

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXII.—No. 14

SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1912

PRICE TWOPENCE

When women reason and babes sit in the lap of philosophy, the victory of reason over the shadowy host of darkness will be complete.—INGERSOLL.

Hot Cross Bun Day.

ON the back of a donkey there is something like a cross. Christian superstition says it was impressed upon the one that Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Since then it has been transferred to the whole species, and every ass is a proof of Christianity.

A similar proof is the cross upon the buns that are eaten on Good Friday. Christians fancy it has something to do with the crucifixion of their Savior. But in reality it has no such connection. Sacred cakes were eaten at the same time of the year by the ancients. Bryant says that "one species of sacred bread which used to be offered to the gods was of great antiquity, and called *Boun*." Hesychius, according to Brand, speaks of the *Boun*, and describes it as a kind of cake with a representation of two horns. Diogenes Laertius says it was made of fine flour and honey. It seems to have been known to the Egyptians. Jeremiah refers to the cakes offered by Jewish women to an Egyptian goddess. "We only retain the name and form of the *Boun*," says Hutchinson in his *History of Northumberland*; "the sacred uses are no more." The Romans prepared sweetbread for their feasts held at seedtime, when they invoked the gods for a prosperous year. It has been suggested by Sir Henry Ellis, Brand's editor, that the form of the cross on buns in England is a relic of Popery; people who could not sign their names made—as such people still make—the mark of a cross instead, and this mark may have been made by the common folk upon their Good Friday buns. But it is well known now that the cross is a pre-Christian sign. It was symbolic of fertility, and would naturally be used in the springtime.

Easter eggs, in the same way, have as much relation to the man in the moon as they have to Jesus Christ. Every animal springs from an ovum, and birds obviously so. Eggs were therefore used to symbolise generation and fecundity. Pliny, in his *Natural History*, alludes to the young people amongst the Romans painting eggs red, and playing with them. The Jews are thought to have borrowed the use of eggs at the Passover from the Egyptians. Afterwards the Christians made the egg a symbol of the resurrection—as it were, the life beyond life. The Paschal egg of the Jews, the Easter egg of the Christians, and the Spring egg of the Pagans, all mean the same thing at bottom. The dormant life of nature manifests itself at this season, as the time comes when the chick bursts through the shell.

What rational connection can there possibly be between buns and Crucifixion? How can a couple of baker's dabs across a plat of sweet dough have anything to do with the death of Jesus Christ? How could the eating of these productions—mainly by children—suggest the Passion of the Son of God? The fact is that nearly all Christian observances are meaningless, or at least puzzling, until we go beyond Christianity, and question the older

Paganism, for an explanation. The Christian Church adopted the Pagan rites, festivals, and celebrations, and associated them arbitrarily with episodes in the pretended history of its alleged Founder. The Crucifixion, for instance, was located on the Friday before the Passover in order that the whole drama of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah might be transacted during that sacred period. There is not the slightest historical evidence that Jesus was executed on that particular Friday, and Jewish writers have pointed out that the chronological, as well as the other, details of the story show considerable ignorance of the religious and political life of the people of Israel.

It is extraordinary that Christians do not ask themselves why the death-day of Jesus is always a Friday, and why that Friday shifts from year to year. Supposing an anniversary falls one year on a Friday, it would fall the next year on a Saturday. But that never happens in the case of the anniversary of the death of Jesus. It falls on the same day of the week every time. But if the day *never* varies, the week *always* varies. Now why is this? If Jesus really died on a particular afternoon in a specified year, his death-day ought to be celebrated with absolute precision. Of course the day of the week would vary from year to year, because of that odd day in the calendar; but the date—that is to say, the day of the month—would always be the same. If it was the thirty-first of March one year, it would be the thirty-first of March every other year. But the death-day of Jesus changes its date annually. And this very fact suggests that Christians are not celebrating an historical event, but are really celebrating a fictional occurrence.

Would it not be very strange if we had to make an elaborate calculation every year to decide when we ought to observe the birthday of Julius Cæsar or William Shakespeare? Would it not be stranger still if the calculation turned upon the phases of the moon and the position of the sun in the zodiac? But that is how the death-day of Jesus is determined annually. It cannot fall *before* the spring equinox, and it falls as soon *after* as the full moon allows. Clearly, therefore, the celebration points back to an ancient sun and moon worship, both of which are artfully conciliated in this shifting chronology.

The very name of Good Friday is a proof that it has nothing whatever to do with the death of Jesus or anybody else. Christians say that Jesus was an innocent victim, that the Jews murdered him, and that his crucifixion was the most awful crime ever committed in this world. Yet they call the bogus anniversary of that event *Good Friday*. They ought to call it *Bad Friday* or *Black Friday*.

If the Christian God, or even a third part of him, really died on this day, Freethinkers might well call it *Good Friday*. But why should Christians do so?

Of course it may be replied that Jesus died to save us from hell and secure us a place in heaven—whether he has done so or not, for it has generally been taught that most human beings go to the Devil's house at the finish. But if this is a reason for calling the day *Good Friday*, the Christians should stop hating or despising the Jews, and love them with all their hearts. Judas Iscariot himself ought to be held in the highest affection; indeed, the most magnificent monument on earth ought to be erected

to his memory; for it was he who pushed Jesus on to his crucifixion, and thus established the first emigration bureau for the New Jerusalem.

So much for the Christians. As for the Free-thinkers, they may speak of Good Friday with a clear heart, and enjoy themselves upon it without mis-giving. It is a part of the great Spring festival, when the year is really new-born, and the sun really begins to shine, and the perennial life of Mother Earth bursts forth with fresh magic, and the days lengthen, and the air grows sweet, and the promise of summer is everywhere, and all things seem to gladden and rejoice.

G. W. FOOTE.

Proving God.

PETER GREEN, Canon of Manchester, is one of God's official representatives on earth. When the office was vacant the Lord looked over the earth and deliberately "called" him to the post. The method of his induction to the office substantially affirmed that there was more in the appointment than is involved in the selection of a man for any worldly position. And, indeed, many of the dignitaries of the Church appear to be where they are for no earthly reason whatever. They are where they are because they have been brought into a peculiar intimacy with Deity. They have felt the power and presence of God, and they have a substantial annual proof of his interest in their temporal welfare. Therefore, they, if any, are authorities upon all questions relating to God. They can look down upon others with the calm superiority of the man who knows. Their information is, as far as it may be, first hand. They *know* that their redeemer liveth; other and less fortunate people can only speculate on the matter.

When, therefore, Canon Green delivers a lecture on the "Proof of God," one's interest is aroused. A man who has some proof of God is the kind of person most people would be interested in meeting, and for whom many are always searching. For a proof that is a proof should settle all controversy, and the disbeliever in Deity would be the first to acknowledge a proof if it were really forthcoming. But unfortunately for our expectations, Canon Green's lecture does not live up to its title. Indeed, he commences with the deliberate avowal that he intends leaving out of the discussion "those things which are a question of the intellect." And how can one do this and prove God? For all proof is a matter of the intellect, and the question of the existence of God peculiarly so. It is quite a mistake to assume that belief in God is primarily a matter of the heart—to drop into popular phraseology. It is primarily a matter of the head. It may live by appealing to emotions, but that is quite another matter. It is the God *idea* that is essential, not the God emotion. The belief in God must always be in the nature of an inference derived from experience. Whether the believer be a savage or a civilised person makes no difference to this truth. The only difference that exists is the class of facts or of experiences from which they are derived. These facts may include the whole of life, as in the case of the savage. They may cover special groups of facts, as in the case of the now defunct Bridgewater Treatise method. Or they may include only poorly understood facts of human psychology as is now the current method. But the same truth persists throughout. The belief in God is always an inference which people fancy they are justified in drawing from certain observed facts.

You cannot, then, put the intellect on one side, although we cheerfully concede that Canon Green reduces its operations to a minimum. What he does is to appeal to personal experience, as though there were any substantial difference between conclusions derived from personal experience and conclusions derived from a study of nature. In either case it is a question of interpretation. Whether one sees the

proof of God in the structure of a planetary system, in the development of animal life, or in one's inner mental experience, matters little. They are all forms of interpretation. A man who intended travelling by a certain train altered his mind and goes by a later one. The train is wrecked, and the man sees the hand of God in his preservation. Another man gets drunk, misses the train, and is also saved from destruction. No one sees God in the second case, although the result is identical. It is pious to see God in a change of mind, but blasphemy to find him in a glass of whisky. It is all, I repeat, a matter of how we interpret our experiences. All that Canon Green really does is to count an ignorant interpretation as of more value than an enlightened one.

Thus, Canon Green cites "a very brilliant young Oxford man"—who offers very little evidence of brilliancy—why he believed in God. The reply was, "Because of the power of prayer." Not, it was explained, because God had actually given him anything, but because of the sense of peace and power that came to him when he prayed. For a very brilliant man this is not very encouraging, and one marvels at the Oxford standard of brilliancy—unless it is the Canon's own standard. For, obviously, the man didn't believe in God because he prayed; he prayed because he believed in God—or, at least, he believed in prayer. If I went down on my knees and spent a couple of hours in prayer, I am afraid that the only abiding impression left would be that I had been making a first-class idiot of myself. But I cheerfully admit that the results would be different with some people. I am quite ready to believe—nay, I affirm—that if anyone believes in prayer he will generally feel stronger and better for praying. People derive inspiration from all sorts or sources. The smell of flowers, a cigar, particular pictures, a thousand and one objects or circumstances, may bring mental peace and serenity. And, clearly, prayer is no exception to the rule. A habit of praying, with a belief in its value, will unquestionably induce a feeling of peace and of strength that results from peace. But to find in this a proof of God is just one of those puerilities in which the clerical mind delights.

Canon Green asks, "How much of what we believe about God can we prove in our own personal experience?" Well, if my own personal experience goes for anything, the answer is, Nothing. And I believe that if the question is only fairly and intelligently faced this would have to be the answer of everyone. Canon Green says that daily experience proves God. A North countryman said to him, referring to an Atheist speaker, "Let him marry a good woman and bring up four children, and he'll know whether there's a God or not." One wonders why. To marry a good woman isn't such a rare event in the world. Nor is the bringing up of four children an unheard-of performance in the absence of a belief in God. The Canon seems to attribute something darkly profound to the remark, but its profundity probably lies in its unintelligibility. Of course, a man with a wife and four children sometimes finds it convenient to pretend to believe in a God. But that is because there is a Christian practice abroad of making one's family suffer if they avow themselves Atheists. Daily experience in this direction does not prove a God; it only proves the bigoted and tyrannical character of believers in God. Piety often secures conformity, even though it cannot compel conviction.

Another of the Canon's wonderful proofs is that of an old man, always poor, always having to work for a living, and yet always getting enough. At every difficulty God had met him with a miracle. Fortunate fellow! Perhaps, as this man was a relative of the Canon's, it would be safest to assume that God was specially interested in the Green family. But all people are not so happily placed or so highly favored. There are thousands always poor, always ready to work, but who cannot always get it to do. And there are scores of families broken up, and brought to destitution and degradation for want

of the miracle God brought to bear upon Canon Green's relative. All want is not the outcome of vice any more than all wealth is the reward of virtue. And if want were the outcome of vice, one would think it should be God's chief business in the world to prevent both. Bungle though he may, man does at least try to do this. But God—if there be a God—does nothing. He is the supreme idler in a universe where idleness sooner or later brings its own punishment. And the punishment for a God who does nothing is that men cease to trouble about him.

One must compliment Canon Green on the convenient manner in which people turn up to endorse his views. Perhaps it is that they recognise a kindred spirit in Canon Green, and so say to him things they would be ashamed to say to others. A young Manchester man, "second in command on a very important paper," said to him, "I never knew what it was to be a man until I found God." Of course, the anecdote may be a true one, and the journalist may have meant what he said, or he may have been just "getting at" Canon Green. At any rate, it is a common religious expression, and one feels a certain contemptuous pity for those who use it. For the man who never knew what it was to feel like a man until he found God is a poor enough creature. There is the whole world of human life around him to excite his manhood. There are the claims of family and friends and fellow human beings. There is the world of literature, of science, and of art. But none of them singly, nor all of them in combination, are enough to arouse manhood without finding God. Well, I repeat, the confession is poor enough; and its poverty is demonstrated in the making. Indeed, it confutes itself. For the man who makes it in all sincerity is really confessing that his real manhood needs yet to be awakened. A man may confess that he can only refrain from stealing while he is under a policeman's eye. The confession may represent no more than the truth, but it can hardly be taken as an indication of a properly developed character.

The truth is that the journalist and the cleric were on this occasion agreed on an ignorant interpretation of a sociological truth. A little inquiry would most probably have elicited the information that he meant, by finding God, no more than that he had learned to lose himself in the human life around him, and had by this means recovered a larger, truer, and more valuable self. And this is the only way in which real manhood ever develops. Manhood is not something that results from intercourse between God and man, but is a result of man's intercourse with his fellow-man. It is this fact that people like Canon Green have before them when they talk about man finding God. Man never does find God; that is a hopeless search for an impossible object. What man finds is himself. And this discovery involves the realisation that "God" is never more than a perverted image of the human mind. Man creates gods as he establishes kings. And the ultimate destiny of both lies in his own hands.

C. COHEN.

God's Love and Miracles.

GRANTING, merely for argument's sake, that miracles in the New Testament sense are possible, we have still to encounter the question, Have they ever happened? Liberal Christians generally answer this question in the negative, the Christianity they profess being entirely non-miraculous; but so-called Evangelical Christians, who are an overwhelming majority, return an emphatically affirmative reply. Professor Harnack, of Berlin, one of the finest historical scholars Christendom has ever produced, published a book a few years ago, entitled, *What is Christianity?* in which he maintains that the Fatherhood of God, which is the only Christian doctrine that really matters, can be held without any reference to the miraculous. Dr. Harnack is, perhaps,

the ablest and most influential of all Liberal Christians, whether in Europe or America. The Rev. Dr. Newton Marshall, of Hampstead, is a capable representative of Evangelical Christianity, and at the recent meeting of the Free Church Council he read a paper, entitled "The Miraculous an Essential Element of Our Christian Faith," in which he makes a bold attempt to show that Professor Harnack's position is wholly indefensible. Having, as he thinks, triumphantly established the proposition that miracles are theoretically possible, he proceeds to prove another proposition, to wit, that God's love could not possibly be revealed without miracles. We give our assent, but, at the same time, venture to challenge the affirmation that God's love has been revealed at all. In short, we have the temerity to reject both the miracles and the revelation said to have been conveyed to mankind by means of them.

But let us follow Dr. Marshall's interesting argument. He says:—

"If it be urged that God comes to us in Christ as one of ourselves and not as a miraculous person, we must reply that that is just the point at issue. We have no ground for believing that Jesus was a non-miraculous person; but we have ample ground for believing that if He had been a non-miraculous person He would never have induced men to believe that God is Father."

Again we give our assent. Nothing is more indisputable than that the Gospel Jesus is a miraculous person; but we are face-to-face with the fact that, on the assumption that the Gospel records are true, Jesus only succeeded in inducing a few fanatics to believe that God is Father. The simple truth is that neither a non-miraculous nor a miraculous person could ever have induced reasonable beings to believe what is not true. We call upon Dr. Marshall to give evidence on our side. He may be an unwilling witness, but this is what he says:—

"At best, there was no convincing evidence in Nature and history that God was Father. There was so much pain and anguish in life that, though some were able to say, 'He is strong,' and fewer, 'He is wise,' and fewer still, 'He is just,' none beyond one or two elect souls, whose teaching was rejected by their fellows, ever said with conviction, 'God is loving.' And how could they?"

It is amazing to find a minister of God employing Nature and history as witnesses against his Master's character. There must be a serious mistake somewhere. As a distinction is drawn between Nature and history, we infer that by the latter is meant the history of mankind. According to Dr. Marshall's theology, both Nature and mankind were made by God; and yet it is frankly admitted that from neither can a convincing evidence be adduced that their Maker is Father. Our unwilling witness continues:—

"Men's inability to believe in the love of God was a habit of mind drilled into them by innumerable generations face-to-face with sorrow, sin, and death. For an archangel to come and say, 'God is love,' would not be enough to overcome the evidence of the tremendous array of sinister facts. People who heard the archangel would shake their heads and say, 'Ah, you are only an archangel; you don't know what life is.'"

We are getting on famously. Scripture says (John viii. 17) that "the witness of two men is true"; but we have the witness of the history of the whole human race, and the witness of Nature as well, that God is not Father.

What more do we need? Happily, Jesus was not an archangel, but a supernatural person who yet lived the life of a man. He was overwhelmed with woe; he was disappointed and ashamed; he died in ignominy and agony; he was tortured to death, crucified; and in the midst of physical and mental agony he had "that final woe, that awful sense of desertion and loneliness which comes, after all, to multitudes, so that he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'" Such, the preacher tells us, was the manner of the life and death of Jesus, and thus Jesus becomes a new witness to the truth that God is not Father. We have now three

distinct witnesses: Nature, history, and a supernatural person, submitting irrefutable evidence that God is not love. And all this evidence has now come to us afresh through the mouth of a minister of the Christian Gospel.

At this point, however, Dr. Marshall and we part company; at least, he is no longer our witness. What he contends is that, though Jesus in dying tasted "the last dregs of life's ills," yet that awful death was not the *end* of him. Had it been, Dr. Marshall would have finally confirmed the unanimous testimony of Nature, history, and the life and death of Jesus. It is true that the Gospel Jesus persisted in calling God the Father of himself and his disciples; but then his life was so punctuated by sorrow and anguish and disappointment and shame, and his death so full of ignominy and undeserved agony that nobody would have believed him had his death completed his life's story. "In other words," says our divine, "without the supreme miracle of the resurrection the revelation of God's Fatherhood could never have been effective." We confess we do not see the force of this argument. Indeed, we are obliged to deny that it possesses either cogency or relevance. The assumption is that God is and ever has been the Father, and was most eager always to make that priceless truth known to mankind, although the facts of Nature and of history seemed to give it the lie. In the fulness of time he sent his supernatural, his only-begotten, Son down into the world in the form of a man, to endure the suffering and sorrow and persecution which generally fall to the lot of a good man, and at last to be murdered in the most heartless and barbarous manner conceivable; and we are assured that he treated his favorite Son thus in order to let his human children know that he was their Father also. Then, after Jesus had lain in the grave some three days, his Father raised him up and conveyed him back into his own bosom on the throne of heaven. Dr. Marshall is aware how absurd the whole story seems to the eye of common sense; but he cannot let it go. He says:—

"However men may protest against associating so great a truth as God's Fatherhood with so incredible a miracle as the resurrection, the fact is that not only would the great doctrine never have come to belief apart from the resurrection, but also if once the miraculous history is discredited, the doctrine will go too. Indeed, one is inclined to believe that much that passes for the great doctrine to-day has already lost the ancient grandeur. We conclude, then, that God could not come to us and show Himself in His supernatural beauty and goodness without miracles happening. That is, miracle is essential to Christianity."

We see that even in Dr. Marshall's estimate the resurrection is "so incredible a miracle," and also, on his own showing, so absolutely useless. The truth is that the bodily resurrection of Jesus has been abandoned by the highest minds in the Churches themselves. Professors Harnack, Schmiedel, and Bacon, Drs. Neumann and Gardner, Canon Henson and Dean Wilson, are only a few of the many representative Christians of to-day who no longer believe in the physical resurrection; and it is quite possible that Dr. Marshall himself does not believe in it. Perhaps he, too, accepts it in the so-called spiritual sense, though he did not let his Free Church Council audience know it. He speaks of it as a miracle, and it could not have been a miracle unless the *dead* Jesus had returned to life again. If he had an immortal part, and if it is that part which is spoken of as having risen, then resurrection is the wrong word, and the doctrine a complete illusion.

This is Easter Sunday. Take a glance at the world as it is to-day, and ask yourselves whether or not it looks like a world of brothers and sisters whose Father is an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving God. Compare Christendom with Heathendom, and tell us what difference the belief in a risen Lord has made. Is the human family a credit to its Divine Parent, or can God be pronounced a good successful Father when all his children are at sixes and sevens? We are passing through a tremendous

crisis on this island just now, an industrial crisis of dimensions never seen before, and resulting in incalculable misery and suffering to many thousands of men, women, and children; what has the loving Heavenly Father done to put a happy end to it? The impotence of those who call themselves his ministers has become a proverb. In the churches they will be singing to-day such doggerels as these—

"Christ the Lord is risen again;
Christ hath broken every chain";
"Christ, who once for sinners bled,
Now the first-born from the dead,
Throned in endless might and power,
Lives and reigns for evermore."

Was there ever such cruel mockery, such barefaced hypocrisy, such debased and debasing superstition? Dr. Marshall speaks at length of the miracle of the kingdom of God made possible through Jesus Christ; but this miracle also has always been only a castle in Spain. The only kingdom we truly need is the kingdom of man, and this can never come until the phantom kingdom of heaven has been abolished even from thought. What society cries out for is not any sort of miracle, or supernatural interference, but the gradual and natural rectification of all the wrongs and injustices from which it still suffers, after eighteen centuries of the imaginary reign of a risen Lord.

J. T. LLOYD.

Old Testament History.—IV.

(Continued from p. 204.)

ONE short paragraph will complete all that we need notice of ancient Egyptian history. In the reign of Rameses III. of the twentieth dynasty (about 1202—1171 B.C.) a great confederacy of the kings of Asia Minor and the neighboring districts, headed by the Hittites, overran Syria and Canaan on their way to Egypt, every race and tribe plundering the inhabitants right and left in their passage through the countries. Arrived in Palestine, this great coalition of princes pitched an immense camp in the "land of the Amorites," drawing their supplies from the surrounding districts. After a short stay, the confederated kings and peoples moved south, carrying everything before them, and, arriving at the frontiers of Egypt, commenced their attack both by sea and land. Here they were confronted by Rameses III. at the head of the Egyptian army. A great battle was fought at Migdol, in which the Confederates were defeated, their hosts thrown into confusion, and after an immense slaughter the broken army was driven from the field. Following up this victory, Rameses marched through Canaan and Syria, and reconquered, one after the other, all the revolted provinces. This accomplished, he returned to Egypt with a large number of prisoners, including thirty-eight princes or chieftains.

The passage of the great confederacy of kings of western Asia, and the fame of the sanguinary battle of Migdol, would be long remembered by the peoples of Canaan. The Israelites, amongst others, did not forget it; but, following their usual system of distortion, they represented *themselves* as the victors in that notable engagement. It was "between Migdol and the Red sea," they said, that the Egyptians overtook them after they had left Egypt, and there all Pharaoh's horses, riders, and army were overwhelmed by the returning waters, and every man of the pursuing army perished (Exod. xiv. 2). This version of the great battle near Migdol we find repeated again and again throughout the Hebrew sacred writings; but, alas, it is nothing but pure fiction.

How many reigns longer the Egyptian domination of Palestine continued is uncertain; but at some unknown date subsequent to the time of Rameses III. the Egyptian kings found themselves unable to maintain their sovereignty over Canaan. That country was then made up of a number of small independent

states, but, as time went on, the weaker were subjugated by the stronger, so that a less number of larger kingdoms ultimately resulted. Then was the time when a confederation of tribes became more than ever necessary for mutual protection; and then, probably, the tribe of Judah found its way into the south of Palestine, and, with the help of the tribe of Simeon, established itself permanently in that district by the slaughter and extermination of the older inhabitants, as related in Judges i.

The most approved method of acquiring new territory in Canaan is very plainly shown in the case of Dan. This tribe is named in the ancient Song of Deborah as one of those that "came not to the help of Yahveh" in the battle of Megiddo.

Judg. v. 17.—"Gilead abode beyond Jordan; and Dan, why did he remain in ships?"

The territory of Dan, in the earliest times, lay in the district around Joppa, with about ten or twelve miles of coast line, and extending inland for about twenty miles. After the withdrawal of the Egyptian rule, the Amorites in the neighborhood began gradually to encroach upon this territory, until at length (as stated in Judg. i. 34), they "forced the children of Dan into the hill country: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley." Thus, cooped up on the mountains with a few sheep and cattle, and cut off from their vineyards and corn-fields, the Danites chose five of their number to search through the land for a new territory that might be appropriated with safety. This search proved successful. In the extreme north of Palestine, near the source of the Jordan, the searchers found a city named Laish, surrounded by good fertile land of considerable extent, the occupiers being a quiet, law-abiding people, with no allies among the neighboring tribes. Having heard the report of their spies, the Danites selected "six hundred men girt with weapons of war," who "came unto Laish, unto a people quiet and secure, and smote them with the edge of the sword.....And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no dealings with any man" (Judg. xviii. 11, 27, 28). After slaughtering all these unarmed people, the Danites took possession of their territory, and changed the name of the city to "Dan."

The post-exilic editors of the book of Judges, who compiled the stories relating to the conquest of Canaan by Joshua and the division of the land by lot among the tribes of Israel, have inserted the following explanation of the Danites requiring a new territory:—

Judg. xviii. 1.—"In those days the tribe of Dan sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel."

This statement refers, of course, to a supposed "inheritance" given to the Danites by Joshua, which inheritance the tribe had never been strong enough to wrest from the rightful owners and occupiers. The Song of Deborah proves the statement to be an editorial fiction. The Danites, at the time the Song was composed, *did* hold possession of a suitable "inheritance"—one which doubtless had come down to them from their Phœnician ancestors, who, from the first we hear of them, had been connected with shipping and commerce. In their new settlement the Danites had no ships, Laish being about twenty-five miles inland. It is probable, too, that the tribe of Dan had seceded from the coalition that called itself "Israel"; otherwise they might have called some of the Israelitish tribes to assist them against the Amorites. But, as we have seen, the Danites rendered no assistance to the other tribes against Thothmes III. at Megiddo, nor, probably, at any later time; they were therefore left to defend themselves as best they could.

The Canaanitish tribes called "Israel" were those named in the Song of Deborah; no others appear to have been known to the writer. To those who "came not to the help of Yahveh" must be added the tribe of Reuben, which is evidently referred to in verse 16. The tribes of which no mention is made

are: Simeon, Levi, Judah, and Gad. Of these, the last named occupied territory south of the Jabbok on the east of Jordan. On the Moabite Stone it is stated that "The men of Gad dwelt in the land of Ataroth *from of old.*" When it is added that the name "Gad" was that of one of the gods of Canaan, there can be no doubt as to the Canaanitish origin of this tribe, which evidently had no relation or connection with those known as "Israel."

Next, as to Simeon, Wellhausen is of opinion that this tribe, in assisting Judah to take possession of the south of Canaan, was almost annihilated, the few survivors being incorporated with the tribe of Judah. We hear nothing of Simeon as a tribe later on.

With regard to the Levites, these people appear to have been the descendants of the ancient priests of Canaan, who wandered about the country performing, whenever required, the duties of priests. The name Levi signifies a wreath or garland, which they probably wore to indicate their profession. There was no grand Tabernacle like that described in the so-called "books of Moses"; but there were "high places" upon which sacrifices were offered all over the land. An account of one of these stray Levites (which is probably historical) is given in Judg. xvii. and xviii., though verse 30 of the latter chapter is an interpolation, inserted when the book was revised and edited many years after the return from the Exile.

There remains to be noticed the tribe of Judah. This tribe appears to be the only one that had no place among the original inhabitants of Canaan, though of the same race. They came, probably, from a district south of Judæa, and, like the Danites, obtained possession of the province to which they gave their name by conquest. They were a powerful tribe from the first, and it is not at all improbable that they were descendants of the "Khabiri" referred to in one of the Tell-el-Amarna tablets. If this be the case, it was this tribe that was first known as "the Hebrews"—a name applied later on to all the tribes of Israel. The tribe of Judah was never allied to the tribes called "Israel." We know that in later times there were two kingdoms in Canaan—Israel and Judah—each having its own line of kings. But before this separation Judah was never reckoned with Israel. Thus, in the reign of David a census was taken, the numbers being: Israel 800,000 men, and Judah 500,000 men (2 Sam. xxiv. 9). Again, a generation prior to this—in the reign of king Saul—the men of the tribes that came to battle are given as, Israel 800,000, and Judah 30,000 (1 Sam. xi. 8). After the secession of the tribes in the reign of Rehoboam, the kingdom of Judah consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with whom threw in their lot the Levites; while the kingdom of Israel included all the other tribes known by the name of Israel, the strongest being that of Ephraim.

The name "Israel" is said by some scholars to mean "a prince or prevailer with God"; by others, "ruling with God"; by Wellhausen, "El does battle"; by Canon Cheyne, "God fighteth." Whatever the name may mean, one fact is certain, viz., that the tribes that originally gave themselves that appellation were not worshipers of the god Yahveh. "El" was the common semitic name for any god. The worship of Yahveh was brought into Canaan by the tribe of Judah, whose tribal name was derived from that of their god. It is true that the names "Jehovah" and "Judah" do not appear to have much in common; but "Jehovah" in Hebrew is indicated by characters representing YHWH, which, with the pointing, become Yahu-ah; while Judah in Hebrew is Yehu-dah, or more properly Yahu-dah. This fact is referred to in Deut. xxviii. 10; 2 Chron. vii. 14; Isa. xliii. 7; Jer. xiv. 9, etc.; the last passage reading:—

"Thou, O LORD [*i.e.*, Yahuah or Yahveh] art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name."

The word LORD, printed in small capitals, represents the Hebrew name of the god—Yahuah or Yehovah.

Had the tribes that were known as "Israel" been worshippers of Yahveh, their name would have been "Isra-yah" or "Isra-iah"; of this fact there cannot be the smallest doubt. It may perhaps be objected that Yahveh—that is to say "the LORD"—is named in the Song of Deborah as the god of Israel. This, no doubt, is the case; but the Song was not written until several centuries after the events commemorated—when the tribe of Judah had found a place in the land—and the writer was probably of that tribe. In any case he was a Yahvist—that is to say, one who in his narratives always spoke of the god of Israel as Yahveh, like the other Yahvistic writers of a large portion of Genesis.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Jose Nakens and the "Freethinker."

El Motin of March 14, translates in full Mr. Heaford's article on "Spain and the Holy Office," with due acknowledgments to the *Freethinker*.

The translation is made (we do not know by whom) by someone with a good knowledge of English.

Appended to this translation there appears an equally good translation of Mr. Mann's letter, which was originally published in the same issue with Mr. Heaford's article. In that letter, it will be remembered, Mr. Mann appealed to Mr. Foote to reissue the chapter on the Inquisition in the "Crimes of Christianity" as a pamphlet. The pamphlet is as yet in the air, but the pages of the *Freethinker* have already been enriched, thanks to Mr. Mann, by the reproduction of the original pamphlet.

The veteran Jose Nakens prints at the foot of Mr. Mann's letter the following open letter, which being of more than personal interest, I here reproduce:—

"Mr. HEAFORD and Mr. W. MANN,—Are you anxious to tackle on the grand scale, and in a decisive manner, the publication of the 'Crimes of Christianity'? If so, I beg you will not be in too great a hurry with publishing it, and will give me the time to terminate my excavations which I have already made in the subsoil of Catholicism.

"I shall not be deceiving you if I say that I shall very soon be able to complete the gallery of stupendous documents, of facts much more stupendous even, which up to the present have been utterly unknown.

"When these are issued you will be able to say that the Inquisition was an unknown world which had yet to be explored. I hope to leave it thoroughly explored and unveil all its inner nakedness for exhibition to the whole world.—JOSE NAKENS."

Nakens is an old man terribly in earnest and anxious that his remaining years of activity may be full of death-dealing blows against the superstition of Christianity, and judging from the instalments of his labors that we have seen in *El Almanaque* and in *El Motin*, we may be certain that he will leave no stone unturned to let in the light upon the hitherto unknown abominations of the Inquisition.

The salutations and the sympathy of the *Freethinker* will go forth to Nakens, to Pey y Ordeix, and his brave co-workers.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

As the steamboat from Boston was about to leave for New York the other evening, a young man, leading a blushing girl by the hand, approached the polite clerk and said, in a low and confidential tone:

"Mister, me and my wife have jest got married and are looking for accommodations."

"Looking for a berth, I suppose," said the clerk.

"A berth! Thunder and lightning, no!" gasped the astonished rustic. "We hain't but just got married. We only want a place to stay all night, you know; that's all."

Acid Drops.

The Blasphemy Laws have been up in the House of Commons again. We take the following from the parliamentary report in the *Daily News* of March 28:—

"THE BLASPHEMY LAWS.

"Mr. Charles Leach (L., Colne Valley) called attention to the blasphemy laws, and made an appeal that they should be repealed. They might have been useful once, he said, when they were first introduced, but he hoped there would be no more prosecutions under them. He failed to find any good in prosecuting men for their religious beliefs or lack of beliefs. He was a Nonconformist, and the history of Nonconformity showed that prosecutions had helped it along. If blasphemy and syndicalism and the like were let alone they would die a natural death.

"Mr. J. King (L., North Somerset) associated himself with the appeal. Perfect freedom of speech with regard to religious matters, he said, was essential for the well-being and peaceful and national and healthy development of the intellect of our country. (Opposition laughter.) These prosecutions could not be continued without endangering the traditions of free speech.

"Mr. McKenna (Home Secretary) said he could assure Mr. King that there was in this country perfect freedom of speech in regard to all subjects, however disagreeable they might be to the listeners. There was only one qualification to the statement, which did not affect the matter of the statement at all, and this was that opinions must be expressed in a manner which preserved the ordinary decencies of controversy. He was appealed to to let these men alone. He would be glad to let them alone, but they would not let other people alone, for they used offensive language which might lead to a breach of the peace, and when a man did this he committed an offence against the laws of the country. The men who had been prosecuted had not been prosecuted for their opinions, but for the peculiar and offensive manner in which they had expressed them. It was not quite fair to speak of the blasphemy laws as old and obsolete laws which ought to be repealed. In a sense the old blasphemy laws were not acted upon at the present day. They had been construed by the judges for over fifty years to deal not only with the matter of a speech or writing, but the manner in which it was expressed."

We venture to thank Messrs. Leach and King for bringing this matter up so boldly. That the Tories should laugh at the idea of developing the intellect of England is perhaps natural. They know how difficult the process must be in their own ranks. And that Mr. McKenna should play up to them in his position as Home Secretary is also natural. Liberal Home Secretaries are always glad of an opportunity of pleasing the Opposition, especially at other people's expense. The attitude is an old and common one. It is referred to in the New Testament as making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, at our own trial for "blasphemy" in 1883, said that the Blasphemy Law was an unpleasant one to administer. Mr. Reginald McKenna doesn't find it at all unpleasant. He appears to delight in it. And the humbug of his reply on this occasion is worthy of the type of Christian and official that he is. We can see him in our mind's eye talking of "manner" with his best necktie on and caressing his beautiful moustache. "Manner" forsooth! Are all the bad manners in England monopolised by Freethinkers? Are they the only people who use "offensive" language in public controversy? How is it that no Christian ever gets prosecuted under the Blasphemy Laws—however "offensive" his speech may be, not only to Freethinkers but even to his fellow-Christians? The answer is obvious. The Blasphemy Laws were originally directed against all deniers and contraveners of Christianity. They are still used against deniers and contraveners—and against no one else. A man has to be an unbeliever before there is anything "offensive" in his remarks on the Christian faith. Our pious Home Secretary knows this as well as we do. He is not such a fool that he does not know he is talking mere blague on this question.

Put not your trust in Home Secretaries. Several persons knew better than we did at the time of the Leeds prosecution. A petition to the Home Secretary, they said, would do wonders. We didn't discourage it—our smile was internal—but we didn't believe it. And our signature was not on the petition. There is only one way of abolishing the Blasphemy Laws. We must go on making Freethinkers. When they are numerous enough to color juries there will be no convictions. Then there will be no prosecutions. And insolent (Reginald) Home Secretaries will stop talking about "these men."

It is safer to ask soldiers to shoot their officers, instead of rioters, when they are ordered to fire, than it is to speak

sarcastically about religion. The Home Secretary could not see his way to remit or reduce the sentence on the Leeds "blasphemers," but he has promptly reduced the sentences on the "Syndicalist" prisoners. Of course, there is no principle in Mr. McKenna's action. He moves or doesn't move according to his fears; in other words, according to his own interest and those of his party. A serious threat in the House of Commons is a wonderful stimulus to the right honorable gentleman's activity.

The editor of the *British Weekly* is convinced that the English working men are filled through and through with the religious spirit. This is a blessed phrase. "Religious spirit" may mean so much, or so little, or just nothing at all. It will cover everything from the half-insane antics of a Welsh revival meeting to a prosaic demand for more wages. The more intelligent portion of the working class have just about as much religion as any other class in the community. In these days of general education and popular propaganda heresy cannot be confined to a class, and the same influences that sap the religious opinions of other people also undermine the religious opinions of working men. Churches and chapels are not better attended in poor quarters than in rich ones. And, as a matter of fact, it is the impossibility of the Churches keeping the working man under control that induces the wealthier classes to more open neglect religion. If religion can no longer play its historic function of keeping people docile and content, its use, so far as the wealthier classes are concerned, is gone.

The Rev. W. Charter Pigott says that Christ deliberately preached to the poor. Exactly; "Blessed be ye poor." There never has been any lack of preaching to the poor. The trouble is that the poor are discovering they have been preached at long enough, and are inclined to become the preachers.

The Churches move—when they must. The Rev. Dr. Kelman, of Edinburgh, said the other day that "no amount of spirituality would make up for the neglect of social facts. I object to dealing in futures, and to having our problems settled for us beyond the grave while there is a housing problem nearer home." This has been said many hundreds of times in the *Freethinker*, and we are pleased to find some preachers accepting our teaching—even without acknowledgment. But Dr. Kelman went on to say that to neglect social problems was Paganism. We beg to assure Dr. Kelman that neglect of social problems was part of neither the theory nor the practice of Paganism. Whether the problems were dealt with in a satisfactory or an unsatisfactory manner, they were at least dealt with. It was Christianity that in Europe first deliberately put the ignoring of social questions as one of the roads to spiritual development. Christianity has only become more social as it has returned to the better ideals of the old Pagan world.

The Rev. W. M. Tate Stoate, vicar of Peabworth, has a new theory of the coal strike. It is foreign agents who are misleading the British working man. They are sent here, apparently, by some Foreign Power—probably Germany—to break this country up from inside, and make it an easy prey when the hour of invasion sounds. The same foreign agents, curiously enough, are working like Trojans for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales. The reverend gentleman explains it in this way. "Most of these fellows," he says, "are atheists and unbelievers." "Atheists and unbelievers" is good. Are there any Atheists who are not unbelievers? He prophesies that the grateful foreigner when he has secured Great Britain will put this epitaph over the British working man's grave: "Sacred to the memory of a fool." We venture to think that the reverend gentleman will die before the British working man, and that he might have the first use of the epitaph himself.

The Free Church ninnies are at it again. The two Sundays' intercession they had before made as much impression on the coal strike as a boy's water-squirt would make on the back of an elephant. Now they are having another try. They are setting apart half an hour for special prayer during the Good Friday services. As the strike promises to be pretty well over by then they will probably succeed this time.

Canon Green, of Manchester, thinks he can see in history God raising up the righteous nation and bringing the evil nation down to the ground. One of the proofs of this is the wonderful expansions of our world-wide Empire. Other nations will please note. We have the largest Empire—therefore we are the most righteous. Other nations should duly recognise our righteousness and acquiesce in our

dominion. This is a point that Mr. Churchill forgot in his recent speech on the Navy. He appeared to be under the impression that our supremacy depended upon the size of the Navy. We do not quite agree with this, but for reasons different from those of Canon Green's. Still, what Mr. Churchill ought to have done was to point out that we are a righteous nation, that our Empire has been raised by Providence, and that Germany and other nations should cease tempting God by threatening our supremacy. For we have been raised up by God, the Church is here to keep the Empire sound, and Canon Green is here to keep the Church up to the mark. All things work together for the glory of God, the extension of the Empire, and the comfort of Canon Green.

England's treatment of the slave, says Canon Green, is the one perfectly virtuous act in history "which God rewards to-day with a world-wide Empire." We don't like to contradict a Canon of the Church, but this strains our sense of deference. England did as much for the maintenance of the slave trade as any other nation in Europe, and while it was possible, made more profit from it than any other nation in Europe. We do not know any other two European cities that derived so much wealth from the slave trade as pious Bristol and godly Liverpool. Conditions never made slavery profitable in England, and thus there was no temptation to perpetuate it at home. But in the West Indies it kept it going long enough. England hung on to slavery while it was profitable; it gave it up when it no longer paid; and the true British spirit found moral and religious reasons for both courses. And we would remind Canon Green that to bring about this "one perfectly virtuous act" Christian owners of slaves had to have their human property *purchased* from them. And we are surprised at having a European reputation for hypocrisy!

John Forley, aged sixty, a window cleaner, being short of cash, went out playing an accordion in the streets in order to get money to pay his rent. He did his part, and the public did theirs, for they contributed 10s. 6½d. Then "Providence" took the matter in hand. Just as the poor minstrel was playing "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," near the Oxford Music Hall, he was knocked down and run over by a motor-omnibus. A few minutes after his admission he passed away. A Marylebone coroner's jury brought in a verdict of "accidental death." No remarks were made about "Providence" or "Gentle Jesus." That feature of the case was left for the *Freethinker*.

Speaking as Chairman at a Humanitarian League meeting in the Howard Hall, Letchworth, lately, Mr. George G. André, J.P., gave several illustrations of the "sentiment" with which people met what they called the *sentiment* of the League. He entreated one man's employer not to dismiss him for a trivial offence, as the dismissal might mean great and endless suffering for his large family; and the answer was that there was no room for sentiment in business. "He solicited," he said, "the signature of a well-known clergyman to a petition praying for the reduction of the term of penal servitude in a case where the sentence seemed unduly severe, and he got a curt refusal, again on the ground of sentiment." "It was a strange and distressing fact," Mr. André added, "that for the criminal man and the suffering animal he found the least sympathy among the ministers of the Christian religion."

We are inclined to believe that a correspondent who signs himself "A. T. P." has been pulling the leg of the editor of the *Church Times*. He writes concerning the belief in India as to the necessity of sacrificing life at the foundation of any great undertaking, and adds: "It would be interesting to know how far the idea is to be found in other parts of the world." Most students of folklore know that one need not travel outside the British isles for examples, and that it is deeply embedded in Christianity itself. The idea underlying the killing and burying a victim beneath the foundations of a building or a bridge was to create a guardian spirit or god for its protection. And this idea, this practice of god-making, is the pivot of the Christian religion—Jesus being only one of the many gods who were made in this fashion. But so far as the killing of a victim at the inauguration of an undertaking is concerned, we have a survival in our present custom of breaking a bottle of wine over the bows of a newly launched ship. The ancient Norse people, when a vessel was launched, actually crushed a human being on the rollers over which the vessel was forced. War canoes amongst savages are still sprinkled with human blood for the same reason. We do not use blood, but we use red wine. First the actual victim, then animal blood, then the wine that is the color of blood. Such superstitions die hard, and

it is not always difficult to retrace the various stages. And the prayers to God offered at a vessel's launching are quite on all-fours with the uncivilised petitions to the tribal ghosts on similar occasions.

"Providence" is the same in all countries. We see by a cutting from a Sydney paper that the Convent of Mount St. Patrick, in Gordon-street, has been struck by lightning. The great orb and cross on the summit of the steeple "reeled for a second on its dizzy perch, and then plunged downward to the convent roof," diving through all obstacles to the convent floor. Before the excitement of this occurrence had died down, the Anglican church of St. Matthias caught on fire. After a long fight with the flames, ending in what looked like a victory for the Fire Brigade, there was a fresh outbreak which was quenched by chemical extinguishers. This remarkable case of "Providence" should make the Sydney people—or rather the Sydney Christians—think a bit. They might ask whether "Providence" doesn't recognise its own buildings, or whether it is sick of the sight of them.

Several men were entombed by a fall of earth in a coal seam near Sheffield on Friday, March 29. Their mates started digging them out. After some hours they were able to communicate with them. One of them was very anxious for news on a certain matter. He didn't ask whether God was in his heaven, as Browning sang, or any other question of a religious character. "What won the Grand National?" he inquired. And the answer gave him greater satisfaction than if he had been told that Jesus Christ had visited the district. It assured him that he had won £100. This case will not appear in the Religious Tract Society's publications.

That Gospel carpet-bagger, Gipsy Smith, reports that during his Pacific Coast mission he preached to a million and a quarter people, and saw over thirty thousand people profess faith in Jesus Christ. If the first figure is correct, the second is not surprising. Indeed, it strikes us as ridiculously small. Anyway, Gipsy Smith knows his people, and the figures are clearly intended for the thoughtless. The thoughtful who are treated to these yarns of the wonderful results of the missions of Gipsy Smith and his kind will wonder how on earth it happens that, in spite of the reported tremendous results, the number of believers grows steadily less. The explanation is, partly that the figures given would not stand critical examination, and partly that the "converted" consist of those who turn up at every mission and lay themselves out for a mental debauch. In this way 500 people soon become 10,000 or 50,000, if the missions are sufficiently frequent. Gipsy Smith knows this as well as we do.

Henry Varley the evangelist died at Brighton on Sunday, aged 76. He was once a Notting-hill butcher, but he found a more profitable occupation. He took to butchering better men's reputations. One of them was Charles Bradlaugh. That is why in the old days—in the 'eighties—we used to call him Butcher Varley. He circularised himself into notoriety during the Bradlaugh struggle. He also called upon the House of Commons to put down the blasphemous *Freethinker*,—which the House of Commons tried, unsuccessfully. The *Freethinker* and its editor are still here. Henry Varley is—God knows where. If there is room for such a vulgar ignoramus in heaven, the place must be sadly in want of population.

"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." So can other people. A woman applying for relief at Pontypool, in consequence of the coal strike, was offered bread. She reminded the committee that "man doth not live by bread alone." They added sausages. The Bible is a very handy book if you know it well.

A lady school teacher held forth to her class on the wonderful character of the Bible. At the finish she asked, "Now then, what is the greatest book in the world?" One little girl held up her hand and answered "Shakespeare." "I've just told you it's the Bible" the teacher replied angrily. "No," said the maiden, "it's Shakespeare. My father says so, and he's a writer,—he knows." She couldn't be shaken on the point. So she got a caning for contradicting her teacher. Such is the method of religious instruction in the schools of a "Christian country" nearly two thousand years after Christ!

Mr. Morrison Davidson still treats the readers of *Reynolds'* to a weekly dose of Christian Socialist Anarchism. It is a strange hodge-podge, though not without its good and interesting features. Long may he flourish! even though his unflagging devotion to the mythical personage known as Jesus Christ is so touching. Mr. Davidson called him in last week's article "the greatest of Labor Leaders." One

of the passages in which the mythical personage refers to labor runs—"Labor not for the meat which perisheth." This would be a funny motto for a Trade Union—or on the top of a ballot paper *re* the Coal Strike. "Take no thought for the morrow" would be just as suitable.

Lords don't often write serious books, but Lord Ernest Hamilton is an exception, as we see by the press reviews of his book entitled *Involution*, which is evidently in some respects very advanced. "The clergy to a man," he says, "know the unreality of what they dispense." Of the doctrine of the atonement he says that it "would not be worthy five minutes' consideration were it not for the bar it offers to ethical progress." "The dogma of the virgin birth," he says, "still has a nominal existence, but it has little effective value in modern religion. It figures, indeed, prominently in the creeds, but outside of them makes little show."

Last October two French soldiers, Tisseau and Nolot, brutally cudgelled an old woman to death in a lonely farm near Le Mans. On Thursday morning, March 28, they were guillotined. They had appealed to the President, but their appeal was rejected, and they had to die. According to the French method they were awakened early in the morning and informed that their sentence would be carried out at once. The scene which followed is thus reported by the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*:—

"Both men showed unusual callousness. They sprang out of bed and dressed unaided. They confessed to the priest, and thanked their gaolers and avocats. They were offered a cup of coffee with rum and cognac, and accepted cheerfully. Tisseau, pressed to take another glass of brandy, said, 'Well, since it is the last, I accept, but all the same, you know, one mustn't abuse one's privileges.' Nolot, finding he could not take his cup on account of his hands being bound, said with equal cheerfulness, 'To take a cup like this you'd have to be a regular acrobat.' They said farewell to each other affectionately. Tisseau went first, and Nolot followed almost at once. Neither of them shrank at the sight of the guillotine, but went up to it quite calmly. The crowd, which had been waiting up all night to be present at the execution, pressed round the square hooting and shouting, 'A mort, Tisseau! A mort, Nolot!' It is seldom that criminals go to the guillotine with such indifference as these two men."

Note the fact that these brutes confessed to the priest. This does not mean that they made a confession of their crime, for they confessed that at their trial. No, it means that they went through the religious rite of confession to the priest as God's representative, presumably receiving absolution from him in the usual way. They were therefore good Catholics. And we are glad to hear it. "For this relief much thanks."

William Henry Broome, of Park-lane, Poynton, a miner and a well-known local preacher, has been fined £5 and costs (or a month's imprisonment) for stealing goods from stalls in the market place. He laid the blame upon his wife, who was fined £10 and costs. Valiant husband! Just like old Father Adam in the Garden of Eden story. The writer of that interesting romance knew a thing or two.

The Rev. Ernest Rattenbury would rather have his children brought up in Aglican or even Romanist doctrines than in Secularism. We can assure Mr. Rattenbury that no one is particularly concerned as to what doctrines he would prefer to have. That is a matter that concerns himself—and his children. What does concern others is Mr. Rattenbury's desire to force the whole of the community to teach his opinions to his own children, and even the children of other people. Of course, we quite realise that, in Mr. Rattenbury's opinion, when he has declared a certain kind of teaching to be necessary, that is ample warranty for the State providing that teaching. This is the outcome of the peculiar kind of swelled-headedness from which preachers are apt to suffer. Mr. Rattenbury says he can "feel the menace of secular education in the air." The menace! So might the burglar feel the menace of a policeman's footsteps.

Newspapers often contain praise of Mr. R. M. Morrell, the founder of the National Sunday League. There was a warm eulogy, with portrait, in last week's *Reynolds'*. There was no mention, however,—there never is—of the fact that he was an old Secularist, and that many, if not most, of his earliest colleagues were known at the Hall of Science. We had many a chat with Mr. Morrell in the 'seventies when he kept a newsagent's shop in Francis-street, Tottenham-court-road. James Thomson ("B. V.") used to call in the shop too. He was living then in Huntley-street, just round the corner. Had Mr. Morrell been a Christian Socialist, or something of that sort, the fact would always be duly announced. But it doesn't do to admit the pioneer work of mere "infidels."

Mr. Foote's Engagements

April 21 and 28, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—April 7, West Ham; 14, Queen's Hall; 28, Wood Green; 30, and May 1, Belfast; 5, Victoria Park; 12, m., Finsbury Park, n., Parliament Hill.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—April 21, West Ham.
- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £116 10s. 5d. Received since:—V. Phelps, 10s.; Joseph Bryce, 8s.; Frederic Walsh, 2s. 6d.; S. G. Mason, 2s. 6d.; T. H. Elstob, 10s.; W. H. B., 2s. 6d.
- V. PHELIPS.—It is very pleasant to hear from a judge like yourself that the *Freethinker* of March 17 (or any other) contains matter to make people "think furiously."
- J. B.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- JOSEPH BRYCE, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "Like many more of your appreciative correspondents, I can never hope to repay the debt I owe for the mental stimulus and intellectual fare which the pages of the *Freethinker* continually afford."
- NON SERVIAM.—We are not able at present to increase our bill for contributions to the *Freethinker*.
- S. CLOWES.—We will keep an eye on Constable's newly announced *Bedrock*, and your suggestion shall be borne in mind. We agree with you, in face of your little story of religious education in an elementary school, that "those who think religion is dead" are—well, unprintably foolish.
- CLIFFORD WILKINS.—See paragraphs. Thanks.
- H. A. BLAMPED.—Perhaps you will let us know the upshot.
- P. BOWEN.—It is a desideratum, as you suggest, but we cannot do any more drudgery than we are doing, and must wait till we can pay for the requisite help.
- E. GWINNELL.—It was not an article on Robert Owen, but he was referred to in it as one whose pioneer work was ignored because he was an Atheist.
- S. G. MASON.—We will answer you next week.
- JEANNIE MUNRO.—It would lead to a political discussion, which we are anxious to avoid in this journal.
- A. MURRAY.—It was Rabelais. He called it "the great perhaps" —*le grand peut-être*. Pope, not Dr. Watts, claims "Vital spark of heavenly flame."
- JULIAN ST. OREY.—Sorry you have been ill, but glad you are now better. With regard to your questions: (1) We believe J. B. Leno died many years ago; (2) Captain (afterwards Admiral) Maxse was, we should say, a thorough-going *Freethinker*. He wrote a strong letter to the *Daily News* against our own prosecution and imprisonment in 1883. (3) James Thomson's article on the *Daily News* was reprinted in the original edition of *Satires and Profanities* which we saw through the press in 1884. It could only be obtained now second hand. (4) *Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought* was really all written by us; Charles Watts did not write a line of it; it was a blunder of our salad days. We don't possess a copy, and we dare say we should smile at a good deal of the contents nowadays. But the idea of the book was a good one, and we should like to carry it out more effectively. (5) You say it is our duty to write our reminiscences of the old fighting days. We begin to think so too.
- W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.
- RICHARD ALLEN.—See "Sugar Plums."
- W. H. B.—Thanks for appreciation and good wishes.
- COMROS.—Will notice your letter next week.
- J. F. TURNBULL.—You will see that the secretary and the committee agree with us that our Glasgow engagement had better be cancelled. No doubt we should have "good meetings" in the common sense of the words, but a semi-success of that kind would not suit us in Glasgow nor would it suit the Branch either in connection with us. Glasgow must be kept a red-letter place for the President.
- E. M. VANCE (MISS), N. S. S. general secretary, acknowledges: Benevolent Fund—Blackburn Branch 14s., Edmonton Branch 5s., T. H. Elstob 5s.; General Fund—Edmonton Branch 5s., T. H. Elstob 5s.
- WHEN the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop 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. 8d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote wrote to the secretary of the Glasgow Branch suggesting that it would be advisable to cancel his engagement for April 14 in view of the general unsettlement caused by the coal strike. Mr. Owen consulted members of the Committee and they "all agree" with Mr. Foote's suggestion. "It will be a big disappointment to your local friends and admirers," Mr. Owen writes, "but perhaps if the autumn bring peace we will have the pleasure of a visit from you then." Certainly. Mr. Foote will not fail to see to that. In the meanwhile the Glasgow "saints" have the good old *Freethinker* to maintain the friendly connection.

There is no meeting at Queen's (Minor) Hall this evening (April 1—Easter Sunday). The lectures will be resumed on April 14, when Mr. Cohen will occupy the platform. Mr. Foote closes the winter course with two lectures on April 21 and 28.

Two final meetings, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., will be held at South Place Chapel (or Institute) on the first two Sundays in May. Further particulars will appear presently.

A Conference on the Blasphemy Laws, and how to secure their abolition, is arranged to take place at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, on Tuesday evening, April 16, at 7.30. Various advanced bodies will be represented. The National Secular Society will be represented by Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. J. T. Lloyd. It is hoped that one result of the meeting will be the formation of an influential standing committee.

The next "social" under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive will be held at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, on Tuesday evening, April 30. There will be the usual program of music, readings, and some dancing. Members of the N. S. S. are entitled to introduce a friend. No charge is made for admission.

The Committee of the South Shields Public Library, in response to an application from our old friend Mr. Thomas Lumley, had passed a resolution admitting the *Freethinker* to the newsroom table. The local N. S. S. Branch is to be congratulated on this happy issue of its long and patient work for freedom.

The Secular Society, Ltd., has engaged Mr. F. A. Davies to deliver open-air lectures during the summer months in London and in the provinces. The campaign will largely be carried on, of course, in association with the Branches of the National Secular Society throughout the country. Mr. Davies's engagements will be made up by Miss E. M. Vance, who is secretary of the N. S. S. as well as secretary of the Secular Society, Ltd. Those who want to avail themselves of Mr. Davies's services should lose no time in communicating with Miss Vance at 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C. His engagement starts on May 1. His work will not necessarily be confined to N. S. S. Branches, but wherever he goes he will try to form N. S. S. Branches if none exist.

Some time ago we mentioned the case of one of our readers in North Britain who had to give up the *Freethinker* because he was laid up with consumption and could no longer afford to buy a copy. We reported that we had put him on our free list, so that he might not lose the paper which he valued so highly, and which had so brightened his week for him. This statement met the eye of one of our readers—Mr. Richard Allen—of Thames Auckland, New Zealand, who sends us £2 for our correspondent, to whom we have the pleasure of forwarding it. His astonishment at such a handsome present from one who knows nothing of him except what is conveyed by that editorial note in this journal is naturally great. It is quite a big windfall to him and his wife in their present unfortunate circumstances, and he is deeply grateful. Mr. Allen will see this paragraph in due course with pleasure.

One of our readers at Sydney, who has gone there from England, writes: "I am glad to notice that the Sabbath is spent far differently. You don't see many top-hatted gentry going off to church, but rather young folk going off to a day's picnic up some lovely river such as the Paramatta, or Lane Cove, or else to harbor and ocean beaches, such as Manly, Covege, and La Perouse, indulging in mixed bathing (shameful!), yachting, motor-boating, etc., and altogether spending Sunday as it should be by the sea or river side, with nature's beauty all around, and the pure breezes giving health and strength for the coming week.....I am glad to say I still get the *Freethinker* (only a month old) every week from home, and am casting about here, there, and everywhere for converts."

Modern Materialism.—III.

(Continued from p. 198.)

"When Buddha was dead, his shadow still continued to be seen for centuries afterwards in a cave, an immense frightful shadow. God is dead; but, as the human race is constituted, there will, perhaps, continue to be caves for millenniums in which his shadow will be seen. And we—we have still to get the better of his shadow!"—NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, § 103.

"Though all men abase them before you in spirit,
and all knees bend,
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing look
to the end.

All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye
pass and be past;
Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die and the
waves be upon you at last."

SWINBURNE, *Hymn to Proserpine*.

BEFORE Herbert Spencer brought forth the *Synthetic Philosophy*, the great French philosopher, Auguste Comte, had propounded his *Positive Philosophy*, in which he linked the sciences together in one comprehensive whole. But Comte, although he must always receive credit for being the first to grasp this Monistic or universal philosophy, had not the "encyclopædic" knowledge of Herbert Spencer; his laborious life rendered it impossible for him to acquaint himself with the known facts of his time. The details of his great scheme abound with errors, his style of writing is unattractive to the last degree, being voluminous, verbose, and heavy, which has all tended to obscure the real greatness of Comte as the unquestioned founder of a universal philosophy.

Herbert Spencer always repudiated any indebtedness to Comte for his ideas, and to those who are acquainted with both systems the disclaimer is wholly unnecessary, although the two systems coincide in some parts, as, indeed, is natural and inevitable.

Comte was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, and was, by nature and disposition, profoundly religious. Spencer was trained in Nonconformity, and, at the age of thirty-one, we find him still believing in a God, for his *Social Statics*, published in 1851, contains a chapter upon "The Divine Idea"; but in his *First Principles*, 1862, he is definitely Agnostic.

Comte also relinquished Christianity, becoming an Atheist. Quoting the well-known Bible verse, "The heavens declare the glory of God," he observes that only among strangers to natural science did it still preserve any value, and declaring, on the contrary, that "the heavens declare no other glory than that of Hipparchus, of Kepler, of Newton, and of all those who have aided in establishing their laws."*

Both Comte and Spencer, having made their gigantic stride across the whole field of science, arrived at the same conclusion—that in the realm of nature there was no intervention of the supernatural. They could say with Lalande, the great astronomer, "I have searched through the heavens, and nowhere have I found a trace of God."†

Strange to say, both Spencer and Comte, having reached practical Atheism, both promptly repudiated it—Comte founding the Positivist Church of Humanity, for the reconstruction of society without the aid of God or King; and Spencer founding Agnosticism.

Comte's objection to Atheism did not arise from any doubt as to the existence of a God. We will state his objection in his own words, as follows:—

"Even considered under the purely intellectual aspect, Atheism only constitutes a very imperfect emancipation, since it tends to prolong indefinitely the metaphysical stage by its ceaseless pursuit of new solutions of theological problems, instead of pushing aside all such problems as essentially inaccessible. The true positive spirit consists in always substituting the study of laws for that of causes—the how for the why.

It is, therefore, incompatible with the ambitious dreams of a misty Atheism relative to the formation of the universe, the origin of animals," etc.*

According to this, we are debarred from inquiring into the origin of the universe, the origin of animals, in fact, into the origin of anything! Indeed, Comte carried this attitude so far that he declared an uncompromising hostility to all modern hypotheses respecting the nature of light, heat, and electricity, declaring that all the time spent in search of their nature and cause was simply wasted. He condemned the undulatory theory of light, and classed the interstellar ether along with phlogiston and the belief in spirits. These were all "primordial" problems impossible for man ever to solve; and it is amusing to notice that many of these "primordial" problems were solved during Comte's lifetime. He repeatedly asserts that we can never know the constitution of the stars, and even while he was writing Kirchoff and Fraunhofer were analysing their chemical constituents through the spectroscope. Lester Ward says:—

"In fact, the domain of the Unknowable in Comte's philosophy was enormous in its extent, and, when we contemplate the little that was left for man to do, we almost wonder how he should have regarded it worth the labor of writing so large a work."†

And, as he further observes, the amount of mischief of this glaring fallacy, more or less vitiating the real truths contained in his work, lent color to the claim that Comtism, were it to prevail,—

"would so far cripple every department of science as to throw it back into mediæval stagnation. For it would strike a fatal blow at all true progress in human knowledge by crushing out the very spirit of inquiry."

As we have remarked, Comte was of a profoundly religious nature, and, having discarded God and the supernatural, he straightway set about founding a religion which he named the Church of Humanity, by which he wished to preserve the shell of Roman Catholicism while getting rid of its kernel, Christianity, for which he entertained a very strong animosity. So in place of God he placed Humanity as an object of worship. In place of the Calendar of Saints he compiled a Calendar of great men; in place of the Church ritual he elaborated a new ritual closely modelled on the Catholic type. This religion of Positivism has been epigrammatically described by Professor Huxley as "Catholicism minus Christianity."

Mr. Benn observes of Comte's new worship:—

"Hastily abstracting the framework of Catholicism from its soul of theological belief, he uncritically gave that framework a value which was more than it was really entitled to; and he fell into this error under the pressure of associations peculiar to the time of his own early training. The son of royalist and Catholic parents, brought up, moreover, in the full flush of the romantic movement, he accepted its interpretation of history as final. Thus it happens that his enthusiasm for the mediæval Church curiously recalls Hurrell Froude's sentiments on the same subject; and their agreement is natural enough, since both took their views from the writings of the French Catholic apologists."‡

Professor Huxley sums up the matter in his whimsical style in a reply to Mr. Harrison's attack on Agnosticism. He says:—

"To put the matter briefly, M. Comte, finding Christianity and Science at daggers drawn, seems to have said to Science, 'You find Christianity rotten at the core, do you? Well, I will scoop out the inside of it.' And to Romanism: 'You find Science mere dry light—cold and bare. Well, I will put your shell over it, and so, as schoolboys make a spectre out of a turnip and a tallow candle, behold the new religion of Humanity complete!'"§

Although Positivism has had several brilliant exponents in this country—more so than in France, the country of its birth—its philosophy has been

* Comte's *Philosophy of the Sciences*, p. 24.

† *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. i., p. 90.

‡ Benn, *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, 1906, vol. i., p. 415.

§ Huxley, *Science and Christian Tradition*, 1902, pp. 260-1.

* G. H. Lewis, *Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences*, 1853, p. 88.

† Buchner, *Force and Matter*, 1884, p. 133.

translated by Harriet Martineau, elucidated by George Henry Lewes and John Stuart Mill; its religion and polity expounded by Professor Beesly, Dr. Congreve, Mr. Harrison, and many others. But notwithstanding this great array of talent, the Positivist Church has but a poor following. Dr. Jowett, being questioned as to what he had seen on his visit to the church in Fetter-lane, is said to have replied, "Three persons and no God."

Having now seen how Comte reached Atheism and then repudiated it, and his reasons—or rather want of reasons—for so doing, we will now consider the case of Herbert Spencer.

As we have said, Spencer, like Comte, arrived at Atheism and rejected it, and for much the same reason; and although Spencer always repudiated any indebtedness to Comte for his ideas, it is difficult to believe that he was not influenced by him in this matter; for Lewes, in his book on *Comte's Philosophy*, published in 1847, dwells upon Comte's rejection of Atheism, and gives his reasons, of which Lewes approves. Now, Lewes was an intimate friend of Spencer, and it is impossible to believe that they never discussed the subject between them, for Spencer bases his rejection of Atheism and religion upon the same grounds as Comte—namely, that the problems dealt with are insoluble.

But while Comte invented a new religion to take the place of the old one, Spencer, with the proverbial English instinct for compromise, proposed what he called a scheme of reconciliation between Religion and Science; which we will deal with in our next.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Echoes from the Past.

VARIOUS social and religious observances which, in the far-distant past, were pregnant with meaning, continue to survive in more or less attenuated forms. Survivals of earlier human sacrifices may be discerned in so-called Guy Fawkes celebrations among ourselves, as also in the practice of circumcision by modern cultured Jews. Numerous old-time salutations in democratic communities; the observance of the Lord's Supper in Unitarian chapels; the "skimmity rides" which have occasionally occurred quite recently in Wessex; and marriage by simple consent, which is still legal in Scotland and New York, all bear witness to this fact.

In the animal kingdom similar phenomena obtain. Most organisms betray a tendency to reproduce remote ancestral characters. Horses sometimes exhibit the long-lost stripes of their untamed ancestors; pigeons revert to the primitive blue form, and cultivated flowers will revert to their original wild appearance. Among animals, some apparently unimportant anatomical structure which has disappeared for countless generations will suddenly return. Horses with abnormal toes, for example, vividly recall the foot structures of their long extinct three-toed ancestors of the Tertiary epoch.

Quite naturally, therefore, may we expect to encounter, even in the most unexpected quarters, curious survivals and reverberations of a still more ancient past. In his anthropological writings, Darwin dealt with some of these, and more recent researches have materially increased their number. The extremely fish-like appearance of the early human embryo arrested the attention, and aroused the wonder, of the pioneers of the now important science of embryology. Darwin and Haeckel have emphasised the fish-like form of the heart of the unborn human child; Varigny has demonstrated the fish-like structures of its brain. The gill-slits of the human embryo, which begin to dwindle away by the fourth week of foetal life, are unmistakably pisciform in character; and the lungs of air-breathing animals, which fulfil the functions of the earlier gills, are merely the transformed swim-bladders, or

floats, of fish. That great authority on human adolescence, Professor Stanley Hall, concludes that the swimming, darting movements of the human body during sleep, indicate a "faint reminiscent, atavistic echo of the primeval sea."

The marked choice of water as a means of escaping the sorrows and sufferings of earthly existence seems to point to an unrestrainable desire to be reabsorbed in the old-time aquatic home. The enthusiastic delight which children display when paddling on the shores of the sea, in the pond, the brook, or even the muddy puddles of town streets, bears a similar implication. As Professor Chamberlain so well says:—

"Useful for comparison with these atavistic traits in man is the study of such creatures as have retrograded from land animals into water animals, or are in process of becoming such; the whale, porpoise, dolphin, once quadrupedal mammals, but modified in form to suit sea-life and swimming, until they are very fish-like in appearance; the seal, a carnivorous animal adapted to a life in water; the dugong and manatee; the walrus, the sea-lion, the beaver, the South American web-footed opossum, the duck-billed platypus, the polar-bear, etc., all show the modifying effects of a partial sea or water life."*

And just as these aquatic or semi-aquatic creatures carry in their structures and functions the indubitable evidences of their originally purely terrestrial habitats, so does the human animal—particularly before birth, and during childhood and adolescence—bear witness of earlier, and quite dissimilar, modes of life.

Passing upwards from man's piscene ancestors to his ape and monkey cousins, we find numerous close resemblances between human children and their less developed relatives. Although it may appear a dreadful statement, the writer has long been convinced that babies bear a striking resemblance to monkeys. Mr. Buckman (*Babies and Monkeys*) seems to entertain a similar view. He pokes fun at the cherished delusion that the latest and most wonderful of all babies is the "very image" of its paternal or maternal begetter. It certainly seems difficult for an unbiassed observer to realise that "the small-jawed, long and prominent nosed individual, with high forehead, was, in babyhood, prognathous, short and snub-nosed, with a remarkably receding forehead." Moreover, as Buckman goes on to remark, the differences between the infant and the adult are greater than the differences between some separate species of animals.

The greater development of arms than legs in the human infant; the motions and uses of the foot; practical non-use of the thumb; the pouch-like cheeks; the direction of the hairs on the upper limbs; the depression at the base of the vertebral column, from which the tail once protruded, all point to its simian descent. The child's instinctive dread of snakes—an almost certain example of the transmission of an acquired characteristic; the habit of hoarding things in secret; the monkey-like trick of placing between the legs articles which others covet; the movements of infants' nostrils and eyebrows, necessitate the same conclusion. The astonishing clinging powers of very young children "goes to show that our ancestors were tree-dwellers, and that the children clung to their mothers, whose hands were occupied in climbing from branch to branch."

Dr. Louis Robinson and other observers have noted the fact that this reflex act of clutching an object is of no service to the civilised child. But when man's distant progenitors were woodland dwellers, this grasping power possessed survival value. And it seems a very reasonable conjecture that the frequent inability of children under six or seven years of age to extend the hand perfectly straight is the result of thousands of years of bough-holding. The child's tendency to hide away from strangers is reminiscent of the period when its arboreal ancestors sought concealment in the

* *The Child*, p. 226.

shadows of the forest. Rocking infants to sleep, with its accompanying lullabies, is probably connected with the swaying of tree branches to the sound of the wind. The very general prevalence of tree divinities and worship, and the important part played by the monarchs of the forest in religion and art, and the wonderfully fond interest which children take in gathering wild flowers, all indicate hereditary remembrances of their woodland dwelling past. Kindred associations are suggested by the enthusiasm with which boys climb trees or swing from their boughs. The almost unconquerable desire to plunder fruit trees—especially those that bear apples—appears as a relic of man's arboreal life. As Schneider puts it:—

"Remarkably constant and obstinate is the inheritance of the instinct for apple stealing, which manifests itself so strongly in boyhood. Although for generations past the apple has been only an accessory food, and education has been working against this predilection for plundering orchards, the sight of the fruit arouses in the young human being still such a strong desire and so great an appetite that the instinct often overcomes all notions of danger, even when the apple is green and unpalatable.....There is no other food the sight of which awakes in youth so strong a desire as does the apple, and we are led to conclude therefrom that our animal or savage human ancestors must have been especially given to eating apples, a view which gains support from the fact that, with primitive peoples as with monkeys, the apple is a chief article of food."

Birds'-nesting is another almost universal passion with boys. They take to it as naturally as a duck takes to water. Monkeys are very fond of eggs, and various observers of these interesting animals have noted the marked similarity of their nest-plundering exploits to those of the soaring human boy. As that industrious ethnologist, Dr. Keane, has remarked, it is quite wrong to suppose that apes and monkeys are exclusively herbivorous in their tastes. As a matter of fact, they are sometimes "insectivorous and carnivorous, eating vermin, eggs, small rodents, and birds."

Dr. Stanley Hall has published an extremely interesting and suggestive study of survivals from the prehistoric past. His work contains a detailed "Study of Fears," which comprises a mass of carefully ascertained data dealing with the observed fears of 1,701 subjects, most of whom were under twenty-three years of age. Ungrounded fears and fancies are notoriously common with the young. These are frequently apparent in very young children, but appear to reach their highest intensity from the period of puberty to the time when, at the age of twenty-five, the reproductive system is fully developed. Past environmental influences most strikingly reassert themselves during this supremely sensitive stage of life. Dr. Hall contends that the relative intensity of these fears fits past conditions far better than it does present ones. Among adolescents particularly, "the intensity of many fears is out of all proportion to the exciting cause." The terror or aversion inspired by large eyes or teeth; curious uncanny sensations which occur in nocturnal sleep, or while lying in a state of semi-consciousness between the closing in of night and the first glimmerings of dawn; the fear of serpents and other terror-inspiring animals; the fear of thunder, wind, and storm, all point to the far distant arboreal past when the ape-man or man-ape was at the mercy of the elements, or prone to the attacks of night-wandering animal enemies.

Particularly interesting is the suggestion that "gravity fears" are largely traceable to man's exceptional and quite recently acquired erect posture. Among these misgivings may be included fears of high places, and fears of falling, sliding, hovering, climbing, flying, and other sensations which need not necessarily make the subject afraid. Hall thinks that some of these "may be considered as instances of arrest, some at the stage before the erect position was acquired," others are "due to an awakening of the normal impulse of the young of the human

species to get up, not only to the full length of the human body, but beyond."

Herbert Spencer once made the daring suggestion that our ideas concerning the appearances presented by the angels and devils of theology, took their rise from the fittings of dusky bats, and the nocturnal flights of pale plumaged owls. The persistence of the aboriginal dread of ghosts is certainly one of the most marked features of modern civilised communities. The almost morbid interest aroused by ghost stories throughout all classes of society; the almost instinctive desire to credit the most preposterous yarns concerning the mysterious; the prevalence of various spiritualistic cults, all illustrate this in their various ways. Many of the most cultured inherit from their savage and barbarous ancestors a bias to believe in ghosts, hobgoblins, and witches. Those mothers and nurses who fill the minds of children with the superstitions of the grey twilight past have much to answer for. As Mosso, in his monograph on *Fear* so well says, "The one who brings up a child represents its brain. Every ugly thing told to the child, every shock, every fright given him, will remain like minute splinters in the flesh, to torture him all his life long." The acquisition of a rational system of culture and nurture for the dawning intellect of the child, unfortunately remains one of the greatest desiderata of modern civilisation.

T. F. PALMER.

Sub-Editing the Bible.

IT was a great task, and, alas, never completed. Perhaps it was because neither Jones nor I had quite grasped the extent of the undertaking that we never got right through with our joint sub-editing of the Holy Scriptures. Possibly we stopped to squabble too often and too long by the way. Nevertheless, we made a big effort to sub-edit the whole book with a blue pencil, and the results, so far as they went, were at once amusing and amazing.

We were both, at that time, budding journalists engaged on an old-fashioned newspaper that left us plenty of time on our hands. Part of this leisure we had previously occupied, perhaps wasted, in desultory disputation on questions of a theological kind. Jones had almost enough faith to be a Unitarian of the more liberal sort, which, after all, is a great deal more than many pressmen I know can honestly lay claim to. I had considerably less. Even that small stock has, in the course of years, been further diminished. However, as, in our conflicts of opinion, we were repeatedly referring to the office copy of the Scriptures—which surely had never been in such requisition before—it gradually dawned upon us that we might as well cease discussion for a time, and try to put this court of appeal in proper order to begin with.

This was the inception of the great work upon which we spent many odd hours during the best part of a year. Where that sub-edited copy of the Scriptures has got to now I do not know. If it should ever have fallen into the hands of a pious believer, who by chance looked at its contents, I hope he was not too greatly horrified at the liberties taken with holy writ.

At the commencement of our labors I felt it necessary to impress upon Jones that we must do this work in quite a professional way. We must deal with the book on its merits, without fear or favor, and as if we had never seen it before. It seemed to me, from a casual glance, that it was too wordy, too diffuse—in fact, too bulky by half. It wanted cutting down—judiciously, of course.

Yes, he thought it would be improved by being brought into a smaller compass. Perhaps it would be necessary to rewrite it here and there. I knew he meant to strike out all the texts on which Trinitarians relied; but I let that pass. He said that, as it stood, it was not in the best presentable shape. He agreed

that there was a great deal in it which was unimportant and uninteresting. The best parts would be decidedly better for being brought closer together. The book would then have a greater chance of being read.

Thereupon we commenced with Genesis, and very soon, by our combined efforts, the Old Testament grew smaller by degrees, and beautifully less. We brought no great scholastic attainments to the task, but we thought we had plenty of common sense and a fair amount of literary taste, and it was no part of our design to trouble about the accuracy of the translation. And so we went on striking out all that we considered "unfit for publication," toning down the Mosaic laws, making short work of tiresome genealogies and the history of petty Hebrew kings, scratching out prophetic rhapsodies, and, in short, divesting the volume of all that we thought too ridiculous, or too obscure or irrelevant to the general purpose of the book. And the mention of the purpose of the book reminds me that one of the difficulties we encountered arose from the fact that we had never quite determined whether to treat the Scriptures as a story-book, in which case there was an abundance of amusing fiction and fable that might be preserved; or as a moral preceptor, in which case we found the morality hopelessly mixed up with the theology.

But as to the propriety of a drastic condensation we never had any scruple or doubt. We allowed no weak consideration for the feelings of Moses or the prophets, or even the "sweet Psalmist of Israel," to stay the blue pencil's work. Reporters, especially if they are young, are no respecters of persons. We had faced bishops unabashed, had our own decided opinions as to the relative merits of standard authors and popular actors, and, if we had been called upon for a "leader," would have threatened the Czar of all the Russias with a not less fiery vehemence than our editor was displaying just then. Judging by the sad havoc made in the sacred writings, Jehovah might well have concluded that either his enemies had written this book, or that it had fallen into the hands of two most ruthless and remorseless critics.

It is true that, at the earnest request of Jones, who was the more lenient of the twain, I gave a reluctant assent to certain passages remaining. I decidedly disapproved of them myself, and privately resolved to make a second revision, in which they would not be permitted to appear. Some of the passages, I convinced him, were libels on the Deity that ought to be suppressed. Others, I persuaded him, might very well be relegated to an appendix for the satisfaction of the curiously inclined. Occasionally, we were both of one mind as to an expurgation, and made it with scarcely a word of comment. Really, on the whole, it was refreshing to notice how literally Jones went on prying when once his critical faculty was brought into play.

When we looked back on the remains of "revelation," after a lengthened period of work, nobody could have been more astonished than we were that the book promised to be so remarkably thin. The attenuated collection of shreds and patches might well have made the Holy Ghost stare aghast with dismay. If our condensed version could have been authorised for general use, what a marvellous economy would have been effected in printers' ink! And yet, as far as I can recollect, the book was all the better for being shorn of much that we deleted. But then what was left made a very poor show, and to this day I have never been able to believe that any of it—either that which was expurgated or that which remained—could be, in the orthodox sense, divine.

Christians who are compelled to accept the whole of the Scriptures—all that is good, bad, and indifferent alike—have ever excited my sincerest commiseration. That they should also feel themselves called upon to circulate them in their entirety is much to be regretted and condemned. There are blots and blemishes in all great human works, with which the keen-eyed critic may readily find fault.

But then these otherwise noble productions are not pretended to be, or circulated as, divine revelations, which surely ought to be beyond the possibility of serious attack. Probably there is something comical in the picture of two young men sitting down to sub-edit the "Word of God." But we are told to "search the Scriptures," and, at any rate, we paid that very much over-rated book a higher compliment by the attention we bestowed upon it than does John Smith or Jack Robinson, who professes his belief in it, but never reads it at all, and probably believes in it the more for that very reason. As for the self-styled Christians who venture to adopt an eclectic policy, it is impossible to understand by what authority, or on what lines, they proceed. Who is to decide which is the human element and which the divine?

Z.

Re Firmin Sagrista.

I THINK Miss Ella D'Arcy, whose noble efforts on behalf of Sagrista are beyond praise, was not fully informed of the latest news when she wrote her letter in the *Freethinker* of March 31. I have sent to her *El Pais*, containing Sagrista's letter of thanks for the labors of innumerable friends at home and abroad, who, as he declares, secured his liberty, and enabled him, after eighteen months' incarceration, to enjoy the sweets of freedom and the comforts of hearth and home. Miss D'Arcy truly says that public opinion in England is the force of opposition that Canalejas most dreads, and I am glad that that opinion has borne fruit in the liberation of the great artist.

In conclusion, let me reassure Miss D'Arcy by saying that I have seen nothing in the Spanish press to contradict the glad news, which appeared in *El Progreso* so late as March 20, of Sagrista's release from captivity, together with the release of his fellow prisoner, Pahissa.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Humanitarian League.

THE Annual Report of the Humanitarian League, presented on the occasion of the Annual Meeting at the Westminster Palace Hotel (March 29) is a record of continued activity on various lines, especially for the reform of the criminal law and prison system and the prevention of cruelty in sport. Attention is drawn to the need of amending the Vagrancy Act, an old statute which still permits the use of the lash for trivial offences. Regret is expressed that facilities could not be found for the Spurious Sports Bill, which would prohibit, together with rabbit coursing and pigeon shooting, what the late Home Secretary described as "the painful and repulsive incidents" of the carted deer hunt. The League's influence is being extended by the formation of local Branches in Manchester, Glasgow, Sheffield, Croydon, and other places.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 28.

The President, Mr. G. W. Footo, occupied the chair. There were also present: Messrs. Baker, Barry, Cohen, Cowell, Davies, Heaford, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Samuels, Silverstein, Wood, Davidson, Dawson, Rosetti, Schindel, Bradford, and Miss Kough.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly balance-sheet was presented and adopted. New members were admitted to the Parent Society.

The suggestions as to the town where the Annual Conference should be held were next discussed, the voting being in favor of Leeds, with London as an alternative.

The President reported that the Secular Society, Ltd., had engaged the services of Mr. F. A. Davies for organising the outdoor work in the provinces during the summer months. His services would be available for the Branches and the arrangements would be in the hands of Miss Vance.

It was further reported that a Social evening would be held at Anderton's Hotel on April 30.

The meeting then adjourned. E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

HANLEY, STAFFS (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Saturday, April 6, at 7.30, "Broken Fetters."

DERBY (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Monday, April 8, at 7.30, "God is Dead"; Tuesday, 9, at 8, "The Philosophy of Death"; Wednesday, 10, at 8, "The Uselessness of Monarchy"; Thursday, 11, at 8, "The Nature and Origin of Christian Worship"; Friday, 12, at 8, "Materialism in the Nineteenth Century."

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Hunting Skunks*, G. W. Foote; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll. 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 6d. per hundred, post free 7d. Special rates for larger quantities. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire (by ballot) each year,

but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

The Society's solicitors are Messrs. Harper and Battcock, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—"I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy."

Friends of the Society who have remembered it in their wills, or who intend to do so, should formally notify the Secretary of the fact, or send a private intimation to the Chairman, who will (if desired) treat it as strictly confidential. This is not necessary, but it is advisable, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid, and their contents have to be established by competent testimony.

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Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

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

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalise morality; to promote peace; to dignify labor; to extend material well-being; and to realise the self-government of the people.

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Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

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