

# THE Freethinker

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*What a boundless capacity for sleep, and for serene stupidity, there is in the human mind.*

—JOHN RUSKIN.

## Catholic Hypocrites.

CATHOLICS were much in evidence on Monday. Dr. H. H. Crippen was being examined by Judge Panet Angers at Quebec. Asked what was his nationality, he replied, *I am an American, born in Michigan.* Asked what was his religion, he replied, *I am a Catholic.* Crippen ought to know. We take his word for it. He is positively the best authority on the subject.

We should be sorry to deprive the Catholic Church of any honor that is justly due to it. We shall therefore not contest its claim to Dr. Crippen—although some good Christians *did* spread the report that he was an Agnostic.

Nor would we be supposed to argue that Dr. Crippen is—what he is—because he is a Catholic. But he is certainly what he is concurrently with his being a Catholic. In other words, his Catholicism did not prevent him from having ample reason—as he must have believed he had—to put as much of the globe's circumference as possible between himself and Inspector Dew. Neither does Catholicism prevent the Catholics of Great Britain from showing a higher percentage of crime than any other section of the community. And we believe they are just as happy in this respect in America.

Another thing that happened on Monday was the passing of the Second Reading of the King's Accession Declaration Bill in the House of Lords. The measure was blessed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Lord Halifax was glad to find himself in agreement with "the very admirable speech of Mr. Silvester Horne." And several Catholic peers, including the Duke of Norfolk, expressed their gratitude as Catholics to the Government. When they do agree their unanimity is wonderful. It looks as though they were closing up the rival Christian ranks against a common enemy. For we do not believe that these noble gentlemen are animated by a true spirit of toleration; in fact, we are sure that they are not. Where mutual interest or mutual fear does not influence them they still hate each other with a most Christian hatred, and they all alike give the "infidel" the benefit of that holy sentiment.

Now a third thing happened on Monday. The Spanish Ambassador to the Vatican hastily left Rome. His departure was the Spanish Government's answer to the Pope's last insolent letter calling upon it to obey his orders in the internal affairs of the country. His Holiness claims to interpret, and practically to administer, the Article of the Spanish Constitution declaring Catholicism to be the State Religion. A nation which allowed that impudent claim would be back in the Middle or Dark Ages.

Let us see what Catholics profess to be grateful for in England, and what they are making all the fuss about in Spain.

They are thankful in England because the King, in his Coronation Oath, is not to insult them by

declaring their religion to be false and idolatrous. That is all. Just a few words once in the King's career. Everything of a substantial character is left them without any alteration of the law. They can vote, sit in parliament, fill nearly every public office, and command armies and navies, in spite of the sovereign's being bound to be a Protestant. As for their religion, they enjoy its freest exercise. They build a Cathedral within sight of Westminster Abbey, and they actually wanted, in connection with the Eucharistic Conference there, to defy the law by carrying the Host in procession, that is, to celebrate the Mass in the public streets in the midst of a Protestant population. They had made all arrangements, even for the protection of their wafer God in the gold box, and it required a very broad hint in a letter from the Prime Minister to induce them to abandon the project.

In England the Catholic Church talks of toleration, praises toleration, and thanks the Government for toleration. In Spain it talks against toleration, curses toleration, and denounces the Government for being friendly to toleration. In both cases it follows the line of its own interest, or what it considers to be so. It has always done the same. Which half of the Janus face is presented depends on circumstances. The Catholic Church has never shown the rudiment of a conscience. We call it a hypocrite for want of a better word. It is a mixture of Pecksniff, Uriah Heep, and Mephistopheles—with a strong dash of Alva and Torquemada.

The very Church which thanks the Government of a Protestant country for toleration denies it to Protestants in a Catholic country. Of the two decrees to which the Vatican takes exception, one aims at limiting the ever-growing religious orders in Spain, while the other allows non-Catholic Churches to display inscriptions and outward signs on their buildings. This is called an insult to the Catholic Church, and Catholics threaten civil war rather than submit to it.

One would think the Catholic Church would be satisfied with compassing the death of an "infidel" like Francisco Ferrer, and securing the sequestration of his property, so that it might no longer be devoted to the cause of Secular Education. But tyranny is always greedy. Its constant cry is "Give! Give! Give!" Its mouth is ever open to devour. Suppressing "infidels" by bullets and robbery is not enough. The Catholic Church wants all at its feet—Jews, Protestants, and Deists, as well as Atheists.

A Catholic, as a Catholic, will always be a persecutor. Mr. Belloc, for all his fine talk about toleration, did not speak a word against the murder of Ferrer, but rather sought to justify it by joining in the chorus of slander against the man so basely done to death. Neither does Mr. Belloc, or Mr. Redmond, or the Duke of Norfolk, utter a word in censure of the domineering policy of the Catholic Church in Spain. And the moral is that they are not to be trusted. They cringe when they are weak, and bully when they are strong. They may be decent men, simply as men; but, as Catholics, they have no conscience. The blood of half the human race would be nothing to the welfare of their Church.

G. W. FOOTE.

## A Study in Christian Lying.—II.

(Concluded from p. 483.)

AFTER dealing with the Romans, Mr. Gun turns to the Greeks—again following Lecky; and again I confine myself to exposing the misrepresentations of his selected author, instead of confuting his statements by other authorities. From Lecky comes this, dealing with the legendary period of Greek history:—

"The position of woman was in some respects a degraded one. The custom of purchase money given to the father of the bride was general. The husbands appear to have indulged largely, and with little or no censure, in concubinage. Female captives of the highest rank were treated with great harshness. The inferiority of women to men was strongly asserted, and it was illustrated and defended by a very curious physiological notion, that the generative power belonged exclusively to men, women having only a subordinate part in the production of their children. The woman Pandora was said to have been the author of human ills."

Pandora, I must remind readers, was the mythical first woman, who, having received from the gods a certain box, opened it and allowed all blessings to escape except hope. As mere myth, the story compares favorably with the Bible, where woman is also the author of human ills. But Lecky is dealing in this passage with legendary or barbaric Greece; and even of this period he points out, in the same paragraph from which Mr. Gun quotes, but which is left unnoticed, that monogamy was the general system in Greece, and adds:—

"It may be fearlessly asserted that the types of female excellence which are contained in the Greek poems, while they are among the earliest, are also among the most perfect in the history of mankind. The conjugal tenderness of Hector and Andromache; the unwearied fidelity of Penelope, awaiting through the long revolving years the return of her storm-tossed husband, who looked forward to her as to the crown of all his labors; the heroic love of Alcestis, voluntarily dying that her husband might live; the filial piety of Antigone. ....All these are pictures of perennial beauty, which Rome and Christendom, chivalry and modern civilisation, have neither eclipsed nor transcended. Virgin modesty and conjugal fidelity, the graces as well as the beauty of the most perfect womanhood, have never been more exquisitely portrayed. The female figures stand out in the canvas as prominently as the male ones, and are surrounded by an almost equal reverence. The whole history of the Siege of Troy is a history of the catastrophes that followed a violation of the nuptial tie."

The whole of this is ignored by Mr. Gun, whose quotation follows immediately after. Having pointed out, from Lecky, that in the early period of Greek life, purchase money was paid by the husband to the father, one would think, in common fairness, that Mr. Gun would also point out, again from Lecky, that in historical Greece this was replaced by a dowry which the father paid the husband—a stage that was never reached in Mr. Gun's Bible, where the purchase of wives is a common transaction. Nor does he give any hint of the testimony Lecky bears in such passages as the following:—

"The prevailing manners were very gentle. Domestic oppression is scarcely ever spoken of; the husband lived chiefly in the public place; causes of jealousy and of dissension could seldom occur; and a feeling of warm affection, though not a feeling of equality, must doubtless have in most cases spontaneously arisen. ....We have another picture of Greek married life in the writings of Plutarch. ....In Plutarch the wife is represented not as the mere housekeeper, or as the chief slave of her husband, but as his equal and companion. He enforces, in the strongest terms, reciprocity of obligations, and desires that the minds of women should be cultivated to the highest point. His precepts of marriage, indeed, fall little if at all below any that have appeared in modern days."

Instead of giving his readers this side of the picture, Mr. Gun summarises the position of women in Athens and the whole of Greece thus: "Women being held in such contempt, necessarily developed vices rather than virtues." His chief proof of this is the existence of the *Hetæra* in Athens, and the

curious position they held. It is true that in Athens the profession of a courtesan was a recognised one, and that the class contained many clever and distinguished women. Anyone but Mr. Gun would, however, have allowed for difference of time and people, and have not been quite so ready to assume that a difference of treatment is necessarily a difference in moral quality. Athens was not peculiar in having courtesans; they have existed in all ages, and they exist in Christian England to-day—although Mr. Gun does not seem to be aware of the fact. The important question is whether the place held by the courtesan in Athens made that of the virtuous women, married or unmarried, lower than it would otherwise have been, or whether it caused the Athenian to think less lightly of female virtue? Now there is no clear evidence that this was the case. Lecky does not assert it; the Rev. Principal Donaldson denies and he is supported by other writers of repute. There is ample evidence that the Athenian held female virtue in high estimation even while he recognised the existence of a courtesan class. The chief distinctions here between ourselves and the Athenians are, probably, that we have a large class of courtesans whose existence we pretend to ignore, while our home life is frequently invaded by *liaisons* formed by married people.

For the reason stated in my first article I have no intention of following Mr. Gun at any length through his chapter on "Woman Under Early Christian Civilisation." Mr. Gun sees in the "mere fact" that Jesus Christ "condescended to be born of a human mother" a circumstance that dignifies woman "in a transcendental degree." Well, as we have all committed a similar act of condescension, Christian and Atheist alike, I am quite at a loss to see the value of the statement, except so far as it illustrates Mr. Gunn's peculiar mental qualities. Mr. Gun also raises a protest against the practice of "some modern sceptics quoting isolated passages from the Fathers which appear to bear harshly on the female sex." But, as celibacy did become the embodiment of an ideal life in the Christian Church; as Lecky, Maine, Blackstone, Donaldson, Dill, with many others, all agree that the legal status of woman deteriorated under Christian rule; and as Christianity treated woman as the origin of evil and Church legends depicted her as the one great preventative to man's spiritual perfection, it is difficult to see what special misrepresentation "some modern sceptics" are guilty of in this matter. Moreover, it is not sceptics alone who use the Fathers thus. Principal Donaldson quotes most of the passages referred to as being fairly representative of the opinions of the Fathers, and Lecky is in agreement with him on this. Finally, the Fathers only praise particular members of the female sex; the sex as a whole they heartily condemn. This is seen from the following passage from Lecky:—

"The combined influence of the Jewish writings, and of the ascetic feeling which treated woman as the chief source of temptation to man,\* was shown in those fierce invectives which form so conspicuous and so grotesque a portion of the writings of the Fathers. ....Woman was represented as the door of hell, as the mother of all human ills. She should be ashamed at the very thought that she is a woman. She should live in continual penance on account of the curses she has brought into the world. ....Women were even forbidden by a provincial Council, in the sixth century, on account of their impurity, to receive the Eucharist into their naked hands. Their essentially subordinate position was continually maintained."

Mr. Gun says that "Christianity improved the legal status of women." Lecky writes:—

"The Pagan laws during the Empire had been continually repealing the old disabilities of women. ....But in the whole feudal legislation women were placed in a much lower position than in the Pagan Empire. In addition to the personal restriction which grew naturally out of the Catholic doctrines concerning divorce, and concerning the subordination of the weaker sex, we find numerous and stringent enactments, which rendered it

\* To the conclusion of this article all italics are mine.

impossible for women to succeed to any considerable amount of property, and which almost reduced them to the alternative of marriage or a nunnery. The complete inferiority of the sex was continually maintained by law, and that generous public opinion, which in Rome had frequently revolted against the injustice done to girls in depriving them of the greater part of the inheritance of their fathers, totally disappeared."

Rather a queer manner of raising the legal status of women!

Mr. Gun duly quotes Lecky as saying that the early Christians insisted upon the importance of chastity. But, as is to be expected, he makes no mention of the fact of Lecky pointing out that their services here,

"though extremely great, were seriously counterbalanced by their *noxious influence upon marriage*. Two or three beautiful descriptions of this institution have been culled out of the immense mass of the patristic writings; but, in general, it would be difficult to conceive anything more coarse or more repulsive than the manner in which they regarded it. The relation which nature has designed for the noble purpose of repairing the ravages of death.....was invariably treated as a consequence of the fall of Adam, and marriage was regarded almost exclusively in its lowest aspect. The tender love which it elicits, the holy and beautiful domestic qualities that follow in its train, were almost absolutely omitted from consideration."

I trust that, by this time, readers of these articles will have a fair idea of Mr. Gun's methods as a writer and of his value as a controversialist. It would have been easy work to have answered Mr. Gun from Christian writers of repute; still easier to have answered him from leading writers of all schools. But Mr. Gun has obviously derived most of his information—such as it is—from Lecky. Therefore, I judged it to be more conclusive to show that even from Lecky himself there comes ample refutation of his statements. Perhaps, when Mr. Gun has time, he may develop sufficient inclination to ponder the fact why it is that in early Christian literature family life is almost conspicuous by its absence. Perhaps he may one day discern the difference between a healthy regard for decency and morality and a reprobation of sexual irregularity that rests upon the unclean basis of sexual asceticism. Perhaps, also, when he reads the mediæval records of convents that were described as brothels and monasteries as worse than brothels, when he reads of the morals of the courts of France, Spain, and England, and reflects upon the fact that woman's legal rights have been won in the face of Christian prejudice, he may pause and consider whether the improvement has been so marked since the days of the Roman Empire that we need pride ourselves upon it, and also whether other causes than Christianity may not be responsible for the advance made.

But of these things I have my doubts. Mr. Gun is a born Christian Evidence-monger; and, with rare exceptions, that species is difficult to improve. Truth to tell, I have not written what I have written with any hope of influencing Mr. Gun. He will feel anything but grateful for having his errors pointed out. Mr. Ballard says in his introduction that, "in the interests of truth, it cannot but be useful to have a few false words pilloried." So far as I have done this I shall have written to some purpose; and so far as Mr. Gun has served to illustrate a type, he, too, may flatter himself that he has not written in vain.

C. COHEN.

### A Modern Instance.

LET us imagine ourselves in a moderately large church or chapel listening to the minister's last sermon before leaving for a five or six weeks' pleasant holiday. The congregation is chillingly small, the building being less than a quarter full. The service opens punctually at seven of the clock on a Sunday evening, but from first to last nothing is more impressive than the utter deadness of everything. The preacher's voice and manner, the music, the prayer,

the sermon,—the stamp of death is upon them all. Perhaps the meagreness of the attendance, or the shadow of the pastor's approaching departure, or the consciousness that Christianity is dying, acts as a damper; but, possibly, it is the moribund condition of the people's belief in spiritual realities, resulting inevitably in a corresponding lack of interest, that supplies the true explanation. But the service makes another impression upon our minds. In addition to being thus dead, the whole performance strikes one as insincere and hypocritical. This does not mean, of course, that the worshipers are conscious hypocrites, but merely that they have fallen into the habit of repeating and hearing cant phrases, which are devoid of any vital significance to them. They are play-actors in disguise, and the disguise is so perfect that it deceives even themselves. An insincere person is not necessarily a liar, though what he says may not be true. We believe that Christianity, on its supernatural side, is an unmitigated lie; but it does not follow that all Christians are false, though they harbor the biggest of all falsehoods. There are people who half believe their own lies. They have been telling them for so long a period that they have come to look upon them as truths. At any rate, there are Christians who, while not consciously believing a lie, fail to realize what they languidly believe to be the truth. That is exactly what is intended to be conveyed by the statement that the worshipers under consideration lack sincerity and truth. They undoubtedly believe Christianity to be true, but they have never bestowed sufficient thought upon it to realize it as either true or false.

Let us take the sermon as a fitting illustration. The text is Isaiah xxvii. 3, and reads as follows:—

"I the Lord do keep it [a vineyard of wine, signifying the Jewish Church]; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

This "vineyard of wine" was Jehovah's supreme care. To make it healthy and fruitful was his predominant ambition. Everything favored its prosperity. It was situated in "a very fruitful hill," and Jehovah had "dugged it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winefat therein." He kept it himself, watered it every moment; and, lest any should hurt it, he kept it night and day. Well, what was his reward for his unremitting labors? *Wild grapes*. Now listen to Jehovah's subsequent speech, for it is peculiarly instructive:—

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the fence thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" (Isaiah v. 3-7).

The profound instructiveness of that passage consists in its vivid portraiture of Jehovah's moral character. It represents him as being much below the average of human excellence. He is fussy, fidgety, and feverishly energetic, neither slumbering nor sleeping; but the moment he realises the total failure of his bustling activity, the spirit of vindictiveness and retaliation seizes him, and he becomes a destructive fiend. How sadly mistaken he was when he said, "Fury is not in me." The "wild grapes" in the well-tilled and well-watched vineyard, the shortcomings and imperfections of the people of Israel, particularly in their relation to himself, filled him with uncontrollable rage, so that he is represented as tearing about and wickedly destroying everything he could lay his hands upon.

And this picture of the Divine Being, mind you, is the work of the greatest and most evangelical of all the Old Testament prophets.

We now return to our preacher. It is fair to observe that the preceding remarks are not a quotation from his sermon. He does not even refer to the Divine destructiveness and wanton cruelty. It would spoil the whole effect of his discourse to do so. What he dwells upon is the alleged sleepless watchfulness of the Lord. He says, in effect:—What Jehovah was to the Jewish Church, that he has always been and is to the Christian Church. The Church would have ceased to be long ago had it not been for the defensive presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its bitter enemies have been numerous and powerful and venomous enough, in all conscience; but it has survived all attacks, however violent, because the Lord has been round about it like a wall of fire. Furious opponents have often arisen, men like Voltaire and Hobbes and Hume and Paine, who angrily cried, "Down with it," dealing it as terrible blows as it was in their power to do; but they are dead that sought its life, while the Church still lives and prospers; and Christ exerts to day a greater influence in the world than ever before. Be of good cheer, my friends, you are a Church of the Living Christ, and nothing can ever harm you because God himself is your keeper. During the minister's absence on holiday, he will water you every moment; lest any should harm you, he will keep you night and day.

That is a paraphrase, but it does not depart the width of an iota from the sense of the original. You may call it rubbish, twaddle, and such it doubtless is; but it is something much worse besides. It is a species of unctuous lying much indulged in by the Pulpit at the present time. Not only is it not true, broadly speaking, but it is entirely and degradingly false, the falsest utterance that ever dropped from human lips. And yet it is a falsehood in which the Church has dealt so liberally and so long that practically every Christian accepts it as a most precious truth of God. Let us face it.

In the first place, it is a lie which is tantamount to a positive negation of the Divine Existence. Indeed, the first seven verses of the fifth chapter of Isaiah might profitably be issued as a "Freethought Tract for the Million." It is passing strange that any honest man can calmly read such a passage and remain a believer in God. Think of tiny Palestine as a vineyard laboriously planted and affectionately kept night and day by the Lord, and yet, in spite of all that, bearing nothing but wild grapes, and then as being, out of pure revenge, callously destroyed, while all the rest of the world remained a howling waste. Such a fact, if fact it were, would be the death-blow of any Deity.

In the second place, it is a lie that ought to bring the blush of shame into the cheeks of all who utter it. The very thought that the Church would have perished long ago had it not been for the protective presence within it of the God of love is altogether too laughably silly. Had the God of love ever dwelt in it there would never have been any hostile world to attack it. In so far as the Church has at any time prospered it has been by means of false pretences. It has always sailed under colors to which it has had no right whatever. As a matter of fact, however, whatever partial prosperity the Church has enjoyed, was secured by a free use of the blood-red sword, and perpetuated only under its shadow. Now that the Church is being forced into competition with other forces, such as Art Galleries, Public Libraries, Sunday Concerts, motoring, week-ends, Freethought lectures, and Godless Socialism, it is being left delightfully behind. All the denominations have had to report sorrowful losses for several years. The chapel referred to in this article is situated in one of the most populous districts in London, and yet it is found to be, on an important Sunday evening in its history, scarcely one-fourth full. In the face of such facts, admitted by Christian leaders themselves, it requires a more than usually brazen-faced

audacity to assert that the Church is the special charge of an infinite and all-powerful God, and that Christ is better loved and more powerful to-day than at any former time.

In the third place, the lie under consideration is, even for a lie, exceptionally perverse and crooked. It is not an honest, straightforward lie, but a lie immersed in sophistry. The legendary flight into Egypt, related by Matthew, but ignored by Luke and utterly irreconcilable with the story as told by him, is dishonestly exploited by our preacher as the first manifestation of the all-conquering power of Christ. "An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead that sought the young child's life." It is always the same, avers our preacher; whenever we look back, we have the comfort of knowing that "they are dead that sought the young child's life," because "God is mindful of his own" and encircles them with his omnipotent defence. This is partly true and wholly false at one and the same time. It is true that the Freethinkers who attacked the Church in the eighteenth century are now all dead; but it is also true that the cause which they so bravely advocated is still alive, and has been ever since steadily leavening, not only the world, but the Church itself, with its own principles. No, Voltaire and Hobbes and Hume and Paine are not dead; they still live in their successors, who are privileged to know that the Church which once used to triumph by slaughtering its adversaries is now in the ludicrous and humiliating predicament of trying its utmost to conciliate and come to terms with them, by surrendering some of its own most indispensable positions, positions which it held with unflinching determination for upwards of fifteen hundred years. Unbelief is on the winning side, because it can command the strongest battalions, the battalions which reason and knowledge are supplying in ever-increasing numbers.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Criminal Trials of Animals.

THE widely received belief in the voluntary actions of animals which the beast fables of barbarous and even civilised races reveal, may prepare us for a few references to the amazing performances in which the Church and the Law jointly engaged down to quite recent times. Just as man in all ages and climes has pictured himself in his divinities, so in a kindred spirit has he attributed to the lower animals a partnership in those passions and emotions which so materially mould his conduct towards his fellow-units in the social organism of which he forms part.

In a recently published volume,\* Mr. E. P. Evans has presented some very remarkable examples of the judicial and ecclesiastical prosecution and punishment of animals in those European countries most famous for their deeply religious sentiments and beliefs.

In the most high and palmy days of the Christian creed, a little ere the Holy Catholic Church was smitten by the shock of the Renaissance, such trials and punishments were the order of the day. The penalty of death was inflicted by secular tribunals on domestic animals like the horse, ox, and pig, after due trial, for the crime of homicide. The ecclesiastical courts, on the other hand, appear to have more closely concerned themselves with the evils arising from the encroachments of rats, mice, locusts, weevils, and other verminous creatures upon the cultivated fields, orchards, and vineyards of the period. Large domesticated animals, which lived under conditions of complete human control, could be promptly arrested, tried, and put to death; but in the case of a plague of rats, locusts, or lice, these more elusive creatures could be reasoned with or overcome through the holy intervention of the Church

\* *The Criminal Prosecution and Punishment of Animals.*

alone. Those most potent and powerful ecclesiastical instruments known as exorcism and excommunication were thus called into requisition, and under favorable conditions these intruding pests were expelled or exterminated by "sacerdotal conjuring or cursing." The circumstance that it was customary to catch some of the culprits, and, having judicially tried and convicted them, to solemnly snuff out their lives while the clergy pronounced their anathema, proves, in the opinion of Mr. Evans, that the entire swarm would have been dealt with in the same manner had that course of treatment been possible. "Indeed," he says,

"the attempt was sometimes made to get rid of them by setting a price on their heads, as was the case of the plague of locusts in Rome in 880, when a reward was offered for their extermination; but all efforts in this direction proving futile, on account of the rapidity with which they propagated, recourse was had to exorcisms and besprinklings with holy water."

There is, however, another aspect of the question which Mr. Evans appears to have overlooked. The almost universal belief in sympathetic magic which Catholicism indirectly inherited from aboriginal man, and which remains to this hour the common obsession of at least 80 per cent. of the Catholic and Protestant peasantries of Europe, led to the assumption that in inflicting condign punishment upon a few of these pestilent intruders, a "telepathic" influence was generated that acted with fatal effects upon the entire host of invaders.

In this matter, as in some others, the Church failed to rise above the suspicion of inconsistency in the explanations she offered of these phenomena. It was generally assumed that plagues of noxious vermin constituted an all too tangible manifestation of satanic agency; but they were occasionally viewed as visitations of God, intended as a punishment for the sins of the people.

"If the insects were instruments of the devil," comments our author, "they might be driven into the sea or banished to some arid region, where they would all miserably perish; if, on the other hand, they were recognised as the ministers of God, divinely delegated to scourge mankind for the promotion of piety, it would be suitable, after they had fulfilled their mission, to cause them to withdraw from the cultivated fields and to assign them a spot where they might live in comfort without injury to the inhabitants. The records contain instances of both kinds of treatment."

An amusing and instructive sidelight is thrown upon much of the contemptible rubbish which is inseparably associated with modern spiritual and "psychical" phenomena by such an illustration as the following. Throughout continental Europe the peasantry are accustomed to confine their cattle in diminutive stalls and sheds. The bad air occasioned by such conditions generates morbid manifestations; the irritated animals act in an abnormal manner, are apt to remain awake throughout the night, and not infrequently are found weak, exhausted, and covered with perspiration in the morning. The peasant does not doubt that these strange phenomena are the result of witchcraft, and wherever possible calls in an exorcist to expel the devils from his cows. Prior to performing this ceremony, the exorcist very naturally opens the doors and windows of the cattle sheds, and the entrance of the purer air renders the act of expulsion quite easy. A German veterinary surgeon,

"who reports several instances of this kind, tried in vain to convince the peasants that the trouble was due, not to sorcery, but to the absence of proper sanitary conditions, and finally, in despair of accomplishing his purpose in any other way, told them that if the windows were left open so that all the witches could go in and out freely, the demons would not enter into the cattle. This advice was followed, and the malign influence ceased."

The primitive savage superstition that unavenged or unexpiated murder brought pestilence and famine upon the land was inherited by the Greeks, and by them transmitted to the Christian Church. The Council of Worms, in 864, decreed that bees, which had stung human beings with fatal results, must be

immediately suffocated in their hive, lest the honey subsequently gathered by the insects assist devils to enter into men. Any noticeable animal variation was in much the same spirit regarded as the outward and visible sign of inward devilish gracelessness. The barn-door cock suspected of laying the "basilisk egg," or the hen at all given to crowing, were regarded as instruments of the Evil One. The old rhyme doubtless bears a very similar interpretation:—

"A whistling woman and a crowing hen  
Are good for neither God nor men."

Documentary evidence, both abundant and conclusive, still survives to prove that even in so modern a period as the sixteenth century, and in the country of the Most Christian King, it was possible for a French jurist of no mean mental attainments to establish a reputation at the bar for forensic ability displayed in a trial in which he appeared as counsel for some rats. These revolting rodents were summoned to appear at the ecclesiastical court of Autun in answer to the charge of destroying the barley crop of the district. Bartholomew Chassenée, the distinguished jurist in question, employed the customary legal sophistries, tricks, and evasions for which the legal profession has been so justly celebrated in all countries possessing any just claim to civilisation. He begged the court to consider that his clients were scattered over a wide area of territory, and were resident in various villages; a single summons to appear in court was therefore inadequate. The judges thereupon granted a second summons, to be proclaimed from all the pulpits of the parishes in which the rats resided. After the rodents had been duly cited for the second time, Chassenée excused the absence of his clients by informing the court that their inveterate enemies, the cats, were watchfully awaiting their victims' arrival at every conceivable point of approach. He then proceeded to show that if a rat or any other creature be cited to appear at a place to which he is not permitted to travel in safety, "he may exercise the right of appeal and refuse to obey the writ, even though such appeal be expressly precluded in the summons." "The point," remarks Mr. Evans, "was argued as seriously as though it were a question of family feud between Capulet and Montague in Verona or Colonna and Orsini in Rome."

Well worthy of note is the fact that Chassenée lived to be reminded of his humane sentiments concerning animals in other and more important circumstances:—

"In 1540 he was president of the judicial assembly, known as the Parliament of Provence, on a memorable occasion when the iniquitous measure for the extirpation of heresy, by exterminating the Waldenses in the villages of Cabrières and Merindol, was under discussion. One of the members of the tribunal, a gentleman of Arles, Renaud d'Alleins, ventured to suggest to the presiding officer that it would be extremely unjust to condemn these unfortunate heretics without granting them a hearing and permitting an advocate to speak in their defence, so that they might be surrounded by all the safeguards of justice, adding that the eminent jurist had formerly insisted on this right before the court of Autun, and had maintained that even animals should not be adjudged and sentenced without having a proper person to defend their cause."<sup>13</sup>

Chassenée persuaded the king to grant a decree allowing a hearing for the persecuted heretics, but his decease, which took place soon afterwards, enabled the orthodox to override this humane act.

Among extant records of animals' trials, the larger number relate to the depredations of insects. The archives of the ancient episcopal city of St. Jean-de-Maurienne retain the original documents which deal with the legal proceedings instituted against vermin which had ruined the vineyards of St. Julian, a district celebrated for the excellence of its wine. The defendants were green weevils, and the wine-growers laid their grievances before Francois Bonnavard, doctor of laws, in 1545. The plaintiffs were repre-

\* *Prosecution of Animals*, p. 20.

sented by an advocate, and the insects were defended by the procurator, assisted by an advocate. After the evidence had been submitted and scrutinised by the contending counsel, the president suspended his judgment, and issued a proclamation instead, which opened with the following preamble:—

"Inasmuch as God, the supreme author of all that exists, hath ordained that the earth should bring forth fruits and herbs (*animas vegetativas*), not solely for the sustenance of rational human beings, but likewise for the preservation and support of insects, which fly about on the surface of the soil, therefore it would be unbecoming to proceed with rashness and precipitance against the animals now actually accused and indicted; on the contrary, it would be more fitting for us to have recourse to the mercy of heaven and implore pardon for our sins."

Detailed instructions are then given concerning the public prayers to be offered up by the parishioners for the purpose of propitiating the Almighty. The people must turn to the Lord with undivided hearts; high mass must be celebrated on three consecutive days in the month of May; the host borne in solemn procession with songs and supplications through the environs of the vineyards; and last, but by no means least, the people must in future lead lives both charitable and just, and never on any account to fail in prompt payment of the tithes. When all these things were done, the insects, according to the unimpeachable testimony of the curate, quickly disappeared.

Some thirty years later the weevils revisited the scenes of their previous depredations, and on this occasion were brought to trial for their sins. The juridical and ecclesiastical experts who conducted this criminal trial recalled the prayers, payments, and masses which triumphantly banished the insects on their earlier invasion. When all preliminaries had been adjusted, the counsel for the insects laid his case before the court. He argued that the plaintiffs' action for "criminal" trespass was not maintainable, and that they were not entitled to a verdict. He submitted that his insect clients were well within their moral and legal rights, and had not in any way rendered themselves liable to excommunication. The sacred book of Genesis was appealed to, inasmuch as it established the proposition that "the lower animals were created before man, and God said to them: Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind; and he blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the fowl multiply on the earth." "Now the Creator would not have given this command had he not intended that these creatures should have suitable and sufficient means of support; indeed, he has stated that to everything that creepeth upon the earth every green herb has been given for meat. It is therefore evident that the accused, in taking up their abode in the vines of the plaintiffs, are only exercising a legitimate right conferred upon them at the time of their creation." And, by way of peroration, the advocate admonishes the plaintiffs to repent of their sins in sackcloth and ashes, this being a more becoming method of imploring the mercy of heaven.

This brilliant defence secured a lengthy adjournment of the trial. When the case was resumed, the wine-growers' advocate stated that although the animals were created before man, they were, nevertheless, made for his use and benefit, and that this was the reason for their earlier creation. The legal subtleties evolved in the course of this hearing necessitated a further adjournment, and when the court re-assembled the counsel for the insects contended that even if animals were subordinate to man that need not imply the right of excommunication, and that his clients were answerable to natural law alone. On these grounds the counsel asks for a verdict in favor of the defendants.

This extraordinary trial, which sheds such a lurid light on the follies and futilities of mankind, is proved by the records to have lasted from April 13

to December 20, 1587. But the final decision in this long-delayed and well-deliberated trial is rendered uncertain through the circumstance that the concluding sheet of the records has been destroyed by rodent or insect agency. "Perhaps the persecuted weevils, not being satisfied with the results of the trial, sent a sharp-toothed delegation into the archives to obliterate or annul the judgment of the court. At least, nothing should be thought incredible or impossible in the conduct of creatures which were deemed worthy of being summoned before ecclesiastical tribunals, and which succeeded as criminals in claiming the attention and calling forth the legal learning and acumen of the greatest jurists of the day."

It appears a strange phenomenon that higher and nobler animals were condemned for crimes, and afterwards burned alive, with greater frequency in comparatively enlightened centuries than in those dark and ignorant ages in which such occurrences might be expected. In the latter half of the seventeenth century these barbarous penalties were most frequently inflicted. Animals were also buried alive, two pigs suffering this punishment at Amiens in 1463. In 1557, a pig was "buried all alive" for the crime of devouring a little child. In 1266, a swine was burned alive by order of the monks of Sainte Geneviève, near Paris, for the same offence. The principle of *lex talionis* was consistently carried out in 1836 by the tribunal of Falaise, when a sow was "mangled and maimed in the head and forelegs, and then hanged, for having torn the face and arms of a child and thus caused its death." This porcine murderer was attired in human clothing, executed in the public square at the expense of the State, and the hangman was presented with a pair of new gloves.

From the relatively enlightened standpoint at which cultured and thoughtful Europeans view organic nature, such travesties of justice and outrages upon rationality as the foregoing trials supply must appear utterly repugnant. But the comparative nearness of these almost pathological phenomena to our own times should serve to remind us that our vaunted civilisation is merely an attenuated fair outward show, and that the coarse and brutal instincts of aboriginal man lurk beneath the surface still.

T. F. P.

#### FREE THOUGHTS.

Christianity should have a Gospel of the Holy Ghost. According to the Old Testament, God did and said a great deal, and according to the New Testament Jesus did and said a great deal, but we have not heard a word from the Holy Ghost. Now, had this important person left a narrative of his doings on earth, we should have an account of his courtship of Mary and a treatise on miraculous conception, documents which would be of great interest to the world and invaluable to the Christian Church. The first chapter of Matthew is worthless unless sworn to by the Holy Ghost and Mary.

We are not afraid of God in this life. Why should we be afraid of him in another life? There is no evidence that God ever harmed a single human being. He has no hell on earth, and there is no proof that he has one anywhere else. Mankind have believed the lies of priests too long. If priests did no more to hurt man than God does we should have a better world to live in.

Men and women need to change the clothes of their minds as well as the clothes of their bodies; to cast aside their creeds as much as their flannels. Fortunately we can live with naked minds if not with naked bodies, and if our minds can be free, what fools we are to put them into bondage to beliefs and statements of faith.

There is a general impression among educated persons that God never has indicated the right line of conduct for human beings. What mankind has adopted as the best moral code for human society has been suggested by human experience. It is impossible to discover the divine hand in human affairs. The "Thus saith the Lord" in the Bible lacks confirmation.

The tragedy of the Cross has been lost in the comedy of the Church.—L. K. Washburn.

## Acid Drops.

Mr. Asquith acted discreetly in arranging with all parties except the Protestant irreconcilables to get the second reading of his Accession Declaration Bill through with a triumphant majority. Catholics are pleased, because the King is no longer to brand their faith as false and idolatrous when he puts on the crown. Churchmen are satisfied, because the King, apart from the Declaration, is bound by old laws to belong to the Church of England. Nonconformists are satisfied, because this fact is not paraded in the amended Royal Declaration, and they are free to feel as if it didn't exist at all. Scotch Presbyterians are satisfied, for a similar reason. The dissatisfied are a few Conservatives, a few Ulsterites, and a few Johnny Kensitites. Free-thinkers also are satisfied, because the sweeping away of the King's negative declaration of religion is a step towards sweeping away his positive declaration of religion. In other words, it is a step towards the final secularisation of the State—which is the political object of Secularism.

Mr. Mitchell-Thomson (North Down) in opposing the second reading of Mr. Asquith's Bill, thought it enough to argue that the Catholic Church was always intolerant on principle, and still claimed temporal power. The latter fiction is really too pitiable for debate in the House of Commons. The intolerance, of course, remains. But we hope the honorable gentleman is not under the impression that the Catholic Church is the only intolerant Church in Christendom. Every Christian Church has persecuted to the full extent of its power. All that has happened is that the Catholic Church has had greater opportunities. But that is a chronological accident. Protestants treated Catholics in England, Scotland, and Ireland, as the upper dog treats the under dog in a fight. Men and women now living can recollect when Catholics were first admitted within the pale of the Constitution. For more than two hundred years before that they had suffered every wrong and every indignity at the hands of the Protestant majority. And when justice was proposed to be done to them, as far as it went under Catholic Emancipation, the Bishops in the House of Lords fought that measure of toleration to the very last ditch. The Church of England has persecuted all it could; so has the Catholic Church. That is the plain truth about both of them. And both of them want watching. But the Catholic ought not to be treated as a criminal, any more than the Churchman, until he commits a crime. There must be no theoretical guilt. It must be practical to be amenable to correction. Protestants, Catholics, and Free-thinkers can all find each other guilty on theoretical grounds. But that simply means persecution *ad infinitum*.

We repeat that although the Catholic Church ought not to be persecuted in a free country it ought to be very carefully watched. Mr. Mitchell-Thomson did well to call attention to an English Catholic declaration of intolerance so late as 1851. There was a Catholic paper then called the *Rambler*, with Cardinal Newman (though not a Cardinal at that time) as one of its contributors; and in the September issue there was an article containing the following passage: "You Protestants ask if the Roman Catholic were lord in the land and you were in a minority, what would he do to you? If it would benefit the cause of Catholicism, he would tolerate you; if expedient, he would imprison you, banish you, and fine you; possibly, he might even hang you. But be assured of one thing—he would never tolerate you for the sake of the glorious principles of civil and religious liberty." People who talk like that need strict watching. But so do people who do it, when they have the chance, without talking about it. They all want watching. To say Christian is to say bigot. Catholic and Protestant both believe in exclusive salvation, and that, as George Eliot showed in her famous review of Lecky, is the inspiring principle of all persecution.

Pope Taylor (Sarto, in Italian) is going it finely. After the broil with the Spanish Government he has got into another with the Portuguese Government over the suppression of a newspaper, and it is rumored that the extinction of the Portuguese Embassy to the Vatican is not impossible.

Father Bernard Vaughan—the gentleman who isn't a father himself, and is always complaining that other men are insufficiently so—says a good thing occasionally, if only by accident. Preaching at Marlow lately, he said that the real reason why churches were empty was a lack of faith. If people really believed themselves to be God's creatures no

counter attraction would keep them from God's house on a Sunday. That hits the bull's-eye. People *don't* go to church because they don't *want* to go to church. A child may see that.

"A Business Man" expresses *his* view of the empty church business in the *Chronicle* discussion. People don't believe in the ministers' sincerity: "The spectacle of a popular preacher living in style, smoking cigars, and taking two and three months' holiday in Switzerland, or a trip to the Holy Land, besides an occasional presentation—these things, coupled with the fact that the popular ministers' sons are educated for the Bar or some other profession, are not calculated to inspire the average man with a deep sense of the ministers' sincerity and devotion to the work of God."

"Women in the Pulpit." This awful problem has engaged the attention of the Wesleyan Conference. Hitherto the ladies have been allowed to work for the Church gratuitously, and the gentlemen found the arrangement most admirable. But the ladies are now clamoring for a share of the salaried work, and there is fear and trembling amongst the present laborers in that part of the Lord's vineyard—especially amongst the duller section of the said laborers, whose only qualification for their jobs is that they are two-legged males, and whom any decent lady preacher could knock out in five minutes. The Wesleyan Conference has had at last to reconcile itself to the idea of women in the pulpit, but it deals with it very gingerly. It reminds us, indeed, of the servant girl who pleaded that her illegitimate baby was an extremely small one. The Conference declares its opinion that cases in which it is desirable to preach are exceptional, but "where a woman possesses special gifts liberty should be given her." Her liberty, however, is hemmed in by various special conditions. The men in possession decide to throw out a rope to her, but they mean to take care that it shall be too short for all but the liveliest jumpers. Fancy a Freethought society acting in this way! You *can't* fancy it.

Sunday cinematograph shows are given in some districts of London in aid of the funds of local hospitals. This has excited the bigotry of the clericals, who don't want any public shows running on Sunday except their own, not even in the sacred cause of charity. Letters of protest were received from these gentlemen and considered at the last council meeting of the Metropolitan Hospital Fund, at the Mansion House, under the presidency of Lord Mayor Knill. Dr. Voelcker wrote:—

"The continued encroachments on the observance of the Sabbath are being more and more forced on the notice of our churches, and the connection of some of our hospitals with Sunday opening of places of entertainment is bound to be brought up."

Prebendary Gurdon wrote at greater length—and strength:—

"There are a considerable number of these cinematograph shows now which are more and more being opened on Sundays. The way they get permission to do so is, as you know, by doing it 'for charity,' after the deducting of the expenses. They are therefore in the habit of approaching certain charitable societies, and getting permission to advertise on their bills what these Sunday shows are for. One does not want to be uncharitable, but I do not imagine that they would thus keep open on Sundays merely for charity, but provided that the so-called expenses can be reckoned at a big enough figure, that it pays them to do so.

Some of us feel very strongly that the hospitals should not aid and abet the opening of them by allowing their names to be used for such purposes."

What does all this mean? It means that the clericals want a monopoly of Hospital Sunday, and that if they can't have it they will do no collecting at all, and the hospitals may go to the devil. Which, by the way, is another good reason for putting the hospitals on the rates and under municipal control.

The Archdeacon of London, who is a member of the Hospital Fund Council, said that he quite agreed with these clerical gentlemen. Of course! He belongs to the same profession, and has his proper share of *esprit de corps*. The Chief Rabbi said ditto. Of course! He is in the same profession too. The Hon. Sidney Holland, however, put in a word for the cinematograph showmen. He said that the London hospitals benefited to a considerable extent from their entertainments. Finally, the matter was referred to the general purposes committee. We hope the committee won't be too much frightened by Dr. Voelcker's threat that "if the Fund did not decide to dissociate itself from the action of certain hospitals in this particular, it would no longer be able to count upon the co-operation of the leaders of the Churches." We trust the committee will regard that threat as the depth of meanness.

God is said to be everywhere, and St. Augustine affirms that the whole—not a part—of him is universally present; and yet, from all the ends of Christendom, if not of the world, there assembled at Keswick, a week ago, thousands of men and women for the express purpose of "waiting upon God," as if he had his abode in that beautiful village, and nowhere else.

One of the speakers at the Keswick Convention stated that prayer is so barren of results because it is not sufficiently persistent. You must beg, and keep on begging, until you get what you want, the listeners were told. "You must hang on until the loaves come." "The greatest temptation is to lose heart, to quit too soon." "What a funny father God must be if he treats his children in that fashion; and they number, on this globe alone, some 1,800,000,000. It would be heartless cruelty inflicted on both them and himself.

Canon Dalby, the rector of Cleethorpes, is a remarkably sensible man—for a clergyman. The local council had been urging the police to enforce the provisions of the Lord's Day Observance Act. The rector attended a meeting of Cleethorpes tradesmen, and vigorously protested against the action of the council. In his opinion, that "ancient Act ought to be amended to meet modern requirements." He was in favor of supplying Sunday trippers with meals as on ordinary days. The kill-joys were very angry, but the reverend gentleman firmly held his ground. It is refreshing to know that here and there a man of God is occasionally found who has sense as well as faith, and whose sense necessarily knocks out of him much of the folly of faith.

Rev. J. Nicholas Knight, who writes a weekly column for the *Ashton Reporter*, doesn't agree with his Savior. The reverend gentleman writes that "The *Freethinker* still struggles on and pathetically pleads poverty." Now the *Freethinker* does not struggle on. It comes regularly before the public in excellent condition, as it has done for nearly thirty years. It was only a little out of condition for a few weeks in 1883, when the Rev. J. Nicholas Knight's religious friends put the editor in prison for "blasphemy"—the very same crime for which their Savior was arrested. The sub-editor broke down in body and mind under the dreadful strain, and friends had to step in and deal with the situation. It was then that the *Freethinker* "struggled" and looked it. But it has always worn a fair appearance since. So much for the "struggles." And now for the "pleads poverty." That is the Rev. J. Nicholas Knight's sneer. Jesus Christ was quite of a different mind. Poverty, to him, was a virtue, carrying a divine blessing. "Blessed be ye poor," he said, "for yours is the kingdom of heaven." He also cried "Woe unto you rich." Thus the *Freethinker* earns the blessing, and the Rev. J. Nicholas Knight the "woe," or as much of it as he can manage to merit.

As a matter of fact, the *Freethinker* would be paying its way all right if it were not for the vile Blasphemy Laws which Christians like the Rev. J. Nicholas Knight originated and still maintain. While those laws exist an outspoken Freethought journal is always in a state of insecurity unless it is printed and published by those to whom upholding it is a point of conscience. The moment there was talk of prosecution, if the *Freethinker* were printed and published by ordinary tradesmen, it would be thrown over and might go under for ever. To prevent the possibility of that, we have had to keep up a separate establishment for printing and publishing this one journal. That is why a paper which more than pays its way, according to ordinary tests, shows a weekly loss. In other words, the bigotry of the Rev. J. Nicholas Knight's friends is the sole cause of our "poverty," yet he has the sweet Christian grace to twit us with it even in these circumstances.

This reverend gentleman advises us to read Harold Begbie's *Broken Earthenware*. We have better books to read. But the advice shows us the reverend gentleman's intellectual level.

In explaining why Jesus is not reported to have ever laughed, Professor David Smith surpasses himself in the art of saying foolish things. He calls laughter "a stupid *gaucherie*, symptomatic.....always of a lack of that self-control which is characteristic of a gentleman." Therefore he confidently asserts that Jesus certainly never laughed. Then he adds: "But he often smiled." Comment would be superfluous.

Mr. Joseph McCabe has achieved the feat of visiting Melbourne, and writing an account of his visit, without so

much as mentioning the name of Joseph Symes. Apparently the little Joseph never heard of the big Joseph. Strange! But truth is strange—stranger than fiction, as Byron said. The big Joseph went to Melbourne twenty-seven years ago, and fought a battle there that a thousand little Josephs couldn't have fought between them. The little Joseph rides into Melbourne in peace and safety; not a brickbat is thrown at him, not an over-ripe tomato, not a too mature egg. He is made much of, and he exults. And he knows not—but others know—of the great Joseph whose name is bound to live in the history of Melbourne; who gave twenty-three years of his ardent life to one of the stiffest battles that ever fell to the lot of man.

Mr. McCabe drew audiences at Melbourne as he draws them in England, by means of a magic lantern and the idea that he is a special prophet of Evolution—when it has weathered all its real troubles and has reached port felicity. Now there remain these three—Darwin, Haeckel, and McCabe, but the greatest of these is —. The reader can fill in the hiatus.

Melbourne seems to be singularly behind date in some things. Mr. McCabe assures us that, after his lectures, the people all over Melbourne took to discussing "the precise affinity of man to the ape." It has reached them at last. And Darwin has been dead twenty-eight years!

"Nervousness," Mr. McCabe says, "I know not, nor have I retained the art of blushing." Evidently.

The President of the Wesleyan Conference is a stalwart champion of the wholly irrational and pernicious doctrine that "there is no salvation by ethics." The Conference cheered that rank heresy to the echo. Goodness is of no account. The best man on earth will burn for ever in hell, if he dies without believing in Jesus Christ. This is the reason why many believers are morally so lax. They may be atrociously dishonest and fraudulent in business, and odiously selfish and cruel in society; but never mind, they enjoy a blissful communion with the blessed Redeemer, and are in possession of a ticket that entitles them to a seat in glory after death.

The President is equally convinced that preaching has become so impotent as it is to-day because of the absence from it of "the note of doom." To be successful, the preacher must present God as "an object of fear," as a Being who can, and will, put obstinate unbelievers in adamant chains in the Bottomless Pit, where they shall wail and gnash their teeth to all eternity. This is happily a confirmation of the persistent teaching of the *Freethinker* from beginning to end—namely, that religion had its origin in ignorance and fear, and has always thriven on the same ever since.

The following appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of July 28, being communicated by its New York correspondent:—

"On board the steamship which sailed from Boston for Europe yesterday were a number of missionaries en route, for the West Coast of Africa. In the vessel's cargo were also 20,000 gallons of New England rum, bound for the same destination."

Criticism would only spoil this. But the question may be asked: Does the bottle follow Christianity—or does Christianity follow the bottle?

The Catholic Bishop of Salford says that when Trade Unionists seek to make the secular solution of the education problem a plank of their platform they enter upon an abnormal and illegitimate development of the Trade Union movement. May we suggest that they probably know their own business a great deal better than he does? The Trade Union movement that he understands best is Priestcraft.

Rev. A. J. Waldron says that "divine service" needs rationalising and shortening. We agree with him. It needs rationalising to nothing, and shortening to the same extent.

Mr. Waldron also says that "the Bible must be treated rationally." True. And better men than Mr. Waldron were sent to prison like common thieves for saying that during the nineteenth century. But they were Freethinkers and honest men. Mr. Waldron is a parson.

An effort is to be made to insure poor country vicars a minimum salary of £200 a year. This would have been affluence to J. C. or any of the apostles. Christian preachers are more expensive articles now. The only faith they are able to live upon is other people's faith.



### 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, £239 13s. 1d. Received since:—J. Hammond, £1; W. P. Murray, 2s. 6d.

**BRUSSELS DELEGATION FUND.**—Previously acknowledged, £1 5s. Received since:—J. Hammond, 10s.; R. T. Nichols, £1 1s.; A. S. Vickers, 5s.; R. H. Rosetti, 2s. 6d.; S. Holmes, 2s. 6d. Per Miss Vance:—Mrs. C. C., 10s.; K. C. C., 10s.

**ADMIRER.**—See paragraph. Thanks.

**E. B.**—Thanks for cuttings, which will be useful.

**T. FLINN.**—Cannot say at present. Will think it over.

**ALERT** says: "Please don't drop the Acid Drops, as one correspondent suggests. I have always reserved them for after tea on Sunday. They aid my digestion." In reply to this correspondent's remarks on the case of Mr. Walsh and the newspaper cutting from the *Positivist Review*, we have to say that the press boycott of Atheism is a very old game. Positivism is quite another matter. Of course, all Positivists are Atheists, in the sense which Atheists attach to their own designation, but the religious public doesn't know it, and "Positivist" doesn't sound dangerous.

**J. HARGREAVES.**—Atheism simply means "Not-Theism," and Atheist means "Without God." Denying the Bible God does not alone constitute Atheism. The majority of Theists do that, and all Deists.

**G. R. B.**—Under consideration. We have not seen the numbers of the *Liberal* said to have been sent us.

**W. P. BALL.**—Much obliged for cuttings.

**J. BRISTOW.**—Too late. An obituary notice, with account of the funeral, may be supplied us for our next.

**H. FRANCIS.**—Very glad to hear that the three new readers you gained us a few months ago "are now devoted admirers." Portraits of Bradlaugh are obtainable through A. Bonner, Took's-court, Chancery-lane, E.C.

**J. M. BRENNELL (Chicago).**—Remittance placed to credit. Glad you "like" our paper and think it will "do much good."

**J. J. H.**—Bishop Ingram's pamphlet shall be seen to.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

Owing to the Bank Holiday, which interferes with the preparation of the forthcoming *Freethinker* in more ways than one, we have less than the usual quantity of paragraphs this week, though we hope the paper is not otherwise shorn of interest. We hope to make amends next week.

A special announcement concerning the St. James's Hall Sunday evening lectures in September and October will appear in our next issue. We think it will be of general interest. We also beg to make another note of the fact that Shoreditch Town Hall has been engaged again for Sunday evening lectures in November.

Pandit Goverdhan Dass, honorary secretary of the Rationalist Press Association in the Lahore District, India,

in forwarding his subscription to the *Freethinker*, says "Kindly accept my sincere and hearty congratulations on regaining your health, vigor, and courage to fight the bigots, hypocrites, and fanatics of the Black Army, who have so long swayed the minds of the poor superstitious, ignorant, and credulous people.....One cannot too highly admire the pluck and sagacity with which you are handling the hammer handed you by your world-wide-known predecessor."

Here is an extract from another subscriber's letter—this time an American doctor hailing from the region which bears that delightful (Indian) name of Mississippi: "I must say I am exceedingly glad to have become acquainted with your paper. Every number teaches me something. I was much impressed by the reports of the speeches at the Annual Meeting." This correspondent asks us "as a favor" to devote an article to Sir Robert Anderson's "Samaritan Pentateuch" argument as set forth in his *Pseudo-Criticism*. We will have the matter seen to. Perhaps we may get our very competent contributor "Abracadabra" to write the article. He is holidaying just now, but he shall be attacked on his return.

Mr. Cohen has been spending a brief holiday in North Wales. He lectures in Victoria Park this afternoon (Aug. 7) and again in the evening. East-end "saints" will please note.

Subscriptions are coming in very slowly as yet for the Brussels Delegation Fund, which is towards defraying the cost of the representatives of the National Secular Society attending the International Freethought Congress on August 21 and subsequent days. We asked for £30, and we should be glad if it could be made up forthwith. As this Congress will largely turn upon, and deal with, the case of Francisco Ferrer, it ought to be an honor to help send Freethought delegates from Great Britain.

Mr. Joseph Collinson is leaving the Humanitarian League, with which he has been associated for the past fifteen years. He has been extremely active in carrying on the League's propaganda by means of letters in the newspapers and weekly journals. We are glad to note that he will still devote himself, in other directions, to humanitarian work. Mr. Collinson is a good Freethinker.

The August number of the *Humanitarian*, the organ of the Humanitarian League, deals with Mr. Foote's "interesting remarks on the letter lately addressed by Mr. Thomas Hardy to the Humanitarian League," and reproduces from the *Freethinker*, with due acknowledgement, Mr. Thomas Hardy's letter to Mr. Foote—which our readers will doubtless remember.

Mr. Hardy's letter would have been printed in half the newspapers in England if it had been written to anyone but Mr. Foote, and had first appeared in another paper than the *Freethinker*. Mum's the word, nearly always, when Mr. Foote is concerned. There never was a meaner press conspiracy.

Mr. H. A. L. Fisher's *Frederick William Maitland: a Biographical Sketch* was reviewed in last week's *Athenaeum*. The writer spoke in the highest terms of Maitland as an historian and a personality. We quote the concluding paragraph:—"But there is, indeed, something more. Maitland, as Mr. Fisher hints, was not only a great historian, a great teacher, and great political philosopher. He was of so simple and winning a personality that no one could be near him and fail to love him; and none of his friends can be the same as if they had not known him. There was something so humble in all his brilliance and erudition, something so tender and almost wistful in his manner, that he could not but touch the depths in those who had to do with him. The long-borne knowledge of his doom, the acute pain, possibly also the lack of any hope from beyond (for he was a convinced and unwavering Agnostic)—these may have in part contributed to that charm, half beautiful, half pathetic, which hung about him. Whatever the cause, there it was; the picture in this volume brings it all back to his friends. They honored the scholar-artist and revered the courageous assailant of time-worn legal and historical prejudices; they loved the man." We draw special attention to the fact of Maitland's "convinced and unwavering Agnosticism."

## "Falling Foul of the Ridiculous Person."

ALTHOUGH Byron said that "ridicule is the only weapon the English climate cannot rust," ridicule has many enemies. Stupid people, who must be literal or nothing, dislike it. Pious ladies, whose simple direct instincts and emotions prevent them from piercing below the surface of a statement, do not care for it. And those other wearers of the petticoats, the priests, whose professional instincts prompt them to reprove it with the whole vocabulary of theological abhorrence.

Without it is based on seriousness, said Heine, wit is only a sneeze of the reason. Every great wit in literature was a man of serious aims, and the greatest writers have been the greatest wits from the days of Aristophanes to those of Anatole France. Some of the best masters of the lash have been among the most earnest soldiers of progress.

A splendid example of sustained irony is found in Gibbon's fifteenth chapter of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, sketching the rise of Christianity. We all realise Gibbon's position. He was pretending to give an account of the early Christians from the Christian standpoint, so as to hoodwink the owls of orthodoxy. At the same time, he contrives to throw doubt and discredit upon the whole story. This is how he does it:—

"But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alteration in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history."

Gibbon is ostensibly censuring the sages for overlooking the Bible miracles. In reality, he is denying their occurrence by slyly pointing out that there is no contemporary record of them from disinterested sources.

The most perfect examples of irony are to be found in Voltaire's *Candide*, the wildest book in the whole world. Voltaire did not lop branches; he laid the axe at the root of the tree. Everyone should read this book. It is the most characteristic of all his writings. Here is a sample taken at random. When *Candide* was to be punished as a deserter—

"He was asked which he would like the best, to be whipped six and thirty times through all the regiment, or to receive at once twelve balls of lead in his brain. He vainly said that human will is free, and that he chose neither the one nor the other. He was forced to make a choice; he determined, in virtue of that gift of God called liberty, to run the gauntlet six and thirty times."

Swift, like Voltaire, was also a master of irony. Voltaire recommended the *Tale of a Tub* as a masterly satire against religion in general, and Thackeray denied Swift's belief in that Christian religion which he had ironically defended in his *Arguments Against Abolishing Christianity*. Maybe, the most terrible example of Swift's peculiar humor is *A Modest Proposal*, which is neither more nor less than a suggestion to use up for food the superfluous babes of the poor.

Singularly enough, the clergy have, with the usual stupidity, overlooked the fact that their God was an ironist when he said, upon expelling Adam from Eden, "Behold, the man is become as one of us!" Elsewhere in the Bible, Elijah imitates the august

example of the "Almighty," and uses ridicule in his encounter with the priests of Baal. They had cried in vain to their god; but the fire would not come. Elijah turned upon them, and said, in the language of to-day: "Where is your god? Why does he not answer? Has he gone on a journey, or what is the matter with him?" This is the language of irony and the deadliest sarcasm. The Christian God was so fond of humor that, when his son was executed, he permitted an ironical inscription on the cross.

"God's" humor took the form of simple, elementary irony. In this he did not rise much above the level of a 'bus conductor or street urchin. The real masters of irony are much more polished and delicate.

Heine lay for seven years prior to his death, sick and solitary on a "mattress grave," his back bent, his legs paralysed, his hands powerless, his sight failing, "God's satire weighs heavily upon me," he said.

"The great Author of the Universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven, was bent on demonstrating with crushing force to me, the little, so-called German Aristophanes, how my weightiest sarcasms are only pitiful attempts at jesting in comparison with His, and how miserably I am beneath Him in humor, in colossal mockery."

The untameable humorist kept his most wonderful jest for the last. "God will forgive me," he said, "it is his trade."

Irony will be found in Fielding's *Jonathan Wild the Great*, in the acidulated pages of Flaubert, and under the suave sentences of Renan. It also lurks in the robust humor of Rabelais and in the suggestive pages of Diderot.

Matthew Arnold compared the Trinity to the "three Lord Shaftesburys," and he never showed weariness of the pastime of bishop-baiting. He was continually making fun of the Bishop of Gloucester, and of his alleged desire to do something for the honor of the Godhead.

Swinburne treats the priests with fearful derision in his "Hymn to Man." He represents them as calling on their god, and he says, "Cry aloud, for the people blaspheme"—

"O, thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their God by thy name.  
By thy name that in hell fire was written, and burned  
at the point of the sword,  
Thou art smitten, thou God; thou art smitten; thy  
death is upon thee O Lord;  
And the love song of earth as thou diest, resounds  
through the wind of her wings—  
Glory to man in the highest! for man is the master  
of things."

Thomas Hardy has shown himself a master of irony in the concluding chapter of *Tess*, and in many another place has used it with deadly effect. But the dictionary definition of irony must be altered. It is not enough to say that it is "a mode of speech expressing a sense contrary to that which the speaker intends to convey." It may be true of Biblical irony, or the similar elementary irony of the streets; but it does not define the more complex irony of literature. We much prefer George Meredith's definition:—

"If instead of falling foul of the ridiculous person with a satiric rod to make him writhe and shriek aloud, you prefer to sting him under a semi-careless, by which he shall in his anguish be rendered dubious whether, indeed, anything has hurt him, you are an engine of irony."

This is well said by one of the greatest masters of the lash in the English language.

MIMNERMUS.

### A SAILOR'S PRAYER.

"O Lord, I am no common beggar; I do not trouble Thee every day; for I never prayed to Thee before; and if it please Thee to deliver me this once, I will never pray to Thee again as long as I live."

## Is There a Heavenly Father?

BY W. W. COLLINS.

"There is no alleviation for the sufferings of mankind except veracity of thought and action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is, when the garment of make-believe, by which pious hands have hidden its uglier features, is stripped off."—HUXLEY.

HOWEVER crude the belief, Christians were entitled to some credit for consistency when they tenaciously held by the theory that the evil in the world was due to the determination of the Devil to mar God's handiwork. The theory may have been totally inconsistent with the omnipotence they attributed to Deity, but, at least, it did not impeach his reputation for goodness, nor represent him as utterly indifferent to the welfare of the creatures he had made. But with the disappearance of the Devil believers are driven to endless efforts, some subtle and some silly, some ingenious and some superficial, to reconcile the evils of this world with their belief in its government by an omnipotent God who is also "Our Heavenly Father."

The recent calamity at Whitehaven, by which more than a hundred and thirty coal miners have been blocked up in the burning hell of the deep sunk mine, is a terrible reminder of the fearful risks men have to run in their necessary efforts to earn bread for themselves and their families. Did "Our Heavenly Father" know before these men went to their work that they were going to certain and frightful deaths? Did he know, too, that their deaths would make widows of eighty-eight wives and render two hundred and fifty children fatherless? And did he, knowing this, do nothing to prevent the awful human holocaust with all its immediate heart-breaking sorrow and its legacy of future poverty and misery? In the face of such a tragedy as this the usual sophistries by which theologians attempt to minimise, to explain away, or to justify the miseries mankind has to endure, are seen to be what they really are, mere fallacious attempts to justify their own fallacious theory of things. Who is there, who has seriously considered the extent of human suffering, who has not felt with Jefferies that it is "so great, so endless, so awful, that the whole and the worst, the worst pessimist can say is far beneath the least particle of truth, so immense is the misery of man." The easy optimism which tells us "God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world," and that all things happen for some wise and beneficial end, is certainly not the result of an appreciation of nature and life as they really are. Such easy optimism is suggestive of minds hypnotised by religious fallacies rather than an intellectual appreciation of actual facts. The pious ejaculation of Sterne's that "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" is falsified every day and every hour of our lives. Facts, terrible and tragic, emphasise the conviction that God does nothing of the kind, so that in their innermost hearts men know the statement is not true.

In a booklet, entitled *Is There a Heavenly Father?* the Rev. Samuel E. Keeble tells us that "Pain and suffering do not predominate in nature; they are exceptional. Happiness there is far in excess of misery." He also asserts that the more parrot cry of "Nature red in tooth and claw" is a most incomplete, partial, superficial, and unscientific view of the economy of nature." He asks us "to listen to the warbling choir in the spring woodlands," to "mark the gambols of the lamb and the tiger cubs," and assures us that "the struggle for existence is, in the main, a painless unconsciousness, and even pleasant one." But surely it is such a view of nature as this which is really incomplete, partial, and superficial. Life is not made up of warblings and gambols, it is a perpetual struggle, a struggle so persistent and so intense that by far the great majority of all living creatures die without ever attaining maturity, and therefore without ever experiencing life full and complete. Even of the human race, more than one-fourth of all born die before attaining their fifth

year, and one-half before their fiftieth; so that the actual average of human life is but little more than forty years. There seems to be something wrong in a system of things by which countless creatures are produced of which only the veriest fraction ever attains to the full span of life; it is inconceivable that such a system is presided over by a power which, in any proper meaning of the term, can be called beneficent, much less designated a Heavenly Father. It is all very well to say, as the Rev. Mr. Keeble does, "that pain and suffering in Nature are not wanton, but purposeful; that they secure the safety, the existence, the preservation, and the progress of the creaturely world; that they are a necessary element in that great system by which the whole sublime economy of the organic world has slowly attained its present wonderful variety and perfection; that they are sufferings which are in the interests either of the creature itself or its species, or of the general order of Nature," and that "they are necessary to progress." But is all this anything more than a series of skilfully spun phrases, which really hide or evade the real difficulty—the difficulty of morally justifying ever present pain and suffering? As Winwood Read forcefully put it in his *Martyrdom of Man* :—

"Pain, grief, disease, and death—are these the inventions of a loving God? That no animal shall rise to excellence except by being fatal to the lives of others—is this the law of a kind Creator? It is useless to say that pain has its benevolence, that massacre has its mercy. Why is it so ordained that bad should be the raw material of good? Pain is not less pain because it is useful; murder is not less murder because it is conducive to development."

"The whole sublime economy of the organic world" is a fine phrase, but it is much more sonorous than sensible. Where do you find economy in the organic world? Its every method is that of lavish wastefulness; prodigality, not economy, is its universal characteristic. That a few creatures may survive, thousands are sacrificed; that a few may enjoy the comforts and pleasures of life, thousands must suffer its ills and pains; that a few may reach the full span of life, thousands must be prematurely cut off. This is organic Nature's inexorable law, its "sublime economy"—this also its beneficence and its justice.

The contention that pain and suffering serve some useful purpose, and that they secure the safety, existence, preservation, and progress of the creaturely world, is one which is wholly indefensible as an explanation and much less as a justification of those evils. Again and again it has been pointed out that many of the most acute pains serve no useful purpose whatever, and that they accompany some of the most trivial ailments and unimportant illnesses. Nature's utter indifference to the good or the bad effects of pain is so obvious that it is logically impossible to regard any particular instance where pain serves some useful end as other than merely incidental. In his *Nature of Man*, Metchnikoff says: "A physiological phenomenon, such as childbirth, is often attended by extremely violent pain, which is absolutely useless as a danger signal. On the other hand, some of the most dangerous diseases, such as cancer or kidney disease, may exist for a long time without causing any sensation of pain, with the result that the sufferer knows nothing of the presence of the disease until it is too late. Were pain to play the part assigned by Nordau (the part of enabling us to recognise dangerous symptoms and to guard against them) it would appear in cases of danger, and yet would never become unbearably acute." It may be quite true that pain plays a part in the elimination of the unfit, but then the question arises, Why, in a world controlled by a Heavenly Father, should there be any unfit? And this is a question which Theism is powerless either to suppress or to answer. It is not true to say, as the Rev. Mr. Keeble does, that "the universal prevalence of struggle, fear, pain, suffering, disease, and death amongst the creatures is to-day ostentatiously

cited as a demonstration of the cruelty and callousness of God." Nothing of the kind; they are cited, and properly so, as quite inconsistent with the theory of a Heavenly Father, who, out of his infinite wisdom made all things, and whose infinite mercy extends to all his creatures. To any such theory Nature itself gives the most emphatic denial. That pain and suffering are wrought into the very warp and woof of living creatures is as incompatible with mercy as the inequality of their distribution is with justice. Who would dare to say that the balance of pain and suffering is so adjusted that each one gets his share? And who would dare to say that they fall only on those who deserve them?

The author of *Is There a Heavenly Father?* declares that "the evil is terrible, and the problem great"; but has it never occurred to him that the problem is one of his own making? He has accepted a theory of things which cannot be squared with the facts. It is useless to rail at the Rationalist, and to tell him that to obviate the difficulty "it would be necessary to reconstruct the system of things upon quite other principles." The difficulty is a Theistic one only; it originated as a necessary consequence of the Theistic hypothesis, and it fades away immediately that hypothesis is dispensed with. The Rationalist recognises that, as Dr. Maudsley has well put it, "The facts of organic Nature, when observed frankly and judged without bias, do not warrant the argument of a supreme and beneficent artificer working after methods of human intelligence, but perfect in all his works." The Rev. Mr. Keeble himself seems to catch some faint glimmer of this truth; he tries to shift the awful burden of responsibility from the Creator to the creature by asserting, "it is not just to charge all the misery and wrong in the world upon God. Most of it is due to human, and not Divine, action." But man did not make himself; human nature, such as it is, is the product of a process for which man is in no sense responsible; and, however much his miseries may have been increased by his folly, unbrotherliness, injustice, and greed, these are just as much the results of that process as are the virtuous sentiments which condemn them. It has been well said that if we attach any meaning at all to the words "virtue" and "justice," there is neither virtue nor justice in creating some race of happy and moral beings at the cost of awful moral, as well as physical, sufferings to myriads of their forerunners.

To the Rationalist and the Agnostic it is evident that the Theistic assumption is incapable of legitimate defence, because it itself is illegitimate. To say that pain and suffering are helping to cultivate the higher virtues, that they are part of the Divine scheme whereby human progress is perfected, that they serve as a warning, and an education from dread events, that for the greater part they are the results of human ignorance and folly, and that there is another life with its compensations, is to indulge in verbal sophistries which do but mock us with their emptiness. At best they are but comfortable cloaks under which shelter is sought from the pitiless peltings of uncomfortable facts; they may be excuses, but they certainly are neither adequate explanations nor moral justifications. However true it may be that the pains and sufferings of past millenniums have contributed to the progress, the fruits of which we enjoy, that fact can never be either a consolation, a compensation, or a justification to the countless hosts of victims whose mangled remains form the steps by which we have risen to our present position.

—"The Examiner," Christchurch, New Zealand.

Father Vaughan says that saints are of two classes—ready-made and manufactured. He seems to set most value on the second class. Self-made saints (we suppose the Father is one) sometimes suggest that their being self-made saves the Almighty the authorship of a questionable piece of work.

## Lincoln's Religion.—II.

By DR. J. B. WILSON.

(From the *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*.)

(Concluded from p. 493.)

WHEN Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency, his scepticism was brought up against him. Out of twenty-three ministers of Springfield, only three were for him. Mr. Newton Bateman, President of Public Instruction, called on Lincoln to discuss the dilemma. The charge of "infidelity" was being rapidly spread all over the country.

"Mr. Bateman," said Mr. Lincoln, "I am not a Christian—God knows I would be, but I have carefully read the Bible and do not so understand the book."

"These clergymen know I am for the freedom of the territories—for freedom everywhere, so far as the constitution permits, and they know that my opponents are for slavery. They know all this, yet, with the Bible in their hands, they are going to vote against me. I cannot understand it."

All this is mighty interesting, in view of the fact that they are now claiming as a Christian a man who said, "I am not a Christian." Mr. Bateman, who reports this, was a Christian, and therefore his statement must be true. It is further interesting as showing the difference of how clergymen regard Lincoln dead and how they regarded him alive. Now they try to claim him; then, they tried to destroy the heretic. Funny, isn't it?

But happily the excitement over the impending war drowned out the clerical cry of scepticism, and Lincoln was elected. But had it been a time of peace, Lincoln wouldn't have stood any more show than a snowball in a particularly oft-mentioned warm place.

Mr. Lincoln openly expressed himself as not believing in the Atonement. He declared it "illogical and unjust and a premium upon evil doing." Nor did he have any faith in death-bed repentance, nor in infant damnation, nor sanctification, nor in miracles, declaring that "the Supreme Power demonstrated itself through order and method, and not by violations of nature's laws." Much other of Christian dogma, dear to the Christian heart, he repudiated.

One of the severest criticisms he made was the following in reply to the frequent question asked him, "Why he didn't join church?" He said: "Whenever a church will inscribe over its altar as a qualification for membership the Savior's statement of the substance of the law and gospel—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself—that church will I join with all my heart and soul."

If this means anything at all, it means that in Lincoln's opinion there wasn't a church in existence in which Christians loved God with all their minds and souls, and their neighbors as themselves—as Christians profess to do; and there was no likelihood of there being such a church. Consequently, he was safe in saying he would join such a church. While his words are diplomatic, they are in fact a severe arraignment of Christian belief and practice, and in face of this stinging rebuke Christianity to-day is making itself laughable in its attempts to bed-fellow with "Old Abe."

Mr. Herndon, his law partner, who states that Lincoln was an avowed sceptic—a Deist of the Paine class of thinkers—says that Lincoln once told him that all the creed he had was that of an old man named Glenn, whom he heard speak at an experience meeting. "When I do good," said the old man, "I feel good; and when I do bad, I feel bad"; "and that," said Lincoln, "is my religion."

After Lincoln got into the swim of politics, and went to Washington, like a good politician, he became, like St. Paul, "all things to all men" on those matters involving their prejudices.

Lincoln knew men and human nature. He was one of the greatest of diplomats and as sleek a politician as ever lived. He had a great war on his hands, daily growing in dimensions. He had no time to bother with petty religious and other delegations, which constantly besieged him with their whimperings and fault findings and conflicting advices.

He apparently agreed with all, and sent them away feeling good, and then went about his business as though they had not been there.

But on one occasion his patience was tested. A delegation of three hundred ministers called upon him, urging him to proclaim the freedom of slaves. They even went so far as to tell him that God had revealed to them that it was his will that he (Lincoln) make this proclamation.

Lincoln replied, "If it be probable that God would reveal his will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed that he would reveal it to me directly," and so dismissed them in a jiffy; whereupon arose a mighty howl in Israel.

Lincoln had not only the South and the scheming governments of the old world, including the Roman Church, to deal with, but many secret and treacherous antagonisms in the North. He could not afford to make a single enemy in the North. When Quakers, Baptists, Methodists, and all the rest waited upon him and told him that their prayers were with him, he thanked them for their prayers, and even asked them to pray for him, or at least they said he asked them. If I had been in his place, I would have done the same. I would have kept the best brand of sacred soothing syrup on hand for all such visitors.

Lincoln confessed to Wendel Phillips and others that he had to use every art of diplomacy in managing the many political and religious discontents and factions in the North, none of which knew the inside state of affairs, but all of which wanted to run the war their way.

That Lincoln did not trust to prayer is evidence by these words:—

"Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes his aid against the other. Neither's prayers have been answered. An all-powerful God could stop the war if he wanted to, still the contest proceeds."

"What is to be is to be, and no prayers of ours can arrest the decree." No one knew better than Lincoln that success depended upon management, money, patriotism, and men.

The coddling Lincoln gave all the many Christian delegations that often annoyed him, no doubt impressed many of them that he had grown to be a regular "Hard-Shell," and accounts for the many stories afloat of his Christian belief. He had to do it. With the responsibility of such a war on his hands, there was no time for any other consideration. The war was paramount, and Lincoln needed every man for a friend.

As the war grew, and the burden became heavier, it is noticeable in all of his State papers and addresses he began to give greater recognition to the Supreme Power. In statecraft, however, this is a kind of a habit, handed down to us from the kings of the earth. It is like our oath, with the "So help me God" attachment. Not one person in a thousand ever thinks about God when taking it. Just as thoughtlessly and indifferently the Lord is shoved into party platforms and State papers.

Just how much of this was habit and diplomacy with Lincoln there is no means of knowing. Anyhow, we observe Lincoln speaking of himself as "an humble instrument in the hands of Providence," and using such expressions as these: "If God wills," "If it be the pleasure of Almighty God," "As God gives us to see the right"; thus acknowledging a Supreme Power. But this, remember, is in no way a recognition of the Christian religion. The Deists, Paine and Volney, who had such a powerful influence upon Lincoln's belief, were the very firmest believers in a personal God.

It is a well-known fact that many of Lincoln's addresses and State papers have been garbled, giving God recognition when Lincoln never mentioned the name of God.

In his famous Gettysburg speech, God was not mentioned. Now, as it is generally given out, it is made to read: "That this nation (under God) shall have a new birth of freedom," etc. It is thus they have doctored the dead.

Likewise, in his Emancipation Proclamation, in the original copy, he forgot all about God. Chase, noticing this, suggested that, in such an important proclamation, the Deity should be recognised. "All right," said Lincoln, "write out what you think ought to be said"; which Chase did, and so the Lord of all the stupendous universe didn't get left. He went in the proclamation just as Chase put Him in. Lincoln was too good a politician to haggle about the Lord just at that time.

It is also well known that Lincoln at times inclined to the belief of Spiritualism, and consulted mediums with members of his Cabinet. With all his greatness, he had his superstitions, and was very much a human being.

Summed up, Lincoln was a Deist to the end of his days. He believed in a Personal God. He never belonged to any church or subscribed to any creed. His awful position and responsibility made him feel at times that he was an instrument in the hands of a Divine Providence. In his days of greatest discouragement, when he knew not whom to trust, not even those around him, when mentally fagged and hardly a shadow of his former self, he may have fallen on his knees in a moment of weakness and prayed, as has been stated of him. But let him speak for himself. His own words will best convey his position, and here they are:—

"I have never united with any church, because I found difficulty in giving my consent, without mental reservation, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine, which characterise the articles of belief and the usual confession of faith."

"The Bible is not my book, nor Christianity my profession. I am not a Christian."

If the Christian hell be true, and that most of mankind go to it, to burn forever and ever, then man should have no other duty, no occupation or object, but to pray, pray, unceasingly pray, to keep out of it. But there is no hell. If God be a just God, all will be saved or none."

Shortly before he died he said, "My earlier views of the unsoundness of the Christian scheme of salvation and the human origin of the scriptures have become clearer and stronger with advancing years, and I see no reason for thinking I shall change them."

From this I infer that, had he lived, in his later years he would have resurrected the thoughts that Wells threw into the fire, and thus taken his stand beside the greatest and most progressive thinkers of all the ages, and so rounded out his most remarkable career.

The statement of Mrs. Lincoln is as follows: "Mr. Lincoln had no hope and no faith in the usual acceptance of the words."

His son Robert, Herndon, his law partner, and Hay, his secretary and biographer, verify the same.

From what I say here I refer the reader to the *Life of Lincoln* by Nicolay and Hay, his private secretaries, and to other biographers who record the testimonies of those closest to Lincoln, and who know him best.

In the face of all this, which is well known to all who study Lincoln, how can ministers and Christian writers even partially claim him as their own.

If he had been a plain man in private life, would they claim him as they do? If he had not been a great historical and ideal character and martyr, would they make any claims upon him at all? Not a bit of it. Instead of claiming him they would be damning his memory for his unbelief, and his soul to-day would be sizzling in hell.

In the language of Lincoln himself, how can men and women "trust such an important matter as the salvation of their souls" to those who either conceal, misrepresent, or sigh for a return of the days of miracles.

What every honest man wants to know about a great historical character is the man as he was—beliefs and disbeliefs, virtues, faults and all—instead of what other people who come after him think what he ought to have been, or as they would like to have him be. The Christian clergy, in thus honoring Lincoln as a Christian, make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of the many, who know that he wrote that book and later openly denounced all the chief tenets of the Christian faith. They not only make liars and hypocrites of themselves, but would try to make a liar and hypocrite of Lincoln.

If Christians succeed in making a Christian of a dead man who was never a Christian when a live man, we may all look for a return of the days of miracles and even apprehend that the millennium is at hand.

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JULY 28.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. Barry, Bowman, Cowell, Davey, Heaford, Lloyd, Leat, Nichols, Rogor, Schaller, Samuels, Shore, Thurlow, Wood, Dobson, Lazarnick, Lewis, and Rosetti.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed, and the monthly cash statement accepted.

The following new members were admitted: Parent Society, 2; Islington Branch, 1; Kingsland, 1; North London, 1; Ogmere Vale, 2; Rhondda, 5.

A new resolution concerning grants to Branches for open-air propaganda was moved by Mr. S. Samuels, followed by a long discussion, and finally carried.

Mr. A. Lewis, the new delegate from Wood Green in place of Mr. Evans, resigned, reported good work done by the Branch.

The following sub-committee was appointed to consider the two resolutions passed at the Annual Conference concerning Cremation and Lecture Scholarships, and report to the next Executive meeting: Messrs. Cowell, Davey, Lloyd, Samuels, and Shore.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

The Negro Holiness Church of Hutchinson, Kansas, held special services on the afternoon of July 4, to pray that Johnson might defeat Jeffries in the fight between them. The victory came off on schedule time; but it is not probable that we shall see this direct answer to prayer frequently cited in Christian apologetic literature in token of God's readiness to hear his children. Yet it is fully as convincing as any of the instances customarily given.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

## 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, C. Cohen, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, F. Schaller, "Christianity v. Reason"; 6, Miss K. B. Kough, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "The Light That Failed."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, E. C. Saphin, "The Gospel According to Smith."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, Mr. Davidson, a Lecture. The Green, Enfield: 7, Mr. Smith, a Lecture.

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

### COUNTRY.

#### OUTDOOR.

HUDDERSFIELD AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Kirkburton): 8, G. T. Whitehead, "Do We Believe?" Market Cross: Saturday, at 8, G. T. Whitehead, "Christian Teaching."

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