

THE Freethinker

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Nothing useful can be poured into a vessel that is already full of what is useless. We must first empty out what is useless.—TOLSTOY.

An Obscene Book.

MRS. BESANT was once before a judge and jury. The judge was a sensible man; he knew the world and had read and studied. But the jury were pudding-headed and would not take his direction. They found Mrs. Besant guilty of publishing an "obscene libel." That is what they called a harmless necessary pamphlet on the population question. They had the decency, however, to exonerate her from any evil motive. But her Irish blood was roused. She published another pamphlet entitled *Is the Bible Indictable?* She argued that it was, and that according to English law, as applied in her case, its publishers were liable to fine and imprisonment.

Fancy a magistrate asked to grant a summons against the British and Foreign Bible Society for publishing an obscene book! The worthy old gentleman might fall into a fit on the bench.

Yet no one in his right senses can deny that the Bible is—at least in parts—an obscene book. The lowest animal functions are often called by their vulgar names; there are frequent, and sometimes very brutal, references to the generative organs; the stories of lust, adultery, incest, and unnatural vice are enough to raise blushes in a brothel; and occasionally, as in the Song of Solomon, the most passionate eroticism is decked out with the most voluptuous imagery. There are things in the Bible, as everybody knows, which no minister dares to read aloud to a mixed congregation,—well knowing that all the bonnets would leave the church and all the bare heads wait for him—outside. Some of it would be too strong even at a "for men only" meeting. It would be hissed in a music-hall and howled at in a theatre. Yet the entire book, with all its obscene passages, is placed in the hands of children in our public schools; yes, and placed there as a text-book of morality.

Paul Bert, the great scientist and atheist, in the course of an educational debate in the French Chamber of Deputies, read out passages from certain Jesuit books of instruction, until the clerical members cried out "Enough!" It is impossible for a Freethinker to shame the Christians as he would. The worst parts of the Bible—to use a French phrase—do not permit themselves to be read aloud. To read them would be to affront the common decencies of civilised society. Nor is it even possible, if it were advisable, to print them. In our *Bible Handbook* we could only give references to the obscenities of Holy Writ, leaving the reader to find them for himself, in the only place where they should be discovered—in the oriental book which the Christians call the Word of God.

Some eighteen years ago an American Freethinker named Wise proved that he did not always live up to his name. He entered into an epistolary discussion with a Christian clergyman, and in the course of it he copied out the twelfth verse of the thirty-sixth chapter of Isaiah; whereupon the man of God had his opponent arrested for circulating obscene matter through the American mail. It was a mean

revenge, but it succeeded. Mr. Wise was found guilty and suitably punished. Thus a definite part of the Bible was declared to be obscene by a verdict in an American court of justice.

We said at the time that if we had been in Mr. Wise's place we should have taken the wind out of the prosecution's sails by pleading Guilty on the facts, and addressing the Court in this style:—"I admit that the text in question is obscene. No honest man could deny it. Its obscenity is beyond dispute, except in a church or an asylum. On this point, therefore, I have no defence. Consequently I plead Guilty in fact to the indictment. I did circulate obscene matter through the American mail."

Our personal opportunities would arise later on between the verdict and the sentence. We should present the court with some considerations why sentence should not be passed upon us. We should first draw attention to the fact that we were not the author of the obscene text for which we were prosecuted. Its nominal author was Isaiah, but its real author was the Holy Ghost; and we should submit that this personage ought to stand in the dock beside us, and bear the principal share of the court's displeasure. We should further suggest that the trial of the chief offender should take place first, and that we ought to suffer no pains or penalties until this was effected. We should also argue that it was invidious and malicious to single us out for prosecution. What others did with impunity ought not to be punished in our particular case. We had heard that very passage read aloud to a large class of boys. It was forced upon the attention of every compositor and reader in the offices where the Bible was printed. We should further point out that in selecting a dirty text from the Bible we were under the restraint of common decency, for we might easily have chosen some very much obscener passages,—in fact, we were rather astonished at our moderation. Finally, we should appeal to the judge, as a Christian man, not to fly in the face of his own revelation, wherein it is stated that *all* scripture is given by inspiration of God, and this verse in Isaiah being certainly a part of *all* scripture, whether it be obscene or not, bears the imprimatur of the Almighty. We should therefore respectfully invite the judge to defer sentence indefinitely or to bind us over in our own recognisances to come up for judgment on the morning of the resurrection.

We have not kept the particulars by us—though we daresay they exist somewhere in the great quarry of the *Freethinker*, and might be dug out by patient industry, unless the world came to an end first—but we recollect that there has been at least one other case since Mr. Wise's, and that the Bible passages quoted were branded as "obscene." In neither case, however, could the court suffer it to be argued that the Bible itself was obscene. Nevertheless, if the book could not be called "obscene" in the sense that it was a continuous obscenity from beginning to end, it contains passages which are in themselves obscene enough to be branded as such in a court of justice. Now this is enough for our purpose, which is to maintain that the Bible, as it stands—and how can it be expurgated and still remain the Word of God?—is an utterly unfit book to place in the hands of children.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Politics.

IT is rather unlikely that thoughtful members of the Conservative Party will offer a very cordial welcome to Lord Hugh Cecil's little book on *Conservatism*, one of the latest volumes in the "Home University Library." Lord Hugh Cecil is not a political philosopher of a very high order, and in this instance the defender of vested interests is obvious enough to arouse suspicion in the minds of most readers. Such expressions as "Ever since Conservatism arose to resist the revolutionary movement of 1789, the defence of property has been one of its principal purposes," may be true enough, but a more astute, and perhaps less convinced politician, would have left it unsaid. And, after all, the chief purpose of a State is, or should be, not the protection of property, but the promotion of life. Any particular conception of the nature of property may be right or wrong, but none of them are sacred. An ultimate justification for any institution can only be found in its beneficent influence on the well-being of all.

The chapter on "Religion and Politics" is also certain to make the book unwelcome to a large number of Liberal politicians, and also to a section of the Labor Party. The manner in which the book has been handled by some religious papers proves this. With these—politicians and papers—the game played has been marked by a certain artless simplicity. Its main features have been to carefully avoid all that is really and distinctively Christian; that is, doctrines, and to speak glibly about the Christian spirit, and the Christian sanction, and the practical application of Christian teaching, to claim all good legislation as the result of Christian inspiration, trusting that the repetition of familiar phrases will do away with the necessity for offering proof of statements made. Thus we have learned that the Old Age Pensions Act, the Insurance Act, with a number of other measures, are all practical applications of Christ's teaching and never could have transpired had not a number of Liberal and Labor M.P.'s been associated with the dissenting churches. Indeed, if one could take seriously most of the statements made in this connection, the conclusion would be that as a manual of political instruction and as a text book of social duty, the New Testament stands without a rival.

Most of this class will be displeased by Lord Hugh Cecil's insistence of the value of religion to Conservatism. Conservatives, he says, value the national recognition of religion, and are convinced of the importance of maintaining the religious life of the community. Moreover, it "insists on the national recognition of Christianity." Conservatism has, indeed, no function "more important at the present time than to watch over the religious life of the people in the sphere of politics." "The championship of religion is, therefore, the most important of the functions of Conservatism. It is the keystone of the arch upon which the whole fabric rests." Astute Conservatives are not likely to thank Lord Hugh Cecil for this deliverance, and a great many Liberals will feel it unwise to thus let the cat out of the bag. And quite apart from their special application to the Conservative policy of to-day, there is a profound historic lesson in these generalisations. For, as a plain matter of fact, it is religion that has always stood as the guardian of vested interests, and, therefore, it has always been important to a certain class to watch over the religious life of the people in politics. It is important for religion to be maintained because of what religion maintains. From this point of view Lord Hugh Cecil is continuing a policy that dates back to at least the time of Constantine the Great. To keep people religious has been the aim of rulers, no matter what their own opinions on religion may have been. And the more tyrannical, the more self-seeking, the greater the concern for the religious life of the people in politics. Whether others have recognised it or not, it has been the rule of practice in government that to keep

a people religious is to keep them submissive. When Charles the Second said that one stone removed from the Church meant two removed from the Crown, he put in a sentence what appears to be one of the main features of Lord Hugh Cecil's political philosophy.

In dealing with the question of the State and its relation to Christianity, Lord Hugh Cecil is on sound ground in pointing out that the New Testament is curiously wanting in definite teaching concerning the structure of the State. He says:—

"It must have struck every attentive reader of the New Testament that its direct teaching in respect to matters of State is slight and even meagre. Neither in the Gospels nor in the Epistles do we read much about the State. The duty of obedience to the State is more than once enforced. The separation of spiritual and secular is taught in the memorable 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' And throughout an example of patient submission to oppression is prominent."

No one can accuse Lord Hugh Cecil of exaggeration in this passage. It underestimates the truth, if anything. For the insistent note of the New Testament is unquestioning obedience to established power, whatever its character. "The powers that be are ordained of God," "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." The teaching is plain and unmistakable. Lord Hugh Cecil attempts an apology for this teaching by arguing that the very idea of the State involves the idea of obedience and the subjection of the individual to the State. This may be granted as true so long as we bear in mind that obedience and subjection may be either voluntary or enforced. And in any case most readers will concede that resistance to the powers that be is often treason to the real interests of the community. The State—if we use that word of the government merely—often lags behind the social consciousness, and in such cases it is in the interests of the larger communal life that resistance is offered. And in such cases the individual is not acting as a mere unit, he is a representative of the group spirit in revolt against a restrictive and oppressive influence. Certainly, in a book which is professedly taken by many as containing the character of human freedom and social progress, the last thing one would expect to find would be an unhesitating and unqualified condemnation of resistance to established power no matter how great the tyranny might be.

And the striking historic fact is that State oppression has always found its strongest support in the teaching and spirit of the New Testament. Luther found there his authority when he cautioned the peasants of his day that no Christian was justified in rebellion against established authority. The Stuarts, in their attack on English liberties, found in the New Testament full sanction for a teaching of non-resistance. And it is an instructive fact that, as Macaulay pointed out, it was the New Testament that was chiefly relied on by those in authority, and the Old Testament by those in revolt. This was again paralleled by the slave owners of America circulating the New Testament as an anti-abolitionist tract, and drawing marked attention to its teachings in favor of slavery. Lord Hugh Cecil admits that the opinion that "the subject has no righteous remedy against tyranny on the part of his ruler, however great that tyranny might be," has "much to support it in the New Testament," but adds that no one nowadays defends this belief. This may be true, but we are not really concerned with what people believe about the virtues of passive obedience, but what the New Testament actually teaches. And that this is a teaching of passive obedience, an obedience that gains in merit from the tyranny exercised, no one who reads the New Testament with an unbiassed mind can doubt.

The truth is that a sound political program has to-day to be based upon some definite theory of the nature of the State and of the legitimate character of State action. And this is precisely what the

New Testament fails to supply. It is not that the teaching therein concerning the State is wrong; even a wrong theory might provide a starting point for discussion. There is simply no conception at all of the organic function of the State or of the collective life of the community. The only collective life envisaged in the New Testament is that of a select company of believers. It is the life that may be lived in common by a body of people whose only bond of union is belief in certain religious teachings. There is not the slightest conception of that organic social life into which all are born and from which none can escape. We do meet with this idea in the Greek and Roman writers; it is quite absent from the New Testament. The State is recognised as one of the facts of existence, but that is all. And if anyone will go through the New Testament, putting down on a sheet of paper all passages having any possible bearing upon social life, he will be surprised—if not already acquainted with the fact—how completely this aspect of life is ignored.

The truth is that the last thing the New Testament writers had in mind was social progress or a social revolution. The mere belief in the approaching end of the world, so widely prevalent, was alone enough to place this subject out of consideration. They appealed to the individual; and after all these years we still have from the pulpit the fatuous teaching that if you will only save the individual, society will save itself. The aim of the New Testament writers was to establish a religious belief, not to inaugurate a new social policy. And so long as the State did not interfere with this belief, what it did or what it ordered was of no consequence. All that the believer asked was to be left alone with his belief. It was the salvation of the soul, not of society, that was desired. Whether a man was bond or free, married or single, mattered little. He might remain content in whatever position he was placed; content that concern for social matters was a matter of very little consequence. It is this that was really the outstanding feature of primitive Christianity. It was this that rendered it attractive to Constantine and his successors, and it is this that has made Christianity so attractive to tyranny ever since.

(To be concluded) C. COHEN.

The Ninth of Romans.

THE ninth chapter of the epistle to the Romans has been "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," ever since it was written; and yet it does not contain a single idea not found in older Scriptures. Not even the application is original. Paul, or whoever the writer was, could not be charged with heterodoxy. Let it be distinctly understood, then, at the outset, that this chapter is in no sense eccentric or out of plumb. Its subject is the rejection of Israel and its justification. Of course, the Jews do not believe that they were ever rejected, for they regard themselves as Jehovah's chosen people to this day; and the truth is that the ultimate rejection, like the original choice, was wholly imaginary. What makes the chapter specially interesting to Freethinkers is the fact that it has often served as a splendid instrument for making converts to Freethought; and it is also well known that it is a source of constant worry to many fairly firm believers. One who has been "greatly puzzled as to how it should be interpreted, and certainly very dissatisfied with such interpretations as those to which he has listened," puts this question to the Rev. Professor David Smith, D.D., in his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for June 20, "Are we to understand that God in an arbitrary sense created some whom he would not save, but deliberately fitted them for destruction?" The Professor's answer is Jesuitical in the extreme. It signifies that Paul's argument as it stands is not

sound, does not present a true picture of God, and aims alone at "checkmating" his opponent's argument. If that is so, Paul was a cunning, deceitful, and dishonest reasoner, whose object was not so much to establish the truth as to defeat his adversaries. But let us examine the argument in detail.

The ostensible purpose of it is to acquit God of the charge of unrighteous treatment of his chosen people, Israel. It is admitted that he rejected as many of them as refused to believe in Christ. It was their lack of faith that caused their ruin. From the Christian point of view rejection on that account, surely, required no justification, because the doom of *all* unbelievers, Gentiles no less than Jews, was to be rejected and damned forever. And yet the writer of this chapter takes infinite pains to explain why unbelieving *Jews*, who had always been a highly privileged nation, should be condemned. He begins with the statement that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel" (verse 6), a statement the absolute injustice of which is abundantly proved by the instances given. The first instance is taken from the life of Abraham, and its effect on the argument is most disastrous. Abraham is described as having two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, the former being a child of the flesh, and the latter, of promise. As a matter of fact, however, on the assumption that the Genesis account is historical, Ishmael was as much a child of promise as was Isaac, because in chapter xvi. we read that the angel of the Lord comforted Hagar, who had fled from her jealous mistress, saying, "Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction"; and yet in chapter xxi. the same Lord is represented as ordering the sending of Hagar and her son into the wilderness to die of starvation, and assigning as a reason this: "For in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Then Paul makes this comment: "That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed" (verse 8). The next example is worse still, if possible, and must be cited in the writer's own words:—

"And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac—for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (verses 10-13).

Professor Smith admits that Jacob and Esau were "both sons of Isaac after the flesh," but claims for some unknown reason that "yet Isaac forfeited his birthright," whatever that may mean. Commenting on the expression, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," the reverend gentleman says:—

"This is indeed a hard saying, but it is according to the Jewish manner, which delighted in clear-cut antithesis, and recognised no shading off [*cf.* Luke xiv. 26]; and, moreover, St. Paul was not concerned meanwhile with the reasonableness of the doctrine: it was in the Scriptures, and that sufficed for the purpose of his argument. His opponents had appealed to the Scriptures, and to the Scriptures he took them."

Poor old Paul, how deeply he is wounded in the house of his friends!

In verses 14-24 he endeavors to dispose of an objection against the justice of the arbitrary conduct attributed to God in the cases just mentioned. The objection takes this form: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" and the answer to it is, in effect, "No, because God is an absolute Sovereign, and has a right to act in all cases exactly as he pleases." This absolute Sovereign is represented as saying to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion," and to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might shew in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth." Then comes the famous metaphor of the Potter and his clay, and this is introduced as a crushing reply to another objec-

tion, which some imaginary person is supposed to raise: "If what you say about God having mercy on whom he will and hardening whom he will is true, why then does he still find fault with anybody, as none can resist his will?" Paul seems to realise that this is sound human reasoning, and that it cannot be refuted except by sheer dogmatism, for he asks, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" If man acted as God does, he would be a brute deserving of severest punishment; but we have no right to sit in judgment on the Almighty, whatever he may do. He is the Potter and we are the clay; and he is quite within his rights when from the same lump he makes some vessels unto honor, and some unto dishonor; some "vessels of wrath, fitted unto destruction," and others "vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory."

That is Augustinianism, now known as Calvinism, in all its shameless cruelty. It is a severely logical system from beginning to end, and the Church has always fattened on it. Firm belief in it has often transformed gentle, tender-hearted, loving people into perfect fiends. It originated as Christian theology with Paul, and Paul derived it from the Old Testament. Paul ordinarily preached a God of love who sent his only begotten Son to die for sinful men; but he never quite forgot that the saints were the chosen of the Lord; and choice always implies rejection. How often he spoke of believers as God's elect, foreknown, foreordained, and effectually called to inherit eternal life and glory; and the predestination of a certain number as objects of a glorious redemption implies the predestination of all others as eternal reprobates. We are assured by many divines that this horrible doctrine is now practically dead, and this may be true with regard to the various Protestant sects; but it is not true of the Catholic Church. It is this dogma that is the secret of her enormous power over the minds and consciences of millions of human beings. Dr. Smith tries hard to soften and sweeten the old orthodoxy to suit the improved taste and the more critical attitude of the twentieth century. "God would be unrighteous," he says, "if he dealt with men in this fashion"; but Paul vigorously asserted that he would not. One of the supreme privileges of being God is complete freedom from responsibility or from the danger of being hauled over the coals by Dick, Tom, and Harry. It must be borne in mind that the Divine Potter created the clay upon which he works according to his will. It stands to reason that the thing formed has no right to say to him that formed it, "Why didst thou make me thus?" "This is a grim doctrine," remarks Dr. Smith, "and it would be terrible if it were the last word about God's attitude towards men"; but is there the slightest evidence that it is less true than the smooth doctrine that God is love, and wants to befriend and make life joyous for everybody? We maintain that there is absolutely no proof of the existence of either type of Deity.

Professor Smith offers a queer defence of the Divine Potter. He says:—

"If he [God] be the Potter and we the clay, then he is bound for his own glory's sake to do the best possible by us. There are, indeed, all sorts of vessels, some for humbler, and others for nobler uses; but all are needful, and all are good. There is a wide difference between 'a vessel unto dishonor' and 'a vessel unto destruction'; and if no potter would deliberately spoil his material, much less would God. If any vessel is spoiled in the making, it is not by his design."

What a lame apology for the Divine Potter offered to one puzzled and perplexed and half-driven to Scepticism. He does the best he can with his material when the material itself is of his own preparing. What about our criminals, in and out of gaols? Are they vessels "spoiled in the making," or are they raw clay waiting to be worked? We fear that even the best of human beings are vessels that reflect but little credit on the Perfect Potter, while countless myriads are vessels so ill-shapen and misshapen as to cause him to hide his head for very shame. We hold that neither the Perfect Potter

nor the Perfect Father has ever granted the tiniest token, or the merest suggestion that he exists, and that the belief in either has seriously retarded human progress; and we also strongly protest against the assertion that, in the ninth of Romans, Paul "is not stating his own doctrine," but "is assuming for dialectical purposes the Jewish doctrine of Divine Sovereignty." We do admit that his argument is a *reductio ad absurdum*, but certainly not that he had no faith in it. To him the Scriptures of the Old Testament were "the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 2); and he was too pious and honest a man to employ such documents for merely "dialectical purposes" without believing them to be true. Our attitude towards the Apostle is more respectful and honorable than Professor Smith's. Our conviction concerning him is that his theology was an exclusively human product, and that he was entirely self-deceived in the conclusion that he had received it as a revelation from heaven; and we have no doubt but that the sooner human knowledge and human wisdom succeed in driving supernatural belief, of every shape and form, back into the night in which it had its birth, the better for our human world.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Deity in the Making.

LISTENING recently to a world-touring Christian Science lecturer, I was somewhat amused at his persistent effort to lift the personality of Mrs. Eddy out of the sphere of the commonplace and envelop her crown-piece in a mythical religious halo. His address was a curious mixture of theological jargon, mediæval superstition, and metaphysical nonsense, and delivered in a ministerial, solemn, and unctuously pious tone that savored of affectation. And towards the end of his discourse, after the reverential mention of the "Mother" of Christian Science, he paused—the pause evidently intended to suggest the overwhelming importance of the parenthetical communication—and the audience were informed that the lecturer who stood before them was "one of those who had had the *unspeakable privilege* of conversing with Mrs. Eddy." The holy awe with which the speaker sought to invest the incident recalled to the writer his youthful impressions of the *unspeakable privilege* accorded to Moses when he was permitted to view the "unspeakable" parts of the divine anatomy. And if the audience did not laugh at this attempt to make a deity compounded of human clay and human folly, it was probably because they were unacquainted with the early history, the matrimonial career, and the subsequent development of this metaphysical priestess.

This public puffing of Mrs. Eddy and her pretensions is, of course, part of the game that Christian Science advocates are playing, and playing for all it is worth. In a recent number of the *Health Record*, Mr. Frederick Dixon, in reply to the charges of a correspondent, wrote of Mrs. Eddy as follows:—

"She left herself and her child penniless when she was little more than a mere girl, because she released her late husband's slaves, who comprised her entire fortune. She set herself bravely to teach and write for a living, and she achieved a success for which every honorable person should respect her."

Just how much truth there is in the statements of this paragraph will be apparent from the following particulars.

George Washington Glover, the father of Mrs. Eddy's only child, was the son of some neighbors of the Baker family, living at Bow. He learnt the trade of a mason, and then went South, where there was a better demand for labor. And it was during one of his visits to his parents that he fell in love with Mary Baker. After their marriage in 1843, which took place in her father's house, Glover took his bride back with him to Charlestown, S.C. Six months later he was stricken with yellow fever, and

died. His young wife was left in a miserable plight, being far from home, among strangers, and without money. Josephine Cartice Woodbury, one of Mrs. Eddy's most intimate co-workers in the Christian Science movement, says that Glover was buried in a pauper's grave, and that notwithstanding the wealth that Mrs. Eddy subsequently amassed she never attempted to remove the stigma from her husband's name. But this was doubtless a malicious interpretation of the circumstances, prompted by the lady's quarrel with Mrs. Eddy. The fact is that the Freemasons, of which Glover was a member, came to his young wife's relief. They not only buried her husband, but also paid her railway fare back to New York, where she was met by her brother George, and taken back to her father's house. Mrs. Glover had now to face a hard situation. Her brief married life had ended in adversity, and a widow in her father's house, she was without means of support for herself or her child, and she had neither the training nor the disposition to take up an occupation, or to make herself useful at home. The particulars of Mrs. Glover's life at this time are given at some length by Georgine Milmine in her History of the Christian Science movement; but that impartial and painstaking historian of Mrs. Eddy's career knows nothing of her husband's "slaves" or her husband's "fortune."

How bravely she set to work to teach and write for a living may be seen from the fact that it was not until six years after her return to the parental roof that she first made an effort to teach a class of children in a small building that had once been used as a shop. This was in the village of Tilton, to which her father had removed. After a few weeks' trial this was given up, and a second attempt some time later also proved a failure. For although, as the historian of her curious career remarks, Mrs. Eddy was later to have a "college" of her own, and to be its president and sole instructor, teaching was assuredly not her vocation in those early days. The few spasmodic verses that she occasionally contributed to the poet's-corner can scarcely be regarded as a serious attempt to "earn a living." It was not until thirty years after this that the first edition of *Science and Health* made its appearance, and to speak of the success she afterwards achieved as being the results of her struggles in the early days of her first widowhood is a clumsy piece of juggling with dates and periods.

Perhaps the most misleading of Mr. Dixon's insinuations is his reference to Mrs. Eddy's relations with her child. Her aversion to her offspring may have been partly due to her nervously afflicted condition, but she also showed a strange lack of maternal feeling throughout the whole of her life. Arrived at home, we read, she took it for granted that her relatives should assume the care of the child. The baby was left to her mother and sister, or sent up the valley to a Mrs. Varney, whose son worked for a relative of the Baker family. Frequently, too, the child stayed with Mahala Sanborn, who had attended the future Mrs. Eddy at his birth. But, wherever it was, it was not with the mother, who had shown a curious aversion to him from the beginning. In 1851, Mahala Sanborn married a Mr. Russell Cheney, and when preparing to move away from Tilton village, Mrs. Glover urged her to take George to live with her permanently. Mrs. Cheney, who was attached to the boy, at last consented to do so, and George accompanied her and her husband to their new home in North Groton, and was called by their name.

When Mrs. Eddy, or, rather, Mrs. Glover, as she then was, became Mrs. Patterson (one is apt to get a little mixed among the various husbands to whom Mary Baker was married), the Pattersons went to stay at North Groton, near to the Cheney's. But even here, although he passed her house daily on his way to school, Mrs. Eddy saw very little of her son, whom she never cared to have with her. In 1857 the Cheney's went West, settling at Enterprise, Minn., taking George Glover along with them. And

Mrs. Eddy never saw her son again until 1879, a period of twenty-two long years. But this separation of nearly a quarter of a century does not appear to have weighed very heavily upon the maternal heart. In the days of her early widowhood, after her return home, Mark Baker was wont to say that "Mary was like an old ewe that won't own its lamb"; and Mrs. Eddy's subsequent relations with her son are a justification and a fulfilment of her father's statement. There is, therefore, surely something ironical in her followers applying to Mrs. Eddy the fond and endearing title of "Mother."

Mr. Dixon's fairy tales, which have not even the saving grace of tradition or romance, appear to be manufactured for the purpose of leading the uncritical into the labyrinths of metaphysical nonsense expounded in *Science and Health*. The type of mind that professes to see in such verbiage the expressions of religious truth can doubtless be persuaded of the "divinity" of its illiterate and commonplace author, but the sordid details of Mrs. Eddy's life afford a very poor title to deification, or even saintship. Mankind has created for itself some curious and strange gods in the past; but a woman who, in her various relations as daughter, wife, and mother, lacked the essential virtues upon which the felicity of these relationships depend, and whose life does not present a single feature of an ideal or humanly attractive nature, is certainly a curious mortal to propose for a deityship in the twentieth century.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Free Thoughts.

It is easy to say that the Bible is the Word of God, but what are the things in the Bible that prove its divinity? In what book, what chapter, what verse, has God hidden the secret of his divine revelation? Or is it concealed in every word of the Bible? If it be not in every verse, then those verses which do not contain the revelation of God should be cast out of the book. The essential thing to find out is this: What is divine?

It seems to me that reading the Bible once were enough to convince any unprejudiced mind that the book was a fraud from beginning to end. I read the Bible from cover to cover before I was of age, and I said to myself then: What a pack of fools Christians must be to accept such a mess of ignorance and superstition as God's revelation to man. The book reveals nothing but human ignorance and superstition. I have not changed my mind since.

Will a Freethinker tell me why he says Christ when he means Jesus? Jesus was not a Christ. The Jews will tell you that they never accepted the Nazarene preacher as their Messiah. That fact disproves for ever of the pretension of Jesus, or anybody else, that the son of Mary and somebody else was the heir to the throne of David, and the "anointed one" whom the Lord God had selected to lead his people to victory. Let us quit helping the Christian superstition.

Certain persons go to the Bible to learn what is holy. But it is not necessary to go to this book to learn what is sensible. And have you noticed that no religion makes common sense holy? And further still, very little that is religiously holy is sensible. The past worshiped what was called holy; the present lives by what is sensible. We are learning to live right, but this knowledge cannot be found in the Bible. Holiness may satisfy the Lord, but sense is better for man.

There are thousands of Freethinkers who do not dare express their sentiments. We sympathise with them. Let an editor of a paper give an honest, impartial review of a work that exposes the foolishness of Christianity, and he must look somewhere else for a living. It is the all-important question of bread and butter that closes the mouth of many an able man. The blackest hand in our land to-day is the hand of religious persecution, which forbids freedom to express one's honest thoughts.

If you wish to go through life absolutely honest, go alone. Don't join anything. Don't belong to anything. Don't swear allegiance to anything. Beware of taking oaths or pledges, or giving promises to support any party, sect, or system. When you are bound to consider the success of an order or a league, you hold yourself ready to surrender your own convictions and independence. Go through life ready to endorse only the right, the true, the good. Do this, and you will come out a man.—L. K. WASHBURN, *Truthseeker* (New York).

Acid Drops.

Sir Andrew Wingate harrowed up the souls of a pious audience in an address to the eminently orthodox members of the Victoria Institute, where religious chatter goes on so regularly a hundred years behind the age. The one sentence of his that fell gratefully upon such ears was the statement that "the strength of England was the Bible in the hearts of the people." This is a fresh variant of the silly old announcement that the Bible was the secret of England's greatness; coal and iron, and manufacturing industry, and shipbuilding, and commerce, having, of course, nothing whatever to do with it. That silly old announcement used to be illustrated with a picture of Queen Victoria presenting a copy of the Bible as "the secret of England's greatness" to a kneeling African chief; the suggestion being, we suppose, that if the black gentleman took home with him a copy of the Blessed Book his country would soon be as powerful and prosperous as the British Empire. The story of that picture was perfectly fabulous; it was flatly contradicted at headquarters; but if it was a lie it was a pretty one, and an edifying one, and it held the field, for pious stories do not need to be true to be useful. The rest of Sir Andrew Wingate's address to the Victoria Instituters was of a more dismal character. He lamented that Bible reading was going out on the heels of Sabbath-breaking. Some subtle influence was sending England to perdition. The orator did not, apparently, say it was the Devil; but there was, perhaps, no necessity to make the statement in such an assembly. "Before long," Sir Andrew Wingate concluded, "the masses would discover that they had no use for the clergy, and a strong appetite for their endowments." That was the most unkindest cut of all. The endowments! Striking the clergy in the region of the pocket! No wonder the prospect is black.

A cutting from the *Transvaal Leader* (May 27) shows us that Christian "cheek" flourishes out there as well as it does here in England. It appears that the Rev. Henry W. Goodwin, preaching to a full congregation at President-street Wesleyan Church on "The Religious Outlook," took credit to Christianity for all the social benefits of modern democracy. "If it had not been for the evangelical revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," the reverend gentleman said, "and the ethical teaching of the evangelical pulpit which followed that revival, there would have been no rise of the democracy as we know it to-day." Could there be greater nonsense than this? Democracy is not confined to England and is therefore not to be explained by purely English causes. Democracy is a world-wide movement. Primarily it is caused by the conquests of science and the spread of education. Buckle knew what he was saying, and had a wide historical knowledge behind him, when he declared that "the hall of Science is the temple of Democracy."

John Wesley was the great Evangelist in England; Thomas Paine was the great Freethinker. John Wesley was a Church and State man; Thomas Paine was a political and social reformer. John Wesley championed the right of George III. and the British Government to tyrannise over the American Colonists. Their rebellion against the King was rebellion against God. Thomas Paine penned the words of fire that roused the rebels into becoming the founders of the Republic of the United States of America. Nor did he merely preach Independence, he practised it by carrying a musket and taking part in the Government of George Washington. John Wesley preached salvation in heaven; Thomas Paine preached salvation on earth. Nearly every good democratic proposal for the benefit of the people may be found in Paine's *Rights of Man*. What was the answer of "evangelised" England? A prosecution for treason felony. Thomas Paine wrote the *Age of Reason* because he saw that the Rights of Man would never be achieved until the Age of Reason was inaugurated. What was the answer of "the Church of Jesus Christ"? Forty years of active persecution during which hundreds of men and women suffered long terms of imprisonment in England, and even in Scotland, for publishing and selling Paine's famous criticism of the Bible and the Christian religion. Later on it was Robert Owen, the Atheist, who raised the "social" spirit in Great Britain, and his bitterest opponents were found in that same "Church of Jesus Christ." Later on still, when Charles Bradlaugh knocked at the door of the House of Commons, with a card of introduction from the Borough of Northampton, he was denied admittance for political and social reasons as well as religious reasons. He was a Reformer as well as an Atheist; and his brave fight for free discussion on certain social problems, including that of population, provided the champions of that same "Church

of Jesus Christ" with the dirtiest and most brutal of the weapons with which they sought to drive him out of public life. Those who are acquainted with the facts know how the "Church of Jesus Christ" helped on the cause of "the poor, the oppressed, and the downtrodden." They also know how easily men like the Rev. Henry W. Goodwin lie for a living.

Mr. F. B. Meyer has great hopes of the Free Churches in the future. The set-back at present, he thinks, is only temporary because there is a generation of new preachers coming along who will win back the people. This new batch of preachers are, to put it colloquially, terrors. "Their combined spiritual and intellectual power will grip the heart and brain of the nation to an unsurpassed extent." This is rather rough on the present batch of ministers, and we fancy they will not greatly relish being told they are back numbers. But, then, we take it, that by the time a minister arrives he always is more or less of a back number. If a minister is really abreast of the best thought of the time, he does not "grip" his fellow-religionists. If he grips them, he loses the others. And by the time he has passed through a training for the ministry he is pretty sure to be of little use outside that profession. On the whole, we await this new generation of wonder-working, brain and heart-gripping ministers without fear—without even curiosity. We have heard of them before.

It is rather late in the day, perhaps, to quote from the *Yorkshire Evening Post* of June 11, but it has only just come under our observation, and what we are going to quote is by no means out of date. It occurs in an article giving an account of a visit to a Salvation Army Shelter at Leeds. The writer made himself up like an ordinary "dosser" and got into the shelter for a bed for threepence, saying it was all he had—the proper price being fourpence. It was only as the daylight crept in that he could see where his bed was and what it was like. The walls looked clean, and the floor fairly so, but the sheets were "unspeakably filthy—stained and fouled beyond description"—the accumulated filth of many nights lying upon them. This is how the amateur "dosser" felt when he got out of the place, escaping not only from the filthy beds but the "disgusting" lavatories:—

"Rain is falling in the street, and the district looks very dismal. But, oh, how sweet is the fresh air even in Lisbon-street. I turn my back on the Salvation Army Shelter and Metropole. I am not squeamish. I have passed the night in lodging-houses frequented by the commonest class of seafaring men; I have slept in a place where dock laborers foregathered; but I never was offered a bed such as that I found in this odd corner of the city of Leeds. Still, one can't expect much for threepence. I sought the Salvation Army Shelter as a tramp with threepence—and they took me in."

Yes, and a benevolent institution run on this plan has taken the British public in.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has explained to a Belfast correspondent that one of his reasons for supporting Home Rule is that in Ireland religion has been used as a cloak for the perpetuation of economic power and privilege. We don't doubt it for a moment. Only we should be pleased to see Mr. Macdonald make the same discovery in relation to English affairs—and say so. Religion has always been used as a means of securing power and privilege, and always will be so used. It is one of the chief means of blinding people to their true interests, and keeping them in a state of workable submission. If Mr. Macdonald will consider the comparative solicitude of large employers for souls and salaries, and the desire of the governing classes to keep the people properly religious, he may realise the function of religion on civilised society more accurately than he appears to do at present. We are, of course, judging him by what he has to say on the subject of religion.

We wonder where "all over the world" is? We are moved to this inquiry by a declaration of the editor of the *British Weekly* that "all over the world Christianity lives without State patronage and support, and the exceptions are bound to disappear." We should like Sir Robertson Nicol to point out the countries in which Christianity lives without State patronage and support. This is certainly not true of any of the English-speaking countries. In England and its colonies and dependencies, and in America, Christianity is protected by law and patronised by the State. Not one form of Christianity, but all. It is forced upon children in State schools. It is placed in a position of privilege in State and municipal functions. It is relieved from taxes that are paid by others. And people have actually been imprisoned during recent months for attacking it. We have not heard that the editor of the *British Weekly* has protested against these fines and imprisonments for blasphemy,

and we have not heard of his advocating the exclusion of Christianity from municipal and State functions. Until he does protest we can only treat his remarks as so much bunkum.

Sir Robertson Nicol says that "A high faith will be content to do without such questionable aids, and will not fear for the future." Certainly, a genuine faith would be content, and would be without fear. But does Christianity come under this description? A genuine faith, for instance, would be content to see children's minds trained in the art of reasoning, and leave them to select whatever religion seemed best when they were old enough to understand it. A genuine conviction of the truth of a teaching would not ask for the protection of the law against the attacks of unbelievers. It would think its God strong enough to stand without the protecting and supporting arm of the policeman. You may attack a scientific teaching in any manner that seems agreeable, and no one dreams of invoking the aid of the police. That is because a scientific teaching is based on facts, and if it can be shown to be untrue, so much the better. But religion is the one thing in the world that is driven to the exploitation of children in order to secure clients, and which goes round whining for the protection of the police against the "profane" and "blasphemous" attacks of unbelievers.

Here is a pretty piece of news from a Monday morning's newspaper:—

"Colors for the Diocesan Boy Scout Corps were on Saturday consecrated by the Bishop of London and handed to the corps, who held a rally in the grounds of Fulham Palace. The scouts performed a play entitled *The Defeat of the Redskins*."

What would the Bishop of London's "Master" have thought of this if he were on earth now? What can any decent and intelligent person think of it on grounds of taste? To borrow one of Carlyle's favorite adjectives, is not the Bishop of London simply "unspeakable"?

A baby girl was found deserted in a London railway carriage. A label announced that her name was Joan and her religious denomination the Church of England. How pious! And how particular!

The religious ceremony at the launching of battleships include a hymn in which the name of "England" appears. The St. Andrew Society of Glasgow objects to this, not on moral but on patriotic grounds, and Mr. Churchill has changed "England" into "Britain."

Canon Thompson, vicar of Eaton, refused to administer the sacrament to two of his parishioners, Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Bannister, who had married under the Deceased Wife's Sister Act, on the ground that they were "notorious evil livers." The House of Lords has decided against the reverend gentleman on appeal. His parishioners are not "notorious evil livers." He himself is a notorious and foolish slanderer. That is the upshot of his ridiculous action.

Rev. Charles William Stubbs, late Bishop of Truro, left only £6,425 gross. But the Rev. James Marshall, of South Hampstead, made up for it by leaving £81,134.

The Rev. Dr. Dixon has appealed for £100,000 in order to purchase the Elephant and Castle public-house, which he wants to convert into a Bible and tract repository and mission hall. Now, Spurgeon's Tabernacle, of which Dr. Dixon is pastor, is only a few minutes' walk from the Elephant and Castle, and we presume £100,000 represents the full market value of the "pub." And Dr. Dixon ought to show the power of the Gospel, not by buying out the owner of the Elephant and Castle, but by shutting him up. Given money enough, any public-house in London could be bought and closed. Publicans would not care. But this would be no proof of the power of the Christian gospel, only of the length of the Christian purse. And if the Elephant and Castle is bought and made into a repository for Tabernacle tracts—which is a questionable change—Dr. Dixon will point to its closing as evidence of the power of the Gospel. And the present owners of the Elephant and Castle will probably open more attractive houses elsewhere. "O Blessed Assinity!"—to use one of Bruno's expressions.

A South African correspondent's letter causes us a good deal of amusement. He is very anxious to have us contradict a statement made by a reverend gentleman of his acquaintance, which seems to prey upon his mind. The statement is that we once had a debate at Bristol with the Rev. J. Moffat Logan, who "utterly defeated" us. Such a

debate took place, and the subject was the Resurrection of Christ. More than that we are not called upon to say; common sense forbids more, common decency forbids more, and both are supported by a sense of humor. We were never so silly and ill-bred as to boast of having "defeated" an opponent in debate; *per contra*, of course, we can know nothing of his having "defeated" us. Opponents in a debate don't meet to discuss each other; they meet to discuss the question at issue. The only point of rational inquiry is how the question stood at the end of the debate. We never heard that Mr. Logan convinced any sceptic in the audience that the Resurrection of Christ was an historical reality. We smilingly advise our correspondent not to let himself be upset by anything that a Christian minister may say about a Freethought advocate. Dr. Warschauer, for instance, published a pamphlet to show how he beat us in debate last year. We published a verbatim report of the speeches on both sides. All the rest we leave to the readers' judgment.

The oddest part of the matter is that the same reverend gentleman assured our South African correspondent some time ago that Dr. Warschauer completely annihilated Mr. Foote. That statement was met with copies of the *Freethinker* containing the verbatim report of the debate. One would have thought that this was enough. The reverend gentleman also assured our correspondent that Ballard had annihilated Haeckel. Which is a joke; a joke of the first water. Fancy the Rev. Mr. Ballard annihilating Professor Haeckel! It reminds one of the heaps of now forgotten clergymen who annihilated Darwin. A flea doesn't annihilate a philosopher by hopping round him all night. The utmost it can succeed in being is a nuisance.

Men of God seem to be particularly amorous in America; at any rate, a lot of them get into trouble over sexual delinquencies. One of our American exchanges, and a much valued one, the *Truthseeker*, has published a long list, in book form, of American sons of God who have seen (too vividly) the daughters of men that they were fair. Amongst the quite recent cases we note that of the Rev. T. J. Dow, a Campbellite preacher of Minneapolis. This gentleman had a wife of his own, but he also fancied the wife of Dr. Fred Woodward, a blind physician. The peccant pair "carried on" easily under the unfortunate husband's eyes, and finally they eloped. The doctor sued the preacher for damages for alienation of affection, and the latter had to hear some of his gushing love letters read out in court. One of them ran as follows:—

"My Dear Little Sweetheart: Your letter was so dear and sweet I just must answer it. Dear heart, you need have no fear of anyone getting your place on my lap. That place is yours and yours only. I will not allow anyone to jump your claim. Oh, my, how I should have enjoyed being with you Sunday afternoon. I know just how you felt. I shall always be as true to you as the needle to the pole. It just seems to me that all my happiness for the future centres on your sweet little life. I shall never look any farther, for I have found my heart's ideal. I have always wanted just such a dear sweet little heart as you, but of all those that I have met, not one of them came up to my ideal till I met you. I know that I have the sweetest, cutest little sweetheart that ever happened. If you were any sweeter I should have to eat you. It seems like an age since I have had a chance to love you as I would like to do. I am taking this opportunity to write to you while the 'Mrs.' is down town. Good bye, dear heart."

Mr. George Macdonald, the able and devoted editor of the *Truthseeker*, surmises that if Preacher Dow doesn't regret his libertinage he must regret having such an imbecile letter put in evidence against him. Well, there is certainly something in that; but, after all, a clergyman in lust (we can't say in love) is just like any other animal in a state of erotic excitation,—and what but an outburst of imbecility could be expected in such circumstances?

The same number of the *Truthseeker* contains a paragraph about another Christian preacher who went wrong, and, worse still, was found out:—

"The places in Harlem which have known that earnest religious worker, Frank Wesley Muhlfeldt, during the past few years, will know him no more for a considerable length of time. Muhlfeldt is in the toils of the police. While doing street preaching and evangelistic work for the Dutch Reformed Church (Mr. Roosevelt's denomination), he has lived a Jekyll and Hyde life, being the head and brains of a gang of thugs and hold-ups, guilty of a long series of atrocious crimes. The felony for which he is now apprehended is murder—the killing for purposes of robbery of Patrick Burns in his saloon on Forest-avenue in The Bronx, early on the morning of February 11. A short time since Muhlfeldt married a girl of eighteen who was attracted to him by his activities as a religious worker."

Poor girl! It is astonishing how so many of the fair sex are fascinated by scoundrels.

"Teddy" Roosevelt reeks with piety, and is on the best of terms with God Almighty. "With unflinching hearts and undimmed eyes," he said to his followers in the recent rumpus at Chicago, "we stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord." It is to be hoped that "the Lord" is grateful for "Teddy's" assistance. We suppose the "undimmed eyes" means that "Teddy" and his followers were sober at the time.

The *Observer* of June 21, 1812—a hundred years ago—recorded the following piece of Protestant toleration in Ireland:—

"The Armagh Yeomanry, after attending parade a few days ago, laid down their arms and refused to serve under Captain J. Barnes on account of his having signed the petition from the Protestants in favor of Catholic emancipation."

The same old game!

Our Spiritualist contemporary *Light* ought to have a better memory. It comments in an editorial paragraph on our remark that it would have been a more convincing proof of "spirit" communication if Mr. W. T. Stead had been warned beforehand of the danger he risked by sailing on the *Titanic*. "It seems so odd," we said, "to be silent before the tragic event and so talkative afterwards." Whereupon our contemporary asks "What right have we to suppose that spirit people knew beforehand that the *Titanic* would be run on to an iceberg." We will answer that question at once, and we need go no further than the pages of *Light*. Our contemporary, in the very same issue, publishes a full report of a long message delivered by Mr. Stead through the lips of a leading American lady medium. Mr. Stead stated (through the Chicago lady, mind) that spirit friends were on the spot to meet the *Titanic* passengers who were to be drowned, for it was all settled, as the following passage will show,—Mr. Stead's interlocutor being the spirit of his dead son William:—

"It is the supreme law of spirit that you reach the one whom you intend to reach. The 'wireless' of the spirit does not get caught by irresponsible craft that stop the message from going to the intended 'receiver.' The wireless of the spirit reaches the object intended. And so when questioning, when aware, when awakened, I would know all, the answers came flocking to me like flocks of birds, flying to me on the invisible pinions of thought, from Julia, from all my dearly loved friends of the household. There they were, waiting for me. I asked, 'Did you know I was coming?' and they knew what the question was before it was formed, and they said, 'Yes.' Then I thought, 'Why didn't you tell me?' They said, 'It would do no good.' 'Why?' 'Because your time had come.'"

Clearly, therefore, we were right. The spirits did know beforehand that the accident would happen and the very spot where it would occur. *Light* knew even its own wretched business.

We are asked by a Welsh correspondent if it is true that General Booth has a fortune of £8 000,000. We don't know. To answer such questions we should require to know everything. We *don't* know everything, and we are happy to believe we never shall. All we care to say about General Booth is that we think it very unlikely that he will die as poor as his Commander-in-Chief did.

Rev. Charles Samuel Durham was caught driving a motor-car in Richmond Park, where there is a twelve-mile speed-limit, at the rate of nearly nineteen miles an hour. What he was chasing, or flying from, does not appear. According to the Bible, and the reverend gentleman's profession, he might have been "fleeing the Devil and all his works." Anyhow, he was fined £1 and costs. It was also decided to summon him for driving without a license. How these poor men of God do get persecuted, to be sure!

Providence used to count the hairs of our heads and watch the fall of the sparrows, but the London streets are too much for our old friend. Last year 400 persons were killed and 10,000 knocked down by vehicles.

The *Indian Witness* reports a curious case of answer to prayer. Somewhere in India a man's family—wife and five children—were converted to Christianity. But they could not be baptised because the father remained unconvinced. Here was a case for prayer, and "many, many prayers were offered for the man." At last, after seven years, he gave way, and the whole family have been baptised. Such is the story, and one would like to know what was the matter with the man, with the Lord, with the prayers, or with all three. Were the prayers not loud enough? Was the Lord not strong enough? Was the man not good enough? If people have to keep on praying for seven years before the

Lord hearkens to their petition to save one man, by what date will the population of India become converted? Perhaps if a solid inducement had been tried at the beginning of the seven years the family would have been roped in long since.

Christians had spun a good many pious yarns about Ingersoll before his death, but that event did not cause any slump in the business. Ingersoll yarns have been regularly manufactured ever since. Here is the latest from the *Chicago Advances*:—

"Robert G. Ingersoll, the famous Agnostic, came home late one night and found his wife and children dressed and ready to go out. Not knowing of any social engagement which could possibly call for their presence at that hour of the evening, he inquired, with an expression of surprise on his face, what it meant. Mrs. Ingersoll responded, saying: 'You must either stop drinking or I am going away with the children—decide now!' From that hour the American Agnostic turned over a new leaf and thereafter Mrs. Ingersoll never found it necessary to resort to any unusual methods in order to guarantee the sobriety of the father of her children."

Mrs. Ingersoll and her children will smile at this new story about "the famous Agnostic." It doesn't even touch him in a weak place. His weak place, if it may be called so, was his affection for his family. He couldn't be happy without them. The notion of his stopping out late when he might have been at home is simply a joke to those who know anything of his character and his domestic surroundings.

Note how circumstantial this new story is. In that respect it is like nearly all the rest of the same species. Yet people actually point to the circumstantiality of the Gospel stories as a proof that they are actual history. The fact is that lies are generally *more* circumstantial than truth. They need all the help it can give them. Fiction, also, is *more* circumstantial than history. What history in the world equals *Robinson Crusoe* in this respect?

The *Guardian* says that Churchmen are ready to work with any Government, "whatever its political hue, that will treat us fairly." If this means anything at all, certainly if it means what it says, Churchmen do not care particularly what kind of a social policy is carried out so long as the religious purpose is served. The Church first is the rule. Citizenship is nothing where churchmanship is concerned. This, we admit, has generally been the case—and it is as true of Nonconformists as others. In each case it is the interest of church or chapel that overrules all other considerations. All the same, it throws a curious light on the kind of social consciousness developed by Christianity.

Mr. Henry Harris, an American lawyer, who practised for many years in Paris, and died recently, leaving nearly £50,000, ordered in his will that his body should be cremated "without any religious ceremony, without the presence of any priest, pastor, or rabbi," and "without speeches or prayers being said at the cemetery or elsewhere." Mr. Harris died at the age of 82. His niece is contesting his will on the ground of undue influence, but she will hardly gain any advantage from the irreligious features of her uncle's will in a country like France. In England it might be otherwise. For even the *Daily News* report of the case from its Paris correspondent is headed "American's Amazing Will." Amazing!

That old-fashioned book of orthodox etiquette, miscalled the New Testament, contains the advice that if a Christian has his coat stolen he shall offer his cloak to the thief. An attempt to follow this advice has been made by a London clothier who has the following notice in his shop window:—

"If the gentleman who stole a pair of grey trousers from outside this establishment on Saturday, June 15, would like the jacket and vest to match, I shall be pleased to supply same for 7s. 6d.

"My aim is to satisfy everybody."

A most creditable aim.

In the fashion papers there is a distinct movement in favor of changing the hair fashions of men. We may yet see West End swells wearing the sausage curls patronised by the Second Person of the Trinity.

The Apple of Eden is the title of a play now being shown at one of the London theatres. The "apple" has been associated with another farce for many centuries.

The newspapers make a great fuss about centenarians. What would they say if they had to report the declining years of "Adam" or "Methuselah"?

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended until September.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £150 18s. 2d. Received since:—W. Dodd, £1; M. Barnard, 2s. 6d.; J. Pendlebury, £1; J. F. Aust, 2s. 6d.; A. Galpin, £1 1s.

L. HARCOURT FARMER (Montreal).—Should have been happy to oblige you, but our lectures are all extemporaneous, and no report was taken of the one on "Lessons of the Shakespeare Festival." We admire Ingersoll's lecture on Shakespeare, and assign it a high place in the literature of the subject. A copy of Shakespeare in one volume, with painfully small print (but we had very young eyes then), was the first book we ever had; the price of it was, though so little, a heavy tax on our dear mother's lean purse. That was some fifty years ago, and we have been studying Shakespeare ever since, with constantly increasing joy and reverence, and assurance of his being the first of Humanists. We have been arguing for thirty years, at least, that Shakespeare was an Atheist. That view is gradually triumphing now. In this also, as in other matters, we are glad to have been a pioneer. And we are glad to hear from you. It is always a pleasure, as Emerson said, to "meet persons who perceive the transcendent superiority of Shakespeare over all other writers."

"CASTREL" writes: "I take great interest in the circulation of the *Freethinker*, having taken it since you left Holloway. I never destroy a copy of the paper. I take the trouble to post it to somebody, far or near, every week. In this way I am instrumental in bringing the paper into the closest touch of probably, fifty-two strangers every year, who, perhaps, would not otherwise be aware of its existence. If this were generally adopted many thousands of strangers would know of the periodical every week, and much good would result. I am quite prepared to be told that this is not an original idea of mine, but if it were better carried out the circulation of the *Freethinker* would increase."

A. L. COATES writes: "I have taken your paper ever since I returned to England from Russia in '93, and would hate to miss it. It is the best paper in England, and I wish it and its editor and contributors 'more power.' I always enjoy your own articles and 'Acid Drops.'"

THOS. A. JACKSON.—Collins's *Discourse of Freethinking* is not exactly a rare book. We have a copy, as you surmise. Thanks, all the same, for calling our attention to the work.

J. B.—Glad you are so pleased with Mr. Mann's articles on "Modern Materialism." They deserve your praise. We shall deal with Mr. G. B. Shaw presently. There is no occasion to hurry. He has had a due share of our attention in the past, and a little patience now will show that we have no personal feeling against him.

F. B. (Bristol).—Your offer of help is very kind, but distance renders it impossible. Your order was passed over to our shop manager.

ANDREW MILLAR.—Pleased to have your note of sincere appreciation.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

SIDNEY WOLLEN.—We have spoken to our shop manager on the subject and more may be done in the direction suggested. You need not fear "the calamity" of the *Freethinker's* "light falling." Our circulation puts that out of the question as long as our own light doesn't fail.

F. T. JONES writes: "I hope you will continue to dwell upon the importance of individual effort on the part of your readers to increase the sale of their paper. After continuous pegging away for months I have at length succeeded in inducing two of my friends to take it weekly."

E. GWINNELL.—We quite appreciate all your efforts to promote our circulation, and we assure you of our best thanks. But you must pardon us for saying that your list of "some of our best friends" is really funny. We prefer to forget the last part of your letter, for we are sure you don't mean it.

E. B.—Your cuttings are always very welcome.

W. DODD writes: "I join with others in their good wishes, but I believe we require to be 're-minded' from time to time."

F. SMALLWOOD.—Your own letter is a good one. We hope the ball will be kept rolling.

J. PENDLEBURY.—Thanks for note with subscription.

W. J. WILDES.—Thanks for your long and interesting letter on the late troubles at Hull. We understand now. With regard to a course of study in Freethought, we shall be printing shortly the full list of books prepared by the N. S. S. special committee. It will be of great use to you and others.

A. GALPIN.—It is pleasant to meet with generous appreciation in an American reader, who must have calls from all sorts of advanced movements in his own country.

M. BARNARD.—"An instalment of the great debt" you say you owe us is better than the non-payment of so many.

SEVERAL correspondents whose letters arrived on Tuesday cannot be answered till next week.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Messrs. Smith & Son, the famous librarians and news-agents, would not "touch" the *Freethinker* some years ago. Their "boycott," however, has been dropped of late years, and the result has proved the justice of our old observation that a sale may be found for this journal whenever it is given a chance. Including provincial branches of the firm that trade "on their own" as well as headquarters, Messrs. Smith & Son now handle a considerable portion of our weekly issue. Those who find it difficult to get their *Freethinker* at present should place their order with Messrs. Smith & Son, whose shops, where they have no railway bookstalls, are multiplying rapidly.

A Birmingham friend writes:—

"I have just read your stirring appeal to Freethinkers concerning your paper—and our paper. In five minutes I had decided what course to pursue in order to increase its circulation. Will other subscribers try the same experiment, say for six months? I shall purchase six copies weekly, retain one, and distribute five in the following manner:—After writing or typing these words—'Please read this paper, it is a journal devoted to the emancipation of mankind from religious superstition. The editor will be pleased to hear from you'—I shall leave them on tramcars or place in letter boxes, &c. I shall also give the name of a newsagent where it is obtainable. I may say that I think it a shame that you should find it necessary to make these appeals for the support of a paper which is the most intellectual little journal published. Every Thursday morning is brightened by its arrival."

This correspondent adds his tribute to the interest and value of Mr. Mann's articles.

The Birmingham Branch's annual picnic takes place on Sunday, July 7, the destination being Bewdley. Train from Snow-hill Station leaves at 8.20 a.m. Tickets, 2s. 6d. each, can be obtained of the secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 245 Shenstone-road, Rotton-park.

Mr. George Berrisford has been carrying on propagandist work at Sheffield and is forming a Branch of the N. S. S. It starts with 26 paying members and good prospects. We wish it all success and it may be assured of whatever help can be rendered from headquarters in London. Under the capable management of Mr. Berrisford as secretary it should make rapid headway. His address is 38 Bolsover-street, where he will be glad to hear from "saints" who will in any way help the new Branch.

The declarations of the Secular Education League pale before the speech of Mr. G. W. E. Russell, presiding on Saturday, June 22, at the Holborn Town Hall in connection with the festival of the Church of St. Alban the Martyr. The following report of Mr. Russell's speech is from the *Daily News* (June 24):—

"He expressed his conviction that no religious teaching at all in the school would be preferable to undenominational religious teaching enforced by the authority of the State.

"If the alternative to a purely secular education was an education in which every form of religion, every parody of religion, and every fragment and distortion of religion was to be taught in the name and with the authority of the State, then he would be in favor of a secular school.

"On the question of education he had found himself thoroughly at variance with the Liberal party, and it was an extraordinary fact that the Government with a majority behind them should have signally failed four times running with an Education Bill. He could only suppose that it was because each of the Bills had been based on a principle so rotten that everybody, whether supporters of the Government or not, realised the futility of what was proposed.

"Even if one of the Bills had scrambled into law, it would have been a fertile source of contention instead of bringing peace, and the problem would have had to be considered over again."

The Secular Education League will no doubt circulate this utterance of a Liberal and a High Churchman as widely as possible. We are calling the Secretary's attention to it.

We have just room to announce that Mr. C. Cohen is visiting Leeds on Sunday next, July 7, on behalf of the N. S. S., and will deliver two lectures in the Town Hall Square. Should the weather be wet the lectures will be delivered in the Assembly Rooms, Briggate.

A Roosevelt Formula.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT has declared his readiness to accept the presidency of this country for a third term. This gentleman has demonstrated his ability to do many difficult things. But there is one difficult thing to which he does not seem to be equal: He cannot endure private life. Immediately after the expiration of his term as President he arranged for a hunting trip, and his daily encounters with beasts of prey in the wilds of Africa kept his name constantly before the public. When he had cleared the forests, he picked up his rifle and started after the kings and emperors of Europe; the Pope was the only man he could not bring down.

Returning to this country, he at once plunged into the midst of a hot political campaign. Having selected the man he wished made governor of New York, he took the stump for him—and possibly also for himself. And now the approaching presidential election has so stirred the blood in his veins that he is eager once more to enter the race. Mr. Roosevelt has done many services to this country, and I hope that the country will in turn do Mr. Roosevelt the service of conferring upon him the blessings of private life.

Even if Theodore Roosevelt were the only man qualified to be the President of this country, in my non-partisan and altogether impartial judgment, it would be better for the country to have a lesser man for President than to put Roosevelt in power for the third time. If a candidate's fitness for the office is the important thing, why not keep a good President in the White House all his life. People say Roosevelt ought to be nominated and elected because he is the best man for the position. Very well, then, let him be President for life. "But our form of government will not allow that." Precisely; fitness for office, then, is not the only thing to be considered. Is Mr. Roosevelt the only man this big country has produced who is fit to preside over us? If we cannot raise more than one man to fill the highest office, let us go back to monarchy—to the one-man rule.

Mr. Roosevelt says he wishes to give the people a free hand. The idea that the people ought to be at liberty to do as they please is a great superstition. It is also a corrupting flattery. It is the argument of the demagogue. If an individual is bound by limitations to his action and thought, so are the people. The people have no more right to be capricious, arbitrary, or lawless than an individual. You see the old idea was that a god could do as he pleased. But that notion destroyed the gods; and the doctrine that the people are above the law will destroy the people. The flatteries which the priest used to address to the gods, and the courtiers to the kings, are now addressed to the people by the politicians. The people cannot vote this nation out of a republic into a monarchy. Of course, they can do it if they want to, just as a man can commit suicide if he wants to.

To nominate Roosevelt because there is a popular demand for him, is not different from the argument which made Louis Napoleon, a republican president, emperor of the French. No amount of popular clamor would justify our abandoning the principle of limiting the President's term of office to just so many years, beyond which he shall not be eligible, even though he were an angel. No candidate should be dearer to us than the principles on which this government was founded. Not that we like Roosevelt less, but because we like the Republic more. But is Mr. Roosevelt big enough, mentally and morally, to deserve the support of the Rationalists in America?

In his *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, Mr. Roosevelt devotes about a line to Thomas Paine, but a line that fitches from him his good name. In this one line or so devoted to Thomas Paine, the former Chief Magistrate of this Nation calls him "a filthy little Atheist." Of course, he penned those un-

gracious words before he became President, but when a new edition of his book was being issued during his term of office at the White House, he was respectfully requested either to omit the passage or to prove it. Roosevelt answered with silence. But silence is no answer. When a man is publicly accused, his accuser is not at liberty to withhold the proofs to justify the accusation. Let me make an explanation. I may entertain a certain opinion of another and may be sure in my own mind that I am right; but I am not justified in giving publicity to that opinion if I lack the proofs to convince others of the truth of my charges. Whenever a man makes public a damaging statement about any historical character—Luther, Calvin, Washington—he is not at liberty to refuse the evidence to prove his statement. He cannot take refuge in silence; the time to be silent is not after he has made the accusation, but before.

But what makes Roosevelt's attack on Thomas Paine extraordinary is that not one of his three accusations against him can be substantiated. It is true that Thomas Paine was not a Christian, but is everyone who is not a Christian an Atheist? That would make more than one-half of humanity Atheist. Moreover, in plain English, Thomas Paine has stated that he is not an Atheist. He declares he believes in God and hopes for a future life. This statement is found on the first page of his great work, the *Age of Reason*. How could the Chief Magistrate, in whose hands are the scales of justice, and to whom is given the care and custody of the reputation of the dead as well as of the living, call such a man not only an Atheist, but use also in connection with it so unbecoming a word as "filthy"? If Mr. Roosevelt made the statement without knowing the facts, an opportunity was given him to expunge the passage from the text of his book. But he disdained even to discuss the issue. This, then, is the way the case stands: he makes a public accusation; he refuses the proofs.

But neither is there any evidence that Thomas Paine was "little." On the contrary, he was a big man physically. He was much taller than Mr. Roosevelt; he had an impressive presence, and those who have seen his portrait in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, or elsewhere, will have observed that there could be nothing little or slight about his person. Perhaps Roosevelt meant to say that he was little in mind; but if Paine had been little in that sense the ex-President would not have gone out of his way to denounce him—nor would he have used such bitter words to denounce so little a man! Thomas Paine was a big man mentally. The evidence of his greatness is too conclusive to leave any doubts about it. Washington bears witness to it; Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin cheerfully acknowledge it; the States of Philadelphia and New York have gone on record by their resolutions and gifts as witnesses to the greatness of Thomas Paine. England and France joined with America to do him honor. He sat in the Parliament of France; he crossed swords with Edmund Burke; he came near making Great Britain a republic. He pleaded for the life of Louis XVI. when all France was suffering from a brainstorm. He went to prison on his way to the guillotine. It was by an accident that his life was spared. In his dungeon, his pen dropped light into the darkness of Europe and America by writing the *Age of Reason*. To call such a man little is a misuse of language. The author of *Common Sense*, *Crisis*, *The Rights of Man*, the *Age of Reason*, a little man!

When we take up the third charge against Thomas Paine, namely, that he was "filthy," we find that Mr. Roosevelt does not only fail to do the great heretic justice, but he does not, I regret to say, hesitate even to do him a positive injustice. The word "filthy" has many connotations. In what sense does Mr. Roosevelt use the objectionable epithet? Does he mean physical or moral filth, or both? I am really afraid of the religious training which can encourage such looseness and such bitterness of speech against an honorable antagonist.

Thomas Paine fought fair. He attacked the Bible, but he gave page after page of reason for so doing. He did not dismiss the book, as Roosevelt dismisses Paine, with a single line, or with a sting and a slap. He proved his points against the Bible, or at least he tried to do so. Where are the proofs of Mr. Roosevelt that Paine, the associate of the first President of America, the guest of France, the man whose pen was as mighty as the sword of Washington, for whom Jefferson sent a ship across the Atlantic to bring him over to America—where are the proofs that he was as Roosevelt would have us think, a dirty character? Defend us against theological weapons! They were at one time the faggot, the halter, the screw, the rack, the stake! They are now slander, scandal, calumny, libel, and horrible deathbed scenes!

Mr. Roosevelt should have availed himself of the opportunity we furnished him to correct an unfortunate error. A man of his profession ought to rejoice that there are men in America who are willing to defend the dead, who cannot defend themselves. We who ask for justice for Thomas Paine will be the first to ask for justice for Roosevelt; while the people who care nothing for the rights of Paine will be the first to forget the rights of Roosevelt. In defending the accused, we offer our protection to the accuser whenever he shall need it. We give him an opportunity to do the greatest act of his life, to recall a bad decision with the magnanimity, the love of justice, and courage of a truly noble nature! More than once we have given Mr. Roosevelt the opportunity to do this. Some years ago I was sent to Washington to plead with him. He did not avail himself of this courtesy. He slammed the door in our face. Later, when he was himself denied an audience with the Pope, his attention was again called to the way he had refused an audience to the friends of Thomas Paine. Once more, when he wrote a letter a short time ago, asking the recall of the sentence against Police Commissioner McCann, who had been duly tried and convicted of an infamous crime—and McCann was pardoned—we called attention to Mr. Roosevelt's kindness for McCann, a convict, and his stubborn refusal to show the same consideration for Thomas Paine, one of the Immortals of America! But McCann was orthodox; Paine was a heretic. Does not that make all the difference in the world? Thomas Paine disdained to wear another man's mental raiment at second hand. For him, as Tolstoy would say, "twice two make four, even in the face of death" and the guillotine, yes even in the face of Roosevelt's "filthy little Atheist!"

Once more, only a short time ago, Mr. Jacob Riis, a particular friend and admirer of Mr. Roosevelt, was greatly worked up over an unfounded report about his chieftain, and rushed into print to denounce the perpetrators of the libel in hot terms, sparing neither his dignity nor their feeling. An open letter was sent to this literary reformer requesting him to use his righteous indignation also in behalf of one who had received, at the hands of his chieftain, the kind of treatment against which he was so anxious to protect Roosevelt. From the silence of Mr. Riis it might be inferred that he is only interested in defending persons, not principles.

But while all our efforts thus far have failed, we are not discouraged; we cannot be discouraged. Truth and justice will not permit us to lose heart. How can people who have nothing to fear be discouraged? Error and injustice tremble lest they should be found out. But truth and justice know no fear. We have a new argument to use with the ex-President, which, after all, might accomplish the end so devoutly desired.

In one of his recent public addresses delivered at the Suffolk County Fair in New York on Sept. 15, 1910, Mr. Roosevelt made the following statement: "I think every citizen of this Republic ought to distrust the public man whose deeds do not square with his words." That is to say, a man ought to try to be as big as his words. He must square the

deed with his profession. I like nothing better than Mr. Roosevelt's doctrine of a "square deal." But why does not Mr. Roosevelt square his deeds with his words? Why does he not either prove his charges against Thomas Paine, or withdraw them?

In the same speech, Mr. Roosevelt uttered also the following noble words: "There are two prime difficulties in getting good government in this country; one arises from dishonest politicians, and dishonest public servants—and the other from the man who deliberately utters a falsehood about an honest man."

Thomas Paine was an honest man. He could have been richer and more popular had he been a hypocrite. By branding such a man as "filthy," Mr. Roosevelt has not only done Thomas Paine a great injustice, but he has also placed himself in an unenviable light. To this day, through his book on *Gouverneur Morris*, he is circulating a falsehood about an honest man who was also one of the builders of America. What will Mr. Roosevelt do about it? His silence in this matter cannot be more stubborn than our determination to keep on speaking about it; if he can suppress, we can express; if he is trying to bury the subject, we are going to keep on resurrecting it.

Would he have the country forget Paine? He might as well try to make us forget liberty!

And what is it we want Mr. Roosevelt to do? To pluck the thorn and plant a flower upon the grave of one of the saviors of man! M. M. MANGASARIAN.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Old Testament History.—XVI.

(Concluded from p. 396.)

ACCORDING to "predictions" in the book of Jeremiah, the Jewish captives deported to Babylonia by Nebuchadrezzar were condemned to "serve the king of Babylon seventy years," and when the "seventy years were accomplished" the god Yahveh pledged himself to "bring them again" to Judea and Jerusalem (Jer. xxv. 11; xxix. 10—14; etc.). This prediction is said to have been duly fulfilled, and all Jews of a later age, from the second century B.C. downwards, firmly believed that such was the case, amongst whom was the writer of the book of Daniel, who refers to the return as near at hand (Dan. ix. 2). The fulfilment of this prophecy is stated to have taken place in the first year of the reign of Cyrus—i.e., 538 B.C.—and full details of the number and the families of the Jews who returned in that year are given in the book of Ezra.

Now, as regards the "seventy years," there were two deportations of Jews—and two only—made by Nebuchadrezzar: the first, that of Jehoiachin, in 598 B.C.; the second, that of Zedekiah, in 586 B.C. Those of the first captivity who returned to Judea in the first year of Cyrus had been in exile 60 years; those of the second captivity who returned had been in exile 48 years. The problem is to find how the "seventy" years come in. I have given it up myself.

Next, as to the alleged fact that a large number of Jews—according to Ezra, between forty and fifty thousand—returned to Jerusalem in the reign of Cyrus. Such a circumstance, if true, appears so extraordinary and improbable that we must turn to the book of Ezra for some rational explanation. In his opening chapter the writer of that book states:—

Ezra i. 1—2.—"In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia.....Yahveh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath Yahveh, the god of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah," etc.

Before reading further I must remark that Cyrus, before becoming king of Babylonia, was king of Anzan or Elam, and was not "king of Persia."

There was no empire of Persia in 538 B.C.: the founder of that empire was a later king—Darius Hystaspes, whose inscription commences as follows: "I am Dareios the great king, the king of kings, the king of Persia, king of the nations; the son of Hystaspes," etc. We have thus evidence that the book of Ezra was not written until after the time of Darius, but how long after remains to be seen. Returning to the proclamation in Ezra, we are told that Cyrus invited all the Jews who felt so disposed to go up to Jerusalem and build the temple, and he commanded that all who did not go were to assist the returning exiles with gifts of silver, gold, goods, and beasts of burden. "Then rose up," the narrator says, "the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites," and commenced preparations for the journey; while all the other Jews in Babylonia contributed as prescribed. King Cyrus himself, the writer declares, assisted by giving up to the returning Jews all the vessels of gold and silver—numbering 5,400—which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple at Jerusalem (Ezra i. 3—11). Also, the total number of Jews who returned to Judea is stated to be 42,360, besides 7,937 men-servants and maid-servants (Ezra ii. 64, 65).

Moreover, in that portion of Isaiah written after the Exile which is called the Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. xl.—end), we find a paragraph relating to Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 24—xlv. 6) in which the writer says:—

"Thus saith Yahveh.....I am Yahveh.....that saith of Cyrus, *He is my shepherd*, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying of Jerusalem, *She shall be built*, and to the temple, *Thy foundation shall be laid*..... Thus saith Yahveh to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him," etc.

The book of Isaiah had been edited and accounted canonical more than a century before the appearance of the book of Ezra; so if one writer took his ideas from the other, we know which was the borrower. The last-named book, in fact, was not written until after the two fraudulent books of Chronicles, which circumstance may account for the fact that the last two verses of 2 Chronicles are the first three verses of Ezra. However, to get some light upon the subject, we will now see what the conqueror Cyrus says of himself in his own inscription. The following extracts will, I think, be sufficient:—

"I am Cyrus the king of legions, the great king, the powerful king, *king of Babylon*, king of Sumir and Accad.....the son of Cambyses the great king, king of Anzan, the grandson of Cyrus the great king, king of Anzan.....Merodach the great lord established a decree unto me Cyrus the king, *his worshiper*.....At that time I entered Babylon in peace.....To the cities of Assur, Arbela, Accad, Zamban, etc., etc.....I restored the gods who dwelt within them to their places, and I established for them seats which should long endure. All *their peoples* I assembled, and I restored their habitations.....May all the gods that I have restored to their own cities intercede daily before Bel and Nebo; may they pronounce blessings upon me; and may they say to Merodach my lord, Let Cyrus the king, *thy worshiper*enjoy length of days."

After reading the foregoing historical record, the problem is to show where Yahveh, his temple, and his people come in. It was not Yahveh, but the god Merodach, whom Cyrus worshiped. He had restored the images of many gods which he found in Babylon to the cities from which they had been taken, and had given permission to the captives in Babylon who served those gods to return to their native cities; but no image of the god Yahveh was amongst them (the Jews never had any image in their temple but the cherubim), Jerusalem is not named among the cities, and no permission, so far as we know, was granted to any Jews to return to Palestine. It is, of course, quite possible that in the confusion of many groups of nationalities leaving Babylon a score or so of Jews may have left with them: but that is the utmost that can be conceded. All the statements in the first chapter of Ezra are untrue, and the book is a late Jewish fraud, like the books of

Daniel and Esther. The book of Nehemiah is but the second part of the book of Ezra, and is of the same character.

We know, indeed, that at some later time the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, and that a temple was erected for Yahveh and the worship of that deity was re-established. "Nehemiah" may have been the name of the governor who superintended the building operations, and "Ezra" that of the priest who took the lead in the religious services. We know, too, that at a later period all the ancient writings were collected, and that some priestly scholars found occupation for many years, and during several generations, in making compilations and adding new laws and regulations, until in the course of time the nation found itself the possessor and custodian of the present Old Testament scriptures.

But, it may be asked, if there had been no return of a large body of exiles, as narrated in the book of Ezra, how came the Jewish nation to survive and retain possession of Judea after the Exile? The answer to this question must be that *all* the people of Judah were not deported, and that every year brought some increase to the population of Jerusalem and Judah. We have seen in 2 Kings that after both the first and the second deportation of captives "the poorest of the land" were left behind. It would appear, then, that after the departure of the Chaldeans, in each case, many Jews who had been in hiding or who had taken refuge in neighboring countries, returned to Jerusalem—which accounts for that city being able to stand a siege under Zedekiah.

After the second departure of the Babylonian army there appeared at Jerusalem "the captains of the forces" with a considerable number of the men of Judah, who had fled by night with Zedekiah, and had succeeded in making good their escape. Amongst the new arrivals was Ishmael, one of the royal family of Judah, accompanied by ten retainers, who had taken refuge among the Ammonites. This man, who was probably heir to the throne, treacherously slew Gedaliah (who had been made governor by Nebuchadnezzar) and the Chaldean guards who had been left with him, after which he and his men again found refuge among the Ammonites. When these murders became known the chief men of Jerusalem and their families migrated to Egypt, fearing the reprisals of the Babylonians: and there the history in 2 Kings ends. We have no information of any kind respecting the course of events in Jerusalem during the period that preceded the first year of Cyrus, and none that can be relied upon after that date.

There can be little doubt, however, that Judah and Jerusalem were not long without a considerable number of inhabitants. After keeping aloof from Jerusalem for a short time, and finding no appearance of the avenging Chaldeans, the Jews began to leave their hiding places and make their way to the holy city. Amongst the first to enter was Ishmael at the head of a band of Jewish refugees from the land of the Ammonites. Next came the Jews who had taken refuge in the cities which had once formed part of the kingdom of Judah, and still contained a considerable number of Jewish inhabitants. To these were added many of the Israelites who belonged to the old kingdom of Samaria, which, so far as we know, was still a flourishing kingdom. Lastly, came the large body of Jews that had taken refuge in Egypt, to find upon their return a fairly populous Jerusalem over whom Ishmael "of the seed royal" reigned as king.

Babylon, separated from Jerusalem by six hundred miles of stony desert country, was far too distant for Jewish exiles to think of leaving, even were they free to do so: and none came. That there should be in Babylon, in the reign of Cyrus, fifty thousand Jews, who after sixty years of exile were worshipers of Yahveh, and desired to return to Jerusalem to build him a temple there (as stated in Ezra) is wildly improbable. The Jewish captives, when deported, cared nothing for that deity, and had now

nearly all passed away. The new generations, for as long as they could remember, had served the gods of the people among whom they dwelt, and whose daughters they had espoused. The idea of leaving the country where they had passed their whole lives and where they were comfortably settled, to take a long, painful, and dangerous journey to a land of which they had only heard their fathers speak, never once entered their heads. Had their fathers wished to return thirty or forty years before, then perhaps they might have been willing to accompany them; but now, to break up their homes, leave all their friends and the only country they cared for, to go off to a distant land of which they knew absolutely nothing—and which they might never reach—the idea alone of such a foolhardy and objectless expedition was simply ridiculous as well as impracticable. Furthermore, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah contain full and conclusive evidence both of their late origin and of the fictitious character of the events therein recorded: there can therefore be no doubt whatever as to the story of the return of nearly fifty thousand exiles from Babylon being a late Jewish fabrication.

ABRACADABRA.

Freethought Astir in Chicago.

On Sunday morning, May 26, Mr. M. M. Mangasarian closed the twelfth season of his lectures under the auspices of the Independent Religious Society. The season of 1912-13 will open the first Sunday in October. As he will again visit Europe this summer, and hopes to attend the International Freethought Congress to be held in Munich, Germany, he will return as he always has, well prepared to instruct his audiences. He is a type of the coming teachers of the people, who in time will supplant the priest and parson. His position is not only different from that of the minister, but more difficult. His Society is composed of people nearly all of whom are readers and thinkers themselves. They attend the meetings expecting to hear something of interest and to learn what they did not know before. He must satisfy the reason. He must give facts. He does all this, and is eloquent besides.

A Christian congregation does not expect what is demanded by an audience of Rationalists. Some of them attend because they think it their duty, no matter what the minister might preach, or whether he is of high or low ability. Others go for social or business reasons. Many, again, to hear the music; while but few care for the sermon, and are not concerned as to its logic, truthfulness, or even eloquence. A minister can say what he likes, dab it inspiration, shout about the grace of God and kindred inanities, and if he is socially popular the people are satisfied. In fact, if he does make mistakes or false statements, many think that, out of charity, criticism of him should not be made. Of the three sexes, men, women, and priests, the latter have the advantage of being considered the weakest when it comes to intellectual responsibility.

Years ago I listened to Colonel Ingersoll in Chicago. I have also attended other Freethought meetings, held in small halls, when two or three hundred was considered a large audience. Of course, Ingersoll always had a packed house. As a fact proving great progress, Mr. Mangasarian now speaks every Sunday, eight months of the year, to a concourse of people as large as Ingersoll used to address, and most of them not only students and thinkers, but people of high social and business position. Rightly did he say this morning that Freethinkers have cause to rejoice over the progress of their principles. The world over, a new impetus has been given to liberty, reason, and science. From the Presbyterian convention in Louisville, from the Methodist conference in Minneapolis, and even from the aged General Booth of the Salvation Army, a wail of sorrow and the darkness of gloom goes up over the prospects of theology and the churches. Christianity has more riches, more money, more property, more preachers to-day than ever before. The ignorant believe in it, Mrs. Grundy is afraid of it, but it cannot command the respect of fearless, honest, and thinking men and women. The pulpit cannot satisfy these. It is not merely deficient in brains but in intellectual honesty. Once it led and commanded. Now it must follow and struggle for an existence.

I heard many regrets in the audience that the meetings were to close for the summer, and Mr. Mangasarian going away. A magnificent bunch of roses that he found awaiting him on the stage, faintly expressed the esteem of the

Society whose lecturer he has been for twelve years. The office in the Fine Arts Building will be open all the summer, where literature can be obtained and a welcome given to all. Every two weeks one of the lectures delivered during the past season will be issued. The Independent Religious Society is the greatest organized force in America to-day working in the interest of Freethought. By means of Mr. Mangasarian's books and printed lectures its influence has been extended, and it hopes, in the future, to have a building of its own.—FRANKLIN STEINER, *Truthseeker* (New York).

Some Reflections.

THAT faith, so blighting, which has cursed the earth,
No longer counts for what it once was worth.
For patient man now opens wide his eyes,
And for the light of knowledge softly sighs.
He sees the carnage wrought by "mighty God,"
And hears the cries of martyrs from the sod,
Of liberators murdered "for His sake,"
Some burned alive around a flaming stake,
And others tortured in a dungeon where
Their wails were mingled with a mocking prayer.
Throughout the weary years of God's long reign,
No love has ruled the world save that of gain.
And after nineteen hundred years of strife,
No man can prove there is an after life.
No man dare say, "I have a Christian been,"
No man can say, "I have a Christian seen."
If they are Christians who exist to-day,
From meeting them and theirs good folk should pray,
And God, if he in heaven be, in shame
Should see they changed alike their faith and name.

G. KERSCHNER-KNIGHT.

WHO IS THIS MAN?

The man that named our country.
The man first to advocate independence for our country.
The man who did more to achieve this independence than any other man, giving his pen, tongue, sword, and pocket-book to the cause.
The man that in the darkest hour of the Revolution wrote the *Crisis*, commencing with the words, "These are the times that try men's souls."
Do you know that General Washington ordered this mighty work to be read to the Army once a week?
The man who was joint author of the Declaration of Independence with Jefferson.
The man who borrowed ten million dollars from Louis XVI. to feed and clothe the American Army.
The man that established the Bank of North America in order to supply the Army.
Napoleon said, in toasting him at a banquet, "Every city in the world should erect a gold statue to you."
The author of the *Rights of Man*, acknowledged to be the greatest work ever written on political freedom.
This masterpiece gave free speech and a free press to England and America.
The man that first said, "The world is my country, to do good is my religion."
The man known as "The Great Commoner of Mankind," the "Founder of the Republic of the World."
The man first to urge the making of our Constitution.
The man first to suggest the Federal Union of the States and to bring it about.
The man first to propose the Louisiana Purchase.
The man first to demand justice for women.
The man first to plead for the dumb animals.
The man first to advocate International Arbitration.
The man first to propose old age pensions.
The man first to propose "The land for the people."
The man that invented and built the first iron bridge.
That man was Thomas Paine.—*Unitarian Calendar*.

Obituary.

It is with deep regret that we report the death of yet another London Freethinker, Mr. Joseph Sheppard, of Peckham Rye. It was a sudden and, to his friends, most unexpected event, as on Sunday, June 16, he was, apparently, in his usual health, and as zealous as ever in his advocacy of Freethought principles. These principles he held firmly and served faithfully for many years; and he was highly esteemed by all who knew him. He was buried in the Camberwell New Cemetery, on Friday, June 21, when, in fulfilment of his own desire, frequently expressed, a Secular Service was read at the graveside. We tender the widow and six children our sincere sympathy in their great loss.—J. T. L.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6, C. Cohen, Lectures.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, R. H. Rosetti, "The Sabbath."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, A. B. Moss, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, J. Marshall, "Silent Gods"; 7.30, Mr. Miller, "Religion and its Practices."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Mr. Davidson, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Mr. Burke, "Buddhism and Christian Pretensions."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BATLEY (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Saturday, June 29, at 7.45, "Deity and Demos."

BARNSELY (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Sunday, June 30, at 7.30, "Royal Parasites"; Monday, July 1, at 8, "Birth and Death of Gods"; Tuesday, 2, at 8, "The Great Enigma"; Wednesday, 3, at 8, "Tragedy of the Cross"; Thursday, 4, at 8, "Sun-Myth and Star-Fire"; Friday, 5, at 8, "Philosophic Necessity of Materialism."

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

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