conjugal heroism and fidelity appear more frequently than in this very age in which marriage was most free and in which corruption was so general. Much simplicity of manners continued to exist with the excesses of an almost unbridled luxury. Augustus, we are told, used to make his daughters and grand-daughters weave and spin, and his wife and sister made most of the clothes he wore. The skill of wives in domestic economy, and specially in spinning, was frequently noticed in their epitaphs. Intellectual culture was much diffused among them, and we meet with several noble specimens, in the sex, of large and accomplished minds united with all the gracefulness of intense womanhood, and all the fidelity of the truest love. Such were Cornelia, the brilliant and devoted wife of Pompey, Marcia the friend, and Helvia, the mother of Seneca. The Northern Italian cities had in a great degree escaped the contamination of the times, and Padua and Brescia were especially noted for the purity of their women."

And then follows a couple of pages devoted to examples of the nobility and virtue of Roman women and of Roman married life, with examples of legislation by Pagan emperors to control existing vices. Clearly, a man who can select the sentences I have quoted from Mr. Gun, and omit all mention of those I have been forced to supply, puts himself almost beyond the pale of decent controversy. In neither politics, science, nor literature would

such a man be tolerated. Christian evidences alone furnish him with a field for the exercise of his abilities, and he is not alone given full scope, but receives the blessing of an accredited representative of the Methodist Church.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

## A Sandy Foundation.

WHAT evidence have we that there is a heaven beyond the tomb, which genuine believers in Christ shall surely enter when they die? On what ground do Christians themselves hope to inherit a blessed immortality? It is well known that consistent Calvinists can never be absolutely sure what awaits them in the Great Beyond, because the secrets of God's sovereign election are hidden from all eyes. In the highlands of Scotland, for example, where true Calvinism still lingers, "the religion of the man of full assurance is much doubted," because such a man is looked upon as being culpably presumptuous, in that he makes a claim that transcends the limits of possible knowledge. But, in any case, what proof is there that there is a heaven or a hell in store for human beings after death? A distinguished divine, so far as heaven is concerned, answers thus:—

"The ground of assurance is the word of the Lord Jesus. His promise to his people is, 'Because I live, ye shall live also'; and he has told us that he has gone to prepare a place for us, 'that where he is, there we may be also.' Is not this enough?"

Such is the case for the validity of the Christian hope, or for the truth of the religion of the Cross; and every thoughtful person must confess that it is a peculiarly weak case. Everything is made to depend upon the word of a person concerning whom next to nothing is indisputably known. Jesus may, or may not, have ever lived; he may, or may not, have uttered the words attributed to him; he may, or may not, have cherished the hopes entertained by so many to-day in his name. On these points there are differences of opinion amongst scholars. Our contention is that, even on the assumption that the Gospels are more or less historical, we know far too little about Jesus to take his mere word for anything. It is easy to say that to "refuse to take Christ at his word is the worst dishonor we could do him"; but, on the other hand, taking him at his word, without sufficient warrant, is the worst dishonor we could do ourselves. Our divine piously adds:—

"We honor him by trusting him, and believing all that he has told us, after the manner of Abraham, who 'staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief,' but 'was strong in faith, giving glory to God.' This is the blessed secret."

The reference to Abraham, in this connection, is most unfortunate, because it is notorious that the promises which that patriarch is said to have received from God were never fulfilled. This was frankly admitted by Frederick Robertson, whose great sermon on the ministry of illusion in God's education of mankind was founded on Abraham's alleged experiences. Abraham is reported to have taken God at his word, and to have been woefully taken in thereby. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are told that all the patriarchs "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims" in the very land promised them as an everlasting possession.

Now, even on the assumption that Jesus lived and taught substantially as recorded in the Gospels, it is beyond all doubt that, by taking him at his word, we would do both him and ourselves the worst dishonor. *He is not worthy of our trust.* This will strike the divine already quoted as a very shocking statement, no doubt; but is it not a true statement, nevertheless? Let us honestly face it. It is undeniable that Jesus is represented as making promises to his disciples which were broken. Talking to them on the eve of his crucifixion, he said that his absence would

be a brief one, that in a little while he would return and see them again; but he never came. He also told them that if he were to be crucified he would attract the whole human race to himself; but that promise has been a dead letter ever since. He is reported to have taught that the end of the world was at the door. What exactly he meant by the "Kingdom of Heaven" is by no means clear; but it is incontrovertible that the term signified some change that would be equivalent to a "complete disruption of all the ordinary relations of life, of all that makes human existence distinctively human." It is quite possible that Jesus also shared the Pagan belief that the destruction of the earth by fire was imminent, and that he did not expect to have his kingdom fully established before that conflagration occurred. What is certain is that the Apostles anxiously awaited his return to convey his people to the place he had gone to make ready for them. They understood that he had made a distinct promise to that effect; but they were all gathered to their fathers without having heard "the trump of God," and without having been "caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

We now see what value attaches to the word of Jesus. He promised to draw all men unto himself by means of his death; but he has not done it to this day. He promised to return to his disciples after a short interval, and the angel confirmed the promise on his behalf immediately after the ascension; but it was never kept. Paul was troubled and perplexed by its non-fulfilment, and Peter offered an ingenious explanation by saying "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," while James calmly said, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord." The point is, however, that the non-fulfilment of those deliberately given promises brands Jesus as a person utterly unworthy of trust. Face to face with these broken promises, who can reasonably take him at his word? His utterances about God and Providence, about heaven and hell, and about the coming of the kingdom and man's destiny,—who can place any reliance on these when history has conclusively demonstrated the falseness of his utterances about himself and the world-transformation he claimed to be capable of accomplishing? "We have his word for it," Christian teachers say; "is not this enough?" No, it is not enough; it is infinitely less than enough. It is conceded that within ourselves there is no evidence of the truth of Christianity. The divines speak thus:—

"We keep looking into our souls for evidences of a work of grace; and because we have no blessed experiences, we despond. But the foundation of our hope is nothing in ourselves. It is the mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and we must stay our hearts on that, and not on our fluctuating emotions and intermittent experiences."

Thus everything is made to turn on the word of a man who is supposed to have lived two thousand years ago—a poor, ignorant peasant, who was at best but a dreamer, and who became the teacher of twelve fellow-peasants as ignorant of the great world as himself, but who is yet depicted as God's only begotten Son, whom his Father "appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds." In the first three Gospels he is brought before us as a carpenter's son, with a mythological aureole surrounding him, while in the Fourth he is pictured as God tabernacling in human flesh; and it is as God incarnate that he both speaks and works. What we witness in these documents is the gradual apotheosis of a poor man whom his family pronounced insane. Students of mythology are intimately familiar with the process, and know that in the case of Jesus it signifies neither more nor less than in multitudes of other instances known to them. What astonishes them is that there are men and women in the twentieth century, when science holds the field, who treat this emotionally manufactured being as if he were objectively real, and as if the words put into his mouth by his makers were liter-

ally true. This is so amazing as to be almost unbelievable. No wonder ordinary believers so often backslide! No wonder that taking Christ at his word is a thing even Christians never do except in empty words! No wonder it takes such countless myriads of professional apologists to prevent the faith from dying out! It is impossible for a structure erected on a foundation of sand to withstand the least storm that beats upon it.

As soon as one renounces such a faith the outstanding marvel is how one could ever have been so stupid as to cherish it. To one contemplating it from outside it seems indescribably ridiculous. Is there anything under the sun more preposterous and laughable than the presumption which enables people to discourse continually and with haughty assurance on subjects that lie outside the bounds of knowledge? The other day, Dr. Campbell Morgan delivered a sermon on "The Sabbath of the Son." He tells us that between the Creation and the Ascension, the Father had a glorious Sabbath all to himself. He rested from the stupendous task of bringing into existence the visible universe. Making worlds and beasts and man was terribly hard work, and he has been enjoying a quiet Sabbath ever since. During his life on earth the Son devoted himself to the work of Redemption, satisfying in full the claims of Divine justice dishonored by man, offering himself up as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and in consequence making it possible for all men to be saved. When he rose triumphant from the tomb, his work, too, was finished; and with the Ascension his Sabbath commenced; and he has been resting ever since, resting from his works, as the Father is doing from his. You see, there are two members of the Holy Trinity who do no work whatever at present. Whatever happens, they must not be disturbed. The only Divine worker just now is the Holy Ghost. Whether he has ever had a Sabbath or not, we are not informed. Ever since the departure of the Son, it has been his turn to engage in toil. His business is "to accomplish the number of the elect," but when he has completed the job his Sabbath will arrive, when he too will enter into his rest, as the Father and the Son have entered into theirs. Dr. Morgan tells us all this without a smile, as if he verily believed it and thought it was actual history. Of course, he does not pretend to have discovered it himself; he merely paraphrases, expands, and embellishes what he finds in Hebrews; but he imagines that the writer of Hebrews knew all about it. Did he? He was merely one of several ingenious people who were engaged in framing a new cult, which differed but slightly from others already in existence. They knew nothing; they only imagined. Christianity, like every other religion, is a carefully manufactured cult, a gradually developed and adapted superstition, erected on a foundation of ignorance and credulity. That is the reason why it is now tumbling about the ears of its guardians. As Jesus is supposed to have said, a house built on the sand is bound to fall.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Nine Books.

ON a recent morning, hundreds of ladies in summer costume, with a few stray men (myself one) scattered modestly amongst the graceful crowd, listened at University College, Gower-street, to a very sprightly lady lecturer, Miss D'Esterre, on the subject of "The Best in Books." She is an Irish-woman, and though she said nothing very original, her gay satire and literary gossip enchanted us, and made us love the very names of the books she twitteringly commended. Whether we, the audience, were in the habit of reading novels, I am not sure; I imagine we were. But Miss D'Esterre only besought us to read one, and that was three centuries old—*Don Quixote*. She told us women (she included men, she said, when she used the term

"women") that it would do us good to read nine books—the world's best. These were the nine: the Bible, the *Arabian Nights*, Homer's *Iliad*, Plato's *Republic*, Virgil's *Æneid*, Horace, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and Shakespeare's *Plays*.

Having just a tincture of Irish blood in my composition, I feel it my duty to agree with my distant countrywoman, though, if Miss D'Esterre happened to be looking the other way, I should knock Horace off the shelf and put Plutarch in his stead. I cheerfully accept the Bible. Since I left off believing in the historical accuracy of its "miracles," I have found it eminently good literature, not nobler than the dreams of *Æschylus* and *Sophocles*, indeed, or more picturesque than the *Shahnameh* of *Firdausi*, or the admirable epics of *India*; but still so sterling in moral and poetic value that I lament the Christian public read it little and understand it less. The very day I was at University College, I heard Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*, address the same audience and misquote the Bible, and not a soul near me whispered the correction. Referring to the closing passage in *Ecclesiastes*, he cited a supposed text—"Love God, and fear his commandments." My Agnostic ear burned, but I remained silent as to the proper reading—"Fear God and keep his commandments"—lest the *Spectator* should be put to confusion before the fair spectators. Of the rest of the nine books, I was interested to observe that they were either Pagan, or, as in the case of Dante, beyond the doctrinal border set by the ordinary Bible zealot. We live in revolutionary times. Our fathers would not have borne patiently the bracketing of the Bible with the *Thousand and One Nights*, and *Don Quixote*. We are very bold in our bracketings. Only a few weeks ago, I saw in the house of Alderman Healey, twice Mayor of Heywood, a colored window containing the portraits of *Shakespeare* and *Thomas Paine*.

Miss D'Esterre's list forces us to make comparisons. The Eighteenth Century Methodists probably believed that the Bible led the way in all literary excellences. Some of its elements I consider unsurpassed—a passage here and there in the Pauline epistles; Jesus blessing the children; Moses passionately begging that his name might be erased from the *Divine* book if so be Israel might be forgiven; certain lyrical pages in the *Prophets*; and such *Psalms* as:—

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

But for fascination of magical narrative the tale of *Aladdin* and the *Wonderful Lamp* will easily outclass any marvel in the Old or New Testament, and Homer's splendid knights who fight on the strip of shore between the walls of *Troy* and the blue *Ægean*, make *Goliath*, *David*, *Gideon*, and *Samson* appear exceedingly rustic. The Bible cannot be said to shine in wit, and Addison once remarked, in his reflections on the Gospel, that "the Sacred Person was never seen to laugh." So that, on this ground, the admirable *Don Quixote* of *Cervantes* runs far ahead of the *Scriptures*, and one dry jest of *Sancho Panza's* is worth more than many dull chapters in *Deuteronomy* (who reads *Deuteronomy*?) or *Ezekiel*. Nobody in the Bible world approaches anywhere near the elegant epigrams of *Horace*. The melancholy man who wrote *Ecclesiastes* is a little *Horatian* in his "Be not righteous over much," but he cannot smile in the manner of the author of the *Odes*; indeed, he cannot smile at all, but sighs about *Vanity* like a whistling October wind. For glittering court-scenes, love-scenes, ghost-scenes; for manly rage and enterprise, and, above all, for womanly captivation and heroism, our *Shakespeare's* plays render the two Testaments tame and grey.

The Bible and Dante occupy a more or less common field, but for sustained power of poetry the Italian beats all the Hebrews. Not a page of the Bible can produce so lovely a vision as that of the Valley of the Princes which is guarded by the

green angels at the hour of the Angelus, or the Great White Rose that blazes across the ceiling of the Tenth Heaven. Even in the department of horrors Dante wins; for while the Bible *Inferno* is tolerable, Dante's magnificent exaggerations compel us to repeat the Cornish farmer's whisper to his wife after hearing a hell-fire sermon—"Noa, Sarah; noa constitooshun could stan' it."

The contrast between the Biblical genius and that of classical Greece and Rome is singularly attested when we open the speculative volume of Plato, or peruse the proud epic of Virgil. On the civic side of life, the Bible cannot bear the palm. I allow that there is a certain crude glory in its dream of the New Jerusalem; and I not merely allow, but I eagerly affirm, that the Utopian panorama in the latter chapters of *Isaiah* ("Sing, O barren," etc.) is superb in celestial illumination and joyousness. But there is no political imagination in the Bible like Plato's *Republic*, and no such dignity of national spirit in the Hebrew chronicles as breathes in the grave measures of the chief of Latin poets. What educator ever tires of studying Plato's scheme for the training of boys and maids, by music and gymnastic, in his ideal commonwealth? The book of the *Republic* has the bloom of immortal youth, and the jaded elector in a modern democracy need never fail for refreshment if he cons the stately dialogues of Plato.

The distinguishing quality of Virgil's *Æneid* is, I think, its masterly composure amid a thousand moving episodes. Pious *Æneas*, founder of the Roman people, passed through tribulations many. He had seen his fleet shattered, and his unhappy comrades swimming for dear life. He battled his way to Italy, to the spot where Rome was to rise. The last page of the epic depicts him as standing victorious over the dead *Turnus*; and he who was "pious *Æneas*" is now "*Æneas acer*,"—the furious. Virgil chants no lamentations, and hangs no harp on the weeping willows. A manly and haughty note rings through every tragic episode. Jove, the sire of the gods, foretells the building of the city of *Romulus*, and the endless dominion of her sons. One of the noblest passages in the world's literature speaks, through the lips of old *Anchises* in the Underworld of *Shades*, of the future of the *Tiber* city:—

"Other people may, perchance, shape with more craft the brass figure that seems to breathe, or draw living faces from marble, or argue questions more cunningly, or trace with astronomic rod the heavenly paths and the rising of the stars; but to rule the nations with imperial power, to dictate terms of peace, to spare the vanquished, and to fling the stubborn to earth—these arts, O Roman, will be thine!"

Whereas the Hebrew dreamed of a Golden *Metro-*polis in heaven, Virgil actually lived in an All-conquering City, and translated its political grandeur into sonorous and lordly verse. These two artistic attitudes—the Utopian vision of the Jew, and the practical dignity in the poem of the Romans—are typical of a force that is declining, and a force that swells. The declining force is that of theology, which sought to construct a city above and is now abandoning the attempt because Humanity is already achieving a real architecture below. But I pay tribute to the genius of the Bible which dreamed. Let tribute, in truth, be paid to all the nine, or nine hundred and ninety-nine, songs and epics and majestic utterances of human literature. The old Church gave us these treasures with a miserly hand. The new will fling them in immeasurable golden showers.

F. J. GOULD.

The chief Catholic event in America will be held at Montreal, Canada, September 6-11, and it is reported that upwards of 200,000 will attend the first Eucharistic Congress ever held in America. Prominent dignitaries of the Church from all parts of the world are reported as coming to attend the Congress. This gathering of the conspirators against the intellectual advancement of the human race will, indeed, be an event in the history of America. Driven to bay in Spain, and other foreign countries, the Vatican now seeks an asylum in America.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

## Acid Drops.

The Kirkdale result seems to show that George Wise and his Protestant lambs played some part in the election, but not as much as they pretended. The Labor vote dropped from 3,921 (in 1910) to 3,427. The Conservative vote rose from 4,144 (in 1910) to 4,268. Thus the Conservative majority of 841 was not gained by a serious transfer of votes—the total increase was only 124; it was chiefly gained by the decrease of 494 in the Labor poll. This may have been caused by some abstentions, but probably more by removals, which is a disadvantage from which the Conservatives naturally suffer least. Altogether, it is possible that George Wise and his Protestant lambs were responsible for about a hundred votes. In other words, the Conservative candidate would have had a majority of 741 without them. So that bounce is one thing, and figures are another.

Scottish M.P.'s received at the House of Commons lately deputations from the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church, the Free Church, and the John Knox Club, who presented the case of the people of Scotland (so they said) against the Accession Declaration Bill. The deputations were introduced by the pious Lord Kinnaird. They protested their unbending hostility to the new Bill. But from chat in the lobby it appeared that they were really animated by professional jealousy. They want the King to be a Protestant (like theirselves, like theirselves), but they don't want him to be necessarily a member of the Church of England. What chance has any Scottish Church (or even the John Knox Club) in an arrangement like that?

English Nonconformist members of parliament are evidently Nonconformists first, and Liberals (or whatever they are) afterwards. They have a Chairman (Sir George White) and a Whip (Mr. Hay Morgan). They also have held a meeting to consider the Accession Oath, and have resolved to inform the Prime Minister that they will not vote for the second reading of the Declaration Bill unless all reference is omitted to his Majesty's membership of the Church of England. His Majesty must be anti-Catholic, to please them, but no pro-Anglican. Why not make him a Methodist at once?

The Wesleyan Conference was so divided over the question of the King's Coronation Oath that the contrary groups combined in favor of the "previous question." Even the great R. W. Perks admits that this was "not a very dignified or satisfactory position for a great religious assembly supposed to lead its followers."

Religious people will say anything—about religion. Here is W. Digby Thurnam, for instance, writing in the *Westminster Gazette* from a Churchman's point of view on the Accession Declaration Bill, who says that "There is no Act of Parliament establishing the Church of England. Nor could there be, seeing that the Church may be rather said to have established the State than the State the Church." The latter sentence is, in our opinion, downright nonsense or downright absurdity. Still, it is a matter of opinion. But the first sentence is a positive statement, and it is utterly false. The State began its establishment of the present Church of England in the reign of Henry VIII. By two Acts of Parliament, in 1535 and 1539, it took possession of all the monasteries and their vast estates and granted them to the King. In the first year of the reign of Edward VI. another Act of Parliament made it a crime to speak irreverently against the Protestant sacrament, taken in *both kinds*; a crime punishable with fine and imprisonment "at the King's will and pleasure." Then came the great Act setting up the Prayer Book, which was concocted by a Royal Commission with Cranmer at its head, as the standard of religious faith and practice in England. It was ordered to be used by every clergyman in the country, and tremendous penalties followed upon refusal. Every time the Prayer Book has been altered it has been done by the State. Of course the Prayer Book was kicked out under Mary, and by several of the very men who set it up under Edward, but it was set up again under Elizabeth, and has never been removed since. It is therefore a ridiculous falsehood to assert that there is no Act of Parliament establishing the Church of England.

The *British Weekly* is very seriously concerned over the King's Declaration. It wants the King's repudiation of specific Roman Catholic doctrines to be precise, and calls on "the friends of religious liberty" to see that this is done. That is, the friends of religious liberty are to see that the King has no religious liberty worth bothering about. One objection of the *B. W.* is amusing. It asks what would

happen if the King's religious opinions were the same as those of Lord Halifax, and replies: "The King would henceforth be a stranger to Presbyterian ministrations in Scotland.....The Chaplains of His Majesty in Scotland would be relieved of their labors." Well, as a friend of religious liberty, we could face the prospect of these chaplains being thrown out of employment without turning a hair. Real friends of religious liberty would see to it that the King had the same liberty to choose his religion as has a crossing sweeper, and they would guard against the encroachments of religion on the State by severing all connection between the two. And this is the only real safeguard. All other resources are merely a question of *which* religion is to rule the roost.

Sir Robert Perks also writes, in the same issue of the *British Weekly*, on this subject. He says the ground of the need for the King repudiating Roman Catholic doctrines lies in the fact that the Catholic Church regards the State as a machine for carrying out the demands of the Church. With this we agree; but what is the position of the other Christian Churches? Substitute "demands of Protestantism," or "demands of Christianity" for demands of the Church, and the statement is as true of Nonconformists as it is of Roman Catholics. Why, Protestant and Nonconformist preachers are continually telling their congregations that they must Christianise the State, and that the State is a channel by which Christianity may be put into practice. It is true they do not promise to use the power of the State as Roman Catholics would if they had the chance—as they do when they have the opportunity. But, given the opportunity, how long would they be before they invoked the power of the State to this end? They have used the powers of the State where they could, and they still use it where they can. Sabbatarianism is still helped by the State, financial aid is still given by the State, and the State still protects religion, to some extent, from attack. And on local bodies the use of State machinery for the furtherance of Christian interests is still more pronounced. Certainly Roman Catholicism is a menace to the welfare of a State, but so are all forms of Christianity to the exact extent of its opportunities.

Sabbatarian bigotry at Great Yarmouth has been soundly beaten, and the pious Chief Constable has been bitterly humiliated. His astonishing view of his own powers and importance has been held up to public derision. The Sunday prosecutions have been dropped, and Sunday freedom reigns once more at the famous Eastern watering-place. And in all this we trace the hand of our veteran friend, Mr. J. W. de Caux.

The Sabbatarians—Churches, Watch Committee, Chief Constable, and all—were defeated by a simple move. Mr. John Barron, one of the town caterers, applied for a summons against certain Corporation servants for violating the Sunday laws for the Corporation's profit, in connection with the Winter Gardens and the Wellington Pier. The Mayor, the Town Clerk, and the Chief Constable talked big and pooh-pooed the application, but they were struck with consternation when they found that Mr. Barron meant business and intended to force the bigots' hands. A special meeting of the Watch Committee was hurriedly convened in the afternoon of the same day and decided that "it was inadvisable to continue the prosecutions." The bigots were beaten, pursued, and annihilated in a wonderfully short time. Did we not say that there would be "some fun" at Yarmouth before this affair ended?

At the Health Congress at Birkenhead, Dr. Lauzen-Brown pointed out that as far back as the time of Abraham, Egypt represented "a sanitary hygienic Utopia." When Abraham entered Egypt, said the doctor,

"he found a land swarming with medical practitioners. He found in existence an extensive system of medical science, a system of State medicine, in which doctors paid by the State were held in high honor and dignity. He found a system of veterinary science in full swing, and a system of food inspection (with a food reserve) in operation. He found a system of social hygiene, in which the sacred waters of the Nile played an important part. He found a system of dealing with the dead by embalming which is still the world's admiration and wonder. Contrast with our own insufferable method of packing corpses in churchyards and beneath the floors of churches."

Dr. Lauzen-Brown might have offered a still more striking contrast. Had Abraham gone to the same Egypt while under Christian rule he would have looked in vain for this elaborate display of medical and hygienic science. He would have found dirt sanctified and cleanliness discouraged. The place of the doctor would have been filled by the priest, and his pharmacopœia would have consisted of dirty relics, prayer, and, above all, faith. Torture of the body would

have displaced the teaching of its cultivation. Instead of mentally affected people being treated on scientific lines, he would have found the exorcist in full control, seeking to expel the demons with which Jesus said they were possessed. And had Abraham been endowed with the longevity of the Wandering Jew, he would have had to wait many centuries for human intelligence to disinter the medical knowledge buried under mountain heaps of Christian ignorance and superstition. There are few directions in which Christian influence has been more disastrous than in that of crushing the medical, sanitary, and hygienic knowledge of the ancient world.

The Rev. Archibald G. Brown contributes a piously mournful letter to the *Daily Telegraph* discussion on "Our Empty Churches." The cause is, he says, there is "a national departure from God. All sense of sin seems to have departed, and there is no fear of God before men's eyes." He looks back fifty years, and says that in those delightful days "Men accepted the Bible as the Word of God, and an appeal to its pages was final. Now scepticism is in the air, and the masses.....have become possessed with the idea that clever people have proved it unreliable." Mr. Brown qualifies this last by saying that the masses know nothing "of the arguments for or against the inspiration of the Book." On the contrary, we believe that any one of the unbelieving masses could give Mr. Brown a very bad quarter of an hour on the subject of the inspiration of the Bible. But Mr. Brown evidently feels that his business is in a bad way.

For ability to see things that are not, to twist facts to serve their own purpose, and to misrepresent their opponents, it would be impossible to beat the men of God. Dr. James, of Enfield, speaking at Torquay recently, said that we "were just on the verge of an age of faith," that "the old Rationalism of the last century was dead and ought to be buried," and that "the most advanced thinkers were returning to the orthodox faith." We defy Dr. James to prove even one of those wild assertions. They are all unadulterated lies; but they are fashionable in the churches just now. Of course, it is permissible to lie in the service of the truth!

Mr. Winston Churchill's prison reforms are in the direction of sense and humanity, and will command the approval of all who understand the problems of penology. The treatment of "criminals," who are sometimes less constitutionally criminal than those who send them to prison and keep them there, has been positively malignant. Lord Gladstone goes, a younger and more pliable statesman follows him at the Home Office, and a considerable step is taken towards that rational humanisation of our penal system which has long been the dream of reformers, from the days of Beccaria and Voltaire to the days of the Howard Association and the Humanitarian League. The latter Society has done a vast deal towards the improvement of public opinion and sentiment. Its labor of twenty years is beginning to bear fruit. Of course the Pankhursts, as usual, attribute Mr. Winston Churchill's new Bill and new regulations to their agitation; but that is only "pretty Fanny's way." Penologists know the causes that have been operating during the best part of two hundred years to produce such reforms, and the names of the men and women who have been the real leaders in this benign movement. The real truth is that the Christian idea of "punishment," which has been the great hindrance to progress in penology, is dying out, and is gradually giving reason and humanity a chance. That is the whole case in a nutshell.

The Methodist Conference at Bradford had again before it the question of admitting women as delegates. After a lengthy discussion their admission was decided on by 179 votes to 153. Sentiment and, from a secular point of view, common sense, were on the side of the 179; but, from a Christian point of view, logic was all on the side of the 153. The women's champions said they wanted to be eligible because they were rational, intelligent, and worked well for the Church. All of which the 153 admitted cheerfully enough; but they met the 179 with the unanswerable reply that the resolution was un-Christian and contrary to Church history. The Rev. Dr. Workman, for instance, reminded the Conference that in the whole history of Christianity there had never been a woman in an ecclesiastical assembly. He also said that in Jesus Christ there was neither bond nor free, neither male nor female. The pertinency of this remark is not very obvious, but evidently Dr. Workman's opinion is that, "in Jesus Christ," man and woman are one—and man is the one.

Rev. Dinsdale T. Young took the meeting back to the New Testament. The teachings of Paul were against their admis-

sion. The women were to keep silence in the Churches. Moreover, the spirit of the Bible was against the proposal. In both directions Mr. Young was on unassailable ground. If there is one clear teaching in the Old and New Testaments it is that of the subordination of woman to man. It is enforced by both precept and practice. Woman is there, but it is as a necessary evil. But, being there, man is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the Church, and who is to obey her husband as Sara obeyed Abraham. To do both Dr. Workman and Mr. Young justice, neither of them desired to prevent women working for the Church. They could still raise subscriptions, subscribe to presentations, and do all the odds and ends of Church work. But the posts of honor—and profit—must be reserved for men. But as 179 members of the Conference were less Christian than the rest, the Methodist women will now have an opportunity in sharing in its future deliberations.

Rev. Dr. Ballard told the Wesleyan Conference at Bradford that there could be "no mistake about the theological unrest of the day." Blatchfordism had spent its force, but there were other disturbing influences. Poor dear Christians! How they hate being disturbed! They like to lay their fat heads on soft pillows and snore in the sleep of faith. Oh, the wickedness of the man who *disturbs* them! Let him be—well, see the last chapter of Mark.

There are some interesting items in *The Chronicle*, a quarterly report of the Borneo Mission Association, in connection with the S. P. G. The little island of Labuan has hitherto "been left to us and the Roman Catholic Mission; now we are threatened," the report continues, "with an invasion by the Basel Mission." *Threatened!* With an invasion! There may be too much Free Trade, it seems, even in the saving of souls. Not that the said saving of souls is an easy business. "During the sixteen years," the report says, "that Mr. Crossland worked among the Undups without a break, he was only able to convert seventy men, while not a single woman would listen to his teaching." Compliments to the female Undups! They appear to be more wideawake than some of the males.

Here is a sad story of depression in the missionary business:—

"A range of hills a little way above the mouth of the Sebetan river, on the left-hand side of the Krian river when you ascend it, is called Temudok. There a mission-house was built about twenty-five years ago, with a chapel on the first floor. The house is on one of the hills close to the river, and commands excellent views all round. This is the headquarters of the Krian Mission. When Mr. Gomes was there, not only the house but the garden and roads were well kept, the school flourished, many hungry Dyaks were fed, and there was a constant succession of Dyak visitors from up and down the river. The chapels up the river were in good order, the missionary in his dug-out was often seen floating on the Krian river visiting his people or making some new openings. Missionaries then were able to compare notes and benefit one another. The work was full of life, encouragement, and comfort, notwithstanding its hardships. The Krian Mission now has sunk very low, and even a solitary missionary is no longer seen floating in his dug-out. Those chapels up the river. Where are they now? What is the cause of this terrible lapse? It is men we want with hearts of love, to come out and raise the mission up again."

Perhaps it is love that is wanted. Perhaps it is money. We see that more is wanted. But that is always the case. The subscribers are mostly ladies; overwhelmingly so. Which is sad. For it shows less gumption amongst the females of England than amongst the females of Labuan.

Principal Forsyth has just succeeded in making a marvelous distinction between God's *will* and God's *intention*. The truth is, he graciously informs us, that, while the Divine will is, from eternity to eternity, absolutely unchangeable, the Divine intentions are "amenable to us." God's thoughts are unalterable, but his ways are "flexible." The amusing thing is that Dr. Forsyth has made this discovery in the attempt to defend the reasonableness of prayer. It must be exceedingly refreshing for Christians to feel that the Almighty is "amenable" to them, or, in plain words, is at their beck and call. How thankful the loving Heavenly Father must be that he possesses such a luminous interpreter as Dr. Forsyth.

History proves to the hilt that Christianity has never lived, and does not now live, except alone on the lips and in the writings of those who profess it. One of its most vital claims has ever been that it completely abolishes all distinctions of race and color. A few weeks ago, a huge Sunday-school Convention was held in the United States;

but in the theatrical demonstration made in connection with it colored children were cruelly denied a place. Christianity makes a tremendous noise in the world, but in every real sense it is as dead as Queen Anne.

Men of God marvel why the Churches are being deserted. The *Christian World* gives columns to a discussion of the subject. Scarcely any two of the writers are agreed as to the real explanation. The true explanation is very simple. The decay of the Churches is merely the natural and inevitable outcome of the discovery, on the part of the people, that Christianity is not true. And the priests are helpless.

Never trust a Christian—as a Christian; least of all as a Catholic. The editor of the *Catholic Herald*, whoever he may be, writes long letters now and then to the *Daily News*, and probably to other papers, in defence of the Catholic Church's reputation for tolerance. These letters are very likely written to advertise the *C. H.*, and in that case ought to be inserted at advertisement rates. The writer himself is impudent enough for anything. He denies that persecution is "any part of the principles of a good Catholic or of the Catholic Church." This is on a par with his defence of the murder of Francisco Ferrer. No doubt he trusts to the ignorance of English journalists as well as that of the general public. We invite him to name a single Catholic divine who has argued for freedom of thought or denied the Church's right to suppress heresy—and heretics. Newman himself, although he thought he could not bear to see a heretic tortured or put to death, logically upheld the Church's right to deal with the heretic as a criminal. We may add that this is involved in the Blasphemy Laws, under which Catholics and Protestants unite to deal with Freethinkers as criminals.

Rev. J. E. Rattenbury held forth at St. George's Hall, Bradford, on July 17, for the salvation of souls. We judge from the report in the *Yorkshire Observer* that Mr. Rattenbury needed salvation at least as much as anybody in his audience. He actually trotted out that false and foolish old "watch" story again. "Years ago," he declared, "when Charles Bradlaugh was at the height of his influence, he made a blasphemous and terrible challenge to Almighty God. He asked Him to strike him dead in twenty minutes if He were God." A man in the meeting cried out "That's a lie." We don't know who the man was, but he was a very accurate speaker. Mr. Rattenbury dished up the old story in a new form on the authority of "a very notable man, who knew Bradlaugh well." No name, of course! Bradlaugh took out his watch at ten to twelve (query, midnight?) and said "If there is a God let him strike me dead by twelve o'clock." The man called out again, "That's another lie." Mr. Rattenbury took no notice. There are times when discretion is the better part of valor.

Mr. F. E. Smith is one of the most dangerous men in England. He is a clever lawyer, who has taken his side, for the reasons which generally animate lawyers, and he will say anything that serves the turn. Taking part in a Tory torchlight procession at Kirkdale, he spouted some mischievous fastain at one of the halts. "No matter," he declared, "what the rest of the country shall say, we in Liverpool shall fight under the Protestant watchwords, 'No surrender, no compromise.' *Fight!* Mr. Smith might explain that he meant peaceful and orderly fighting inside the polling booths, but the Orange mob was likely to understand the word differently. Presently, however, Mr. Smith let the cat out of the bag. The bag was labelled Protestantism, but the cat was labelled Tariff Reform. Listen to the honorable gentleman:—

"Joseph Chamberlain has stood all his life for Protestantism, and we will send him a telegram that Kirkdale and Liverpool stand firm for his cause—for the twin causes of Protestantism and Tariff Reform."

Mr. Smith called for three cheers for "Joseph Chamberlain" and another three cheers for the great and good "George Wise." Then he kissed his hand to the ladies at the windows. And then he laughed in his sleeve.

We have received No. IV. of a monthly periodical called *Showers of Blessing*. It appears to emanate from a Bournemouth mission-hall. It is published "free"—for who would pay for it?—and is devoted to, "Pentecostal work." There are lots of "Hallelujahs" in it, and stories of faith-healing, and casting out devils, and talking with "tongues"—or gibberish. Pastor W. Hutchinson, who runs this antediluvian publication, evidently picks up enough to keep him going. "We have received," he says, "watches, rings, chains, and various articles, which we have sold to carry on the Lord's

work." Hallelujah! We presume the Lord's work includes the comfortable maintenance of Pastor Hutchinson.

One item in this antediluvian publication is a "testimony" by some person without a name or an address. The testifier "went up to see Brother Hutchinson" and told him there was something wrong inside. "He commanded the demon off from me," the unknown says, "and I got immediate relief." Brother Hutchinson is clearly too valuable a person to be wasted on a Bournemouth suburb. He ought to come to London and cast out devils there. Plenty of them are ready for the operation, especially on Saturday nights—outside public-houses.

Rev. A. H. Bestall, a Methodist missionary from Burmah, says that whatever Buddhism has done it has not saved a solitary soul in Burmah. Readers of Mr. Fielding Hall's works will be in a position to take this gentleman's statement for what it is worth. Those who have read Mr. Hall's *Soul of a People* know that the effect of Buddhism on the Burmese character is such as Christianity has not been able to produce in any part of the world or in any portion of its history.

How they love one another! The vicar of St. Andrew's Church, West Bromwich, who is accused of "Popish practices," had a street procession the other day, headed by a crucifix. The local Protestant League started an opposition show, and carried a banner, "No Popery in England's Church." The rivals got too close together in King-street, and there was a scrimmage. "We'll have it down," cried a woman, and made a rush for the "No Popery" banner, which was pulled down and hoisted up, again and again. The policeman standing by did not interfere. Perhaps he thought it was a harmless public amusement.

Orangemen and Catholics had another exchange of Christian courtesies on Sunday last at St. Helens, Liverpool. Thirty of them, whose Christian charity waxed too warm, fell into the hands of the police, and were suitably dealt with afterwards by the magistrates. The program included a free fight outside a church, the showering of stones and bottles at tramcars, and most of the other incidents so familiar to the pious zealots of that "meek and lowly" neighborhood. Christians there are full of the peace of God, and they prove the truth of the classic saying that the peace of God passes all understanding.

Father Vaughan was one of the clericals who screamed at (and in) the Public Morals Congress. "Meet the devil," he exclaimed, "and fight him." We guess Father Vaughan would sooner fight the devil without meeting him. "Tell him," cried the hysterical priest, "to go to hell." Oh! Also ah! Suppose the devil were to return Father Vaughan's compliment. Wouldn't he look blue!

Two little girls, six years old both, dined together at the table of the parents of one of them. The guest girl asked the lady of the house, "Please may I leave the table and thank God for a good dinner?" "Thank who?" said the lady's daughter, and on the formula being repeated, she laughingly asked "Who's God?" "Oh, don't you know? he lives up in the sky," replied her friend. "But why," she rejoined, "thank *him* for the dinner? He didn't make the dinner. Mamma made it." The parents had to leave the room with serviettes in their mouths. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" cuts more ways than one.

One of the ladies at the Caxton Hall Public Morals Conference signed the visitors' book as "Delegate from Heaven." We shall be safe in assuming that none of the clergymen present were eager to volunteer for the job of seeing the lady home.

"Providence" has been letting the weather go to pieces, and sooner or later we shall have to go in for Home Rule in the meteorology of this planet. America has been suffering from a prolonged heat wave, causing the death of hundreds of people. Europe, on the other hand, has been plagued with cold, wind, rain, and floods. One cyclone in North Lombardy, which lasted only a quarter of an hour, killed sixty-four people and injured several hundreds. The material damage was tremendous. Germany has had hurricanes. France has had fresh floods, and England has had—well England has had the July we all know too well. As the yokel told the Rev. Dr. Jessop, "that there Providence had better mind what he's about."



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 4, 11, 18, 25, St. James's Hall, London.  
October 2, Glasgow; 9, Manchester; 16, St. James's Hall;  
23, Leicester; 30, Birmingham.

### To Correspondents.

**PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.**—Previously acknowledged, £233 9s. 1d. Received since:—J. G., 2s.; L. Himmel, 5s.; D. D. B., £5 5s.; J. H. O. (S. Africa), £1; J. Garner, 1s.; A. H. Deacon, 2s.

**BRUSSELS DELEGATION FUND.**—V. Whitty, 2s. 6d. *Per Miss Vance*:—W. Dodd, 10s.; H. C., 10s.; G. D., 2s. 6d. "Saints" are requested to support this fund promptly.

J. WAINWRIGHT.—Attended to. Thanks for good wishes.

P. A. G.—Glad to have your "tribute of praise to the grand little *Freethinker*"—though it isn't so very little considering that the contents are all original, in the sense of being specially written for the paper.

T. M. MOSLEY.—Mr. Cohen dealt with the general question in an excellent series of articles some six months ago. We will not forget, but we are "going slow" just at present.

J. TRACKRAY writes: "In a drive from Paddington to King's Cross, I noticed that two little Bethels have within the last two months been turned into Living Picture Theatres; one opposite the Midland Railway, the other a very old-established business (40 years to my knowledge) called Praed-street Chapel." Our correspondent thinks this is a sure sign that Freethought is neither dead nor dying.

A. E. W.—See paragraph. Thanks.

J. BURRELL.—It was well-intentioned but a waste of time. You could hardly expect such a man as ex-President Roosevelt to answer your letter begging him to correct his foolish as well as malicious description of Thomas Paine as a "dirty little Atheist." Roosevelt evidently thinks himself a very great man, but unless he gets into some great mischief (which is very possible) he will be forgotten five years after his death, while Thomas Paine's memory brightens with the march of time.

V. WHITTY.—There is an excellent half-crown book on Buddhism by Professor T. Rhys Davids, a competent scholar, and by no means an orthodox Christian. Curiously enough, it is published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

L. HIMMEL.—Your letter got mislaid during our illness, and has only just turned up. Accept regret and apology.

S. MILLER.—We cannot say whether "Tom" Robertson, the dramatist, was a Freethinker.

HELENA GUNNING.—(1) You can obtain back numbers of the *Freethinker* from our publishing office for some years back. A few are out of print. (2) Do you mean the *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*? That is procurable at our office, price 3s. 6d. (3) Glad you so enjoyed reading our speech at the Conference evening meeting. We listened to the others and thought them all good. (4) There ought to be a strong rally at St. James's Hall in September.

J. H. O.—Your letter shall be attended to. We are glad to hear there are a good many Freethinkers in South Africa. We are assured that Freethought is spreading amongst the Boers. The younger ones learn English to get access to a great literature, and leave the old Dutch Bible behind them. With regard to your questions: (1) Copies of this journal are sent as you suggest. (2) Freethinker is an historic word. The French equivalent, *Libre-Penseur*, is universal on the Continent of Europe. People must think, to live at all; but how many think freely? (3) We could hardly leave out the "Acid Drops." Many readers like that department of the paper best of all.

D. D. B., sending cheque to the President's Honorarium Fund, does not wish his identity disclosed. "Of course," he says, "the day will come when it will be deemed an honor to have assisted men like yourself, and to be allied with you in any way, but for the present we have to help you and sink into the background, so to speak, whilst you have to carry the burden of battle."

J. PARTRIDGE, secretary of the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch, writes: "We are delighted with your very excellent article on Mr. Walsh, and think it would make a splendid leaflet. We would take a few thousands."

G. R. BALLARD.—What is written with head and heart must touch heads and hearts, so your letter gives us no surprise. Your question shall be answered later on.

A. ROSE.—We started a penny *Pioneer* a few years ago, but the more neutral title didn't help it; it had to be dropped. The fact is, whatever your title, you soon get found out. Besides, a positive title, like the *Freethinker*, attracts a definite public for certain. We are not likely to change our flag.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for useful cuttings.

J. GREEN.—Thomas Paine was a Deist. You need not say "the late." There is only one Thomas Paine.

J. McCLELLAN.—We are continually saying that Tuesday is too late for paragraphs.

W. DAVIDSON.—What you call "the materialist conception of history" is no part of present-day Socialism, if we may judge from its leading expounders. A great many Socialists would endorse Mr. Cohen's articles. And are you not too sensitive?

Thanks, anyhow, for your good wishes in our "good fight" for Freethought,—which, by the way, it was Mr. Cohen's express object to justify.

A. H. TARRUM.—"Many inaccurate statements" is a vague charge, impossible to refute. We have looked at your book for ourselves, in the light of your letter, and we see that "Mimmermus" did not misrepresent you in any way. He confused Professor Macalister with Principal MacAlister, but gave the quotation accurately. A trivial slip for your pompous parade of correction.

F. J. VOISEY.—Sorry to hear of the sad news.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—Thanks, though we always see the *Hibbert*. The article on Athanasius merits your description, but Athanasius is not a live issue at this time of day. It is getting to be *Athanasius contra mundum* with a vengeance.

WHEN the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

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.

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

St. James's Hall has been engaged by the Board of the Secular Society, Ltd., for another series of Sunday evening Freethought lectures during September and October. Mr. Foote is preparing a special course of lectures for the four Sundays in September. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd lecture twice each in October. There are five Sundays in that month, and Mr. Foote takes the middle one. London "saints" will please note.

The attention of "saints" is called to the special notice *re* visitors to the International Freethought Congress at Brussels from the pen of Miss Vance, the N. S. S. general secretary, which will be found on another page of this week's *Freethinker*.

The *Freethinker* has devoted readers. Few journals raise such personal attachment. Here is an extract from the letter of a correspondent who has been an invalid nearly three years:—

"Since I first took in the *Freethinker* things have always been the same mentally—bright and promising. My wife and I are glad to find you well again, and sincerely wish you a long continuance of good health, and thus be the means of cheering up many physically afflicted ones, as you have cheered up me."

Another correspondent, thanking us for posting on his paper a week or two before he could renew his subscription, says:—

"I should be very sorry to miss the paper now, as it has such an invigorating influence on me, and to miss it now would mean something like intellectual imprisonment."

We get a number of such letters; and they assure us that, if we don't make a fortune, we do something better.

A Rhondda Branch of the N. S. S. has been started. It meets every Sunday at 3 p.m. at Parry's (late Dann's) Temperance Bar, Dunraven-street, Tonypandy. Local "saints" will please note.

The Newcastle Branch holds its annual picnic to-day (July 31). Train leaves Central at 2.30. Tickets (including train-fare and tea), 2s. 3d., of H. B. Dodds, Lily Cottage, Walkerville.

Mr. Mangasarian, of Chicago, writing to us from Long Island, where he is trying to nurse his sick wife back to health, says:—

"I notice in the *Freethinker* the letter of a Christian Scientist, who desires to know my authority for saying that Mrs. Eddy signed quotations from Jesus Christ with a mere J. C., etc. If he will consult W. D. McCracken's answer to Mark Twain's statement containing the same charge, he will be a little wiser than he now seems to be on this matter. I am, of course, in the woods now, and far from my books or a library, but Mark Twain's book on Christian Science, as also the answer to it of W. D. McCracken, a well-known defender of Christian Science, could be readily consulted."

We do not intend to let Mr. Mangasarian be troubled further in this matter.

### "Literature in a Strait Waistcoat."

It is related of a distinguished military officer that, after dining "not wisely but too well," he rose and proposed the loyal toast of "The Quing." The gallant soldier was confused; but the audience applauded to the echo, and drank the loyal toast with becoming solemnity. In like manner it does not signify what absurdity or what paradox is uttered in the name of religion but it is sure of a vociferous welcome.

This unreasoning devotion, this unswerving fidelity on the part of their followers, leads inevitably to the clergy taking themselves very seriously, and causes them to poke their sacred noses into matters of which they have but a slight acquaintance. Not contented with guiding their flocks in matters of faith, they wish to exploit the general public in every other department of life.

It was therefore to be expected that the most low varlets of the Most High God would be present at the Conference on Public Morals held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, and representatives of the State and fancy religions both brayed their advice to the public and constituted themselves the guardians of our firesides. To see the men and women of a free country surrendering themselves with unbounded trust to the clerical direction is very touching. Humility is a rare and fragrant virtue, and what can be more humble than to surrender your morals and your intellect to the judgment of saintly ecclesiastics and evangelical Nonconformists? At this particular Conference the clergy concerned themselves with the morals of books and the influence of the theatre, and Canon Rawnsley, the Rev. Dr. Horton, and the Rev. Hugh Chapman aired their pious and paltry opinions on these topics. Canon Rawnsley pointed out that the Post Office officials had no power to open packages and letters in transit, and seemed to feel aggrieved that the British Government officials did not imitate the example of Russian and Turkish police. The Rev. Dr. Horton spoke of a bookseller who refused to sell him a copy of Walt Whitman's poems for fear of corrupting his morals, and the Rev. Hugh Chapman (whoever he may be) sighed for the time when music-halls and theatres should be controlled by men full of the spirit of Christianity, thus deposing all Jewish impresarios in a breath. It is perfectly clear from the discussion that the clergy were obsessed with the idea of sex matters, and when they spoke of immoral literature they meant indecent writing. Mr. John Murray, the well-known publisher, went further afield, and included books on religion, on social questions, on politics, on philosophy, and specially instanced the writings of Henry George, Karl Marx, and Nietzsche as being noxious literature. As a tradesman, he discreetly omitted all reference to "Don Juan." This shows the value of definitions and the need of a level head in such discussion. As Mr. J. St. Leo Strachey, the editor of the *Spectator*, pointed out, there is a real danger in such a course of action of placing literature in a strait waistcoat, as an official censorship must result in administrative literature.

Freethinkers have ever been the staunchest champions of freedom of speech, and whatever liberties the nation at present enjoys is largely owing to their efforts. For this reason alone all such suggested meddlesome interference with the legitimate liberties of citizens should be strenuously opposed. Clerics must never be allowed to ride roughshod over our liberties, won at the cost of the suffering of our best and bravest.

The irony of the situation lies in the fact that the clergy have laid themselves open to the very charge which they are so eager to fasten upon others. The clergy are far worse offenders than mere novelists. They thrust the Bible into the hands of every child, and the most utterly shameless of the books denounced by the clergy is a comparatively innocent work when placed by the side of "God's Word." The Bible is full of passages totally unfit to be read

about to an adult mixed congregation. To force such a work into the hands of helpless little ones is a crime. Detailed accounts of murder, incest, adultery, rape, sodomy, onanism, and unnatural vice disfigure its pages with remarkable frequency. Polygamy, slavery, wholesale violation, and indiscriminate massacre are not only mentioned, but have the Divine sanction. These horrors are written in plain, unvarnished language, which the least-educated juvenile can understand. Is it possible to conceive of anything more disgusting or more hypocritical? The majority of novel readers are, at least, grown up, and persons of full age are not so easily contaminated by cheap fiction as the clergy imagine. But the impressions of early childhood are indelible.

The Ethiopian cannot change his skin or the leopard its spots, and we do not anticipate that the clergy will cease their endeavors to dictate to their fellow men and women. Neither history nor experience seems of any avail to stem the tide of their pretensions. Fortunately, the clerical panaceas carry their own condemnation upon the surface, visible even to those who run. And Freethinkers will see to it that this clerical menace to our liberties is frustrated. We shall never allow the most precious possessions of civic life to be handed over to the control of clerical chartered libertines or commercial jacks-in-office, lacking alike in sane judgment and width of intellectual outlook. The first stage in our devolution will have been reached at that moment when we permit priests to direct what books shall, or shall not, be read. The final stage would mean that England would sink to the level of Spain or Russia, where liberty is a dream and Freethinkers are shot like rabbits.

MIMNERMUS.

### Elijah the Tishbite.—II.

(Concluded from p. 475.)

AT length the Lord said to Elijah: "Go, show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth" (1 Kings xviii. 1). Accordingly, Elijah arranged a meeting with the king, and they met. Royal meetings were decided upon in those days in a very different manner to what they are now. But it must not be forgotten that the potentates who are styled kings of Israel and Judah were nothing more than tribal chieftains—petty rulers whose authority was recognised only by their own adherents. The meeting was a memorable one. The two actors in it scowled at each other in the manner approved of by stage heroes, but they carefully avoided coming to blows. Said Ahab to Elijah: "Art thou he who troubleth Israel?" Of course he meant to say that he was—but he did not. Said Elijah to Ahab: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and hast followed Baalim" (v. 18). Then a very pretty contest was arranged to take place between Elijah and the priests of Baal. All Israel was to assemble at Mount Carmel, and two bullocks were to be provided for sacrifices. The priests of Baal were to have one, and Elijah was to have the other; and the god who should consume by fire from heaven the bullock sacrificed to him was to be considered the God of Gods. Well, the day for the contest arrived, and "all Israel," we are told, assembled to witness it. According to some writers, "all Israel" meant three or four millions of people; but how this should be, after three years of famine and pestilence, only the eye of faith can discern.

The priests of Baal had the first innings, and they appealed to their god in their most approved fashion, but without success. Perhaps, as Elijah mockingly said, "Baal was talking, or pursuing, or in a journey, or was asleep" (v. 27). What would be said of the Freethinker who might jeer in similar terms at the

Christian God? Then Elijah had his turn; and he won in a canter, for we are told that, at his request, "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (v. 38). Here again is an opportunity for the exercise of pure faith.

But Elijah was not satisfied with so peaceful a victory. He was a tiger by nature, and thirsted for the blood of his opponents. And so he cried out, "Let not one of them escape!" And, causing them to be taken to the brook Kishon, he there slew them (v. 40).

Dr. Milligan admits that, according to the text, Elijah "slew them with his own hand." The doctor is horrified at the act, but palliates it by saying that "the dreadful deeds of the Old Testament prophets" are not to be judged by "modern standards." Modern standards indeed! How long is it since the massacre of St. Bartholomew took place? Did not Queen Mary roast Protestants because they would not become Roman Catholics? And did not her saintly sister, Queen Elizabeth, boil Roman Catholics because they would not become Protestants?

It is little more than three centuries ago—which is but as yesterday compared with the distant past in which Elijah lived—that men and women were burnt to death at Norwich for daring to think for themselves. Lollard's Pit, in which these sacerdotal murders took place, was situated about midway between Pull's Ferry and Bishop Bridge. It was on the outside bank of the river, beneath a hill on the top of which were to be seen, when I was a boy—and may be now, for aught I know to the contrary—the ruins of what were known as Kett's Castle. Kett was a notorious rebel—otherwise Freethinker—against the priestcraft of his day. I have stood on the spot—it is a limekiln now—and pictured to myself the tragic scenes that have been enacted there in the not long ago. And since that horrid time, both Roman Catholics and Protestants—all of whom professed to be the only real Christians—have hounded to death men whose scientific knowledge taught them that the Bible stories of the creation of the world, of Adam and Eve, of the Deluge, of the sun and moon standing still, of the shadow of the dial going back ten degrees, and other such stories, are stories, and nothing more.

Bishop Hall struck the true Christian note when he said: "Let no man complain that Elijah's holy hands were bloody; this sacrifice"—the murder of these four hundred and fifty priests of Baal—"was no less pleasing to God than the other"—the sacrifice of the bullocks. And Bishop Wilson exonerates Elijah from all blame in the matter. "If," said he, "God give the wish, and if it be His Will that the sacrifice should be made, is it the prophet's fault? Is he to blame for it?"

This massacre of the prophets of Baal aroused the indignation of Jezebel, the queen, and she forthwith sent this message to Elijah: "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time" (xix. 2). Was she not chivalric in giving Elijah notice of what she intended to do? How different her conduct in this respect to that of Elijah, who, having entrapped the priests of Baal, killed them as one does a rat in a trap. Thereupon Elijah fled into the wilderness for safety. "He went for his life" (v. 9), we are told; so that, after all, this ferocious man was a coward at heart. His faith in the Lord was not strong enough to make him face the irate queen. According to Christian writers, Jezebel was the incarnation of one of the Furies. But what conduct on her part could have been more natural? Had she not a just right to avenge the murder of her friends? To my mind she was simply the prototype of the celebrated Countess of March, who, during the troublous times of David Bruce, in the absence of her lord, defended the Castle of Dunbar against the English soldiers who besieged it. She was popularly known as "Black Agnes," her complexion being very dark. Throughout Scotland songs

were sung in her praise. One verse descriptive of her is as follows:—

"She kept a stir in tower and trench,  
That brawling, boisterous Scottish wench;  
Came I early, came I late,  
I found Agnes at the gate."

If, as is written, Jezebel compassed the death of Naboth the Jezreelite, in order to obtain his vineyard for her husband Ahab, then she was guilty of a brutal act; and yet, were it so, she was a sister of mercy in comparison with such a monster of cruelty as Elijah. Throughout his life Elijah was continually shrieking for fire and blood—for fire from heaven to consume his enemies. A legend, related of him by Epiphanius, asserts that angels attended at his birth, and that they swaddled him in fire and suckled him in flames. Even Dean Stanley speaks of his "savage humor"—a savage humor which he displayed to the end of his career.

Having threatened King Ahaziah with death, Elijah sat himself down on the top of a hill to see what the Lord would do. Presently there came to the foot of the hill a troop of fifty soldiers, the captain of whom said to Elijah: "Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down!" To which Elijah replied: "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty men." And we read that fire did come down and destroyed them all. A like fate happened to a second troop and its captain (2 Kings i. 9-12). A third troop came to him, but its captain pleaded for life; and, as the angel of the Lord said "Go down with him; be not afraid" (v. 15), Elijah went. To believe all this we must exercise the most implicit faith. Dr. Milligan believed it, but he is "shocked at the destruction of so many men who only obeyed the command of their captain and their king."

I have said that Elijah rushes into view as a comet does; I will here add that he disappears as mysteriously. We are told by Elisha, his servant and sole legatee, who was with him at the time, that suddenly "there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them asunder; and that Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings ii. 11). Dr. Milligan endeavors to explain away this "stumbling-block to faith" by saying that the chariot and horses were merely "symbols and appearances," and that the event as described is only "figurative." Was the transfiguration of Christ, at which Elijah made a reappearance, only "figurative" then? (Matt. xvii. 3; Mark ix. 4; Luke ix. 80). On this point Dr. Milligan is silent—discreetly silent.

Now, what lesson does this history teach? It teaches, strange to say, that we are to be guided in all matters, not by faith, but by reason and common sense. Does it not? Well, let us consider the point.

Elijah, when addressing the people, asked them this question: "Why halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings xviii. 21). But the people remained silent; they were not prepared to give him an answer—not prepared to believe him until he had demonstrated that his god was the better one. Forthwith he undertook to do so, by proposing the sacrificial contest between himself and the priests of Baal. The test was that the god who answered by fire—that is, who should send down fire from heaven which should, before their eyes, consume the bullock offered to him as a sacrifice—should be worshiped as the true god. Elijah was triumphant. In the sight of the people Elijah made request to his god, and instantly fire descended from heaven and consumed not only the bullock, but also the altar itself—the fire was so potent, so fierce, that it consumed the very stones of which the altar was built (v. 38). No room was left for doubt—Elijah had appealed to their senses, and, as seeing is believing, they were convinced that Elijah had spoken the truth. Elijah, therefore, trusted not in faith, but in fact—not in mere words, but in actual deeds.

I propose to treat you as Elijah is said to have treated the Israelites of old—to appeal not to any

superstitious notions that you may have, but to your reason and common sense; and having done so, I shall ask, "Why halt ye between two opinions?" I say as Elijah is "said to have treated the Israelites of old," because, for the nonce, I have assumed that this history is a true history. But is it? Let us bring it—as Elijah is said to have brought his sacrificial contest—to the test of reason and common sense. If it be true, there surely can be no difficulty in proving it to be so.

Well, where is the evidence of its truthfulness? That lightning is a most destructive power is a matter of common knowledge; but when was it ever known to dart from the empyrean blue at the request of a man, and to do what it is said to have done at the request of Elijah. To believe that such an extraordinary event happened, we must have extraordinary evidence—evidence that cannot be gainsaid, evidence that carries conviction with it. Where is such evidence? Beyond the statement in the Bible there is none; and that statement is no evidence at all. For aught we know to the contrary, Elijah is a myth—the story of his life a fairy tale. Who the writers of the Bible were is unknown; but that they were ignorant and barbaric is well known.

The question then resolves itself into this: Are the Bible stories respecting miraculous events sober statements of undoubted facts, or are they mere mythical tales? Is the story of the Creation true? Was the first man created out of the dust of the earth, and the first woman from a rib that was taken from the man's side? Is it true that at the command of Joshua the sun and moon stood still? Did the shadow on the sun-dial ever go back ten degrees? Did ever man walk unharmed in a fiery furnace? These are some of the Bible stories. Who believes them? "Why halt ye between two opinions?"

J. W. DE CAUX.

### Lincoln's Religion.

BY DR. J. B. WILSON.

(From the *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*.)

THERE are few things considered of greater importance in a great man's life than his religion.

If a man is religious, if he believes, if he be a Christian, and therefore eligible to salvation and eternal happiness, he is regarded as a good man, though he be corrupt at heart and rotten to the core.

If he disbelieves, if he opposes the Christian sway over the human mind, he is sure to be regarded as a bad man, though he be honest and moral, and one of the world's greatest reformers.

Somebody ought to tell the truth, and keep telling it, about Lincoln's religion.

Encyclopedias and histories artfully suppress the facts of this particular phase of his character. Children are being stuffed at school and at Sunday-school with instances of his amazing piety, and of his profuse and excessive reverence for the blood-thirsty Jewish Jehovah.

Newspapers are continually printing long articles about him, detailing his Christian virtues and his simple childlike faith.

Preachers everywhere are rubbing holy ointment into his gaunt and bony frame, in a desperate endeavor to round him out into "a little fat oily man of God." They hold memorial meetings in their churches, and in their sermons deify the Christian character of this man who wrote a book for the purpose of proving the falsity of the Christian claims and of demonstrating that the Bible is not the Word of God.

But piety never stops even at the preposterous. Thus the mind of the child and that of the non-reading public, and of the foreigner who comes to our shores, are all misdirected on this matter of Lincoln's faith.

Why do the clergy thus try to tin-can themselves to Lincoln's coat-tails, knowing, as they must, that he never joined church, and that he seldom went to church, and that he openly said, time and again, that he could not subscribe to the principal Christian dogmas, and that he had no use for theologians and theology? Why are they now claiming this unbeliever and heretic?

I will tell you why. Lincoln is the greatest historical character in this country, and they can't afford to lose him.

They can't afford to let the world know that this Colossus among men was a Freethinker and Deist. Keenly they observe that the people of this country have adopted Lincoln as the model American; and, that Rationalism may not prosper, and that Christianity may not suffer, it is up to them to make a Christian out of this infidel; and this they are trying to do with all the chicanery characteristic of the Christian conscience.

So, I say, since they are continually falsifying about Lincoln's religion, someone ought to be continually telling the truth about it.

For one hundred years the clergy did their best in their attempt to defame the memory of Thomas Paine. It has taken fifty years of persistent hard work on the part of Liberals to rescue his reputation from their lying lips. It will also require many years of good hard work to lift the free and independent soul of Lincoln out of the muck and mire of superstition into which he has been plunged.

Just as they falsely attempted to blast the character of Paine and disown him, now as falsely they are attempting to make a Christian of Lincoln and claim him. Why should they damn the one and claim the other? Simply because Lincoln, through the opportunity of office, became a great popular idol, which, they perceived, could not be overthrown by the cry of "heretic." Well they knew the deadening effect to have this great popular idol and hero pointed to as a disbeliever and repudiator of the chief tenants of the Christian system, so they had to claim him. Would they have done so had he remained in private life and been less a hero?

What are the facts in this case? They lay much stress upon the fact that Lincoln was a great Bible reader. Certainly. That was about all he had to read in his youth, and to church was his only place to go. All statesmen of those days, for the same reason, were posted on the Bible. When they had anything else to read, they dropped it. Statesmen of to-day know little of the Bible, and care less. They have other things to read and think about. Because Lincoln studied the Bible is no sign of his believing it, but rather the opposite; for no thinking, unprejudiced person can read the Bible and believe it.

In 1834, Paine's *Age of Reason* and Volney's *Ruins* fell into his hands and made a great impression upon him. Being well posted on the Bible, he conceived the idea of writing his own individual views, which he did, and of which he was very proud.

William L. Herndon, his law partner, said: "The purpose of Lincoln's Book on the Bible was to demonstrate first, that the Bible was not God's revelation, and second, that Jesus was not the son of God."

Herndon, a Freethinker himself, remonstrated against its publication, and pointed out to Lincoln that it would not only hurt his standing as a lawyer, but would kill his political future, which was bright at that time. His friend, Samuel Hill, likewise remonstrated with him, but to no use. Seeing that Lincoln was obstinate about it, Hill, one day when Lincoln was out, fired the manuscript in the stove. For a long time Lincoln was greatly hurt over this outrage. What a pity that Hill or Herndon did not take this manuscript and hide it instead of burning it. Suppose it had been withheld until now, when Lincoln has become the idol of the world? Who can estimate the influence it would have in crushing superstition and idolatry and intellectual cowardice out of the hearts and minds of men? No doubt he put his best and brightest thought in this book, which, it is said, went further than Paine and Volney, and was Atheistical in its tendencies.

Suppose it were here to face the clergy to-day, would they dare to misrepresent and claim him as they do?

All histories of Lincoln say that he frequently attended church in Springfield with his wife, also at Washington. Politicians still do the same. Because a non-church member goes to church now and then doesn't make him a Christian. I go to church occasionally, and, had I the time, I would go more often than I do. I hear wise as well as foolish things said there, and to the extent that the Church is ethical, not dogmatical, it is not a bad place to go.

Again, men through marriage get caught in the web of superstition, and for sake of peace in the family, have to donkey to it. The number of people who go to church for business, political, social, and domestic reasons, were they all known, would stagger the clergy. The Church is full of embryo infidels all the time. It is making more infidels to-day than it is making Christians. There is where the infidel graduates.

Lincoln lived at a time when everybody were "jiners." The great question is, if he were a Christian, why didn't he own to it, and join church? If he was a meek, prayerful creature, as so many state, strange he was never seen praying with praying people. Most of Lincoln's biographies which make Lincoln to be, as the writer would have him be, declare that he was "a man of prayer." But one person

only can I find who says that he saw and heard Lincoln pray—so he couldn't have had the habit very bad.

A preacher up in New York State gives out, that on a call at the White House, and when leaving, the President said, "Out in our country it is customary to invite the minister to pray when he calls," and then asked him to engage in prayer, and both fell on their knees, then and there, and asked the Divine Blessing. We have this preacher's unsustained word for this very unlikely story. If Lincoln had invited all the preachers to pray who called on him, there would have been a continuous prayer-meeting in the White House, and no time for business.

But even suppose he did pray, and that he believed in a God, still that don't make a Christian of him, no more than it makes a Buddhist of him, which sect also believes in God and prays. There is no evidence whatever that Lincoln believed in, or even referred to the Christian's God—the Jewish Jehovah. Lincoln's God was simply the Unknown Supreme Power—the God of Nature.

These Christian-written biographies are amusing. They half-way admit all I say here, but by the time they apply their special brand of varnish they have "Old Abe" polished up and transformed into a glorified Christian saint.

Lincoln was often outspoken against the clergy, charging them with "twisting the words of Christ to suit their own doctrines," which he said was blasphemy.

At one time there was a big revival in Springfield, led by an eminent clergyman who had set the whole town afire. Lincoln, being a notable absentee, was frequently invited to attend. Finally he told them that "he had no confidence in the minister—that he was incompetent, and that he would not trust his advice even in an ordinary business transaction, and he couldn't see how they could take his advice on such an important matter as the salvation of their souls."

These remarks were spread rapidly and, of course, largely magnified, and Lincoln became "a marked man." His infidelity had already leaked out, and this confirmed it. In those days it was the most shocking of all things to be a sceptic or Freethinker, and to criticise the parson was to profane the Almighty himself.

(To be continued.)

**International Freethought Congress.**

INQUIRERS will kindly note that I have made arrangements for members and friends who desire to take part in the above Congress.

To carry these out properly, it is necessary that all intending to accompany the N. S. S. official delegates should at once write to me enclosing at least £1 deposit.

As a substantial reduction will be made if twenty or more persons take part, I trust everyone will do their best to make the number as large as possible.

The party will travel from London to Brussels via Dover and Ostend, leaving London by the morning train on August 20, arriving at Brussels the same evening and returning to London on the morning of August 27.

The hotel accommodation will consist of meat breakfast, late dinner, bedroom, lights, and service, for seven full days. The cost, which also includes delegates' credential fees, which admit to all meetings of the Congress and one admission to the Brussels Exhibition, is £5 14s. each; but if the party be twenty or more the price will be reduced to £4 12s. each.

It should be noted that the second-class morning service has been chosen so as to give the party the benefit of day-light travelling by the most pleasant route, third-class travelling on the Continent being very uncomfortable.

I can obtain a reduction on the return railway tickets of friends coming from the North to London to take part in this excursion if they will write me before taking their tickets.

Will those who have written me personally on the matter kindly take this as my reply?

—MISS E. M. VANCE, General Secretary N. S. S.

**LIBERTY.**

O, Liberty,

Burthen of every sigh!—thou gold of gold,  
Beauty of the beautiful, strength of the strong!  
My soul for ever turns agaze for thee.  
There is no purpose of cternity  
For faith or patience; but thy buoyant torch  
Still lighted from the Islands of the Blest,  
O'erbears all present for potential heavens  
Which are not—ah, so more than all that are!  
Whose chance postpones the ennui of the skies!  
Be thou my genius—be my hope in thee!  
For this were heaven: to be, and to be free.

—Benjamin Paul Blood.

**Correspondence.**

**CRUELTY TO PIT PONIES.**

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Many are the barbarities perpetrated in trade and encouraged—often unknowingly—by kindly people, but it is hard to conceive anything more distressing than the fate of that poor, hopeless slave of modern civilisation, the pit pony, the condition and treatment of which is a crying shame to this great nation. A mass of evidence has been published which proves that there can be absolutely no question as to the horrible and revolting cruelty which prevails among many of the men and boys employed in our coal mines. While it is quite true that the conditions under which the human workers are employed are far from what they might be, and in some cases are, I believe, very bad, those of the hapless ponies are many times worse. At the mercy of rough men and boys whose own hard lives made them for the most part callous and unsympathetic, especially where sub-human life is concerned, numberless unoffending animals in our mines are annually subjected to treatment which would send the offenders to prison without the option of a fine if committed above ground. Besides being forced to pass their lives in unnatural surroundings; covered with sores and bruises; hardly ever seeing the light of day, tasting a blade of fresh grass, or breathing a whiff of pure air; they are kicked and cuffed, beaten with thick staves or pick shafts, and deprived of food and water for long periods—sometimes for twenty-four hours at a stretch. But this is not all. Barbarities even worse than these are not unknown. Such is the exceeding brutality in some mines—I do not say all—that animals have had their sight deliberately destroyed or had their tongues torn out by the roots; sometimes they have been fatally wounded or killed outright by a savage blow. All this may be safely and emphatically stated. We all note with satisfaction that some progress has been made with regard to worn-out horses, and there is every prospect that some rational measure of reform will be accomplished which will effectually check the abominable cruelty which the traffic entails. May we hope that the case of the pit pony, whose plight is equally pitiable and calls aloud for redress, will likewise be taken in hand at an early date?

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

**MRS. EDDY.**

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the article "Christ's Champions," in your issue of the 10th inst., your correspondent "Mimmermus" goes entirely out of his way for the sake of describing Mrs. Eddy as an industrious American advertiser. May I ask whether, in order to advance the cause of free thought, it is necessary to throw doubt on the good faith of those who differ from you? If it is necessary, then the cause of free thought must at the moment be in a bad way. It certainly was not the method adopted by the great thinkers of the past, who felt themselves unable to accept any phase of the Christian religion. As an argument it is a *quantité négligeable*, and it can lead to nothing but the blankest *tu quoque!* It so easy to say, it is not worth saying, and it is so valueless when said, that it is better to leave it unsaid. FREDERICK DIXON.

[We did not know that "the great thinkers of the past" built up big fortunes, especially by Mrs. Eddy's methods. And to classify Mrs. Eddy with them is an outrage on human intelligence. We suggest that the lady's devotees should answer Mark Twain.—EDITOR.]

**THE WORLD'S SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.**

After three years another world census of Protestant Sunday-schools has been taken. The corrected figures, compiled from the recent World's Convention in Washington, show a considerable increase over the last census. There are 30,445 more schools reporting, making a total of 285,999 schools. The scholars now number 27,403,823 (a gain of 4,785,431), and the teachers and officers 2,607,371 (a gain of 187,927). These are the figures for the four principal countries:—

	Schools.	Teachers.	Scholars.
United States .....	150,445 ...	1,544,455 ...	12,777,739
Great Britain & Ireland	49,219 ...	712,699 ...	7,246,773
Canada .....	10,211 ...	84,675 ...	733,135
Australia .....	7,752 ...	52,641 ...	568,614

It is estimated that in England and Wales there is one Sunday-school to every 739 of the population, and in the United States one to every 599.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON. OUTDOOR.

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, a Lecture; 6, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Walter Bradford and J. J. Darby. Newington Green: 12 noon, S. J. Cook, a Lecture. Finsbury Park: 3.30, James Rowney, "The Atonement." Highbury Corner: Saturday, at 8, H. King and James Rowney.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, R. H. Rosetti, "The Sabbath."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Sketches from Christian History."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, Mr. Davis, "Christianity and the Labor Movement." The Green, Enfield: 7, Mr. Dawson, "Finesse of Lying."

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

### COUNTRY. OUTDOOR.

BRADFORD (Morley-road): 8, Debate, Rev. Le Touch and C. J. Atkinson, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"

HUDDERSFIELD AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Cross): 8, G. T. Whitehead, "Comments on the Y.M.C.A. Preacher." Saturday, at 8, G. T. Whitehead, "Drinks at the Crucifixion."

LAINDON, ESSEX (opposite Luff's Hairdressing Saloon): R. H. Rosetti, "Sketches from Christian History."

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Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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